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Preface

Foreword

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Foreword

The University of Tsukuba will be celebrating its fiftieth anniversary next year. It was designed to be a university unlike any other in Japan, and many new concepts were implemented in its design. One of these was the emphasis on interdisciplinary education and research. The original organization of undergraduate programs was symbolic in this regard. It clustered ‘basic’ disciplines, such as philosophy, history, linguistics, law, economics, mathematics, physics, and chemistry, into one unit, and ‘applied’ disciplines, such as comparative culture, area studies, education, biology and agriculture, into another, with engineering disciplines into yet another. Moreover, students had to attend several courses from programs other than their own to earn a bachelor’s degree.

On the other hand, postgraduate programs remained vastly discipline-based, which was only natural half a century ago. So was the faculty, each of whom belonged to one of the discipline-based organizations called ‘institutes’, in which discipline-based research was conducted. Twelve years ago, however, some faculty members of the Graduate School of Humanities and Social Sciences came to realize that it was time to take action to better meet the ever more complex problems of our twenty-first century global societies. This is why we set out for our Inter-Faculty Education and Research Initiative (IFERI), see the following section, About Variability, Uncertainty, Complexity, Ambiguity, for further details.

The Graduate School of Humanities and Social Sciences (HASS) was, and still is, a multidisciplinary organization. It embraces various disciplines, such as philosophy, history, archaeology, linguistics, literature, law, economics, sociology, politics, etc., within a single graduate school. IFERI started as an intra-HASS initiative to establish interdisciplinary education and research. As the present volume of *Inter Faculty* testifies, this initiative has proved to be fruitful, inspiring our faculty and students to explore new frontiers in the Humanities and Social Sciences.

Twelve years later, it is again time to take further action and to go beyond intra-HASS interdisciplinary education and research and seek to collaborate with the natural sciences, engineering, medicine, and so forth, to tackle global issues in an era of Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity and Ambiguity (VUCA).

As Japan's new Science, Technology, and Innovation Basic Plan issued in 2021 puts it, "it will become increasingly important to accumulate 'knowledge' with depth in the humanities and social sciences, and to create and utilize 'convergence of knowledge' (総合知 *sôgô-chi*) that contributes to comprehensive understanding and problem-solving of issues regarding human beings and society through fusion with 'knowledge' in the natural sciences."¹



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¹ https://www8.cao.go.jp/cstp/english/sti_basic_plan.pdf