



The Ibaraki-Shinbun, Nov. 27, 2007

### **ICAS Visiting Professor: Some Personal Reflections**

The following are some personal reflections, as I near the end of my second two month appointment as ICAS Visiting Professor. One of my main responsibilities is to teach a graduate course in adaptation science at the Hitachi campus. In addition to lectures, the students particularly enjoy the weekly interactive session. Small groups of students discuss a practical topic amongst themselves, and then share their conclusions in a short presentation. These are generally well considered and imaginative. If my small sample is representative, Japan will be well served by its next generation of leaders and professionals.

A few weeks ago I attended the Third International Student Conference organized by students at Ibaraki University. The large number of participants considered sustainability as a concept for maintaining a safe and secure society. They discussed the issues from both local and global perspectives. Ibaraki students are leading by example. Most walk to the Mito campus or travel by bicycle or bus. This is not only good for their health, but also for the global environment. One issue worthy of more discussion, and action, is the large amount of packaging used in Japan. I realize that there are important historical-cultural reasons for this. Hopefully acceptable solutions can be found, although the challenges are much more demanding than becoming a “closed-loop society”. Such a goal, in itself, does not encourage waste minimization, as highlighted by the fact that it is only a short time before my yellow “burnables” bag is full once again, mostly with packaging. Viewing packaging waste as a source of energy is not a sustainable, or economic, solution.

Another highlight was the recent announcement that the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change was awarded the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize, jointly with Al Gore. This was in recognition of its efforts to increase understanding about man-made climate change, and to lay the foundations for the measures that are needed to counteract such changes. Both the Director of ICAS, Professor Mimura, and I are long-term members of the IPCC.

I am very much enjoying the opportunity to live and work in a country where the students, the government, and other key players are demonstrating strong and effective leadership to address global environmental issues such as climate change. The Government set a high standard when it announced the “Cool Earth 50” initiative, including a 50% reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 2050. That leadership in global economic and environmental affairs continues, and will be highlighted at next year’s G8 Summit in Hokkaido. Perhaps the students organizing the 2008 International Student Conference at

Ibaraki University can be equally influential, possibly by arranging for the conference to be “carbon neutral”. Now there’s a challenge!

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**[Picture] Professors Mimura and Hay teaching the course in Adaptation Science at the Hitachi campus of Ibaraki University**