

Career Support Program to foster Students

Kanazawa University Co-op has been working together with Kanazawa University to conduct various support programs for students (top picture). Among those programs are College TOEIC, Test of Legal Proficiency, Certification Course Guidance and Support for Entrepreneurial Venture. An example of program highly valued by Kanazawa University is the Support for Job Hunting. One of the success stories came from the Public Service Examination Preparatory Course, which contributed to the increased number of the students being accepted as prospective civil servants.

The Co-op also conducts programs for first-year students. An orientation session about campus life for students and their guardians are being held each year, sometimes with guest speakers from various consulting firms.

While also making use of university co-op's strength in know-how related with student support, co-op's relationship with a number of professionals and agencies proved to be extremely useful in this kind of support programs. Co-op cooperates fully with any party for programs that assist student's career options, lead to student's growth and contribute to the university itself.



Uniqueness of Japanese University Co-ops

In Japan, university co-ops play a major role in the lives of students on campus.

Students Services:

Unlike the consumer co-ops that supply goods and services to community members through store outlets and home delivery services, the university co-ops provide a wide selection of services including stationery supplies, drawing materials, athletics wear, lab coats, electronic dictionaries, food and beverage products, and other necessities, which are essential for campus life. Students and faculty members can also order products, which are not available in the private stores.

With the co-op membership card, students can buy books, textbooks and magazine at a 10 percent discount. Books, including foreign language books can also be ordered through the co-op bookstore.

Healthy and balanced meals including set menu, daily specials, noodle dishes and curry rice based on self-service system are offered at a low price at the co-op cafeteria.

Some university co-ops provide meal coupons and meal cards that are purchased in advance, and regularly report students' eating habits to their parents/guardians.

In addition, each university co-op provides various supports, including apartment hunting for single person and dietary life support, for freshmen who have just started life at the campus.

The first challenge of a freshman is to find an apartment in an unfamiliar place.

Last year Hiroshima university co-op helped 1,700 lease-agreements to be concluded on behalf of students. Every year about 40% of the freshmen find their apartment through the Co-op.

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A plan to foster Student's Growth:

University life is not limited to classes offered by the university, the university co-op has a support program to foster student's growth as is conducted at Shimonoseki City University Co-op.

In this program students learn about one another, learn about the importance of "mutual aid" and share experiences, leading to enriching their campus life, helping them to find their dream and facilitating them to get new acquaintances. Nurturing students this way can contribute to the building of affluent and self-help society.

Activities going beyond services:

No one predicted the success of a product called "Keio Sweat." This sweatpants has been selling like hotcakes in Keio University Co-op since its launch. Some 500 pairs of Keio Sweat were sold in only two months. Keio Sweat is one of co-op original products developed with co-operation of the students.

Mie University Co-op has also been working hand-in-hand with Mie University and its local producers in developing products with university brand name.

Co-op's Cafeteria:

Students do not only go to buy meals at the cafeteria, but also use the facility to have discussion with their classmates. Besides, working with their computers inside the cafeteria is also promising. A room full of communication is contributing to students' growth.



“Business Integration Agreement” system between consumer co-ops.

The core role of JCCU in the retail operation of consumer co-ops is to supply CO-OP brand products.

In order to increase consumers' purchase of CO-OP brand products, JCCU, business federations and the member co-ops are to integrate their operations in areas of shelf control and sales promotion as well as product development, which, at present, are operated in less efficient way on three layers of national, regional and local level.

A “Business Integration Agreement” system has been established in order to realize more efficient business operation across JCCU, business federations and the member co-ops through integrated merchandizing operation.

In 2011, five major business federations have joined the system, which cover 51 percent of the national sales of primary co-ops.

The categorical achievements of the system in 2011 are:

- Making weekly plans of merchandizing including target sales volume of major products.
- Joint planning of monthly promotions. Sharing high-level information on merchandizing.
- Sharing same offices. Mutual secondments of staff members.

JCCU Fund-Raising for the Great East Japan Earthquake.

JCCU has received a total of 2.43 billion JPY into the fund-raising account opened for the Earthquake reconstruction. The period for the campaign is over and the account is since closed on March 31, 2012.

JCCU extends gratitude to all individuals and donor organizations.

Business integration between JCCU and its member co-ops



Yano Kazuhiro
Managing Director (CEO)

1. Strengthening solidarity between JCCU and member co-ops

The necessary condition to achieve our 2012 business target is to strengthen solidarity between JCCU and its member co-ops in every area of business including the development of CO-OP brand products. JCCU has been grading up the level of solidarity with its member co-ops in pursuit of critical mass to steadily compete with retail rivals.

In the 1970s, each primary co-op purchased individually and JCCU provided small amount of CO-OP brand products.

In the 1990s, eleven regional business federations were established by majority of member co-ops with the aim of pooling resources together in purchasing products and issuing catalogues for home shopping. JCCU provided wider range of CO-OP brand products to the business federations.

In the 2000s, JCCU and major regional business federations integrate their functions with the development of CO-OP brand products as well as the purchase of national brand products. The extension of the integration now includes sales promotions and merchandising.

JCCU has made a business integration agreement with five major federations, which represent more than half of the national sales of the primary co-ops. In this regard JCCU shares a part of responsibility of operational result of each member co-op.

2. Co-op Vision 2020

Several action plans are included in the “Co-op Vision 2020” as follows:

- Strengthen functions of the regional business federations. Establish two large-scale primary co-ops, which would operate in multiple prefectures in the Tokyo metropolitan area.
- Aggressively carry the business integration process in order to maximize benefits for lives of co-op members. Find the optimal combination of functions across primary co-ops, business federations and JCCU in order to increase efficiency of business operation.

Seek integration in the areas of logistics, system developments, research and study for business strategy and finance.

- Enhance JCCU's functions of guidance and public relations, which are vital to a national union.
- Develop an active organizational structure and sound operational structure that includes very new and aggressive policy of finance.
- Utilize the total cash flow within the group of JCCU and the member co-ops as a whole.
- In case of a large-scale investment such as new infrastructure project, JCCU and its member co-ops will work jointly to make a plan of funding, investment and recovery.

3. Detail of the 2012 action plan

The co-op group recognizes that;

- Rival competitors in food retailing are strengthening their positions through merger and acquisitions.
- The co-op group must have the scale and power to compete with the rivals.
- Two large-scale co-ops will be established in the Tokyo metropolitan area where one third of the population in Japan live.
- JCCU and business federations would tighten their relations to provide better service to their member co-ops.

The projects to realize more solidarity in business operation are divided into the following categories:

- Unification of policies regarding products development, merchandizing and sales promotion.
- More shift of business operations to JCCU from business federations.
- Utilization of JCCU's scale merit as a national organization in the area of developing CO-OP brand products and purchasing from suppliers. Reducing the number of suppliers.
- Upgrading the level of SCM (Supply Chain Management) and OEM (Original Equipment Manufacturer) of JCCU as the provider of CO-OP brand products.
- Joint operation of quality assurance of products and customer services of JCCU, business federations and the member co-ops.
- Enhancing analysis of purchasing data of co-op members by developing more efficient systems.
- Developing a Business Continuity Plan (BCP) covering the member co-ops nationwide.

Workshop on common diseases treatment in children

The Japan CO-OP Insurance Consumers' Co-operative Federation (JCIF) promotes community outreach workshops for co-op members with children in collaboration with the Japan Red Cross for the purpose of decreasing children's diseases and fatal accidents.

This year JCIF is holding a series of workshops nationwide targeting preschool children and children at the age of 6. Contents of the workshop vary according to the regional circumstance.

On March 22, at Pal System Chiba Co-op Funabashi HQ, a workshop was held under the title "How to treat common diseases in children" and "Basic knowledge and precautionary measures for radioactivity."

In the "disease" part, Ms. Fumiko Toyone gave a lecture on how to care for a child. She explained distinctive features of common diseases and symptoms with children and some precautions to be taken when making diagnosis.

She insisted that parents monitor their children's health regularly to see if they show anything unusual since it will help them to make the right decision when the child falls sick.

She also explained the importance of parents knowing their children's average temperature and demonstrated the correct way of measuring body temperature.

The last half of the workshop was a lecture by Hisako Kojima, explaining the basic knowledge and precautionary measures of radioactivity.



JCIF continues to protect the life of children through information dissemination and the timely payment insurance premiums.

CO-OP CLEAN Co. Ltd and Borneo Conservation Trust (BCT) secures ecological corridor.

The Borneo Conservation Trust (BCT) with the financial support from the CO-OP CLEAN Co. Ltd., a subsidiary of the Japanese Consumers' Co-operative Union (JCCU) has secured a 5.7-acre land, identified as one of the key ecological corridors for the Borneo pygmy elephants and orangutans in Lower Kinabatangan area.

In order to support this project CO-OP CLEAN launched a campaign from May 21, 2011 to October 20 2011 where from the sale of each co-op detergent product, 1 yen was donated towards the support of the BCT-Japan project as CO-OP CLEAN's contribution to the conservation project in Borneo.

Hideyuki Oohira the Managing Director of CO-OP CLEAN Co. Ltd, said CO-OP CLEAN's deep concern on the issue of sustainable management and conservation of the ecosystem has driven them to work towards achieving greater sales so that a bigger contribution can be made.

CO-OP CLEAN sold about 2.6 million packages of detergent last year, which has contributed 2.6 million yen towards the purchase of this land parcel.

The chairman of BCT, Tan Sri Ibrahim Menudin, expressed his appreciation to Hideyaki Oohira, for their support in the conservation project.

Ibrahim emphasized that this effort to purchase the forestland parcel is another positive step in achieving BCT's vision to secure the ecological corridor for the Borneo pygmy elephants and orangutans. He further stated "this particular land parcel is very important for the elephants' migration from Lot 3 to Lot 4 of the Kinabatangan Wildlife Sanctuary".



Borneo pygmy elephants



Members of BCT and Co-op clean Co. Ltd

'Baby Support Club' to help child-raising family with free support goods

Child-raising support for everyone (30% families with babies use the service.)

Co-op Yamaguchi started this 'Baby Support Club' in 2005 to support mothers with babies.

The Co-op started this drastic free service for child-raising families because of the prefecture's aging population and low birth rate.

As of 2011, Yamaguchi prefecture's population is 1.44 million, and it is expected to decrease to 1.10 million by 2035. At the time, the number of aged people (aged 65 or over) in the population will be 40%, and that of children (aged 14 or under) will be 10%. Therefore about half of the population will have to support senior and child generations.

Mr. Yamazaki, Executive Director of Co-op Yamaguchi, insisted on the importance of the system and commented, "Though we can not stop the population decline, I hope this Club can help increase the number of families who would consider having more children. I strongly expect other Co-ops in other prefectures with the same population problem to introduce this system."

Under the system, all pregnant women and mothers with babies under the age of one can join the Club. Members can get free support goods for three months along with periodical distribution of child-raising information.

In addition, Co-op's delivery service users can extend this service term up to one year, with free delivery service fee. After the one-year term, the member can get a half-price delivery fee service until the baby is three. Co-op Yamaguchi finds that the Support Club is so helpful not only for buying goods but also for making friends.



Prefecture supports heavy debtors

Green Co-op Kumamoto is commissioned by Kumamoto prefecture to undertake a support business for the rebuilding of the lives of heavy debtors in the prefecture. The Co-op announced 2011 result on April 6.

In 2011 the co-op consulted more than 700 cases of which majority of them were involved in loan contractions amounting to about 29 million yen. This result exceeded the previous year when the business was first commissioned.

Out of the 777-telephone counseling in 2011, 504 cases chose one-to-one counseling. Among them, 149 cases concluded a loan contraction, which resulted in 73.74 million yen. The purpose of loan included education expense, living expense, car expense and house rent.

The reasons for falling into heavy debt follow the ranking: 1. Low income, 2. Living expense, 3. Illness and injury, 4. Business finance, and 5. Gambling.

The counselors are qualified clinical psychotherapists and other specialists. They check the consuler's household accounts, adjusted their debts, and provided information for public assistance where necessary.

As a debt consolidation prevents the debtor from further borrowing, the repayment capacity of the consuler is checked carefully.

Anyone who is judged to have sufficient debt-paying ability receives a maximum 1.5 million yen loan from Green Co-op with a reasonable interest.

The prefecture's consumers' department mentioned that the number of people who are in arrears of local tax payment and scholarship repayment are increasing. Green Co-op hopes that financially handicapped citizens would use the system.

Comment on business integration between JCCU and Member Co-ops from the point of view of U-Coop CEO



Shigeru Maeda, CEO U-Co-op (JCCU member co-op)

Shigeru Maeda was interviewed about his view regarding the business collaboration between JCCU and its member co-ops. The following are his comments:

The business relationship between JCCU and member co-ops is a win-win one.

In the era of declining birthrate resulting in population decrease and aging population in Japan, our business collaboration could not be avoided. It is estimated that the Japanese population would decrease by more than 40 million in 50 years from 2010 to 2060. How co-op could build a business model that could be sustainable, in the midst of a significant decrease of the population, and to keep contributing to the lives of its members is one of the major challenges.

News in Brief

Delegates from iCOOP KOREA visit two Co-op Tokyo stores

Seven delegates from COOP SERVICE Co.Ltd, a subsidiary company of iCOOP KOREA, paid a day visit to Co-op Tokyo Mini Co-op Akatsuka store and Co-op Kaidori store to study about the product logistics, refrigeration and freezer controls at the two stores.

The first stop of the visit was at the mini co-op, one of the smallest stores of Co-op Tokyo but apparently bigger than any of the stores of iCOOP KOREA.

At the Co-op Kaidori store, delegates received explanation of the store layout based on the "Eco-store concept".

Delegates were impressed about the various energy conservation activities of the store, particularly the use of high efficiency light reflector to improve illumination intensity and the use of ceramic tiles on the floor as light reflector to improve the light intensity and the general illumination in the store.

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Even in the situation where there is little difference in opinions among some regional co-ops, JCCU should keep optimizing co-op logistics infrastructure, manufacturing base and store strategies for the benefit of the co-ops.

Until now even if two or more co-ops existed in the same prefecture and were competing with each other in store and home delivery business, the businesses were profitable because of the continuing increase in population.

However if business integration is not promoted from now co-op is likely to lose in the competition.

Expansion of scope of business

Besides the existing classifications such as day-to-day coordination, product development etc., it is necessary that JCCU makes a comprehensive policy that could ensure that products such as processed food, perishable foods, refrigerated and frozen foods could be produced and maintained in each temperature range.

Business integration will promote the reduction of operational cost, increase profitability and co-op members will get the benefit of it.

Delegates learned about the various devices to improve refrigeration efficiency, adoption of energy savings light and showcase night cover installations.



Delegates pose inside Mini Co-op after the observation.