

**News and Notes****Higher education has some answers for problems of aging societies**

The phenomenon of aging societies has become significant not only in Japan but also in other countries, including China and South Korea, and has exerted a profound influence on societal development, causing many serious problems.

In an attempt to approach these problems from the standpoint of women's education, the female presidents of educational institutions in and outside of Japan gathered in Tokyo on June 4 at Josai International University.

At the Japan Meeting of the World Women University Presidents Forum, the presidents and vice presidents of universities in the U.S., New Zealand, China and Japan got together to discuss "Issues regarding higher education for women in an aging society" from the viewpoint of women in higher education.

The organizer of the meeting, Noriko Mizuta, who is president of Josai International University, said in her opening remarks that although the fields of medical care, nursing and social welfare are increasingly important in an aging society, these fields are facing critical labor shortages. Mizuta emphasized that univer-

sity education could play a significant role in addressing this urgent issue by producing highly qualified professionals and upgrading the social status of workers in the fields.

Mizuta also pointed out that the re-education of women is another important role of university education, which enables women to acquire the skills needed to enter the workforce and be financially independent as they grow older.

Nine of the participating representatives of universities gave presentations on current

problems and the ongoing efforts in their countries regarding the graying of society. Their papers illustrated that gender disparities are causing serious losses of social resources in aging societies.

After the presentations, a lively discussion focused on the reported topics and other matters, such as what can be a good model for re-education or lifelong learning in universities, etc.

The meeting was held as a preparatory forum for the fourth World Women University Presidents Forum, scheduled to

be held in October 2009.

WWUPF was first held in 2001 on the initiative of Liu Jinan, president of Beijing Communications University, to provide female college presidents in the world with the opportunity to get together and exchange opinions on higher education. The first meeting in 2001 saw the participation of approximately 100 women presidents from eight countries; by the third forum in 2006, the number of participants and participant countries had risen to 200 presidents and vice presidents from 34 countries.

