

Morinomiya Campus 'forest of knowledge' opens to the world

EMI MAEDA

CONTRIBUTING WRITER

On Sept. 24, Osaka Metropolitan University (OMU) opened its new Morinomiya Campus in the heart of the city. The 13-story facility incorporates cutting-edge smart technologies and an environmentally conscious design, serving also as a hub for cultural exchange, community collaboration and international engagement. More than just a place of learning, it has opened its doors to the world as a center that will grow together with the city.

The university was established in April 2022 through the merger of Osaka City University and Osaka Prefecture University. Both had traditions spanning more than 140 years, and their integration created one of Japan's largest comprehensive public universities.

As a new symbol of the university, the Morinomiya Campus represents its vision for education, research and community engagement.

President Hiroyuki Sakuragi said, "The new campus embodies the concept of a 'forest of knowledge' where nature and diverse academic fields intersect, generating new knowledge." Taking advantage of its central location, the campus also serves as a think tank where new ideas are formed with government, industry and community partners to address social challenges and envision the future of society.

One of the defining features of the Mori-



Students of Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University participated in a calligraphy exchange activity with OMU. OSAKA METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY

nomiya Campus is an education program for first-year students that brings together about 3,000 new students from all 12 undergraduate faculties. Students join small groups of 10 to 15 to engage in discussions and fieldwork across disciplines.

"The process of students framing questions and engaging in discussions, accompanied by faculty members, provides a foundation before they move on to specialized studies, building the basis for lifelong learning," explained Sakuragi. "By experiencing cross-disciplinary exchange, students will grow into individuals who, even after advancing into their own specialties, maintain a broad perspective and are able to collaborate across fields."

Showcasing Osaka's traditions

Another distinctive feature is its role as a hub for sharing Osaka's history, culture and arts with the world. "The campus stands in front of Osaka Castle, set within the Morinomiya area, which has borne witness to centuries of history," Sakuragi said. "Osaka is also home to a rich cultural heritage, including bunraku, a traditional performing art that the city takes pride in internationally."

The hall on the third floor is equipped with facilities that can also accommodate bunraku performances, the venue will also host lectures where both students and local residents can experience traditional performing arts in an accessible way. Plans are even underway to invite Living National Treasures — people tasked with preserving important intangible cultural properties — for special performances, making the hall a unique place for international visitors to experience Japanese culture firsthand.

Partnering with community

Surrounded by housing complexes with elderly residents, the campus has become a base where researchers and students from the School of Medicine's Department of Rehabilitation Science work closely with local people to improve health and quality of life. Through intergenerational exchanges, the university directly contributes to the well-being of the community.

The campus also functions as a disaster evacuation site and is equipped with



President Hiroyuki Sakuragi OSAKA METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY

emergency supplies.

With approximately 6,000 faculty members and students in total, it operates like a small community while at the same time contributing to local initiatives in partnership with residents — presenting a new model of an open, urban university.

Open to the world

Within the campus, a space known as the Global Village has been created, offering an environment where Japanese and international students can study together and experience different cultures through joint projects and events.

Sakuragi emphasizes that true global education goes beyond improving language proficiency — equally important is understanding one's own history and culture and being able to communicate them in one's own words.

Fostering individuals who can engage with others on equal footing with mutual respect and work together to shape the future — this is the essence of the global human resources that the Morinomiya Campus aims to cultivate.

OMU was built with the support of society, and the president hopes students will learn a sense of gratitude and responsibility.

Sakuragi left the following message for students: "Studying at university is possible not only through your own efforts, but also thanks to the support of your families, teachers and the wider community. I hope you will become individuals who live up to that trust. If you approach your campus life with this awareness, your learning will surely lead to creating a new future."