

Weekly Wire
News from East Asia and Pacific
January 15, 2013

Australia

Thousands of students get a helping hand to attend university

More than 207,000 Australian students received Youth Allowance payments in 2012 to help them attend university. The total number represented an 8% increase from 2011.

<http://minister.innovation.gov.au/chrisevans/MediaReleases/Pages/Thousandsofstudentsgetahelpinghandtoattenduniversity.aspx>

Japan

WPI 2012 Program Review

In FY2007, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) began the World Premier International Research Center Initiative (WPI), a highly challenging and long-term program to support the establishment of world-class research centers.

In FY2007, the following five centers were funded and initiated research activities under the WPI Program:

Advanced Institute for Materials Research (AIMR), Tohoku University
Institute for Physics and Mathematics of the Universe (IPUM), the University of Tokyo
Institute for Integrated Cell-Material Sciences (iCeMS), Kyoto University
Immunology Frontier Research Center (IFReC), Osaka University
International Center for Materials Nanoarchitectonics (MANA), National Institute for Materials Science (NIMS)

In FY2010, the sixth WPI center was selected and initiated research activities:

International Institute for Carbon-Neutral Energy Research (I²CNER), Kyushu University

The six WPI Research Centers had site visits and underwent program reviews during 2012. A brief summary of scientific achievements of each center follow.

1. AIMR has developed a number of very powerful and cutting-edge tools for experimental research such as scanning tunneling microscopy and angle-resolved photoemission spectroscopy. Progress in spintronics was most impressive.
2. At IPUM, singularity theory and topology have been applied to problems in astronomy. The relation between gravitational lensing theory and Finsler geometry is a new connection between mathematics and astronomy.
3. The 2012 Nobel Prize for Physiology or Medicine was awarded to Dr. Shinya Yamanka of iCeMS (jointly with Dr. John B. Gurdon) for the discovery that mature cells can be reprogrammed to become pluripotent stem cells.
4. IFReC successfully integrated imaging and bioinformatics into experimental immunology for spatio-temporal studies.
5. MANA has made pioneering achievements in boron nitride nanotubes, artificial photosynthesis, and quantum dot bioimaging.

6. Although it has only been in operation for two years, I²CNER is making progress in the fields of hydrogen production, hydrogen storage materials, and materials transformation.

The WPI 2012 review document is now available at:

http://www.jsps.go.jp/english/e-toplevel/data/08_followup/FY2012result_e.pdf

New Zealand

“Which science to fund: time to review peer review?”

This 11-page document prepared by Sir Peter Gluckman, Chief Science Advisor to the Prime Minister, presents the author’s personal views on a topic that is of interest to funding agencies worldwide. The author hopes to stimulate discussion on peer review issues and funding decisions. He concludes that peer review processes are high in burden, less than ideal in outcome, and no perfect process exists.

<http://www.pmcsa.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/Which-science-to-fund-time-to-review-peer-review.pdf>

Singapore

R&D investment

Singapore’s National Survey revealed that their R&D expenditures marked a record S\$7.4 (US\$6.12) billion in 2011, an increase of 14.8% from the previous year.

<http://www.a-star.edu.sg/Media/News/PressReleases/tabid/828/articleType/ArticleView/articleId/1755/Default.aspx>