

## Research Branding Project for Private Universities Progress Report for the 2018 Academic Year

Number of Educational Corporation	261009	Name of Educational Corporation	Shinshū Otani Gakuen		
Name of University	Otani University				
Title of Project	Creation of an International Buddhist Research Network and the Promotion of “Human Studies” based on Buddhism				
Application Type	Type B	Grant Period	Five Years	Student Capacity	2995 students
Participating Organization	Faculty of Letters, Graduate School of Letters, Shin Buddhist Comprehensive Research Institute, Library, Museum, The Eastern Buddhist Society				
Project Outline	<p>The excessive rationalization of modern society has resulted in the “sense of meaninglessness.” Critical attempts to reexamine the early modern and modern ages have already been made. However, it is becoming increasingly urgent to find solutions to fundamental problems concerning the environment, human rights and bioethics. Buddhism has the potential to provide solutions to these important problems. In this project, we will create an international research center based on Buddhism and promote “human studies” unique to our university. We will unfold a strategic branding project for making the world recognize once again the importance of Buddhist studies.</p>				
① Aim of the project	<p>About a hundred years ago, Max Weber made the important point that the increasing rationalization of modern society will bring about the “sense of meaninglessness.” Subsequently, especially after the two world wars, various attempts have been made to reexamine modernity critically. But as if to mock such attempts at reexamination, the secularization of modern industrial society is proceeding at a greater pace and people are increasingly caught up in the globalized market economy. Under such circumstances, the problems of the “sense of meaninglessness” such as ecology, human rights and bioethics are becoming even more severe. Moreover, the market principle has pervaded the academic world of the universities. As a result, research that are believed to “contribute” to society in concrete ways, such as the applied sciences, have come to be overemphasized while research in the humanities and theoretical sciences have been curtailed. However, at present, when people are faced with the fundamental problem of the “sense of meaninglessness” and the need to overcome it is extremely urgent, the humanities, and Buddhist studies in particular, have become increasingly important, as it has the potential to provide answers to these problems.</p> <p>Therefore, our university has made the following four points the central pillars of its branding project. First, we will create the foundation for engaging in research from an international perspective on the basis of the knowledge of Buddhism we have accumulated in the past. Second, we will conduct joint research with scholars from America, Europe and Asia. Third, we will promote academic exchange among scholars and students. Fourth, we will make Buddhism, the intellectual heritage of world, available to society at large in the form of “human studies” unique to our university. In other words, we will offer to the world a humanities that is based on the core spirit of Buddhism—to face the actual problems of society squarely, to seek after the truth and to establish a firm ground for living our lives—in the form of “human studies” unique to our university. In this way, our university, even while it will still retain the traditional philologically-based study of Buddhism at the center of the university curriculum, will also actively engage in studies conducted from the perspective of clinical Buddhism that can contribute to the fields of sociology and education, as well as studies than can respond to the needs of society. In this way, we will create a brand image of Otani University as a “university of human studies” having the mission to nurture an independent person who can discover a way to live his or her life with firm resolution in modern society.</p>				

<p>② Goal and Implementation Plan for the 2018 Academic Year</p>	<p>I. Goal and Implementation Plan concerning Branding Project</p> <p>[Goals to be Achieved]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○Holding an international symposium</li> <li>○Publishing an Encyclopedia of Japanese and Vietnamese Buddhism</li> <li>○Participation in research activities by employing Vietnamese students as research assistants</li> </ul> <p>[Implementation Plan]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>①“<i>Tannishō</i> Translation Workshop” to be held in association with University of California at Berkeley’s Institute for East Asian Studies and Ryūkoku University Research Center for World Buddhist Cultures (August and March).</li> <li>②Lecture on Japanese Buddhism (intensive course) by an Otani professor at Eotvös Loránd University (March).</li> <li>③Publication of the papers presented at joint symposium “Buddha’s Words and their Interpretation” held with Eotvös Loránd University in the 2016 academic year.</li> <li>④Press release about the publication of an <i>Encyclopedia of Japanese and Vietnamese Buddhism</i> (The finished product may not be delivered until the next academic year) as a collaborative project with a Vietnamese institution</li> <li>⑤Hiring a Vietnamese student as a research assistant</li> <li>⑥Publication of the results of research in the Chinese academic journal <i>Foxueyanjiu</i> 佛学研究</li> <li>⑦Panel presentation by the Eastern Buddhist Society at the academic conference of the Japanese Association for Religious Studies</li> </ul> <p>II. Goal and Implementation Plan concerning Branding Activities</p> <p>[Goals to be Achieved]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○Evaluation of the two years of activities and the reestablishment of quantitative goals</li> <li>○Creation and distribution of a pamphlet introducing the project</li> </ul> <p>[Implementation Plan]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>①Press release in Japan and Vietnam regarding encyclopedia project and hiring of the research assistant</li> <li>②Continuing publication of <i>The Eastern Buddhist</i> (two issues)</li> <li>③Creation and distribution of a pamphlet introducing the project</li> <li>④Continue introducing the research activities at Open Campus events and the nationwide PTA meeting.</li> <li>⑤Creating a web page for this project in English. Establishing goals for numbers of accesses to the Japanese language page.</li> <li>⑥Performing a satisfaction survey and determining the state of branding for students</li> <li>⑦Developing an action plan with improvements based on a review of the two years of activities</li> </ul> <p>[Standards for Determining Achievement of the Goals]</p> <p>Regarding research activities, all activities other than publication will be carried out. Regarding branding activities, in addition to carrying out all activities in the implementation plan, the action plan with improvements based on a review of the two years of activities will serve as the standard.</p>
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<p>③ Results for the 2018 Academic Year</p>	<p>I. Results of Research Activities</p> <p>We were able to collect and transmit Otani University's latest research on Buddhism through the Shin Buddhist Comprehensive Research Institute and create a network with researchers working internationally.</p> <p>Plan ① “The <i>Tannishō</i> Translation Workshop” was held in association with University of California at Berkeley’s Institute for East Asian Studies and Ryūkyō University Research Center for World Buddhist Cultures (June and March).</p> <p>Plan ② Lectures were held for six days on Japanese Buddhism at Eotvös Loránd University between March 18 and 26, 2019.</p> <p>Plan ③ A two-day international symposium with the theme "Buddhism in Practice" was held at Eotvös Loránd University in Budapest, Hungary, from September 17 to 18, 2018, jointly sponsored by Otani University's Shin Buddhist Comprehensive Research Institute and the Buddhist Research Institute of the East Asian Studies Institute at Eotvös Loránd University.</p> <p>Plan ④ Discussions are underway regarding the publication in the joint project with a Vietnamese institution</p> <p>Plan ⑤ A Vietnamese student was hired to serve as a research assistant in hopes of furthering research into Vietnamese Buddhism</p> <p>Plan ⑥ Results of research will be published in <i>Foxueyanjiu</i> in May 2019</p> <p>Plan ⑦ The Eastern Buddhist Society hosted a panel with the theme "Japanese Buddhism and Buddhist Studies in the Twenty-first Century and Contributing to Society" at the seventy-seventh academic conference of the Japanese Association for Religious Studies which was held between September 7 and 9, 2018.</p> <p>In addition, researchers participated in a panel presentation at the Sixteenth Annual Conference of the European Association for the Study of Religions that was held for four days between June 17 and 21 at Bern University in Switzerland, presenting Otani University's research on Buddhism at one of the largest conferences on religious studies in Europe.</p> <p>II. Results of the Branding Activities</p> <p>Plan ② Published <i>The Eastern Buddhist</i> (in July and February)</p> <p>Plan ③ Included an article introducing the project in volume 199 of Otani University's public relations magazine <i>Jingen ajile</i> (Spring/Summer 2018) to relay information about it to current students and their families.</p> <p>Plan ④ Held three meetings of the working team for the project (one at Otani University, one at the Kinki area, Gifu, and Sendai, with a total of 172 participants), and at alumni association events (total of 735 participants).</p> <p>Plan ⑤ Made the English language version of the web site available online. There were a total of 1,652 views of the web site between April 1, 2018 and March 31, 2019.</p> <p>Plan ⑦ Held three meetings of the working team for the project where we considered the progress of the activities and possibilities for improvements.</p>
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<p>④ Self-evaluation and Outside Review for the 2018 Academic Year</p>	<p>(Self-evaluation)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Held a meeting of the Research Branding Project Working Team on April 24, 2019, where self-evaluation was performed. The number of downloads of the <i>Annual Memoirs of the Otani University Shin Buddhist Comprehensive Research Institute</i> from the university increased considerable over the 2017 academic year to 32,563 downloads and the number of views on JSTOR (Journal Strage) increased by fourteen times to 17,824 views, which indicates that the university has been successful in relaying the results of the research conducted here. Also, students have remarked that they learned that the university is invested in performing research. Further, regarding the activities that have not been carried out, we will evaluate the future course keeping in mind the possibility of changing the plans.</li> <li>•Self-evaluation will also be performed at a meeting of the Committee on Support for Research and Educational Activities planned for June.</li> </ul>
	<p>(Outside review)</p> <p>An outside review of the activities carried out in the 2017 academic year was performed by the Outside Review Committee (consisting of Shengkai [Associate Professor, Qinghua University, China], Professor Gandya [National University of Mongolia], Professor Yunwen [Chinese Academy of Social Sciences History Division] and Professor Hamar Imre [Eotvös Loránd University, Hungary]). The committee reviewed the project based on four points: "Appropriateness of the Research Plan," "Progress of the Research," "Organization of the Research Group," and "Results of Research" and graded it using four levels: Excellent, Good, Average, Poor. In addition, reviewers were asked to make comments under the subheadings "Expectations for the Project" and "Advice for the Project." The grades are as follows:</p> <p>"Appropriateness of the Research Plan": Excellent 4, Good 0, Average 0, Poor 0  "Progress of the Research": Excellent 3, Good 1, Average 0, Poor 0  "Organization of the Research Group": Excellent 3, Good 1, Average 0, Poor 0  "Results of Research": Excellent 3, Good 1, Average 0, Poor 0</p> <p>"Expectations for the Project" included:  So far, the activities and publications are still focusing on the academic research in Buddhism. However, both the mission of the Otani University and the aim of this project have a broader vision. The founding spirit of the university as follows: "to nurture people who can live autonomously as a member of society on the basis of the Buddhist spirit." One point of the central pillar of this branding project is "to make Buddhism available to society at large in the form of 'human studies' unique to our university".  I hope to see more efforts and more achievements in regarding to the role of Buddhism in modern society, in solving the contemporary problem of "sense of meaninglessness".</p> <p>"Advice for the Project" included:  •More and more broad-based collaboration with Buddhist studies centers and schools is recommended.  •It might be more international if one or two young Chinese scholars could be involved in this project and some articles could be published in Chinese.  The same committee will perform an evaluation again in July 2019.</p>
<p>⑤ Status of the Use of the Subsidy for the 2018 Academic Year</p>	<p>The subsidy was used to defray the cost for the activities listed in “③ Results for the 2018 Academic Year” (including transportation costs and registration fees for attending international conferences, as well as expenses related to the publication of <i>The Eastern Buddhist</i> such as costs for printing and binding of the journal, fees for business consignments, commissions and advertising fees).</p>