

Contents	1	SciREX Summer Camp Report [Miyu Ishiguro]
	2	A New Beginning for Healthcare Planning [Kenichi Hanioka]
	3	Student Interview, No.19 [Mr. Yuichi Sakurai]
	4	To GraSPP, SIPA, and Beyond [Nana Homma] / Topical News

# SciREX Summer Camp Report

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I participated in the SciREX Summer Camp held over three days from August 31 to September 2. This year's course took place on Awaji Island, with the topic being societies with a falling population. It involved working in groups to develop likely and ideal scenarios for 30 years in the future, and producing policy proposals for achieving the ideal outcome.

## ●Up to the night before departure

Before arriving in person, we introduced ourselves to our groups and undertook preliminary exercises. My group was made up of people from a variety of disciplines, such as agriculture and philosophy of science, and with diverse backgrounds, ranging from people with employment experience to someone who already had a master's degree and aimed to receive another. While I looked forward to the cross-cultural attraction of having people from diverse backgrounds, I did wonder whether we would be able to agree on a joint proposal. Given the difficulty of conducting much of a conversation by e-mail, we approached the start date without being fully prepared and I joined the course with some doubts still in my mind.

## ●At the course

The summer camp primarily involved group work. In my group, we first had to make up for our lack of preparation, but once we got to meet each other face-to-face, our discussion proceeded smoothly. The group leader kept careful track of time and we all avoided focusing too much on our own specialties. As part of their preliminary preparations, one of our group, an expert in public health, had produced a concept diagram looking 30 years ahead from the perspective of their own field. At the camp, though, his attitude was to contribute his own knowledge when



dealing with medical or public health issues but to pay careful attention to what everyone else had to say when it came to fields outside their area of expertise, he declared. Having talked this over early on, our discussions proceeded with everyone respecting each other's differences. What impressed me here was that, whereas we are in the habit of looking at things like society and policy from within the frame of our own specialties, this was a chance to gain insights into how these things look from different perspectives. Looking at legal matters from the perspective of someone who develops rockets provided a view of the law unlike what I get in my usual studies.

## ●After the summer camp

Having received some stern feedback from the teachers at the group presentation, the summer camp left me with an awareness of how much I still have to learn. In regard to putting policy into practice, it was pointed out to me that the impressive outcomes I intended would not necessarily eventuate straight away, and while this may seem obvious when written down, it is something you tend to forget when engaged in group work at a summer camp. Nevertheless, while the expression may sound a little clichéd, I found it a valuable experience to be involved in the group work and other activities, and in the cross-cultural exchange that resulted from contact with people I would not normally get to meet, including members of our group with different specialties and academics from other universities.

"Why do you always restrict themselves to their own field?"

I particularly remember this comment being made by one of the teachers I had a chance to speak to. This has prompted me to adopt an attitude of opening myself up to other fields.

