

The Ownership of Intellectual Property Rights and the Collaboration between Universities and Industry in Japan

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During the early days of the Meiji Restoration, universities were established in Japan for the purpose of training scientists and engineers for Japan's developing industry. The creation of the Japanese university system resulted in collaborations between the corporate and academic sectors. A natural result of this activity was the establishment of close relationships between industry and academia.

The career of Nagayoshi Nagai, PhD, in the Meiji era is an example of a successful relationship resulting from the movement within Japan to establish strong ties between academia and industry. Nagai, after completing his studies in Japan, traveled to Germany for further studies in the field of chemistry. Upon returning to Japan, Nagai was requested by the Japanese government to assume the position of professor in the Department of Pharmacology at the University of Tokyo. In addition, Nagai concurrently held the position of director of engineering in a Japanese pharmaceutical corporation.

Before the 21st century, official Japanese government statistics did not totally reflect the extent and complexity of industrial-academic collaborations. This is partly because these statistics tracked executed research agreements and may have missed many university and corporate partnerships that were not memorialized on formal research contracts. In 1978, the Japanese Ministry of Education announced that university-based inventions arising under government research grants would belong to the nation.¹