

ASPIRE Forum 2025 held at Hong Kong University of Science and Technology

The ASPIRE Forum, the annual general meeting of the ASPIRE League, which Institute of Science Tokyo is a member of, was hosted by Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST) and took place from July 7 to 11 at the HKUST main campus. The ASPIRE League, initiated by Institute of Science Tokyo (formerly Tokyo Institute of Technology) and established in 2009, is a consortium of top science and engineering universities in Asia with the aim of forming an innovation hub in the region through the advancement of science and technology and the development of human resources. The five-member universities are Tsinghua University (China), Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST, China), Nanyang Technological University (NTU, Singapore), Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology (KAIST, Korea), and Institute of Science Tokyo. Since the launch, Science Tokyo has been serving as the League's secretariat.

Symposium

Researchers from each member university delivered lectures related to this year's forum theme, "Advancing Health & Medicine through AI & Technology."

Professor Fumihiko Ishikawa (Program Director, Visionary Initiative H1: "Vision of Total Health Design," Science Tokyo) introduced initiatives being implemented through the integration of universities. His presentation highlighted efforts to innovate drug discovery and surgical procedures through AI, robotics, and imaging technologies, and contribute to treatment development through interdisciplinary research, using leukemia as a case study.

Following presentations by six researchers — including one from Delft University of Technology representing the IDEA League — a panel discussion was held, chaired by Professor Bertram Shi (Department of Electronic & Computer Engineering, Hong Kong University of Science and Technology).

Vice Presidents and Senior Staff Meeting

On the afternoon of July 10, the Vice Presidents & Senior Staff Meeting was held with vice presidents and senior staff from each member university in attendance, chaired by Vice President Tim Cheng (HKUST) and Professor Nobuhiro Hayashi, Secretary General of the ASPIRE League and Vice President for International Strategy and Engagement at Science Tokyo.

Each vice president introduced recent activities at their universities. From Science Tokyo, Professor Tomohiro Morio, Executive Vice President for Global Affairs, introduced the university integration and Visionary Initiatives.

As this year marked the renewal period for the League's Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), an updated agreement was approved and signed. Following the signing ceremony, Science Tokyo provided a report on the ASPIRE Undergraduate Engineering Design

Challenge 2025 (ASPIRE UEDC 2025), an exchange program for undergraduate students held in June, and then participated in a discussion about the future activities of the League.

After the meeting, proposals submitted for the 2025 cycle of the ASPIRE League Partnership Seed Fund (startup research support between member universities) were reviewed. Following the meeting, nine research outcome presentation sessions were held online for joint research projects previously supported by the Seed Fund.



MOU signing ceremony

Student Workshop

This year's student workshop took place from July 7 to 11 at HKUST. Twenty-six graduate students from each member university gathered for an in-person workshop. Additionally, graduate students from Delft University of Technology in the European IDEA League also participated.

The workshop, titled "HKUST Entrepreneurship Bootcamp," was also open to member universities of AEARU (Association of East Asian Research Universities), with two master's students from Science Tokyo participating under the AEARU program.

On the final day, July 11, students presented the results of their group work aligned with the forum theme "Advancing Health & Medicine through AI & Technology" to the vice presidents and symposium speakers. The students were divided into four mixed-university teams and proposed AI-based products and services to support people's health:

1. A teddy bear measuring children's vital signs, such as temperature and heart rate.
2. Glasses for early-stage dementia support.
3. A platform providing fitness training to maintain elderly health.
4. An insole for shoes that monitors and analyzes elderly gait patterns to prevent falls.

Of the four teams, three proposed products aimed at Hong Kong's aging society. In just five days, they conducted market research, developed business models, and delivered substantial presentations. Each team received questions and advice from vice presidents and symposium speakers, and awards were presented to each team.







Final Presentation



Professor Tomohiro Morio, Executive Vice President for Global Affairs (5th from left), Professor Nobuhiro Hayashi, Secretary General of the ASPIRE League, Vice President for International Strategy and Engagement (3rd from left), Professor Fumihiko Ishikawa (4th from right), International Division staff (three on the right), and participating students.

The next chair institution for 2026 will be Nanyang Technological University (NTU). The upcoming ASPIRE League events are scheduled to be held at NTU: the undergraduate program will take place from June 22 to 26, 2026, followed by the ASPIRE Forum from July 6 to 10, 2026.