

Entrance Ceremony Speech by the Senior Dean of the Faculty of International Research and Education (FIRE) and the Dean of the School of International Liberal Studies (SILS),  
on 21 September 2021

Professor Taisaku Ikeshima

President, Vice-Presidents, Faculty Heads, Fellow Professors, Parents and Students, Good morning, and welcome to the Faculty of International Research and Education (FIRE) at Waseda University, which comprises the School of International Liberal Studies (SILS) and three graduate schools, namely the Graduate School of Asia-Pacific Studies (GSAPS), the Graduate School of Japanese Applied Linguistics (GSJAL), and the Graduate School of International Culture and Communication Studies (GSICCS). On behalf of the Faculty, I would like to offer my warmest welcome to all the new students entering these schools.

I am Professor Taisaku Ikeshima, the Senior Dean at this Faculty. I teach International Law, Japan's Foreign Policy and other related courses at SILS and GSICCS.

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Since its foundation in 2004, SILS has steadily acquired an extremely dynamic and diverse culture, which is evident in the international atmosphere on campus. English is certainly the *de facto lingua franca* at our school. Our unique diversity is, however, based on the multicultural backgrounds and plurilingual perspectives of our students and faculty.

We hope that you will take full advantage of our liberal arts curriculum. However, freedom and responsibility are two sides of the same coin. You must be responsible for your own decisions and conduct, not only in your selection of courses, but also in your daily life.

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We are living in a time of VUCA: V for volatility, U for uncertainty, C for complexity, and A for ambiguity. The world has been facing the COVID-19 pandemic, which is likely its most serious challenge since the Spanish flu of 1918-1920. You will, therefore, need to be flexible and resilient, in order to adapt to new situations and find ways to cope and prevail.

Please continue to think and decide for yourself, no matter how convenient artificial intelligence (AI) and the internet may seem. Please do not reach a conclusion hastily or make a rapid judgment. You should take your time to find your own way and ideas, through endurance and struggle, having empathy with others, and adapting yourself to a changing situation, both flexibly and resiliently.

I would say that this kind of virtue, or endurability, may be associated with 'Negative Capability', a phrase coined by John Keats, an English poet of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This is one of the attitudes you will hopefully acquire under our liberal arts curriculum, one which is most needed for survival in a time of VUCA.

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We hope that you will freely and responsibly maximise your life at our institution. Our particular academic environment is sure to profoundly enrich your experience here, enabling you to lead a fruitful and prosperous life in the future.

We wish you good luck, and all the best! Many congratulations to you!  
Thank you.