

To those being admitted in September of the 2021 academic year

Congratulations, new students, on your admission to this graduate school.

Ordinarily, I would be congratulating you in person, but unfortunately that cannot happen now. I would thus like to express my heartfelt recognition of your achievement on behalf of the Graduate School of Political Science through this medium.

During the last academic year, almost all classes ended up being conducted online to stop the spread of infections as we endured the COVID-19 pandemic. Various restrictions will continue through the first term of this academic year, as well. Vaccinations have finally started to become available, and this is where I would like to be able to anticipate the possibility of a return to our normal educational and research environment. However, the end of the situation is still not in sight, and unfortunately it seems that we will have to proceed with caution for the time being. The Graduate School of Political Science is expending every possible effort to continue to offer an adequate environment for your education and study

The COVID-19 pandemic has presented us with considerable difficulties. I am sure that you are aware that the question of how to respond to these difficulties has given rise to much debate in Japan and all other countries around the world. In some countries, lockdowns and the wearing of masks are subject to acrimonious division. Here in Japan, too, there have been various opinions and divisions pro or con the subjects of nationwide school closures, requests on bars and restaurants to curtail their operations, the GoTo Travel policy, and—most salient here—remote lectures at universities. It is natural that people's views are at odds in a situation in which the solution to the problem is uncertain. However, it seems that arguments in these debates are frequently based on emotion and lacking in data-backed, cool-headed analysis. Could such discourse possibly lead to the creation of constructive policies? What we need are arguments that have scientific bases. And yet, in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, there are problems that cannot be resolved merely by looking for the most effective policy based on scientific knowledge. For example, it is anticipated that vaccines will be the trump card that will rein in the pandemic, but the developed countries are competing with one another to secure doses, as evidenced by the fact that restrictions on exports from the EU to the rest of the world have already been announced. Could this possibly be fair? Is it alright to leave poorer countries behind when implementing measures to stop the crisis? The WHO argues that vaccinations should be rolled out in a fair manner. When solving problems, we must consider not only efficiency but also fairness. But what would be fair? That question does not seem to be amenable to an easy answer.

I believe that the present coronavirus crisis is also an opportunity to once again demonstrate the

importance of the research and educational activities in which we have engaged here at the Graduate School of Political Science. This graduate school has formulated a curriculum for building a strong foundation for research, setting as requirements courses covering three methodological categories for our students to study: those covering empirical methods, in which reality are analyzed based on quantitative and qualitative data; those covering mathematical methods, in which reality is modeled and analyzed theoretically; and those covering methods of conceptual analysis, in which students are taught to understand and use normative concepts effectively. It is my belief that you can approach problems from broadly encompassing perspectives and to gain the capabilities needed to pursue solutions to those problems. I am also certain that these capabilities will apply not only to the current COVID-19 pandemic but will let you contribute to solving various issues that our society faces.

All the more because we are now in such difficult circumstances, it is my hope for all of you new students that you will refine your intellectual constitutions through the accumulation of even greater efforts than those of us who have come before you. That is why we at this graduate school also intend to do our part by continuing to do our best for you. Let us come learn together.

September 21, 2021

Dean of the Graduate School of Political Science

Ikuo Kume