

**Words of Welcome for Incoming and First Year Students,
September 21, 2020**

**Aiji Tanaka
President, Waseda University**

On behalf of Waseda University, I am delighted to welcome all incoming students this September as well as all first year students who enrolled in April 2020. Congratulations on your entrance to Waseda University. I extend heart-felt congratulations also, of course, to your parents, other family members, and friends.

I would like to take this opportunity to offer some words of welcome. It is our great regret that we are holding this entrance ceremony online, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We originally planned to greet you all in person at this entrance ceremony, but the pandemic situation in Japan does not allow us to do so.

We also feel very sorry about the cancelation of the entrance ceremony in April this year. Those freshmen and the first year graduate students who enrolled in the spring did not have an entrance ceremony at all, and they have been patiently waiting until now for the chance to see each other.

We are very sorry we were unable to offer face-to-face classes last spring. We had to consider students who are outside Japan or outside the Tokyo Metropolitan area who could not enter our campus areas. We understand that many of you are eager to come to campus and see your friends and professors. We are indeed planning to hold some face-to-face classes this autumn. Although freshmen may not have seminars or labs in person, I am asking all school deans and department chairs to arrange some opportunities for you to see each other. International students who are outside Japan or students remaining outside the Tokyo Metropolitan area will be able to watch in person classes on line if they wish.

Waseda University has a tradition of encouraging student diversity. Since my inauguration as the president of Waseda in November 2018, I have stressed the importance of “flexible sensitivity,” which is the ability to accept, understand and respect people with difference nationality, race, language, religion, culture, creed, physical conditions, gender, and sexual orientation from your own. Please foster your “flexible sensitivity” while you are at Waseda.

Another important value is “intellectual resilience,” with which to develop your own solution to problems for which there is as yet no answer. The COVID-19 is one of those problems. Global warming is another one. I hope you will cultivate “intellectual resilience” in your studies at Waseda.

I also have been advocating a new long-term goal for Waseda: to make Waseda one of the world’s top-tier universities, even if it may take two or three decades. Consider some examples from the United States. In the early 1930s, American top schools including Harvard, Columbia, and Yale were far behind their top European counterparts such as Oxford and the University of Paris, but they were committed to catching up. It took those American top schools for 40 years to catch up, but they managed to do so by the 1970s. It is time for Waseda to set our sights high and commit ourselves to that goal.

We faculty members and administrative staff pledge to do our very best to provide you with the educational environment that will allow you to graduate with the confidence to contribute to human society around the globe. Please study hard while you are students at Waseda, but at the same time, enjoy your student life. When you graduate from this university, I hope you will have found at least one thing to which you are determined to devote yourself.

Once again, I wish you a wonderful and fruitful student life at Waseda.

Best wishes to you all!