

## Words of Welcome for Incoming Students, September 23, 2023

**Aiji Tanaka**  
**President, Waseda University**

On behalf of Waseda University, I am delighted to welcome all incoming students to Waseda University today, September 23, 2023. Congratulations on your entrance to Waseda University. I extend my heartfelt 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 pleasure to hold this entrance ceremony in person. Today, after three long years, we are able to conduct a real full version of the entrance ceremony in our traditional manner.

We have been preparing to welcome you all and to provide the best possible educational environment as a leading private university in Japan. During the COVID-19 pandemic period, we replaced older air conditioning systems with brand-new ones with the capacity to circulate 30 cubic meters per hour per person in each classroom. Therefore, you can feel safe attending in-person classes at Waseda.

We are now pretty much recovered from the COVID-19 pandemic. It exerted an extremely negative impact on student life at all institutions of higher learning. At the same time, the COVID-19 pandemic also taught us a lesson. This kind of crisis has a greater negative impact on those who are weaker or members of a minority. The COVID-19 pandemic was a more severe experience for those who are less affluent or less healthy, and for those students who were living away from their own families. We must be considerate to those people and students who suffer more from a tragedy due to their particular circumstances.

For example, let us imagine how fearful and uneasy students from Ukraine studying at Waseda feel now. At the same time, let us imagine how

our students from Russia feel as they look at what their own country is doing, and how scared they must feel about other people's perception of them. It is important to empathize with how other people feel and to be considerate of people different from yourself. This ability is an example of what I mean by "flexible sensitivity."

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 of different nationalities, ethnicities, languages, religions, cultures, creeds, 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 solutions to problems for which there is as yet no answer. COVID-19 is one of these problems. There are many other problems like this: global warming, the growing gap between the rich and the poor, the invasion of a smaller country by a militaristic government's forces, and so on. You name it—the list goes on and on. No one has a complete solution to any of these problems.

Indeed, no single solution may exist. It may be that there are multiple solutions to each problem. It is your task to come up with your own solutions to these and other, as yet unknown, problems. While you are studying at Waseda University, you must learn how to use your own brain to think about the solutions that the world community of human beings will require. I hope you will all cultivate "intellectual resilience" at Waseda.

I have also 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, the top American 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 top American schools 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 an 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 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!