

September 15, 2024

Graduation Ceremony, September 2024

Akira Mandai

Executive Chairman of the Waseda University Alumni Association

Good morning/afternoon, everybody. I am Akira Mandai, Executive Chairman of the Waseda University Alumni Association (WUAA). On behalf of the WUAA, I would like to say a few words of congratulation.

Before doing so, I should point out that this year we have again experienced natural disasters throughout Japan. Beginning with the 2024 Noto Peninsula Earthquake on January 1, damage from earthquakes and typhoons has had a great impact on citizens' lives. I would like to extend my deepest sympathy to all those who have been affected by these natural disasters.

And now I wish to express my heartfelt congratulations to all of today's graduates on your graduation and to all your families who have supported you up to the present.

In 2020, the year of your enrollment, we saw the global spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, which had a grave impact on society and people's everyday lives. I am sure that all of you experienced many hardships in your efforts to continue student life both in your studies and extracurricular activities during these four years, so I am well aware that you are attending today's graduation ceremony with special feelings. For this reason, even more so than usual, in addition to offering all of you graduates my heartfelt congratulations, I feel a particularly strong desire to deliver this message on behalf of the WUAA.

With your graduation today, all of you without exception will become alumni of Waseda University and members of the WUAA. I would like to take this opportunity to explain to you a little about our association. At Waseda University, we call our graduates "*koyu*," and the WUAA, also referred to as "*Koyukai*," is an alumni organization composed of graduates of this university. This alumni association was originally founded in 1885 immediately after the first students graduated from Tokyo Senmon Gakko, the predecessor of Waseda University. Sharing our history and thoughts of our alma mater, we celebrate the 139th anniversary of our foundation this year. The basic policy of the WUAA's activities

is to provide support for our alma mater and for the current students who are our juniors and to build networks and friendships among Waseda alumni. Our current organization has its headquarters within the university. Headed by Waseda University President Aiji Tanaka, the WUAA is managed by approximately 60 chairpersons. Every year, we provide 200 to 300 million yen to support current university students, mainly through scholarships, and for various kinds of alma mater support.

At present we have about 680,000 alumni. Our 1,400 alumni association chapters, known as “*Tomonkai*,” are active throughout the world, organized by categories such as regions in Japan, graduation years, professions, and overseas countries. The power of these 680,000 alumni is the pride of Waseda.

In the Paris Olympic and Paralympic Games that ended recently, in addition to current Waseda students, many of our alumni competed in various events and performed brilliantly, some of them winning medals. Our alumni are active not only in sports, but in all kinds of fields both in Japan and throughout the world, making a significant contribution to society. They include business people and executives, prime ministers, community organizers, politicians, bureaucrats, lawyers and judicial officers, writers, artists, doctors, and members of the media. This diversity of our alumni is also the power and pride of Waseda.

Furthermore, although the WUAA was once seen as a male-dominated organization, it has changed greatly in recent years, as reflected in the rich diversity of those graduating here today. Our aim is to create a place where alumni can engage in a wide variety of activities with peace of mind, regardless of whether they are men, women or non-binary, and regardless of differences such as age, nationality, ethnicity, religion, or disabilities. I believe that this respect for diversity is one of the WUAA’s most important values.

Inheriting this great tradition and changing flexibly with the times, we members of WUAA want to continue to advance together with “Waseda, home of the heart,” upholding our slogan, “To the world together, toward the future together.” We will open our doors wide to alumni from all walks of life and we look forward to your active participation.

Incidentally, all of you graduating from Waseda University today will carry on your shoulders a “future with no clear answers,” which no-one has yet experienced. Today’s world is in the midst of a great

changes in politics, economics and social systems caused by factors such as geopolitical turmoil, climate change, and the dramatic evolution of generative AI, and the future is becoming increasingly uncertain. But in times such as these, the kind of human resources fostered by Waseda, who think outside the box and are always ready to take on challenges, are needed more than ever.

Along the paths you are about to take, there will be enjoyable and happy times, but you may well also experience great hardships bringing pain and unhappiness. Further refining the qualities of intellectual resilience, flexible sensibility, and empathetic reasoning you have acquired, and with your pride at having studied at Waseda and your enterprising spirit, I hope you will become individuals who can move and inspire people both in Japan and beyond, and make a significant contribution to the world.

As you become active in society, we will greatly welcome your full use of the organizations and networks of the WUAA as a rich reservoir of human resources. Our various alumni association chapters in Japan and throughout the world, organized by categories such as industries and graduation years, are looking forward to welcoming you. The contact details of each chapter are posted on the WUAA website, so please do not hesitate to get in touch and become members. And going forward, we also ask for your warm support as a strong cheer group for the current students who are the juniors of our alma mater.

Finally, let me reiterate the WUAA's slogan: "To the world together, toward the future together." Graduates of Waseda, spread your wings and soar high to the world and toward the future!

I very much look forward to meeting you all again here at the university in five years' time at the Homecoming Day to which all our alumni are invited.

Once again, many congratulations on your graduation today!