

Words of Welcome for Incoming Students,
September 26, 2026 (both for Undergraduate and Graduate)

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On behalf of Waseda University, I would like to offer my heartfelt congratulations to all the new students who are beginning your studies here today. I would also like to extend my further congratulations to all the parents, guardians, and relatives who have supported you and helped you reach this important milestone.

At today's ceremony we are delighted to welcome 492 undergraduate students and 635 graduate students to Waseda University. And of that total of 1,127 students, approximately 75% are international students.

I was appointed the 18th president of Waseda University just five days ago, on September 21. Many of the representatives of university leadership here on this stage today, including vice presidents and deans, also took office at the same time. In that sense, today marks a new beginning for all of us. As you begin a new chapter as Waseda students, we too are beginning a new chapter in the leadership of the University. It is a great pleasure to take this first step together with all of you who have gathered here from around the world.

Waseda University is one of Japan's oldest and most distinguished universities. It was founded in 1882 and at the time, Japan was in the midst of great reform, the Meiji Restoration. Our founder, Shigenobu Okuma, believed that it was essential for students to pursue free and original scholarship in a system created to suit Japan, and established Waseda University under the founding principles of "the preservation of the independence of scholarship", "the promotion of the practical application of scholarship", and "the fostering of good citizens".

Okuma's educational philosophy resonated powerfully with Waseda University's first student body made up of eighty bright individuals. Today, Waseda enrolls approximately 50,000 students, and over 700,000 alumni are excelling in diverse fields and careers around the world. You are now becoming part of this long and distinguished tradition, and I strongly urge you to make the most of your time here at Waseda starting today.

In addition to cultivating knowledge in your chosen field, I strongly encourage you to take advantage of the vast resources available and explore various fields of study as well. The Center for Japanese Language offers Japanese education programs at all levels, from beginner to advanced. The Global Education Center offers over 2,400 courses to all Waseda students in a variety of subjects, including languages, data science, physical education,

and so on. Through WAVOC, our volunteer center, you can get involved in various volunteer activities and fieldwork experiences. And numerous cultural facilities, including our on-campus Museums, are also available for you to explore and enjoy

Waseda also has a vibrant sports culture. Student athletes are active in forty-four nationally competitive sports clubs, including baseball, which just started its fall season, Ekiden long-distance relay racing, rugby football, and more. I hope you will support and cheer on our many sports teams with enthusiasm as a member of the Waseda community.

As you can see, Waseda has cultivated a rich environment for education and self-discovery, but how you take advantage of this environment will be up to each of you. With that in mind, I would like to share four pieces of advice for you to keep in mind as you embark on your student life here at Waseda.

The first is to take initiative and actively challenge yourself to try new things. When starting something new, it is natural to have anxiety about what might happen if you fail. However, in these moments I would like you to remember the words of our founder, Okuma: “You will inevitably fail. In fact, your failures will outnumber your successes. But do not get discouraged; rather, gain valuable experiences from your failures and strive for success.” I urge you to take on challenges without fear of failure and gain as much practical experience as possible.

My second piece of advice is to engage with the “real” as you hone your knowledge and sensibilities. These days, as virtual reality technology advances, copies and substitutions for various things are readily available. And while we should certainly make use of the current technology, it is important to remain in touch with the “real”. Direct encounters with people, places, objects, and events engage all our senses and can teach us things that mediated or simulated experiences cannot. Sharpen your five senses and your judgment so that you can distinguish between the virtual-reality and the real-reality.

Third, learn about the world and cultivate your ability to see things from a broad perspective. It is vital to keep daily tabs on what’s happening around the world socially, economically, and environmentally. Today’s network technology allows us to easily pinpoint information about subjects that interest us, but these individual pieces of information are merely dots. It is essential that you develop the ability to connect these dots into lines, and the lines into a full picture, as you broaden your perspective.

My fourth and final piece of advice is to forge strong connections with your peers, engaging in discussion and mutual development while respecting each

person's values. Generative AI may sometimes seem ready to agree with you, but real people will not always do so. There will be times when you simply cannot see eye to eye and disagreements will arise. However, there is so much you can learn from such experiences. So, please engage seriously in discussion and debate with your friends, while always remembering to respect one another.

As you put these four pieces of advice into practice, I hope you will enjoy your life at Waseda to the fullest while keeping a strong sense of purpose: to develop the knowledge, judgment, and abilities you will need to contribute to the world.

Finally, I wish to say that a university is a place like no other in our society, a place to meet people and make friends, to gather and learn from one another, inspire each other, and grow as individuals. Although your years at Waseda will form only a small fraction of your lives, I firmly believe and hope that Waseda will remain in your heart no matter where in the world you go after graduation, and you are always welcome to return. Your time here will also give you the strength to reflect on the path you've taken and discover the best way forward. I hope you will make the most of your time here. And I look forward to walking alongside you as you begin your life at Waseda.

Once again, I offer my heartfelt congratulations on your admission to Waseda University.

Thank you very much and good luck.