

## Congratulatory Address

Hirofumi Nomoto

Thank you for the introduction. I'm Nomoto from Tokyuu and I'd like to congratulate all the new students joining the university.

Congratulations also to the parents of the new students who must have been looking forward to this joyful day.

Originally, we would've had an opening ceremony by welcoming lots of people in this renovated Waseda Arena, but as we all know, even though the state of emergency has been lifted, we still don't see an end to the spread of COVID-19.

Under such circumstances, the fact that this ceremony is held with the efforts of the faculty and staff is truly a matter of joy, and I hope all of you also had a memorable start to your college life.

I too clearly remember the opening ceremony held 54 years ago in the Memorial Hall that stood here in the same place, in which I participated with my mother who came to Tokyo all the way from Kyushu.

Of course, the venue was not as impressive as this back then!

I joined the then Department of Civil Engineering, School of Science and Engineering. I think it's now called the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering, School of Creative Science and Engineering. While I did feel a bit sad at the loss of the word *doboku* from the Japanese name, I think it is a splendid name for the current era.

It unquestionably is a name that captures in advance the changes in the world, and the addition of the word creative to the science and engineering is also a good touch. Of course, I can really feel the expectations placed on you with the addition respectively of fundamental and advanced to each name.

All of you who start the first year must be filled with hope in your hearts as to how to spend your college life from today.

I'm sure you'll lead your student life with various dreams and hopes. There are two things I would like you to definitely try.

The first one is taking on challenges. As long as you're a student, it's natural to take on the challenge of new disciplines, but you could also try various club or volunteer activities or start a business. Including part-time jobs, I'd like you to take on as many challenges as you can and gain experience while you're young. Of course, nothing that goes against the law.

Also, pursue one thing thoroughly, be it sports or a research field. Being a leading person in that field would also be a remarkable achievement. The experiences in your youth, even if you fail in some, will definitely stand you in good stead. It is said that "experiences make a person," and a lot of experiences will help you significantly when you enter the real world.

During my student days, I was moderate in terms of studies, but mixing with my friends, doing numerous part-time jobs, and doing a road trip around Japan in 35 days with a friend during the summer break in the final year of college – I literally did experience many things.

They have been helping me in my work also after I became a member of the adult world. Even now I regularly talk, with a bit of pride, about my experiences from college days to the employees. They probably might be thinking "not again."

Currently, with the spread of COVID-19 all around, you too probably struggled a lot with your entrance exam studies and restrictions on meeting friends, etc.

At the same time, work style and lifestyle are also changing significantly with remote studies and remote working, etc. In

this world, changes will always create chances. However, you won't be able to grab that chance just by waiting patiently. It's important to act.

You'll come across various chances in the long life lying ahead of you. Take on those challenges bravely. When you take action, it might at times create troubles for others. When that happens, apologize genuinely and reflect, which will definitely turn your experience into something useful.

Failure will be the fertilizer for your growth, given your youth. But, if you keep on failing, there will be too much fertilizer which could cause root decay. So, I request you to do it within bounds.

The second point is regarding the word "creative" that is there in your school name too. I often tell my employees to forge "two *sozoryoku*, or creative powers." The first *sozoryoku* (想像力) is the Japanese word for "imagination."

It is often said that "you cannot respond to something that you can't imagine." The chances of an accident will significantly differ if a person is driving with the thought that a child might suddenly jump in front rather than driving without such a thought. We could think of the same concept regarding response to natural disasters.

In terms of lifestyle also, everything starts from imagination—what is the world going to look like post-COVID-19, what is going to trend in the future, what will become obsolete, how would the customer preferences change, etc.

To build such a creative power, what most important is experience. While own experiences are limited to oneself, you can also gain experiences from books, movies, and news or various people through conversations with teachers and seniors. Observe and listen to everything with interest and take on challenges to have lots of experiences.

The second *sozoryoku* (創造力) is the Japanese word for "creation." I often tell my employees that creation is what you actually make from what you imagined in your head. Value is created when you actually give shape to the imagination. For that, you need to act, and you need to take on the challenge. Otherwise, nothing will be created.

Without doubt, all of you present here today are chunks of creative power. You are the ones shouldering the future of Japan. There was a time when people said "Japan as No. 1." There were many technologies that originated in Japan, and the Japanese people's enthusiasm to learn and their reading habits came for praise. In those days Japan was number two in the world in math skills, and in top positions in scientific and information fields, and it was an object of admiration around the world.

Now, 40 years later, I don't think our academic ability has necessarily fallen, though the ranking might have dropped relatively. However, maybe because we have become richer compared to then, I feel the youth lack in the will to take on challenges.

I hope all of you here would forge these two *sozoryoku* and take on various challenges. This will definitely link to the "enterprising spirit" in Waseda's anthem.

When the world changes, that will without doubt give birth to chances. But, bear in mind that you won't gain anything unless you take on those challenges.

Think of it as the three cha's—"change, chance, challenge," so that you won't forget it.

Right now, the environment surrounding Japanese society is changing at unprecedented speed including globalization, digitalization, falling birthrates, and aging of population. Against this backdrop, the society is eagerly seeking human resources that can flexibly and appropriately respond to all kinds of changes.

Human resources with abundant imagination and who can propose concrete plans to deal with changes, and take on the challenge and carry them out. I strongly expect many of you to grow into such resources.

All of you present here today probably realize that there will be considerable differences in what your future will be depending on how you spend your student days, which is neither too long nor too short, here at Waseda University—either firmly with a purpose, or aimlessly.

I'm repeating myself: anyone can have “dreams” and “hopes,” but unless you have strong “will” and “aim” you won't be able to fulfill your dream.

I would like you to acquire by all means a “spirit of challenge” and the two “*sozoryoku*” in order to also fulfill your dreams.

Finally, here at Waseda University, there are many brilliant teachers who are successful in the various specialized fields, and also assuring staff who will warmly support your student life.

Make full use of this privileged environment and study assiduously and have a wonderful student life, and at the same time, do not forget the feeling of gratitude towards these people as well as your family, who are always there supporting you.

I would like to conclude my speech by praying for a healthy and enriched college life for all of you who are entering this university in 2021 amid sweeping changes on a global scale.

Congratulations to all of you.