

September 16, 2023

Graduation Ceremony, September 2023

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.

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

The COVID-19 pandemic, which has spread rapidly not only in Japan but throughout the world from its outbreak at the beginning of 2020, had a very grave impact on people's lives. With the easing of behavioral and other restrictions since early this year, I am delighted to see that social activities are returning to normal.

I am sure that everyone graduating today has experienced many difficulties over the past three and a half years in continuing your studies and university life. 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 138th 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 between 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 670,000 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 670,000 alumni is the pride of Waseda. Active in all kinds of fields both in Japan and throughout the world, including not

only business people and executives, but also prime ministers, community organizers, politicians, bureaucrats, lawyers, judicial officers, artists, doctors, and journalists, our alumni are truly diverse.

Inheriting this great tradition, we members of the WUAA, while welcoming the participation of many new members from now on, want to continue to advance together with “Waseda, home of the heart,” upholding our slogan, “To the world together, toward the future together.”

You who have graduated from Waseda University today will carry on your shoulders a “future with no clear answers,” which no one has yet experienced. While the fight against COVID-19 continues, the world faces great changes in politics, economics, social systems, and security, and the future is becoming increasingly uncertain. But in such an age as this, the kind of human resources fostered by Waseda, who think outside the box and are always ready to take up new challenges, are needed more than ever. Such people will be active in their communities and then spread their wings to become global leaders.

Along the paths that you are about to take, there will not only be enjoyable and happy times. You are also likely to suffer great hardships bringing painful and unhappy times. Nevertheless, I believe a bright future lies ahead for you. While student life was hard during the pandemic, the experience of overcoming that will be a source of great encouragement in your lives. By further refining the resilient intellect and flexible sensibility you have acquired at this university, with your pride at having studied at Waseda and your enterprising spirit, I hope you will become someone who can inspire and move people in Japan and beyond, and make a major contribution to the world.

Even after you graduate and leave the fold of the university, the bonds of Waseda link all of you through the same DNA. After leaving the nest of Waseda, your thoughts and feelings will be as one with the 670,000 alumni active all over the world. The WUAA will give you a warm welcome not only throughout Japan but also in every country and region of the world. And as you all become active in society, we will greatly welcome your full use of the WUAA as a rich reservoir of human resources.

Finally, I want you never to forget that your alma mater, Waseda, and its alumni are always close by and will give you encouragement. 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.

The WUAA’s slogan is “To the world together, toward the future together.” Graduates of Waseda, spread your wings and soar high to world and to the future!

Once again, many congratulations on your graduation!