

April 1, 2024
Entrance Ceremony (1st)

Congratulatory Address

NAKAJYO, Akiko

Congratulations today to all the new students and their families.

I am so happy you're able to be here at this moment, the start of a new world.

Some of you are overjoyed at the opportunity to attend Waseda University, others of you selected Waseda University from among a number of options and will start exploring what it means to attend the school.

In either case, you're all here after overcoming various challenges known only to you. There are students here in fact who suffered through the recent Noto Peninsula Earthquake. Each one of you has risen up to meet the challenges and take a new step forward, and I'm very proud of you for it.

Were the challenges you have faced so far and the road you have chosen the right one? You will prove it to yourself now. Just as Waseda University gave me the chance to open many doors, for all of you Waseda is a place to discover new possibilities. Today, to everyone starting out, I want to introduce myself briefly and provide you with two messages.

First, I will briefly introduce the road I'm walking down.

Since I was a young I wanted to play a role in connecting Japan and the world to information and content, and I've worked at a broadcaster, communications company, and Google. My mission now at YouTube is to provide all people with a platform for expressing themselves and to deliver their voices to the world. Truly the road I've travelled has been full of good fortune.

I'm sure all of you here have spent some time on YouTube learning from and enjoying the video made by YouTube's creators. YouTube is a stage connected to the world, and the many wonderful creators who work and excel daily have encouraged me personally as well.

In addition, for me, YouTube is a workplace for taking on the challenge of new technologies. It is a meeting place for creativity and technology, so, for example, with regard to generative AI, which has been much discussed recently, we believe it will not simply take the place of human creativity but support it. I personally work with my team on building a responsible platform, which is our vision.

At any rate, I have been at a workplace where you must continue to learn each day. I learn from the many wonderful leaders and teams, and from my experience being in the middle of innovation, I will convey my message to you.

Why is everyone here in this place?

It's because each and every person here today will become a leader who contributes to the world.

All of you have had potential and have grown with a lot of love and investment. Your role is to contribute to society. Toward the future that you will build, I want you to begin preparing two capabilities while being aware of your lives as students at Waseda, one is the ability to pursue potential and the other is to feel grateful. I would like to speak to you today about these two capabilities.

First off, the ability to pursue potential

I was not a bright and shining student like many of you. I went back to college and graduate school after first being out in the working world. That is how I came to study at Waseda.

After going out into society, I experienced failure after failure. The people around me all seemed exceptional. I wanted to be in charge of a new program as a broadcaster, but one of the reasons I couldn't was that women were limited to assistant roles, but at the time I didn't have the ability to fight it, because I thought I was the one with the problem.

I didn't think I was able to take a leap unless I rebuilt myself. So, I went back to school to make myself, who lacked confidence, strong and refine my thinking that had been warped at some point, and pursue the potential in myself.

If I hadn't have gone through this process many times, I don't think I would have gotten the chance I later received.

The world today is complex with many unknown problems and problems without answers, and the speed of change is accelerating. To stay in a comfortable place or not do anything because you don't know what you want to do is to denigrate yourself.

The world has many changes and you definitely receive a lot of chances, so continue to study, believe in your own potential, and continue to pursue it.

My second message is the ability to feel grateful.

To get here today, I think all of you took on many challenges.

I, too, am still on the road and have had major setbacks. In the tough times when I wasn't moving forward, I received support from my family and friends. It is my wish that in tough times the people that helped me will think, "It was right to believe in her and support her at that time." Start again the pursuit of your potential, do a good job, or, in other words, develop the ability to be grateful to those

around you; you will grow as a person.

I ask myself sometimes what does it mean to be living in the age we're living in.

Even in the world today, family members are dying in wars and women are being cut off from educational and employment opportunities. This goes back a ways, but my grandfather was killed in World War II at the age of 30. My mother, at a time when it was considered embarrassing for women to work, no matter how good a job she could do, she couldn't work, and I remember her in tears saying how much she wanted to work. If we had been born earlier or the times did not allow it—at least living now in Japan we can give a shape to it.

Your mission in life is not your mission alone.

Think back to the tough times in your lives so far. Behind you are many, many lives connected together; those are the family and friends that believe in you and support you.

I think you can definitely feel the force of people pushing you from behind.

To conclude, everyone in the team that have entered this university in 2024 gathered here today, each of one of you have a different life you're leading, and your lives will be different going forward as well. This is why it will be so important to learn from your future friends who you don't know yet but are seated beside you today. The ability to accept values from differing perspectives is fundamental for future leaders.

To everyone entering the university today, I want you to pursue your potential, move forward as leaders by continuing to learn, cultivate the ability to feel grateful, and help create a better, more diverse world.

I wholeheartedly look forward to seeing you learn and take on challenges at a broad-minded, highly diverse university like Waseda and to the type of future you will create as the team that entered in 2024.

Congratulations.