

March 25-26, 2025

March 2025 Congratulatory Address

Akira Mandai

Executive Chairman of the Waseda University Alumni Association

Hello, everyone. I am Akira Mandai, Executive Chairman of the Waseda University Alumni Association (WUAA). I would like to say a few words on behalf of the WUAA.

First of all, I would like to express my heartiest congratulations to you upon your graduation today, as well as to the families who have supported you during your time at Waseda University!

In April 2021, when many of you entered Waseda University, society was still reeling from the effects of the coronavirus pandemic. Although social activities gradually recovered after that, you no doubt experienced many difficulties in continuing your studies, extracurricular activities, and other student life. Those experiences, I imagine, add to the pleasure of graduation. Your hearts must be filled with joy and pride in your accomplishments. For this reason, I too am filled with a particularly strong desire to offer you my heartfelt congratulations and deliver this message on behalf of the WUAA.

All of you, without exception, will become alumni of Waseda University and registered members of the WUAA upon graduation. I'd 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.

The alumni association was founded in 1885. Tokyo Senmon Gakko, the predecessor of Waseda University, was established in 1882, and the first cohort of 11 students graduated in 1884, followed by a second cohort of 67 students in 1885. On December 13, 1885, at the Fujimiken restaurant in Kojimachi Ward in Tokyo, 50-odd graduates gathered with university representatives, including Mr. Sanae Takata, one of the founders of the association, who subsequently served as the first and then the third president, for a meeting to kick off the WUAA. This meeting represents the birth of the association. The name Tokyo Senmon Gakko was later changed to Waseda University, and the WUAA has shared in its illustrious history up to this day. The WUAA, which began with just a few dozen "*koyu*," currently has around 690,000 members, and has grown to become one of Japan's top alumni associations. In December of this year, it will celebrate the 140th anniversary of its establishment.

The mission of the WUAA is to provide support for the university and its current students who will follow us and to build networks and friendships among Waseda alumni. Our current organization has its headquarters within the university campus. Headed by Waseda University President Aiji Tanaka, the WUAA is managed by a group of approximately 60 chairpersons. Every year, we provide 200 to 300

million yen to support current university students through scholarships and other kinds of alumni support.

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 690,000 alumni is the pride of Waseda. Active in a wide range of fields in Japan and around the world, our alumni contribute to society not only as business people and executives, but also as prime ministers, community organizers, politicians, government officials, lawyers, judicial officers, athletes, writers, artists, doctors, and media personalities. This diversity of alumni is the vitality and pride of Waseda.

At one time, the WUAA had an image of comprising mostly male members, but in recent years, the association has changed dramatically, reflecting the great diversity of today’s graduates.

The WUAA strives to create an environment in which all members can participate in the association’s activities in comfort and with peace of mind, regardless of their differences, for example in terms of gender, disabilities, sexual orientation and gender identity, nationality, ethnicity, faith, and age. Respect for diversity is considered one of the most important values of the WUAA.

The goal of the WUAA is to carry on this wonderful tradition and change flexibly with the times, moving forward together with “Waseda, the home of the heart.” The association opens its doors wide to all alumni, and we look forward to your participation.

As you go on to the next stages in your lives, feel free to make full use of the rich human resources and networks that WUAA has to offer. Your fellow alumni will always give you a warm welcome at Tomonkai chapters not only throughout Japan but also in various regions of the world, industries, and graduation cohorts. Contact information on Tomonkai chapters is available on the WUAA website. Please contact us and join us in our activities. And going forward, we also ask for your warm guidance as a strong support group for current Waseda students.

Along the paths that you are about to take, there will not only be enjoyable and happy times. You are also likely to face great hardships that may bring pain and sorrow. However, by further refining the robust intellect, flexible sensibility, and empathetic reason you have acquired at this university, and by embracing the pride of having studied at Waseda and your altruistic spirit, I hope you will become someone who can make a major contribution to the world.

In closing, I will say that the WUAA’s slogan is “To the world together, toward the future together.” Graduates of Waseda, spread your wings and soar high, into the world and into the future!

I sincerely look forward to seeing you again on a homecoming day when you will be invited to the university five years after graduation.

Once again, many congratulations on your graduation!!