

# President's Speech for the Commencement of March 2025

March 25-26, 2025

Aiji Tanaka, President  
Waseda University

Dear graduates and distinguished guests,

On behalf of Waseda University, it is my great pleasure to congratulate you upon your graduation. We also extend congratulations to your family, relatives, and friends. I am sure that this is a moment you have been waiting for while studying here at Waseda.

We considered inviting family members in addition to graduating students to this graduation, but we were concerned that it would be dangerously congested on the road in front of Waseda Arena. Consequently, we have been inviting only the actual graduating students to this Arena for the last several years. We hope you will understand our decision.

At the same time, we would like you to know that we are all proud of you, who have completed your study at Waseda, accomplished your own goals, and are graduating today.

I suppose that many of you graduating with Bachelor's degrees this year entered Waseda in 2021, that those with Master's degrees came in 2023, and that those with Doctoral degrees came even earlier. Accordingly, I am sure that your student lives suffered from the COVID-19 pandemic to a great extent.

The learning and research you planned to do at Waseda must have been negatively affected by the pandemic. Thanks to your patience and self-control, however, no cluster infections occurred in class. I really appreciate your cooperation and self-discipline.

You are graduating from Waseda University today in a manner that is truly

gratifying. Your graduation signifies that your efforts to study at Waseda became fruitful. Please be confident of what you have learned at Waseda, and be a pioneer, forging your own way forward in your life in society at large or in graduate school.

You are now entering a world that you have never experienced before. I imagine that at present you have positive expectations regarding your future, and at the same time you might anticipate some anxiety. However, this is quite natural. You will be fine as long as you are honest about yourself and faithfully try to design your own life.

Most of the problems human beings are facing today do not have one correct answer. Think, for example, about the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change due to global warming, and wars or armed conflicts that continue to kill so many people all over the world, you name it. No one has a single “right” answer to solve any of these problems.

After you graduate from Waseda and start working in the real world, you will face many new problems to which no one really has a correct answer or optimal solution, although the scale or the impact of those problems may be smaller than those of the coronavirus pandemic or violations of human rights due to armed conflicts mentioned above.

However, you have learned how to use your own brain to solve unknown problems at Waseda. Therefore, I hope that you are graduating today with confidence in yourself to achieve your dreams even though you might feel some anxiety.

Since the time I became the president of Waseda University six and a half years ago, I have been advocating the fostering of “intellectual resilience” and “flexible sensitivity.”

What, then, does “intellectual resilience” mean? The tough-mindedness that impels you to think through a problem to arrive at your own solution is what I call “intellectual resilience.”

I trust that you have learned how to use your own brain and think thoroughly about unknown problems. Accordingly, you have fostered “intellectual resilience” at Waseda. That is because the development of such an aptitude is Waseda’s tradition and an important characteristic of the student culture of Waseda.

However, in order to do this, it is important to learn from the scholarship of thinkers who have come before us. Ever since the invention of a writing system over 5,000 years ago, human beings have recorded and compiled the essence of their experiences in the form of scholarship. Respect scholarship. Scholarship does not provide answers to unknown new problems, but it records how human beings confronted unknown problems in their own day. By learning about these human efforts, you have gained relevant knowledge at Waseda with which to address new problems yet to arise.

Another important ideal is to foster “flexible sensitivity.” This ideal encourages our students to accept, understand, and respect people of different nationalities, ethnicities, languages, religions, creeds, genders, and sexual orientations. Particularly during the coronavirus pandemic period, we also learned that this pandemic more negatively impacted some people who were in weaker positions because of their nationality, ethnicity, and income level. Therefore, you have developed your power of empathy, or “flexible sensitivity,” even better due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In addition, I added a third ideal goal in 2022. That is “responsive reasoning.” This encourages us to listen to other people who have different opinions from ourselves, and to engage in deliberations with other people in order to enhance each other’s intellectual abilities. I wish you, who have studied at Waseda University, to have confidence in your intelligence and, at the same time, to pay due respect to the intelligence of others.

I sincerely hope that you will cherish the importance of “intellectual resilience,” “flexible sensitivity,” and “responsive reasoning,” and utilize these ideals in your future life. If you keep these ideal goals in your mind and work in your own society or the world at large, then the world will be more peaceful and fair. These ideal goals are in fact based on the ideals of the

founder of Waseda University.

The founder of Waseda University, Okuma Shigenobu, emphasized three ideals. He advocated “independence of scholarship,” “practical application of scholarship,” and “fostering good citizens,” by which he meant “Do not think only of your own interest, your family's interest, or the interests of your country alone, but be ambitious to contribute to humankind throughout the world.” In other words, the most important ideal of the founding fathers of Waseda University is to “foster and educate students who would contribute to human beings throughout the world.” For this reason, we need education. Then, as Okuma thought that education at Waseda must be based on scholarship, he emphasized “practical application of scholarship.” Furthermore, Okuma advocated “independence of scholarship,” because he thought that scholarship must be independent of political power, of monetary power, and of desire for fame.

Waseda University is at present striving to foster and educate global leaders who will contribute to humankind across the globe. However, at Waseda when we envisage a global leader, it is not necessarily a person who is working for an international organization such as the United Nations or an international corporation. No matter how small a village or town in which a person lives, and no matter how small an NPO or corporation a person works for, they are regarded at Waseda as a global leader if they always think of humankind across the globe. I trust that you will all be global leaders in this sense.

I have two final things to tell you. First, I would like to ask you to set up automatic transfer of the emails you receive via “My Waseda” to your own private email address, such as Gmail. Then you can receive information and notifications from Waseda regardless of where you live or which company or organization you are working for. That way, you can obtain information from Waseda University effectively when you need to receive recurrent and/or reskilling education. I am positive that Waseda can offer what you need to learn in the future. Your Waseda email address will be useful to you then. Please keep in touch with your alma mater, Waseda University.

I have one last piece of advice I would like to give to you, our graduates. That is, do not be swayed by trends, but rather, find your interest or passion and pursue it. Trends die out in five years or so, and even if you follow a trend, if it is not something that stirs your curiosity, you will only be able to exert 80 to 90% of your potential. Devoting yourself to something you find meaningful will allow you to put in your 120%. It is abundantly clear that an effort made at 120% will have a more successful outcome than an effort made at 80%. I used to share these words with my zemi students every year, but ever since becoming the president of the university, I have bestowed these words upon all Waseda graduates.

Please have confidence in what you have learned at Waseda, because you have survived the difficult academic environment brought on by the coronavirus pandemic. You can go out into the world and live well with this confidence.

Even after you graduate, please come visit your alma mater. We are looking forward to welcoming back you, who will be evermore brilliantly shining, to an evermore brilliantly shining Waseda.

Congratulations on your graduation!