

**Words of Welcome for Incoming Students,
April 1-2, 2025 (both for Undergraduates and Graduates)**

**Aiji Tanaka
President, Waseda University**

Dear Incoming Students of Waseda University, Parents and Guardians,

On behalf of Waseda University, I am delighted to welcome all incoming students today. Congratulations on your entrance to Waseda University. I extend my heartfelt congratulations also, of course, to your parents, other family members, and friends.

We considered inviting family members in addition to incoming students to the entrance ceremony, 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 incoming students to this Arena for the last several years. We hope you will understand our decision.

Today, I would like to speak to you about two things. First, I will talk about what I wish for you to learn at Waseda University. Second, I will talk about what kind of student life you should enjoy at Waseda.

Presently, I am promoting this goal for Waseda University: that Waseda should be recognized as the most attractive university in Japan at which to study by 2040, and in Asia by 2050.

This does not mean that Waseda should be No. 1 in terms of the difficulty of its entrance examinations in Japan, nor that Waseda should gain the largest number of Nobel Prizes among universities in Asia. Rather, Waseda University would be recognized by intellectuals throughout the world as the university offering the most effective educational environment to anyone who wishes to contribute to humankind or to the development of Japanese society. This should not be an impossible dream to achieve.

For that purpose, I would like you incoming students to proceed in your

studies at Waseda while cleaving to an aspiration. As the president, I am now advocating three ideals. They are “intellectual resilience,” “flexible sensitivity,” and “responsive reasoning.”

What does “intellectual resilience” mean? Most of the issues human beings are facing today do not have one correct solution. Think, for example, of the COVID-19 pandemic, global warming, the growing gap between the poor and the rich, or the wars and armed conflicts that have killed and 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.

I hope that at Waseda University you will develop the “intellectual resilience” to think through your own solutions to problems for which the way forward is still unclear. However, finding a new solution does not mean simply allowing a new idea to pop up in your mind. Such ideas will not be accepted in the real world. It is essential to learn from the scholarship of thinkers who have come before us.

What is scholarship? 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. Scholarship may not provide answers to unknown new problems, but it records how human beings confronted unfamiliar problems in their own day. By learning about these human efforts at Waseda, you will gain relevant knowledge.

Another important ideal is to foster “flexible sensitivity.” Under the concept of “flexible sensitivity,” we encourage our students to accept, understand, and respect people of different nationalities, ethnicities, languages, religions, creeds, genders and sexual orientations. If you can respect and understand people with a different background from you, you will have flexible sensitivity.

Nowadays, the world has become borderless, and it is necessary for all of us to live and work together with various kinds of people, both in Japan and outside Japan. In such a world, it is important to be considerate of other people with different backgrounds from yourself. Therefore, you should

cultivate a flexible sensitivity that you will bring to bear on all your interactions.

In order to foster “flexible sensitivity,” it is most effective, in my opinion, to study abroad, as this entails living in another country, meeting various kinds of people, and viewing Japan from the outside. In 2019, before the coronavirus pandemic, Waseda University sent out 4,580 students to study abroad, and received 8,350 international students to study at Waseda. Both numbers are the highest by far in Japan. Please try to grasp an opportunity to study abroad through one of Waseda’s many exchange programs.

The third ideal is “responsive reasoning.” This ideal suggests the importance of listening to others and understanding their reasoning. As a consequence of this practice, you will enhance the level of thinking of both yourself and others. You should have confidence in your own intelligence as a student at Waseda, which is a major research institution. At the same time, you should respect the intelligence of others as well.

Waseda University has provided liberal arts courses focusing on fundamental academic skills for the last 20 years. In 2013, Waseda established the Global Education Center, which has provided a systematic framework for these liberal arts courses.

In 2004, Waseda began offering Tutorial English, which teaches students how to communicate in English; and in 2017 we initiated Academic Writing and Discussion in English (called AWADE for short) to teach expository writing in English. Waseda has also been offering Academic Writing in Japanese since 2008, and Basic Mathematics since 2009. In 2019, we restructured our Introduction to Statistics. It is now called Introduction to Data Science, and in it students can learn how to analyze big data with AI from the basic level to intermediate and advanced levels. The Global Education Center is offering these courses to all students throughout Waseda. Please take advantage of the opportunity to take these courses to master fundamental academic skills as well as the courses of other departments or schools offered through the Global Education Center.

The reason I have been talking about “flexible sensitivity” in addition to “intellectual resilience” and “responsive reasoning,” which emphasize more academic aspects of human intelligence, is related to three ideals of Waseda University’s founding father.

In a famous speech, Okuma Shigenobu, who is the founder of Waseda University, told the students of Waseda, “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.” This statement was offered to explain what “building a model citizen” meant. Okuma advocated three ideals: “independence of scholarship,” “application of scholarship to the real world,” and “building a model citizen” at the ceremony celebrating the 30th anniversary of Waseda in 1913.

I very much like the statement, “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” as this statement seems to me to represent a common value among Waseda students and alumni. This statement, I believe, has had a magnificent impact on our educational environment.

In order to allow our students to understand the ideals of our founding father, starting in April 2022, I decided to give a book titled Okuma Shigenobu and Waseda University to all incoming students. Please read this book and understand the tradition and ideals of Waseda University.

Let me introduce an episode that represents the value of flexible sensitivity. In March 2011, the Tohoku Earthquake and Tsunami hit the Tohoku region of Japan. In the spring of that year, approximately 6,000 student volunteers from Waseda went to Tohoku to help the people who were suffering from the earthquake and tsunami. Those student volunteers brought their own food and drinks as well as sleeping bags so that they did not have to depend on the residents of Tohoku who had more than enough to deal with, without additionally providing for volunteers. Our student volunteers have continued to go to a city in Tohoku called Kesennuma for more than ten years now to help the residents. The residents of Kesennuma

now say “Welcome back” and “Thank you” to Waseda freshman or sophomore students who are visiting Kesennuma for the first time, even before they start volunteer work. This is because Waseda students have kept on going to Kesennuma to help the people there, and the Kesennuma residents in return show their appreciation to all Waseda students who come.

On January 1st of 2024, a huge earthquake and tsunami hit the Noto Peninsula. Mr. Ezaki Taro, a Waseda alumnus, visited Suzu City and other cities on the Noto Peninsula to engage in volunteer work. I was asked by a fellow professor to introduce Mr. Ezaki to the Mayor of Suzu, who is also a Waseda alumnus. I also introduced Mr. Ezaki to the former president of Hokkoku Newspaper, the largest newspaper in Ishikawa Prefecture. These are examples of how effectively the Waseda alumni network works, and how alumni are spontaneously coordinating their work.

These two episodes represent activities based on the values of Okuma’s ideal, “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.”

On April 1, 2024, Waseda University established the Global Citizenship Center to organize and unite all the activities in which students participate and have learned “flexible sensitivity.” From now on, you students can participate in these activities more easily.

Let me now change the topic of my speech. I would like to speak to you about what kind of student life I wish you to spend at Waseda.

At Waseda, anyone can find their own place to be comfortable. In other words, Waseda has a tradition of accepting the diversity of students. Members of the Waseda community accept anyone from anywhere and respect each other. In today’s parlance, this tradition embodies “diversity” and “inclusion”.

If you wish to accomplish something or are facing difficulty, you can consult with your teacher (professor), administrative staff, or fellow students.

You will surely find a way to overcome any problem and achieve your objective. We believe that Waseda provides an environment that can respond to all kinds of aspirations of our students. A student at Waseda can be devoted to academic research, athletic activities, circle activities, or volunteer activities, according to their desire. Please try anything you wish. But, DO NOT forget also to study hard to master scholarship.

Before I close my speech, I would like to encourage you to make many good memories while you are here. One thing that can easily leave you with a good memory is Waseda sports. In particular, please go and cheer for the Waseda baseball team playing against Keio University at Jingu Stadium in late May and late October every year. You will enjoy yourselves and experience the enthusiasm and love for Waseda on the part of upperclassmen and our alumni.

You can also watch and cheer for the Waseda Rugby team playing against Keio University on November 23 every year. Additionally, you can enjoy the University Rugby Tournament match in January as well as the Hakone Ekiden long-distance relay race on January 2nd and 3rd every year. Please enjoy sports events and participate in the Waseda Student Festival, known as Waseda-Sai, as well.

I also hope you learn how to sing our school song “Miyako-no Seihoku” while you are at Waseda. It will strengthen your ties with Waseda alumni in your future life.

Study as hard as possible and enjoy yourself. It is my earnest hope that you will spend a fruitful student life. In four years, we will see you off when you are even more brilliantly shining at Waseda than you are now.

To those incoming students who prefer English, I would like to welcome you briefly in English.

Congratulations on your admission to Waseda University, and welcome! Waseda offers you an environment in which you can thrive and excel.

I hope you will let your curiosity roam while you are here, and become an intellectually broader and more creative person than when you arrived.

I know you will work hard, but it is vital to take care of your emotional and physical health as well.

Enjoy rewarding activities, and invest in nurturing friendships.

Best wishes for your studies and student life at Waseda!

Congratulations once again on your entrance to Waseda!