

## President's Speech for the Graduation of September 2025

September 20, 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, although many of you had entered Waseda even before the COVID-19 pandemic ended.

Many of you, who are graduating from the undergraduate program today, entered Waseda in September 2021, at a time when the COVID-19 pandemic was still ongoing. Although we gradually resumed in-person classes from the 2021 academic year, there were still considerable restrictions on your student life back then. For example, we were unable to permit student parties until April 2023. In this sense, you experienced a period when you could not fully enjoy campus life. This was true not only for undergraduate students, but also for graduate students and students of the Art and Architecture School.

Thanks to your patience and self-control, no cluster infections occurred in class at Waseda. I really appreciate your cooperation and self-discipline.

Both you and the entire Waseda community endured hardships due to the pandemic and overcame them together. Yet, precisely because of those challenges, I believe you have emerged stronger and more resilient.

I used the word “resilient” just now. This is rooted in two ideal goals of education at Waseda that I espoused when I became the president in November 2018. One is to foster “intellectual resilience,” and the other is to foster “flexible sensitivity.”

What, then, does “intellectual resilience” mean? Most of the problems human beings are facing today do not have one correct answer. Think, for example, about the COVID-19 pandemic, global warming, the growing gap between the poor and the rich, 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. I hope that you will tackle those new unknown problems and find your own solutions to them. The tough-mindedness that impels you to think through a problem to arrive at your own solution is what I call “intellectual resilience.”

At Waseda, you have learned how to use your own brain and think thoroughly. 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. At Waseda University, where very diverse groups of students are studying and spending time together, you have acquired the power of empathy to understand how people different from you feel and think. Particularly during the coronavirus pandemic period, we also learned that this pandemic more negatively impacts some people who are 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.

How do you feel about armed conflicts or war, violations of human rights, and extreme political divisions? Why do people have to confront each other so aggressively? If all people could consider things from the perspectives of other people who are in different circumstances, then the world of human beings would be much more peaceful. Therefore, it is important for you to foster “flexible sensitivity.”

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, surely the world will be more peaceful.

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, even after you graduate, I hope you will never forget Waseda. Being a Waseda graduate will surely be an asset in your future. I would like you to remain connected to your alma mater throughout your life. At Waseda, we call our alumni “KOYU.” We invite alumni back to Homecoming Day in the fifth, the tenth, and the fifteenth year after graduation, and then every ten years thereafter. Please do not forget to maintain your connection with Waseda.

In order for us to keep you up to date with many events including Homecoming Day, I would like to ask you to set up an automatic transfer of the emails you receive via “My Waseda” to your own private email address, such as Gmail. That way you can receive information and notifications from Waseda regardless of where you live or which organization you belong to.

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

Congratulations on your graduation!