

September 19, 2026

September 2026 Graduation Ceremony Congratulatory Address

Hello everyone! I am Akira Mandai, Executive Chairman of the Waseda University Alumni Association. On behalf of the Association, I would like to offer you our congratulations.

To all of you who are graduating today, as well as to your families who have supported you up to the present, congratulations on this accomplishment! Well done!

In September 2022, when many of you enrolled here at Waseda, we were all still dealing with the difficulties of the COVID-19 pandemic. I imagine that many of you faced considerable challenges as you started out and carried on with your student life, both academically and in extracurricular activities. So, you must be feeling extremely pleased to have made it here today for your graduation ceremony. It is for this reason that I am all the more eager, as a representative of the Alumni Association, to offer you my heartfelt congratulations and to share a few words with you today.

Now that you have graduated, all of you will automatically become alumni of Waseda University and members of the Alumni Association. Please let me take this opportunity to briefly explain what the Waseda University Alumni Association is about. At Waseda University, we call our graduates *koyu*, and the Waseda University Alumni Association, also referred to as *Koyukai*, is an alumni organization composed of graduates of this university.

The Waseda University Alumni Association was founded in 1885. The predecessor of Waseda University, *Tokyo Senmon Gakko*, was established in 1882. It produced its first class of 11 graduates in 1884, with a further 67 students graduating in 1885. And it was in that same year that the Alumni Association was born. Afterwards, *Tokyo Senmon Gakko* was renamed Waseda University. Since then, we have stood side by side with Waseda University on its long journey, sharing in all its triumphs and difficulties to the present day. Though it began with just several dozen alumni, the Waseda University Alumni Association now boasts 700,000 members, making it one of Japan's leading alumni organizations. Last December marked its 140th anniversary.

The Alumni Association's essential purpose is to support Waseda University and the current students who are following in our footsteps, as well as to foster personal connections and friendships among alumni. Currently, the Association is headquartered within the university campus and officially headed by Waseda University President Aiji Tanaka. The affairs of the Association are run largely by a board of approximately 60 officers. Every year, we provide 200 to 300 million yen to support Waseda University. A large part of this goes toward scholarships for current students, but various other kinds of financial support are also provided.

There are also around 1,400 Alumni Association chapters, known as *Tomonkai*. These include local chapters around Japan, chapters based on year of graduation and profession, and even

overseas chapters. All are actively engaged in activities. Waseda is proud of the power of its 700,000 alumni. In Japan and around the world, Waseda alumni actively contribute to society in a vast range of fields, not only as business people and executives, but also as prime ministers, community organizers, politicians, bureaucrats, legal professionals, athletes, writers, artists, doctors, media figures, and more. This diversity of Waseda alumni is the vitality and pride of Waseda.

In the past, the Alumni Association tended to be seen as a male-dominated organization. However, reflecting the great diversity of today's graduates, it has changed significantly in recent years. It strives to create an environment in which all alumni can feel comfortable and secure participating, regardless of gender, disability, nationality, or other factors. Respect for diversity is one of the values that the Alumni Association holds highest.

I understand that many international students are with us at today's graduation ceremony. The Waseda University Alumni Association warmly welcomes you all. The diversity of the Association, which includes graduates from many different countries, is a strength, so we are honored by your presence. Now that you are alumni of Japan's most international university, we sincerely hope that you will consider taking on a role within the Association to serve as a bridge between Waseda and the world. The different cultures and perspectives that you offer can make a positive impact in the international community. We hope that you will further hone the intellectual resilience and flexible sensibility that you cultivated here at Waseda, and that you will go on to thrive and shine brightly in various parts of the world.

As you embark on your careers in the real world, we urge you to take advantage of the Waseda University Alumni Association. It is a treasure trove of talented people and extensive networks. Remember that you can join *Tomonkai* alumni chapters, not only throughout Japan but also around the world. There are chapters for specific industries and for every year of graduation. Contact information for alumni chapters is available on the Alumni Association website. We encourage you to get in touch with your local chapter and join our community. I sincerely hope that over time you will even become strong supporters and cheerleaders of current Waseda students.

At the Alumni Association, we are committed to continuing this journey hand in hand with "Waseda, our home for heart." Our doors are open to alumni from all walks of life, so we look forward to your participation.

The motto of the Waseda University Alumni Association is "To the world together, toward the future together." May all of you, who are graduating today, fly out confidently into the world and into the future! I very much look forward to meeting you all again in five years, when you will be invited to return to the university for the Homecoming Day.

On a personal note, like President Tanaka, I will be stepping down as Executive Chairman of the Alumni Association on September 20.

For the last eight years, since 2018, I have had the privilege of seeing graduates off to their next chapters. Today is the last time I will do so, and that gives this ceremony a special meaning for me.

Going forward, I will continue to treasure the bonds I have forged through Waseda, and to devote myself to supporting my alma mater and the students who are following in our footsteps.

Once again, welcome to the Waseda University Alumni Association! And congratulations on your graduation!