

## President's Address at the 2018-Autumn Saitama University Entrance Ceremony

All the trees in the Saitama University campus had just started to be tinged with their own autumn color in harmony with each other. On this pleasant day with full of hope, as the SU President, I would like to express my warm congratulations on your admission. Welcome to Saitama University.

In addition to 666 graduate students enrolled in April this year, we have 57 newly admitted graduate students in this autumn, the 31 and 26 of which are master's and doctoral students, respectively. It should be mentioned that the autumn students are from 13 countries, namely Afghanistan, Bangladesh, China, Egypt, France, India, Mongol, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, and Japan. This is a distinctive entrance ceremony with full of diversity corresponding to the SU vision; *'Saitama University All in One Campus at Metropolitan Area Saitama – Embodiment of Diversity, Synergy and Integration'*. I would like to express my deep respect for your continuing study at the SU Graduate School under this diversity rich environment.

In 1949, Saitama University was founded. It was a start only in two faculties. One is the Faculty of Humanities and Sciences with the former Urawa High School as a base, and the other is the Faculty of Education with the former Saitama Teacher's Schools as parents. Following the history of 70 years since then, the time axis of SU, where a number of branch points are connected, reaches to the present with many twists and turns. Currently, it consists of five undergraduate schools and three graduate schools in the academic fields of liberal arts, economics, education, science and engineering. SU has grown into a middle-sized national university with 8, 600 students.

SU relocated about 50 years ago to this current Okubo campus where all the schools are gathered. Two years after the relocation, in 1971, I was admitted to the Faculty of Science & Engineering and spent four years on this campus as a SU student. At the time of my admission, the campus located in the riverbed of Arakawa was a poor landscape only with the new buildings line up other than the few native trees. The campus is now rich, lush green and beautiful in the four seasons. This is due to the action of my respected Professor Shunzo Okamoto as the fifth SU President. He made the decision about 40 years ago to plant many, various trees on this campus. The trees have grown up resulted in the present, my favorite beautiful SU campus.

This fact teaches us the importance of time axis as the passage of time and also great importance of time axis origin corresponding to the first action. I am sure that each of you has now visions of your new life and study at SU with your fresh resolve. Please keep the visions in your mind and make a progress smoothly along the new time axis with its origin, which is today.

SU will celebrate its 70th anniversary in 2019. And the catch-phrase of the 70th anniversary has been set, *'Connect to The Future'*. "An attraction of SU is to be a bridge connecting people in all positions. For examples, international students and Japanese

students, alumni and present students, regional people and SU people are always connected. I want SU to connect this 70-year-old role of connecting people's hearts to the future." This is the very nice message from the SU student who proposed the catch-phrase.

In the SU's long history, there are many alumni who have been very active. Particularly in the last three years, the achievements of three alumni were distinctive in the academic, cultural and artistic fields. It is exactly what SU holds as *'All in One Campus'* and *'Diversity'*. The first is Dr. Takaaki Kajita who was awarded the 2015 Nobel Prize in Physics for his discovery of neutrino mass. He graduated from the Faculty of Science in 1981. The second is Dr. Kazuhiko Komatsu who was chosen as a Cultural Contributor in 2016 in the *'Yokai'* (specter) culture study. In 1970, he graduated from the Faculty of Liberal Arts. And the third is *'Oil Painter of Snowy Scenery'* and a recipient of the Japan Art Academy Prize in 2016, Mr. Yuji Negishi who was elected as a member of the Japan Art Academy in 2017. He graduated from the Faculty of Education in 1961. In the messages for their juniors, they all emphasize the importance of encounters in the limited parts of their own time axes on the SU campus away from the bustle of metropolitan cities, such as the encounter with academic disciplines, the encounter with professors, and the encounter with friends.

My career is also very much affected by the encounter with professors during my SU period. Above mentioned Prof. Okamoto awoke me to the wonder of vibration phenomena of structures. Another professor was Prof. Narioki Akiyama, teaching me the essence of structural mechanics. He also admonished that university graduate should return to his university and do his best for the university, and this makes me to have returned to SU as a faculty member in 1982. Furthermore, I learned a lot from the eighth SU President, Prof. Kiyoshi Horikawa, as a Presidential Assistant. These could be the big branch points of my time axis.

As shown in my personal episode, SU has an environment to encounter diverse professors and academic disciplines, which has been continued on its time axis. SU will maintain this environment and connect its history for continuing to shine from now on.

The present university's vision is, as mentioned earlier, *'Saitama University, All in One Campus at Metropolitan Area Saitama – Embodiment of Diversity, Synergy and Integration'*. SU is distinctive in that the diverse academic disciplines of humanities and sciences, as well as a total of 9,300 students, faculties and staffs from various countries, are all gathered in one campus. Under this vision, SU has been adding to its brightness more and more by pushing forward two functional enhancements. The first is the base reinforcement as a center of intellect by extensively enhancing the functions of fundamental and applied researches and of education for global human resource cultivation, standing firmly that the universal mission of universities is the creation and succession of intellect. The second is the self-branding as Saitama University by positively playing a role of regional core center to solve regional problems by the industry-

university-government collaboration, to develop human resources according to the regional needs, and finally to activate the metropolitan area around Saitama. SU will promote '*embodying diversity and integration for synergy*'.

Now, let me talk about the research you will do at the SU Graduate School. The undergraduate school is an entrance to the scholarly activity, the learning is gradually shifted to research conscious one as the grade progresses, and it becomes research-based one at the graduate school. Therefore, I have made the following three remarks on the research in my addresses for the previous entrance ceremonies of the SU Graduate School.

The first is that research is a repetition of a challenge and failure aiming for a higher state, and an act that you cannot do without passion. You will realize the immense values in making your way of thinking more flexible and more diverse through discussions with others, especially at the time of failure in your research. Research is similar to life, and therefore research is interesting.

The second is that vigorous curiosity, strong desire, sharp observation and depthful insight of researchers are indispensable for causing serendipity, which means a lucky instance, or experience that happened accidentally, but that the serendipity in research is not merely a fortune. For example, above mentioned Prof. Kajita, the Nobel Prize winner, says, "I noticed the gap with the calculated values in the observation data of neutrino detected at Super-Kamiokande. I felt it very momentously, and devoted myself to elucidating the unexplained event, which led to the discovery of the neutrino mass". I expect all of you not to miss a chance of important encounter and serendipity in your research at SU.

The third is that it is important for researchers to rethink about the meaning of their researches or "What are their researches for?" through experiencing research activities, and to raise awareness of the issues on social involvement of researches. It is generally said that both a standpoint of '*Science for Knowledge*' and another standpoint of '*Science for Society*' are important for researchers. The graduate researches are highly flexible or diverse, and therefore the coexistence of researches from these two standpoints is possible.

In addition to these remarks, let me introduce one more comment of an intellectual that could be suggestive for you who start research at the SU Graduate School. That is from the science writer; Ms. M. Yoshinari's interview with Prof. James D. Watson, the 1962 winner of Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine for the elucidation of the double helix structure ("*Reversal of Knowledge*", NHK Publications 395, 2012, in Japanese). Prof. Watson points out that the current young people cover very restricted academic field, especially at the time of their choosing a research problem from inexhaustible ideas. He says, "It is important to have one's own idea discussed and criticized by others, while such time for others seems wasteful. The young people are nearsighted and seldom spend a

time for learning outside their fields. It is partly due to the fact that the doctoral course has been supposed to produce technicians."

The society's expectation toward the sciences becomes interdisciplinary by crossing academic fields, and transdisciplinary based on mutual collaboration with the society. As symbolized by the historical merger between *International Council for Science* and *International Social Science Council*, which is scheduled for October 2018, the trend of change from '*Science for Knowledge*' to '*Science for Future/for Society*' is occurring in the world scientific community. You should not narrow yourselves the possibilities of the future by insisting on your specific field of research. I do expect all of you to fully exploit the environment of SU where the various academics coexist and to do your best research fight. Let's embody together the diversity, synergy and integration in SU.

Aside the studies, you will have your own daily life in Japan. And I am afraid if you might come across unexpected difficulties, mostly because of the cultural differences. If it would be the case, please remember that the SU faculties, staffs and also students are willing to help you to get rid of the troubles you would be involved.

Finally, I sincerely hope that your student life at Saitama University will be a meaningful and productive one.

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