

## President's Address at the 2016 Saitama University Commencement

The summer, excited by the Olympic and Paralympic Games in Rio, is over and pushes forward the time's step steadily to autumn. And the campus of Saitama University brings on an atmospheric scene on this special day of graduation. I would like to express warm congratulations and much respect on your graduation on behalf of all the members of Saitama University. In addition, I extend my sincere congratulations to your families.

The numbers of graduates who earned doctoral and master's degrees today are 33 and 15, respectively, and 36 of them are from 11 overseas countries. Furthermore, there are 9 re-educated people in the working world, which is equal to 13% of all the graduates including bachelors. It is a distinctive commencement that is full of diversity only in "Saitama University All in One Campus at Metropolitan Area Saitama". Each of you must have encountered various people and academic disciplines, and got various experiences in the study process at Saitama University.

Five and a half years have passed since the Great East Japan Earthquake occurred, but the restoration from the disaster still continues. During this period, in addition, a variety of serious natural disasters occurred, such as the Hiroshima landslide disaster in 2014, the volcanic eruption disaster of Mount Ontake in 2014, and the Kumamoto earthquake disaster in 2016. Especially at this time of year, natural disasters of heavy rain and flooding occur every year, and have a big influence on the social life. We cannot but realize powerlessness of the human being against the nature's power.

In order to work on the social problems such as the natural disasters, the Cabinet Office, Government of Japan, founded "Strategic Innovation Promotion Project", abbreviated to SIP, in 2014 as a national project beyond the traditional disciplines. And, based on all the 11 social problems in SIP, creating a world-leading "super smart society"; Society 5.0, is declared in the fifth Science and Technology Basic Plan of Japan in this January. The "super smart society" is an ideal form of our future society and will bring wealth to the people through an initiative merging between the real world and cyberspace by leveraging ICT.

In this April, following the Science and Technology Basic Plan, Keidanren (Japan Business Federation) made a policy proposal entitled "Toward realization of the new economy and society – Reform of the economy and society by the deepening of Society 5.0". The proposal clearly states that it is imperative to break through the five walls for realizing the new economy and society in which discontinuous and disruptive changes are expected to occur. Those five walls are the walls of ministries, legal system, technologies, human resources, and social acceptance. Among these, regardless of your specialties, what I want you to understand is the "wall of social acceptance". That is, the examination of ethical issues and social implications, such as definition of individual happiness, is indispensable no matter how significant the technology innovations are. In this sense, the knowledge of science and technology is

insufficient and the knowledge of humanities and social science is necessary.

About humanities & sociology and science & engineering, the confusion on "cutback in humanities & sociology from national universities" caused by last June's notice of the Ministry of Education is still fresh in our minds. In connection with this confusion, Prof. Shunya Yoshimi, University of Tokyo, discusses on usefulness of knowledge of humanities & sociology in his book: "Shock of 'Cutback in Humanities & Sociology'" (Shueisha, 2016). According to his discussions, the basic problem behind the confusion is a common understanding of confrontational composition of "profitable science & engineering" and "unprofitable humanities & sociology". However, there are two types in the usefulness of knowledge; purpose-accomplishment type and value-creation type. Humanities & sociology has the latter type usefulness, which reconsiders or newly creates the social value axis itself. This is just the indispensability of humanities & sociology in Keidanren's proposal on the "wall of social acceptance".

Prof. Yoshimi also mentions that "deep" professional education and "wide" cultural education are both in humanities & sociology and science & engineering, and that the real intellect space consists of two axes and four quadrants. On this basis, he points that recent university education is directed to more practical learning focused by OECD-defined competencies, such as the ability to utilize knowledge. He regrets that there occurs a concern that the cultural education loses substance, and that the interest in knowledge itself, brought up by universities, seems to be declining. And finally, he emphasizes that there must be not only usefulness but also playfulness in the intellect of university, especially in the intellect of humanities & sociology.

Another knowledge that I found interesting is "adequate knowledge", which is introduced by Prof. Shinichi Watabe, Tohoku University, in his book: "Learning in the Super Digital Age – Toward the reinstatement of adequate knowledge" (Shin-yosha, 2012). Realizing through the experience of the Great East Japan Earthquake that those stacked by science and technology are very fragile, he points out the importance of learning not only "precise knowledge" without ambiguity but also "adequate knowledge" that catches a complicated object entirely with being complicated.

I have just talked about the variety of intellect, starting from the social problem of natural disaster. Each of you has earned the degree by acquiring the specialized knowledge and related competency. I hope you not only to deepen the professional intellect and enhance the competency more, but also to pay more attention to a great variety of intellect from now on. Today's degree is one big knot, and the study continues still more. I do expect each of you to significantly contribute to the knowledge society as an intellectual professional in your future.

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