

## President's Address at the 2017 Saitama University Commencement

Dear the international graduates, the summer that repeated unseasonable weather is over and time is steadily progressing to autumn. And Saitama University campus will also move on to new attire. On behalf of Saitama University, I would like to deeply express warm congratulations on your graduation on this pleasant day. In addition, I extend my sincere congratulations to your families who have supported you.

The numbers of graduates who got doctor's and master's degrees today are 16 and 28, respectively, and 34 of them are from 11 overseas countries, namely Bangladesh, China, Indonesia, Korea, Myanmar, Nigeria, Pakistan, Laos, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, and Vietnam. There are 10 re-educated graduates, which account for 15% of all the graduates including bachelors. Furthermore, the graduate ratio of humanities versus science fields is approximately 1:1. 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 now a feeling of satisfaction, which must be due to your own steady effort on your study. I would like to express much respect on it.

Let me talk first about natural disaster as a topic of this time of year. It is reported that there were as many as 40 of the enormous natural disasters, such as flooding, windstorm and earthquake, occurred in various countries around the world in August this year. In September, the most powerful Atlantic storm in a decade, Hurricane Irma, has caused widespread destruction across the Caribbean and the southern US, and the M7.1 earthquake hit Mexico City again and issued over 200 victims on the 19th of September. Thinking of the affected people and realizing powerlessness of the human being against the nature's power, I do want all of us to be university people who can contribute, even a little, to creating wisdom to live with natural phenomena.

In order to work on the social problems such as the natural disasters, the Japanese government has founded "Strategic Innovation Promotion Project" as a national project beyond the traditional disciplines. In addition, the 5th Science and Technology Basic Plan of Japan in 2016 declares creating a "super smart society"; Society 5.0, which will bring wealth to the people through an initiative merging between the real world and cyberspace by leveraging ICT. Furthermore, the importance of data science education is being emphasized so that each can utilize IoT and AI to benefit from that.

In this situation, I would like to introduce some issues for your contributing to the knowledge society as its member.

The first is an essay entitled "*Discarding Information* – Holistic nature and eclectic action of information after 3.11" (Gakuto, Maruzen, 2017) by Prof. Hiroshi KAINUMA, Ritsumeikan University. He pointed out that, in Fukushima after the Great East Japan Earthquake on 3.11, 2011, the problem started from the information deficiency, such as distrust of information hidden in the nuclear energy industry/administration, but that a new problem of information overload was started enlarging behind it. He continues, "Information are pieces of a jigsaw puzzle and knowledge is a picture

completed by combining them. People cannot find a meaning even if thrown in large amounts of pieces of information. Even with small pieces, on the contrary, experts pick pieces, imagine the whole picture from them to find some structure, and make it knowledge. In the era of information overload, the task of *discarding information* to regain holistic nature is required for those who are considered as experts."

Each of you can be an expert in the sense that you should have tried to make knowledge by sorting out and combining the information in your study at Saitama University. This is an inductive inference, one of the logical methods of science, which Francis Bacon discussed in the 17th century, and science is a study that reaches a more general rule from information obtained from *observations* and experiments. I do hope you to apply these logical methods widely to social issues from now on.

The second is the word of Emeritus Prof. Daizaburo OKUMOTO, Saitama University, who translated *Entomological Souvenirs* by J.H. Fabre over 30 years, which was introduced in the Asahi Newspaper on the 9th of September. He says that the importance of *Observation* practiced by Fabre has not faded today. He continues, "However, it is impossible to see without prejudice and knowledge gets in the way rather to obscure things. This is the same as someone sees the king only naked when told naked. One notices the difference only when pointed out. We seem to be watching and believe it is actually visible. Even for human behavior in society, it is important to *observe* with a calm view why it happens."

The third is Emeritus Prof. Michiko HASEGAWA of Saitama University. In the Sankei Newspaper on the 29th of August, she presented an article entitled "To regain *Thinking*", in which she points out that the most lacking in Japan today is *Thinking*. She says, "Even in the society of specialized scholars, you may see papers such that you want to say, "*To study and not think is a waste.*" On the other hand, there are many papers such as "*To think and not study is dangerous.*" It is quite difficult to deepen our knowledge while keeping harmony between learning and thinking, and therefore Confucius left such words." She continues, "Both learning and thinking are basically based on finding things according to the matter itself. Unless we forget the basics, they can compensate each other well. Recently, however, questions of the essential matter itself are totally forgotten, and only emotional arguments that have abandoned neither learning nor thinking are widespread. We should start with sharpening the abilities of hearing and looking for the restoration of *Thinking*."

Starting from the contribution to creating the wisdom living with natural phenomena, I have introduced the importance of discarding information, observing calmly, and thinking with learning. I do expect each of you to significantly contribute to the knowledge society as an intellectual professional in your future. Today's degree is one big knot, and the study continues still more.

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