

President's Address at the 2025 Saitama University Degree Awarding Ceremony

Ladies and gentlemen, distinguished graduates of Saitama University, allow me to extend my heartfelt congratulations on the successful completion of your studies.

On this auspicious day, I also wish to express, on behalf of all faculty and staff, my deepest gratitude and warmest congratulations to the families and all those who have supported and encouraged you throughout your academic journey.

Today, we confer degrees upon 25 graduates from the Undergraduate Program, 28 from the Master's Program, and 25 from the Doctoral Program, among whom 44 are international students.

For each of you, this day is not only the conclusion of your academic pursuits but also a profound turning point—a new departure in the journey of life. Your days at this university have been marked by earnest scholarship, encounters with new knowledge, and dialogues with mentors and peers that have helped shape who you are. Now you stand at the threshold of your next path, with pride and anticipation, perhaps mingled with a touch of uncertainty.

At such a milestone, allow me to share a message that embodies my deepest wish for your future.

It is this: **“Cultivate the power of self-education, and never cease to learn.”**

We live in an age defined by rapid and unpredictable change. In recent years, the world has witnessed wars and conflicts, deepening social divisions, and the rise of excessive nationalism—developments that have shaken global politics and economics. At the same time, scientific and technological advances in artificial intelligence, digital transformation, biotechnology, and quantum technology are transforming our way of life and work at the most fundamental level. The advent and swift evolution of generative AI, in particular, have brought revolutionary changes to how we create, share, and interpret knowledge itself.

To navigate such turbulent times without losing oneself, it is essential to remain adaptive, to question boldly, and to continually renew one's understanding through constant learning.

Moreover, this commitment to lifelong learning is inseparable from the way you will design your future lives. Unlike the linear pattern familiar to previous generations—education, work, and retirement—today's society increasingly requires us to rebuild our lives through multiple stages, in which learning and work intersect repeatedly.

In their influential book *The 100-Year Life*, Lynda Gratton and Andrew Scott argue that in this era of longevity, life will no longer be confined to the traditional three stages. Instead, new stages will emerge: a stage of exploration and self-discovery, a stage of independent contribution outside organizations, and a stage of parallel activities combining diverse pursuits. To thrive in such a multi-stage life, they contend, one must acquire knowledge and cultivate foresight.

To embrace such a life design requires flexible thinking, openness to new perspectives, and, above all, the proactive capacity to learn anew—to reskill, to relearn, to reimagine. This is the very essence of what I call the power of self-education.

Fortunately, our generation has been blessed with unprecedented opportunities for learning. Through the internet, online lectures, and open-access resources, the world's most advanced knowledge is now accessible regardless of time or place. By taking advantage of these resources and nurturing the discipline to learn at one's own rhythm, you will find in lifelong learning a true compass to guide you through times of change.

The moment one thinks, "*I no longer need to learn*," one's growth comes to a halt. I urge you never to succumb to such complacency. Instead, carry questions within you, keep your curiosity alight, and rejoice in each new encounter with knowledge. At every stage of life, learning opens new doors.

Finally, I ask you never to forget your days at Saitama University—the words exchanged with friends, the dialogues with your professors, the everyday scenes on this campus. These will remain with you as a quiet light, illuminating your path forward and giving you strength whenever you need it.

I extend my heartfelt blessings for your future. May you walk forward with strength, resilience, and cheerfulness.

Once again, congratulations on your graduation and the completion of your studies.

September 19, 2025
Takafumi Sakai
President, Saitama University