

President's Message to All SU Students at the Start of the New Academic Year

As the long, cold winter draws to a close and we enter March, the cherry blossoms on campus have come into full bloom. Accordingly, it is with great pleasure that we welcome a new cohort of students to our university, ranging from undergraduate to graduate level, bringing our total student body to approximately 8,500 for the 2023 academic year.

While we still faced the COVID-19 pandemic throughout the previous year, from the sixth to the eighth waves of infection, our university was able to maintain in-person classes as a general rule, while also continuing extracurricular activities under certain conditions. This is thanks to the hard work and cooperation of our students and faculty, and we would like to express our gratitude for your efforts.

Over the past three years, we have gained a better understanding of the nature of COVID-19 and how to manage it. Recently, the number of infections has significantly decreased, leading to a relaxation of mask-wearing regulations in Japan, and from May, COVID-19 will be classified as a Category 5 infectious disease. It seems that we are finally seeing the end of this pandemic. Throughout this challenging period, various online initiatives have been implemented to sustain daily life during the pandemic. At our university, we have become accustomed to using online resources for classes, lectures, and meetings, and we would like to use this valuable experience to enhance our future education and research.

As we begin this new academic year, I would like to highlight some important information regarding education and student support.

Education

I would like to introduce some new developments in our education system. Since last year, we have made data science courses a mandatory part of the curriculum and have also worked to enhance our active learning courses. In addition to literacy level courses, we will be offering advanced courses in data science as electives from this academic year. In today's society, individuals with digital literacy skills are in high demand, and we encourage all students to take advantage of these courses according to their interests and needs.

From the 2023 academic year, we will be launching a problem-solving course based on a comprehensive partnership agreement with SAITAMA ARENA Co., Ltd. Through fieldwork and discussions, we will learn about the challenges of creating a vibrant community in the Saitama Shintoshin area, where the Saitama Super Arena is located, and work to develop solutions. Valuable proposals from students will be implemented in actual policies, making this an invaluable experience for students as they participate in society.

Based on a comprehensive partnership agreement with Saitama Medical University and Saitama Prefectural University, we have begun collaborating in both research and education. As part of this collaboration, outside of credited courses, faculty members from both universities will deliver

lectures and practical training on topics of mutual interest. These courses offer unique and engaging content that differs from regular lectures, and we encourage all students to participate. In addition, a credit transfer system with Saitama Prefectural University will begin this year. These credit transfer courses will be posted on our website, so please take a look for any courses that might interest you.

In order to promote diversity on campus and within the local community, our university established the Diversity Promotion Center in the 2022 academic year. Starting this academic year, the center will launch a new lecture series, called the “Diversity Issue-Solving Education Program.” It is important to consider diversity from various perspectives to succeed in society in the future, so please consider taking this course. Additionally, you can also obtain the newly introduced Open Badges from our university by completing this program.

New Student Support

To further enhance student support in the 2023 academic year, we will establish support rooms for disabled students. It may take about six months to put into full operation, but we will work with the counseling center and health center to provide individual support for each student. Life is full of various difficulties, and it is important to stand strong against them, but do not hesitate to consult with us or seek help when necessary. If you have any problems, please do not hesitate to consult with the professors in your department or graduate school, as well as these support services.

Last year, the Public Relations and External Affairs Division at our university launched the “Saitama University Student PR Supporter” system. The goal of this service is to support the university’s public relations from a student perspective, and to contribute to the presence of our university by working with administrations from nearby municipalities. In addition, based on our comprehensive cooperation agreement with SAITAMA ARENA Co., Ltd., student PR supporters will participate in events organized by SAITAMA ARENA Co., Ltd. from the planning stage. You can gain valuable social experience by participating, so please be sure to apply if recruitment is available this year.

Recommendation for Studying Abroad or Traveling

Our university offers various programs for students to study abroad for six months or more. Even during the COVID-19 pandemic, we supported our overseas study abroad programs as much as possible after discussing it with the students themselves and their parents. We understand that it may be difficult for some students depending on their academic field or year to participate in long-term study abroad programs, but we encourage students to take advantage of the opportunities available during their summer vacations or other available times to travel abroad, even for a short period. While it is now possible to view cityscapes around the world using Street View, experiencing a new country firsthand can provide a wider perspective and invaluable experiences that cannot be gained from a computer monitor. Of course, domestic travel is also highly recommended. As the saying goes, “If you love your child, send them out into the world,” because there is always something to gain from traveling. We encourage all students to consider these options according to their individual circumstances.

Closing Message

As I mentioned earlier, we are nearing the end of the COVID-19 pandemic. A movement towards post-pandemic developments is underway this academic year, and I believe that students who have faced various constraints and difficulties will now be able to enjoy a more fulfilling student life. In addition to studying diligently, I encourage you to engage in various experiences, such as conversing with other people, taking on part-time jobs, and traveling. It is often said that student life seems long, but it passes by in the blink of an eye. Therefore, I urge you to cherish this relatively free time and make a conscious effort to enhance your daily activities. I have high expectations for your personal growth.

April 2023

Takafumi Sakai
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