

Spring has arrived in all its glory, surrounding us with cherry blossoms in full bloom. As we celebrate this wonderful day, I congratulate you on your entry into Kanazawa University. We have just now made the Declaration of Matriculation for 1,975 undergraduate students, 793 graduate students, and 25 students of the Undergraduate Training Course for School Nurses. I am extremely delighted to have the honor of greeting these 2,793 new members. Welcome to Kanazawa University! On behalf of the entire faculty and staff, I warmly welcome all of you to our community.

I would like to express our deepest condolences to the victims of the 2024 Noto Peninsula Earthquake and our heartfelt sympathy to the survivors. I fervently hope for the earliest recovery for all people and communities affected by this immense tragedy.

You who are joining us this year were in junior and senior high school at the height of COVID-19. The pandemic had a tremendous impact on your lives, including school closures and various restrictions on many of your activities. COVID-19 was eventually downgraded to a Class V Infectious Disease as defined by the Act on the Prevention of Infectious Diseases and Medical Care for Patients with Infectious Diseases, and the restrictions that had been in effect for over three years were finally relaxed. Subsequently, you were subjected to another enormous challenge this year when the Noto Peninsula Earthquake struck on New Year's Day, just ahead of the university entrance exam season. You have endured many trials and tribulations to come to this day and take this first step on a new journey for you. I deeply admire the diligence and dedication that you poured into your studies and other pursuits each day, enabling you to successfully surmount the obstacles in your path. I also heartily congratulate your families, who have long supported your aspirations.

Kanazawa University, the academic community you now join with much excitement, traces its origins to the Hikoso Vaccination Center. That facility was founded by the Kaga Domain in 1862, during the Edo period, to vaccinate the population against smallpox. This was followed by the establishment of various predecessors of our institution under the old school system, such as the Fourth Higher School. Today, Kanazawa University carries on that more than 160 years of history and tradition while also embracing the spirit of innovation. We are also blessed with a greenery-filled campus whose home is in Kanazawa, a university town endowed with a rich heritage of traditional culture. I hope that you will take great pride in being able to pursue your academic journey in the wonderful environment offered by our innovation-driven university steeped in history and tradition.

Our core ideal, enshrined in the Charter of Kanazawa University, is to be “a research university dedicated to education, while opening up its doors to both local and global society.” Our undergraduate and graduate programs are grounded in this ideal and follow the Kanazawa University “Global” Standard (KUGS) as their vision for developing talent. We are a university that is infused with intellectual curiosity and provides an environment for people to grow by following their own path of learning so that they can shine on the world stage. Last May 15, the G7 Education Minister’s Meeting Excursion in Toyama and Kanazawa was held at our Kakuma Campus. This event brought G7 ministers and representatives of international organizations to our university to discuss the future of education with students and faculty, and concluded with the issuing of the Kanazawa University Youth Declaration. Rare experiences such as this are a rich source of inspiration for us. Meanwhile, our university boasts many world-class centers of research, such as the Nano Life Science Institute. Their sophisticated power of research provides a foundation for the acquisition of comprehensive insights in both specialized and transdisciplinary domains. I encourage all of you to passionately strive for success and to use our university’s well-equipped educational and research environment to boldly take on challenges. I want you to seek new heights, driven by your vibrant intellectual curiosity. Together, our faculty and staff will stand beside you and provide their fullest support. I firmly hope that you will grow into Kanazawa University Brand talent who serve as core leaders in Japan and abroad. The insights that you will gain at our university are guaranteed to become an irreplaceable asset for your future in this era of immense change in the fabric of society and people’s values.

In the wake of the Noto Peninsula Earthquake, many people are working hard to help the survivors get back on their feet and to recover, restore, rebuild the affected communities. The disaster has brought into the spotlight not only the geopolitical implications of a peninsular earthquake, but also many challenges posed by rapid population aging and the declining birthrate, and by the resulting impact on communities, social infrastructure, livelihoods, healthcare, education, and tangible and intangible cultural assets. In May 2022, our university laid out “Kokorozashi” (aspirations) as a vision for its future. This vision articulates our aspirations to contribute to society through “future-oriented intelligence,” built on an all Kanazawa University approach. Future-oriented intelligence is the wisdom needed to explore and overcome current and future challenges. It is a means of creating value for the future. In this context, I relish the expression *fueki-ryūkō*. This means to continue taking on challenges while firmly maintaining your immutable essence, and thereby build up both traditions and innovations. A critical element of this process is to have the perspective of future-oriented intelligence. Kanazawa University will ceaselessly think about how to contribute to the areas

affected by the Noto Peninsula Earthquake, other local communities, and the international community as a hub of diverse knowledge. I invite all of you to join us in thinking and acting together, in your roles as Kanazawa University students and members of society. You will help to sustain a prosperous society for Japan and the world in the years ahead.

Today, humankind faces many global challenges, including protracted international conflicts around the world, poverty, famine, food security, health and welfare concerns, energy needs, climate change, and environmental issues. At the same time, society is also being rapidly reshaped by AI, digital transformation, and technological innovation. I would like to share with you three tips for how to pursue your studies at Kanazawa University amid such dramatic changes.

The first is to embrace encounters with new people.

All of us have much to learn from others. It is important to meet and interact with people who are passionate about what they do. Please embrace the encounters with others that Kanazawa University offers you as a hub of diverse knowledge that is broadly open to insights from around the globe. Be sure to actively engage with vibrant people within and outside our university with sincere interest. Chance encounters will likely lead to lifelong friendships. And, these interactions will help you to strengthen your “human resilience” rooted in a strong aspiration to transcend barriers. When I was younger, I entered Kanazawa University as a student filled with the same hope and excitement that you feel today. The friendships I made with my classmates and others back then have remained an irreplaceable asset for me over the more than 40 years since I graduated. I hope that during your time as Kanazawa University students you will have encounters that at first seem by chance but years from now will make you truly feel that they were destined for you.

My second piece of advice is to think for yourself.

When you go out into the world to pursue your careers, you won’t find model answers waiting for you. In the rapidly changing real world, there sometimes aren’t any answers, or there might be more than one “right answer.” In order for you to become able to blaze a path to the future in such an environment, it is vital for you to explore current and future challenges, pose your own questions, and seek solutions to them. This means you need to think on your own, forming hypotheses and testing their validity with scientific evidence. This approach is the cornerstone of our university’s educational program, and a key point for studying here. Remarkable innovations are being achieved in AI and other technologies. These can be put to good use in many endeavors, but ultimately the decisions are made by humans—namely, you.

One of the most important things you can do as students here is to build up experience in thinking on your own, identifying challenges, and boldly overcoming them. A commitment like this will undoubtedly become an asset that will support your lives. I want you to know that you can change yourselves and the future, and you can create the future.

My third tip is to interact with people outside your comfort zone.

Immersing yourselves in different cultures and environments is a surefire way to grow tremendously as a person. Please take advantage of your time as Kanazawa University students to experience interacting with people outside your comfort zone. Don't let the fear of failure hold you back from taking the first step forward into a new world. Thinking and acting on your own is an essential part of blazing a path to the future. I'm sure that you will find new horizons. Fresh perspectives will help you to gain diverse values and learn many new things. Engaging with others in face-to-face talks and even casual chitchats is a key part of this process. My personal experiences in studying abroad left a deep, lasting impression on me. Please take opportunities to study outside your major, especially ones that enable you to get outside your comfort zone and interact with people whose worldviews, cultures, customs, and values differ from yours. I would like for you to do this to acquire strong human resilience and deep insights, and then use those assets to help overcome diverse challenges and create new value for the future.

It is my heartfelt hope that you, the next generation of leaders, will blaze paths to the future, cherish your communities, and shine on the world stage. I am strongly counting on you to become Kanazawa University Brand talent who will serve as leaders in Japan and around the world. Please never forget the excitement of this day and always maintain lofty aspirations and spirits as you enjoy enriching experiences as Kanazawa University students.

Again, congratulations on joining our university!

WADA Takashi
President, Kanazawa University

April 4, 2024