

2014 Osaka University Autumn Graduation Ceremony President's Address

Creating harmonious diversity in a global society

Undergraduate and graduate students, as you take your next step from Osaka University, it is my great pleasure to wish you my heartfelt congratulations. Today represents the culmination of hard work and diligent study. As the president of Osaka University it is my distinct privilege to congratulate you on this the day of your Graduation Ceremony.

I also would like to address the parents and relatives, the supporters of your pursuit of knowledge and truth, and express my deep respect while offering them congratulations for the accomplishments we honor on this day.

Graduate students, today you receive your degrees. I imagine your hopes and dreams will grow as you follow each of your individual paths to success. Utilizing the knowledge and skills you developed at Osaka University, you will become international leaders in your field in various countries and regions, contributing to the future of your country and the welfare and advancement of human society. I am proud that you who have studied at Osaka University are prepared with the disposition and determination to become authorities in the global community, and that you have a sense of responsibility and dignity necessary to move forward in society.

A danger of globalization

The world you inherit is full of diversity – different languages, customs, cultures, peoples, religions, politics and countries. Economic activity on a global scale and the resulting human exchange has brought about dramatic new challenges to our very survival. Global issues such as climate change, energy shortages, food supply and population changes, as well as infectious diseases have become more complicated.

With such interconnected causes, it would be easy to see diversity as a main factor to our world's issues. Human society is replete with examples of strife caused by diversity of peoples and religions. History is full of conflicts arising due to our differences. From that perspective, diversity may be seen as a barrier to a global society.

I do not agree with this perspective. Diversity itself is the source of a rich human spirituality, a source which is a precious factor in the development of the future. It is precisely because of diversity that humankind advances, and with it we will overcome the obstacles that stand in the way of our future. Moreover, it will allow us to continue to develop our society.

Creating harmonious diversity

I believe that in order to live in a global society, we should understand, respect and preserve diversity, and moreover actively encourage it to stimulate innovation. Only with the "creation of harmonious diversity" will humanity ensure global peace and encourage economic and societal innovation. Globalization through the creation of harmonious diversity should be our ultimate goal.

The Osaka University at which you have studied is a center of scholarship. We support research to ascertain the true essence of things and strive to cultivate individuals with the ability to do the same. With the diverse strength of a comprehensive university we offer opportunities to study in a wide variety of fields. Take for instance the study of languages. Osaka University offers a diverse mix of 25 different language majors, leading Japan in the research and education of a variety of Asian languages.

Overcoming barriers brought about by diversity is vital in the global society. Scholarship, along with art, sports, and economic exchange, is a universal human language. We have the unique ability to utilize that universal language to remove barriers to harmony. Universities impart scholarship, a universal

language resulting in person to person exchange, which maintains diversity while also overcoming its inherent obstacles. Therefore in the global society of the 21st century, I believe the new role of the university is to “create harmonious diversity through scholarship”. In this way, universities, by “creating harmonious diversity,” have and will make a profound contribution to the global society. You who have studied and researched at Osaka University will have an indispensable role in the new global society.

A mindset of sharing

How can we as individuals adjust our minds to encourage harmonious diversity? I believe that we must start by recognizing and respecting diversity, namely the importance of mutual understanding and respecting other cultures. For this, it is necessary to have the compassion and open-mindedness to put yourself in another’s position and judge things from other perspectives. Coexistence and cooperation with others is important, and to do this you must know yourself and others. If you cannot answer “Who am I?” you will surely be unable to distinguish and respect others.

I believe this “mindset of sharing” is a factor that the global talent of the future must not lack. For the coexistence and co-prosperity of humankind’s cultures and religions, the truth of this mindset must be understood, accepted and respected. This is the fundamental heart of the global society. First you must know yourself, love your country and understand and respect its culture. If you cannot first love yourself and your country and have pride in it, how can you respect other countries and cultures?

Much like DNA, individuals and organizations inherit knowledge based on history and early experience. When speaking of the future, I am ever mindful of the past. Starting today, you all share the common history of having studied at Osaka University. As graduates, you will be seen by society as

those with singular talents. Expectations will be high and you will have a responsibility to society. An important part of knowing yourself is being aware of Osaka University. What kind of institution is it? On this day of your graduation, I would like you to consider for a moment Osaka University's past, the history of the institution that will forever shape your future.

The origin of Osaka University: "Tekijuku"

Toward the end of the Edo period, in 1838, OGATA Koan founded a private academy named "Tekijuku," with the goal of "helping the people of the world with the latest knowledge." It was housed in a small building, but it had a profound impact on Japan. It was also the origin of the Osaka University from which you graduate today.

More than 1,000 students were educated at Tekijuku from all parts of the country, studying texts on Western science and technology translated to Japanese. Notable leaders from a variety of fields were educated there, including FUKUZAWA Yukichi, who founded Keio University; SANŌ Tsunetami, who founded the Japan Red Cross; and OTORI Keisuke, who was active as a diplomat. Graduates of Tekijuku such as these went on to modernize Japan at the beginning of the Meiji period. Their influence is still felt to this day.

Osaka University echoes the words of OGATA Koan, "For people, for society, and for the pursuit of truth." We inherit the determination of the young scholars who studied at Tekijuku and the love of Osaka residents for scholarship.

Years after Tekijuku, locals played a key role in a transition that brought about our modern institution. Citizens calling for an "imperial university in Osaka" lead to the founding of Osaka Imperial University in 1931. They were supported by the president of the Osaka Prefectural Medical School, KUSUMOTO Chozaburo – who later became the university's second president – and the Osaka prefectural governor, SHIBATA Zenzaburo. The sixth imperial university in Japan,

under the leadership of the first president NAGAOKA Hantaro, consisted of two schools, medicine and science. In 1933 the Osaka Technical School became the School of Engineering.

A year later, a young scholar introduced an unproven theory about the existence of subatomic particles called “mesons.” He was 27 years old, and an associate professor at Osaka Imperial University. His name was Hideki YUKAWA, and he received his doctoral degree from Osaka Imperial University in 1938 with his theory. In 1949, he became the first Japanese Nobel Laureate with the theory he put forth for his PhD thesis at Osaka Imperial University. Later in life he wrote about his time at our university, describing “something about being here makes everyone feel like working”¹. Osaka University continues to foster the environment he described, one of open research that stimulates diligent study and exchange of ideas.

In the postwar era, with the inclusion of a School of Law and Letters, the framework of our current, comprehensive university began to take shape. Under the motto of “Live Locally, Grow Globally,” Osaka University became a national university corporation in 2004 and merged with the Osaka University of Foreign Studies in 2007. We are now a modern, comprehensive university, a representative of the quality of higher education in Japan.

Much like those who studied at Tekijuku and brought about the new age in which we live during the disorder of the closing Edo period; much like Hideki YUKAWA who, influenced by the environment here, produced world-class theoretical research; so too should you, with brilliant dreams and true determination, pave the way for a bright 21st century.

The future of humanity falls to each and every one of you. You will become leaders in your respective fields and fulfill your duty in society; you will make meaningful advances in basic or applied research. This kind of achievement is well

¹ Source: *The Traveler*, the autobiography of Professor YUKAWA

within reach for all of you, and it is the heritage of intellectual creativity long nurtured at Osaka University.

The dream of Osaka University: From “Tekijuku” to “World Tekijuku”

Osaka University is approaching its centenary in 2031. Our goal is to become a World Tekijuku by this time, a worldwide top-ten comprehensive research university, and to contribute to the global society by “creating harmonious diversity through scholarship”. Osaka University is actively reforming internal organizations and systems to make this dream a reality by 2031.

Our goal is significant, and it will not be accomplished today or tomorrow. But we will focus on the current challenge, moving steadily towards our dream moment by moment, day by day. I encourage you to do the same. Never be discouraged by your distance from your dreams – focus on your current work and the dreams take care of themselves.

At the end of the Edo period, graduates of Tekijuku spread throughout the country to follow their dreams. So too must you use that which you have learned at this World Tekijuku and share your talents with the world.

“Dreams are meant to be achieved”

Believe in your dreams and live long, fruitful lives.

On this momentous day, as you take your next step from Osaka University, we wish you health, fortune and happiness.

Once again, congratulations.

September 25, 2014
Toshio HIRANO
President
Osaka University