

President NISHIO's 2017 Entrance Ceremony Speech

Welcome to Osaka University.

First of all, I would like to heartily welcome you to Osaka University. I also offer my sincere congratulations to your families and relatives.

Today, 3,413 undergraduates entered 11 schools and 2,939 graduate students advanced to 16 graduate schools in Osaka University. As President of Osaka University, I extend a hearty welcome to you.

After overcoming entrance examinations, a great challenge, you enrolled in Osaka University. I'm sure you are thrilled, thinking of study, sports, student life, and life plan in the coming years.

There are many new paths ahead of you. You will learn and experience many things, as well as acquire abundant knowledge at Osaka University. As you start your life at OU, I have something that I would like to share with you.

Characteristics of Osaka University

Osaka University was founded in 1931 as an imperial university through financial support from economic and financial circles and citizens of Osaka prefecture, Osaka city and, above all, their strong passion. Although there had been an imperial university in Kyoto next to Osaka, Osaka citizens wishing for an imperial university strongly urged the government to establish one in Osaka as well, which led to the establishment of Osaka Imperial University.

Osaka University's roots reach back to Tekijuku, a private "place of learning" founded during the Edo Period. The building of Kaitokudo no longer exists, with just a stone monument standing in its place, but the building of Tekijuku still remains in Kitahama, Osaka and is designated as a national historical site and important cultural asset. These two places of learning were built not by the government or feudal domain, but by citizens as schools for citizens. Inheriting the academic culture and spirit of these two places of learning and armed with its spirit of innovation and restless challenges, Osaka University has been engaged in research, education, and social contribution.

In 2007, Osaka University merged with Osaka University of Foreign Studies. The Osaka School of Foreign Studies, the predecessor of Osaka University of Foreign Studies, was also established by money donated from a couple who had succeeded in the marine industry.

Osaka is a noteworthy city in that its citizens have developed schools and universities in

order to promote education and human resources development in this manner.

Osaka University is a comprehensive university with 11 undergraduate schools and 16 graduate schools. The number of undergraduate students is over 15,000, the largest among national universities in Japan. The university also ranks first in the number of female students among national universities in Japan. Also, we are the only national university that has a school of foreign studies that offers courses in 25 languages. We are also focusing on encouraging OU students to go overseas to study and accepting international students. The number of such students is on the rise year by year. We accepted some 2,200 international students, mainly from Asia, in the 2016-2017 academic year, which is more than twice that of 10 years ago.

In this way, your university has become what it is now through its noteworthy history and development and has an unprecedented background to its founding. Knowing these things is also part of learning and encourages you to study more. Citizens of Osaka prefecture and Osaka city are proud of such history and still support Osaka University and its students. I hope you keep this in your mind and feel encouraged. In order to realize that, I hope you will visit The Museum of Osaka University on the Toyonaka Campus as well as Tekijuku.

Learning at university

By the way, I'm sure you have made efforts to find the best way to get higher marks to pass entrance examinations and what to do for achieving that goal. In a situation where the subjects you needed to work on were given, you studied by focusing on how to solve them. This way of studying can be compared to "jigsaw puzzle-type learning." When building a jigsaw puzzle, one thinks about how to put pieces together quickly and accurately to complete it, or a way leading to an already prepared right answer.

On the other hand, learning at university is "LEGO® brick-type learning." No right answers are prepared, let alone problems. In such a setting, one needs to think from the basic questions such as what to make and how to make it.

Now that you have enrolled in Osaka University, you are asked to have such a mindset and way of learning. You will be asked questions, such as what subjects to study for opening your path, what research theme to choose for your graduation work or for getting your master's or doctoral degree, and what life to live in the future. In other words, you'll be asked questions, such as what to do or what not to do, as well as why you will do it. You will be put in such a situation more often after going out into the workforce.

In modern society, human beings face complicated global issues, such as a deteriorating global environment, resource depletion, as well as religious and ethnic conflicts. In order to

take on these difficult issues, we are being asked what we should do, why we will do it, for what purposes we will do it, and even whether we won't bother to do it. Society craves for personnel capable of considering these things.

To respond to such a demand, Osaka University will carry out further educational reform so that we can nurture individuals who have both expertise in limited fields as well as the ability to see things from a wider perspective. However, the most important thing is that at this opportunity, each of you changes your way of thinking and shifts to "LEGO® brick-type learning."

Being dedicated to something

I have one more thing to ask.

I was born in Kokufu cho, Takayama city in Gifu prefecture. In winter, I put in hours of alpine ski practice every day as an elementary and junior high schooler. You may think that Gifu, the Hida region in particular, is one of the most famous ski resorts, but to tell the truth, Kokufu cho was not good for skiing and there were no ski slopes with lifts. Once I skied down a slope, I had to climb back up the slope while carrying my skis. In such circumstances, I practiced skiing daily after school by myself. I still remember thinking how beautiful snow covered trees were while practicing in the dead silence.

Because I was a regular winner in ski competitions in Kokufu cho, my teacher brought me to various competitions in the Hida region since I was in my fifth year of elementary school. I was scared of the steep, ice-covered slopes in competitions as an elementary student, but my teacher watching me warmly from the side of the courses dispelled my fear. I felt courage to go down the steep slope infused into my mind and affirmed my decision to reach the goal at any cost. I continued to ski in such a setting, winning the championship in the prefectural tournament when I was in the second year at junior high school.

A great joy, a terrible slump in the next season after the championship, valuable experiences shared with my teacher, as well as his encouragement by saying "If you work hard toward your objective, fortune smiles upon you someday." Such memories come back to me anew.

Pleasure, hardships, glory, and failure. The various experiences that I had through skiing guided me for the rest of my life.

That's why I definitely want you to dedicate yourself to something. Of course, because you have taken the trouble to enroll in this university, you need to give your all to your study and research. In addition to that, you should be dedicated to something -- club activities, volunteer activities, or hobbies, anything is okay. Experiences from doing something with your whole heart will surely enrich your life.

What I expect of you

I hope you will not lose the excitement you feel today or your original intentions. I want you to spend your college life with the pride and awareness that you are Osaka University students. For some of you, today is the first day of your relationship with Osaka University. The relationship will last long after graduating from OU. I think this opportunity brings OU closer to your families as well. Your understanding and cooperation are greatly appreciated.

In closing, I wish for your continued good health and success. My sincerest congratulations to you all!

April 3, 2017

President of Osaka University
NISHIO Shojiro