

President Hirano's Speech at the Graduate Schools Investiture Ceremony

September 20, 2011

By President HIRANO Toshio

First of all, please permit me to extend my sincere congratulations to each and every one of you on reaching this day, the day on which you receive your master's or doctor's degree. I also would like to express my respect for your family who has supported your learning and research to this day.

Today you're graduating from this university with a master's or doctor's degree. Soon you will be active in a variety of fields in society using your knowledge and experience. You must be filled with expectations for what lies ahead.

My hope is that whatever goal you aim for, you will become experts and reliable leaders in that field. And for that purpose, you will make efforts to accumulate knowledge and experience, acquire skills, and achieve significant results.

What you've learned is only a portion of scholarship and science. In other words, your life of learning has just begun. I hope you will never stop developing your abilities and addressing new challenges in the path that lies ahead.

I want you to remember a phrase, *noblesse oblige*. Noblesse oblige refers to noble ancestry constrained to honorable behavior; privilege entails responsibility. However, prior to saying more about noblesse oblige, allow me to talk about the history of Osaka University and the long way your predecessors have walked along.

Under the principle that universities should be centers of scholarship and education and pursuing academism should be our mission, Osaka University has striven and become an academic leader not only for Japan, but also for the world. This year is the 80th year since Osaka University was founded. Thanks to the strong desire of local people to have an imperial university in Osaka and efforts of persons involved in the university, including the president of Osaka Prefectural Medical University KUSUMOTO Chozaburo and the governor of Osaka Prefecture SHIBATA Zenzaburo, Osaka Imperial University was founded in 1931 with two schools, Medicine and Science. The university was the 6th imperial university and the first president was NAGAOKA Hantaro.

However, our university's roots reach back to Tekijuku, a private "place of learning" founded by the doctor and scholar of Western sciences OGATA Koan who worked to save people with state-of-the-art knowledge at the end of the Edo period. Tekijuku's open academic culture and forward-looking spirit gave birth to Osaka Prefecture Medical School and, eventually, to today's Schools of Medicine and Science at Osaka University. Two years later, Osaka Industrial University combined with Osaka University, becoming the current School of Engineering.

When the schools of Law, Economics, and Humanities were established following the end of World War II, collections of books regarding traditional Chinese and Japanese learning

possessed by Kaitokudo were passed on to Osaka University. Kaitokudo was a “place of learning” for merchants, founded by merchants, in Osaka in the late Edo Period. These book collections were symbolic of the original scholarship and “Osaka spirit” that our university inherited with these tomes. When Osaka University started under the new education system, the schools of Law, Economics, and Humanities were divided into the School of Letters and the School of Law and Economics, setting up a structure of the current comprehensive university.

SHIBA Ryotaro, a graduate of Osaka School of Foreign Languages, the predecessor of Osaka University of Foreign Studies, wrote that Teijuku was the predecessor of Osaka University and OGATA Koan a founder of Osaka University at the beginning of his novel *Kashin*. As can be seen, thanks to the support of the citizens of Osaka, the spirit and roots of Osaka University reach back to Kaitokudo and Tekijuku, and Osaka University has developed under the motto “Live Locally, Grow Globally.” Moreover, after going through transitions such as the legal status change to that of a national university corporation in 2004 and its merger with Osaka University of Foreign Studies in 2007, Osaka University has emerged representing our country as a comprehensive university. Osaka University has produced many excellent scholars, educators, intellectuals, as well as key government and business leaders.

In celebration of its 80th anniversary, Osaka University has established the project “Reflecting on the origin... Looking to the future...” On this occasion, Osaka University recognizes the role of university in our historical roots and is making a leap forward.

Taking a look at the history of our country, three great earthquakes took place in Japan about 150 years ago, at the end of the Edo Period. At that time, under the strong pressure from foreign countries attempting to open Japan, the Japanese government that had enjoyed a peace for 300 years was at a loss at what to do. At such a fateful crisis, thanks to young people including SAKAMOTO Ryoma from Tosa clan and FUKUZAWA Yukichi and OMURA Masujiro from Tekijuku, Japan was able to get through hardships at the Meiji Restoration and achieved modernization.

Devastated by its defeat in WWII 66 years ago, Japan again faced a national crisis, but achieved a miracle in economic recovery.

Currently, Japan is facing the third greatest crisis. The Great East Japan Earthquake took place on March 11 and the accidents at the nuclear power plants have added to the worries and suffering from the quake. Six months after the nightmare of disasters, many disaster-stricken areas still have no prospect of recovery. Whether Japan can overcome this crisis and find its way to a brighter future depends on you young people.

For our country to survive and develop, advancement of scholarship and science and technology is essential. Innovative technological development and the creation of a spiritually rich and peaceful society cannot be realized without advancement in sciences trusted by the people. Society asks you to further promote fundamental and applied academic research as a creative intellectual activity as you developed it at Osaka University and to fulfill your

responsibilities as leaders in a variety of fields in society. You who have studied and conducted research at Osaka University can and have the responsibility to achieve this. This is noblesse oblige. I hope you will join society with your head held high as persons who studied at Osaka University.

Although devastating events have taken place one after another, the achievement in the World Cup of the Japan women's national football team, Nadeshiko Japan, brought happiness to Japan. Why are people moved by success of athletes in Olympics and world championships? People are impressed with athletes' techniques and skills acquired through years of blood, sweat, and tears and applaud their play. However, is this the only reason?

I think that people applaud and are moved by athletes' hard work behind their wonderful plays. Athletes demonstrate the results of their long years of intensive training—a combination of their sincerity, passion, and skill that warms our hearts.

As children, we all had dreams; however, a dream is very different from the reality and cannot be achieved easily. Dreams seem impossible to achieve. As people grow and experience harsh realities, they realize the difference between their dreams and reality. They lose the innocence and luster in their eyes they had as children. And perhaps they find themselves to be ordinary persons.

I believe you have infinite possibilities for your future.

Some of you will be active in companies, government offices, or nurture the next generations at educational institutes, while others will explore the future through conducting research. I hope you will not lose your dreams throughout your long lives. Don't forget your delight at this moment, appreciate every second, and address challenges with a great vision for the future.

Allow me to close by wishing you all good fortune. May each of you live your life to the fullest!

Congratulations to you all.

Osaka University
President
HIRANO Toshio