

2022 NAIST Spring Graduation Ceremony (Mar. 24, 2022)

Let me begin by congratulating each member of this graduating class, on which I have just conferred 307 master's degrees and 46 doctoral degrees.

I am extremely happy to be standing here in front of you, not online and not just a recording. In particular, for those who entered the Master's Course in 2020, the staff of NAIST made every effort to hold this graduation ceremony in-person here at the Millennium Hall, as it was not possible to hold your entrance ceremony face-to-face due to the coronavirus.

The global epidemic of novel coronavirus infections that began at the end of 2019 has expanded and contracted with the outbreak of several mutant strains, and its end is still not in sight. Obtaining a master's or doctoral diploma in graduate school is not an easy task to begin with, but under the difficult circumstances of an unknown infectious disease outbreak, each of you worked diligently and overcame challenges to receive your diploma here today. Please take pride in what you have accomplished.

As I pay tribute to all of you for your efforts, I would also like to thank all those who have helped and supported you throughout your studies, such as your supervising professors, the faculty, your family, and your friends. In addition, with the support of many people, NAIST has been able to minimize the outbreak of new coronavirus infection while continuing its active educational and research pursuits. I am grateful to the Dean of the Graduate School, the Director of each division, who are now on this stage, and other faculty members, along with the administrative office staff who have provided various support day and night, and on weekends as well. The entire NAIST community, including all of the students here, are a credit to their efforts. Let us give a big round of applause to those who have supported your life at NAIST, including those not here with us today.

Now that you are completing your graduate studies today, I would like to take this opportunity to look back and remind you of when and how you decided to enter graduate school. I remember I began thinking of going to graduate school when I was in elementary school.

I was still in elementary school student when I asked my father. "When I graduate from elementary school, what comes after that?"

My father naturally replied, "Next is junior high school."

"Well, what comes after graduating junior high school? "

"Next is high school."

My questions continued.

"Well, what about after graduating high school? "

"University."

My father may have been getting a little annoyed with his answers becoming shorter.

"Well, what about after graduating university? "

"Graduate school."

"Well, what about after graduating graduate school? "

"Nothing, it's over."

Thus, for my father my persistent questioning was done, but for me, I was thinking of going to that very last "graduate school". Perhaps I thought that if I went to all the schools including the very last one, a graduate school, I would be able to learn all I could learn.

In completing your graduate studies today, how do you feel?

You probably don't feel that you have "learned all you can learn". I was the same way. The professors who guided you all completed graduate school decades ago, and although they may not have attended any school since then, they have cutting-edge knowledge, conduct world-class research, and instruct their students. Please imagine how that is possible.

I believe one of the most important skills that you have acquired as graduate students is to learn by yourself. Through your thesis research, you have learned how to update yourself, how to upgrade yourself, and how to create new value that can be shared with others. The faculty members who have mentored you have also never stopped learning and upgrading themselves to conduct cutting-edge, world-leading research.

I would like to share with you the words of Mahatma Gandhi, which I hope you will take to heart as your graduate studies are completed today.

Live as if you were to die tomorrow.
Learn as if you were to live forever.

I am sure that all of you who have received your degrees and are about to embark on your journey into the world are excited about your new beginnings. However, when trying to accomplish things, life is never long enough. I hope that you will always think about what you need to do right at this moment, and never stop learning and evolving. Our society, and the world, count on your future success.

In the years to come, I look forward to seeing you as our proud alumni, for example, on our Homecoming Day, which is held every fall. Remember – even after graduation, you are members of our NAIST community. NAIST now has over 10,000 alumni and the NAIST Alumni Association serves as their global network. Please become a member of this network.

Once again, congratulations to all of our graduates, and my best wishes for your future after graduation in the spirit of "Outgrow your limits" at NAIST.