

Congratulatory Remarks to Graduating Students (September 25, 2020)

I would like to offer my heartfelt congratulations to the 30 master's and 28 doctoral students who have been awarded degrees today. There are 58 master's and doctoral students receiving their degrees today, of which nearly 80%, 45 in total, are international students who chose to leave their home countries to study here at NAIST.

NAIST's network of graduates is growing year by year. Including the graduates here today, NAIST has conferred a total of 8,362 master's degrees and 1,732 doctoral degrees. 384 master's and 360 doctoral graduates are international students and we are seeing the continued global growth of NAIST's network.

From when the new coronavirus was first confirmed in Japan in Nara prefecture in late January of this year, the infection gradually spread throughout Japan and there were fears of an explosion of infections. From early April when a state of emergency was declared for certain areas of Japan and in mid-April the state of emergency was then extended to all prefectures, Nara prefecture was under a state of emergency for about one month. Due to this, activities at NAIST were restricted in various ways. This infectious disease disaster is still continuing. Today's graduation ceremony has been reduced in size compared to previous years through participation limits.

“Natural disasters strike when they are forgotten about.” as Torahiko TERADA said and the coronavirus infection was the first massive infection disaster in 100 years since the Spanish flu in the world.

I salute you for your hard work during such circumstances in performing your master's and doctoral research and successfully obtaining your degrees today.

Of the master's course graduates, some will continue their studies in the doctoral program to become researchers, and others will enter the workforce, starting new lives in society as professional researchers and engineers. Also, many of the doctoral course graduates will start their careers as professional researchers.

Currently, science and technology is facing an unprecedented era of revolutionary changes. Along with science and technology advancements, society itself is going through enormous change. It is currently thought that computer ability will surpass the sum of our human ability in the 2040's and technological singularity will be achieved,

and, at that time, the majority of the jobs existing today will disappear and new professions will appear. Considering the current infection disaster, it is thought that there will be even more uncertainty in the future. All of you will experience this 'new normal' society from now.

In the 2040's you will be the central part of society. You have developed specialized knowledge and experience from the various fields of information, biological and materials sciences, and their interdisciplinary fields, but from now I hope that you will be active as researchers and engineers, responding flexibly to developments in science and technology through further exploration of related fields to gain a broad understanding of various areas of study to continually pursue the opening of new frontiers for exploration.

Through your master's and doctoral thesis research, you have the valuable experiences through which you developed the ability to identify problems, explore and implement solutions to these problems, evaluate the outcomes, and write academic papers on the outcomes through discussions with people having various viewpoints.

I am confident that the difficulties have faced at times, including the unforeseen conditions due to the new coronavirus infection, along with the networks you have created here will assure your successful future.

NAIST's role does not end with us sending you out into society. Rather, NAIST faculty and staff members consider our role as facilitating the building of strong relationships with alumni so that each and all of you will be able to continue your creative lives in an ever-changing community of science and technology.

Recently, every year we hold our Homecoming Day along with the Fall Open Campus and we hope to continue holding this kind of event. Please return to our campus at that time as role models for our future students. In the 'new normal' of the post-coronavirus world, we will consider an online participation format and, if that case, Homecoming Day will be a blend of real-world and virtual participation

Also, in addition to the alumni association activities at the center of our graduate networks, we want to strengthen our international network of graduates who are active around the globe through international satellite offices established in Indonesia and Thailand. As I noted earlier, 45 of the graduates today are international students, and we hope that you participate in these pursuits.

I would like to congratulate you all again and in conclusion, we look forward to your future endeavors and success.

Naokazu YOKOYA, President, Nara Institute of Science and Technology

September 25, 2020