

Fall Welcome 2023

Hello, I'm Kaz Shiozaki. As President of the Nara Institute of Science and Technology, NAIST for short, I'm excited to welcome all of you starting your postgraduate study here at NAIST. It is also a great pleasure to see those who received their Master's degrees last week here in this Millennium Hall and will be continuing as doctoral students.

Our faculty and staff are proud that you have chosen NAIST as a place for your graduate study. NAIST is a unique university with distinctive features and strengths. Above all, there are no undergraduate programs at NAIST. In contrast to many universities whose graduate programs accept students from their own undergraduate courses, NAIST admits graduates from diverse universities and technical colleges, as well as working adults. Many international students are joining us from abroad as well. Among the new students enrolled today are 71 international students from 19 countries and regions, making NAIST an international campus, with about one out of every four students being from overseas.

Our faculty members also have diverse backgrounds. Some of you may have heard of the word "academic inbreeding" or "intellectual inbreeding," the practice of a university hiring its own graduates to be the majority of its professors. NAIST is far from such a practice. Our professors are top researchers who came to NAIST from various universities, research institutions, and companies.

As a university community rich in diversity, we drew up a couple of years ago The Declaration of Co-creative Community, which begins as follows:

"The Nara Institute of Science and Technology is a community that encompasses students, faculty, and staff of diverse identities and backgrounds. As members of this community, we must create and maintain an environment where we all can study and work to our full potential in order for NAIST to continue its contributions to the development of science, technology, and society.

The Co-creative Community we aspire to is a community where members strive for the creation of new value through the exchange of opinions with courtesy and empathy. We value our individual differences and pursue mutual understanding and respect while rejecting discrimination."

You can find the entire Declaration on our university website, and we also posted it at the entrance of your Division buildings. Please make time to read it. Diverse attributes, knowledge, and experience hatch creative ideas and allow flexibility to

changes and fluctuations; therefore, they are the essential drivers of scientific and technological developments.

Now, I wonder if those new to NAIST have had a chance to explore our campus and the areas nearby. Adjacent to this campus, just to the north, is the Takayama Science Plaza, where you can enjoy lunchtime music concerts once a month. The glass windows of its building mirror the face of Albert Einstein, which is really big, and you won't miss it. Needless to say, he was a giant in theoretical physics and a Nobel Prize awardee. But he was also known to be a violin player. Indeed, according to a study by researchers at Michigan State University, Nobel prize-winners are more likely to play musical instruments or enjoy arts as hobbies, such as painting, sculpting, or writing poetry, in comparison to their peers.

Starting from tomorrow, you will be a student as well as a researcher carrying out your thesis research. When we delve into our research theme and become immersed, we are often trapped within the framework we build around us. However, if we can step out of it, a new landscape may open up before our eyes, possibly leading to discoveries and innovations. New perspectives are what artists also seek in order to create their masterpieces, as we can see, for example, in Pablo Picasso's works. The same applies to musicians looking for unique perspectives to play their familiar sheet music.

Therefore, creating artwork or playing music are believed to foster abilities to get out of our accustomed mindset and reach a new vantage point. However, even if you have no painting brush or musical instrument, don't worry. By interacting with others with viewpoints, mindsets, experiences, and knowledge that are different from yours, you can obtain fresh perspectives from them to reexamine the things taken for granted by yourself. This is why science and technology cherish diversity, which is the strength of the NAIST community, as I mentioned earlier. As our Declaration of Co-creative Community says, "We value our individual differences."

When your professors or your colleague students don't agree with your hypothesis, interpretation of results, or new model, don't be upset but get excited. They offer different perspectives and ways of thinking that may help your research progress. They are also lending a hand to reset the 'default' of your frame of thinking and skills so that you can reinvent yourself and expand your intellectual horizons.

Before closing, I'd like to introduce our school motto: "Outgrow your limits." Don't set limits on yourself. Get out of your mindset and out of your comfort zone. NAIST is where you can find opportunities and challenges beyond what you can

imagine right now.

Ready, Set, Go to outgrow your limits!