

President's Commencement Address, June 2026

First, I would like to extend my heartfelt congratulations to those who were just awarded degrees from our university. I am truly delighted to be here with you on this memorable day in your lives. I would also like to congratulate your families, faculty advisors, and friends celebrating this day with you. I am very proud that you have earned your graduate degree, a major milestone in your life, through perseverance and hard work since enrolling at this university. I hope you will feel confident and proud of what you have achieved at NAIST.

People with graduate degrees remain in the minority in society. One reason for this is that postgraduate study requires considerable time and effort, as you have discovered. Consequently, they are expected to take on leadership roles in various sectors of society.

So, I'd like to talk a little bit about leadership. Since the World Cup is in full swing right now, I'd like to share an interesting study on leadership in soccer. This study was a joint effort by researchers from the MIT Sloan School of Management, Columbia Business School, and INSEAD, a renowned private business school. They collected and analyzed data spanning 25 years, from 1992 to 2017, on soccer teams and their managers in the English Premier League, which is considered one of the world's top leagues. The results revealed a correlation between managers' career history and their team's ability to score. Specifically, for every additional country in which a manager had worked during their career, their team scored an average of 3.42 more points. In other words, the more international experience a manager had, the stronger their team tended to be.

Moreover, such a correlation between international experience and leadership was not limited to soccer teams. The same group of researchers also conducted a study of managers at an Australian construction company, for example, and found that those with a wide range of international experience were rated more highly by their colleagues.

Another interesting finding of these studies is that the number of countries one has visited contributes to one's leadership qualities, rather than the length of time spent abroad. This suggests that interacting with people from diverse cultures is crucial. The ability to communicate with people from different cultural backgrounds, understand what they are saying, and ensure they understand one's own thoughts and intentions is an extremely important skill for leaders.

This is one of the reasons why NAIST has built a global campus environment. Our university brings together students, researchers, and faculty members from approximately 50 countries and regions worldwide. Students can hone their communication skills through interactions with this diverse group of people during their studies and research here. Interestingly, a study published last month in *Nature* found that racial diversity in higher education institutions is associated with higher salaries

upon graduation. Your experiences at NAIST and the skills you have acquired here will serve you well in your future careers. Also, whenever you have the chance, try visiting various countries and observe the changes that occur within yourself. Some studies suggest that living or traveling abroad can improve cognitive flexibility, adaptability, and metacognitive ability.

The 19th-century British philosopher John Stuart Mill pointed out the following:

“It is hardly possible to overrate the value, in the present low state of human improvement, of placing human beings in contact with persons dissimilar to themselves, and with modes of thought and action unlike those with which they are familiar ... Such communication has always been, and is peculiarly in the present age, one of the primary sources of progress.”

As you travel the world, you'll meet people from all walks of life. Furthermore, as you set out into society, you're bound to work with individuals whose perspectives differ from yours, and you may even find yourself collaborating with those whose opinions you do not always agree with. Working together as a diverse team fosters cooperation, enabling innovation that leads to groundbreaking solutions to difficult challenges and, ultimately, the creation of new value. Such experiences will help you acquire diverse perspectives and flexible thinking, and you will realize that the world you see is changing. Your journey of “Outgrow your limits” will continue even after you graduate from NAIST.

Once again, I would like to congratulate you on becoming a NAIST graduate. Today, you have joined the ranks of over 10,000 alumni who have studied at NAIST and are trying to make this world a better place. The NAIST Alumni Association is a global network of our graduates. I encourage you to participate actively and stay connected with NAIST. Even after graduation, you remain a member of the NAIST community.

Let me close my commencement address with my parting wish for you: May your future be rewarding and fulfilling!

June 25, 2026

Kaz Shiozaki

President