

2024 Spring Welcome

On behalf of the faculty and staff of Nara Institute of Science and Technology, NAIST for short, I would like to congratulate the 348 students entering our master's programs and the 89 new students entering our doctoral programs today. I would like to extend my sincere congratulations to their families as well.

We are genuinely grateful to the members of the stage party for their attendance despite their busy schedules: Mr. Makoto Yamashita, the Governor of Nara Prefecture; Mr. Masashi Komurasaki, the City Mayor of Ikoma; Mr. Tetsuya Kobayashi, the Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Foundation for NAIST. Mr. Kobayashi also serves as Representative Director and Chairman of the Board of the Kintetsu Group Holdings Co., Ltd. Our appreciation also goes to Prof. Kiyoshi Kiyokawa, the President of the University Alumni Association.

The graduate education system in which you will begin your studies was developed in the United States in the latter half of the 19th century and spread throughout the world thereafter. Although there are some lecture courses, the characteristic feature of graduate education, including that at NAIST, is research-oriented education, where you learn by working on your research projects. However, the research you will conduct at NAIST is not just "a laboratory course" for your learning. You will be engaged in cutting-edge research to acquire knowledge and technologies that are novel to humanity. A well-known example of such research is that of Dr. Shinya Yamanaka and his graduate students at NAIST, who successfully created iPS cells that the Nobel Prize later recognized.

Indeed, our graduate students are working on research projects supported by taxpayers and other public funds. In a speech given by U.S. President Barack Obama at a National Academy of Sciences meeting, he mentioned why cutting-edge scientific research is publicly funded, as follows:

The fact is an investigation into a particular physical, chemical, or biological process might not pay off for a year, or a decade, or at all. And when it does, the rewards are often broadly shared, enjoyed by those who bore its costs but also by those who did not.

And that's why the private sector generally underinvests in basic science, and why the public sector must invest in this kind of research—because the risks may be large, so are the rewards for our economy and our society.

<Japanese translation of the above follows.>

All of you enrolled at NAIST today will build on your training as graduate students while working on publicly funded research. You can hone a variety of skills and abilities through research experience. These include the ability to identify issues and problems to be addressed; the ability to gather, evaluate, and process information on the identified issues and problems; the ability to formulate and test hypotheses; logical thinking and critical thinking; and the ability to communicate orally and in writing for dissemination of information. Let me reiterate that you will be working on publicly funded research at the scientific forefront, not just for practice. Therefore, a high level of these skills and abilities is required. This high level of training at NAIST makes our graduates so highly regarded.

During such a learning experience at NAIST, I would like you to enjoy the changes happening to you. NAIST has a school motto, "Outgrow your limits." "Your limits" means something like "boundaries" that limit and define each of you. Therefore, "Outgrow your limits" means "grow out of your shell." At NAIST, you will encounter diverse knowledge and research, meet various professors and researchers, and make new friends. Besides, as you work on your research projects, you will face numerous challenges entirely new to you. We want you to enjoy your development and changes through those experiences.

What was previously incomprehensible to you becomes comprehensible. Things that had never interested you become attractive. You start loving what you thought you didn't like. At NAIST, you can enjoy transforming and creating yourself while collaborating with your new colleagues on your research.

"Life is like riding a bicycle. To keep your balance, you must keep moving."

These are Albert Einstein's words. I encourage you to make the most of the opportunities and resources offered at NAIST and enjoy "cycling" through the two-year Master's or three-year Doctoral courses, acknowledging that the landscape you see will change as you develop.

Welcome to Nara Institute of Science and Technology.

Starting from today, "Outgrow your limits!"

April 5, 2024

Kazuhiro Shiozaki

President, Nara Institute of Science and Technology