

2025 Spring Welcome

On behalf of the faculty and staff of Nara Institute of Science and Technology, I would like to extend my heartfelt congratulations to the 365 students who have enrolled in our Master's programs and the 86 students who have enrolled or advanced to our Doctoral programs today, as well as to their families.

I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to Mr. Makoto Yamashita, the Governor of Nara Prefecture, and Mr. Masashi Komurasaki, the City Mayor of Ikoma, for their congratulatory addresses today.

The most significant reason why today marks a meaningful and celebratory new start for you is that each of you has taken the step to further your learning in graduate school. As you may know, the number of people pursuing graduate studies is still relatively small in the overall population, particularly in Japan. According to the 2020 education statistics from the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), France has the highest ratio of postgraduate students to the population, at 5.4 per 1,000 people. Japan has less than one-fifth of that number, less than one per 1,000 population—the lowest among OECD member countries.

“The OECD Learning Compass 2030” states that education has historically lagged behind waves of social transformation. For example, during the Industrial Revolution in 18th-century Britain, there was a period of “social pain,” where a divide was created between those who benefited from the revolution and those who did not. Later, with the advent of universal, compulsory public schooling, more people could benefit from and contribute to the Industrial Revolution, eventually transitioning from a period of “social pain” to a time of “prosperity.”

According to management consultant and educator Peter Drucker, in 19th-century America, only one businessman had received a university education—J.P. Morgan, a financier whose name remains in that of an investment bank today. Most of the famous industrialists of that time did not have even a high school education. However, in recent years, the percentage of executives with postgraduate degrees in publicly traded U.S. companies has exceeded 50%, and more than 10% of CEOs in the top 100 companies hold a doctoral degree. It is becoming recognized that even a bachelor's degree is insufficient for fulfilling leadership roles in society.

Looking back at Japan in the 19th century, attitudes toward higher education vastly differed from today. In a newspaper editorial published in *Jiji Shinpō*, founded by Yukichi Fukuzawa during the Meiji era, he wrote:

"Those with money can buy and enjoy fine clothing and food, while those without money must be

content with inferior clothing and food. This is a simple and universal law, with no exceptions in society. The same applies to education—children from wealthy families can afford a high level of education, while those from poor backgrounds must be satisfied with a lower level."

Fukuzawa, therefore, argued that the government should support only the "lowest level" of public education, such as literacy and arithmetic.

However, since the First Industrial Revolution in the 18th century, science and technology have advanced exponentially. Today, we are in the midst of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, also known as the Digital Revolution. Throughout the history of this development, education and technological innovation have been "racing" each other. The OECD warns that if education fails to keep abreast with technological advances, it will create societal disparities, leaving some people behind. Therefore, the level of education necessary for individuals to benefit from and contribute to scientific and technological progress has been rising for the last 200 years. This is undoubtedly a big challenge for educators and policymakers. At the same time, you must view your education as a long-term investment in your future, spanning 10, 20, or even 30 years ahead.

Today, you have taken the first step in that long-term investment. We, the faculty and staff, are proud that you have chosen NAIST as the place to pursue your graduate education, and we hope that you, too, take pride in studying here. In the latest evaluation by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, NAIST was one of only two national universities in Japan to receive the highest rating in both "education" and "research." In addition, NAIST has been selected as one of 25 universities for the ministry's new funding program, J-PEAKS, which allows us to develop a research university model of the next generation, starting this April. NAIST continues to pursue the cutting edge in research and education, and such a campus environment should encourage you to explore your potential.

Upon your new start at NAIST today, I would like to introduce you to our university's motto: "Outgrow your limits." This means "go beyond your limits." Each of you possesses a great potential that you may not even be aware of. NAIST is a place where you can discover new possibilities within yourself, push the envelope you believe you have, and continue to grow.

Welcome to NAIST!

April 4, 2025

Kaz Shiozaki

President