

Presidential Address

Masao Ueno
President of Meiji University

To all new students, congratulations on getting into Meiji University.

It brings me great joy to welcome you today as members of Meiji University here in Surugadai, the place described in our university anthem as a land “*shirakumo nabiku*.” I would also like to extend my sincere congratulations to the families and friends who have watched over your growth with warmth, encouraged you, and at times gently urged you forward. We ask them to continue to support you as you begin a new chapter and we together strive for even greater growth at Meiji University.

A university is a place where faculty pursue the frontiers of knowledge, staff support that pursuit, and students—who are at the very center of learning—gather to challenge and elevate one another. At the foundation of this environment lies the spirit on which Meiji University was founded: “Rights and Liberty, Independence and Self-Government.” This principle embodies our commitment to nurturing individuals who respect themselves and others, and who, through independent and self-directed thinking, contribute to the betterment of society. For 144 years, this banner has flown unfailingly.

However, when we look around the world today—including Japan—we must confront certain realities. Wars, discrimination, poverty, climate change, and the fragmentation of information are just a few of the issues threatening and even denying “Rights and Liberty, Independence and Self-Government.”

It is precisely because of these challenges that we must carry forward the mission entrusted to us by our founders: Through education and research, we must work toward a society where every individual is respected. And today, as new members of Meiji University, you are now a part of that mission.

As you begin this journey, I ask each of you to make this founding spirit your own source of strength. To do so, one essential quality is the ability to embrace and harness diversity. At Meiji University, students, faculty, and staff come together from across Japan and from more than 45 countries and regions worldwide, enriching our community with a diverse

array of values and cultural backgrounds.

Within our campuses, ten undergraduate schools and sixteen graduate schools offer a broad range of learning opportunities. Beyond the classroom, club activities, community engagement, study abroad, and volunteer work will introduce you to countless new experiences and people. This is a vast ocean of diversity.

What matters most is not merely acquiring knowledge about diversity, but learning to accept, understand, and reflect on differences— and to apply those insights to your own thoughts and actions. You may feel uncertain or confused when you first encounter perspectives different from your own. But that very moment is the gateway to personal growth. I encourage you: do not fear. Jump in. Engage in dialogue. Laugh together. At times, even clash. Those experiences will become a lasting source of strength, empowering you to shape your own future.

Next April, Meiji University will launch a new Minor Program open to all undergraduate students. This program offers a structured opportunity to pursue a secondary field of study alongside your major. A student in the School of Global Japanese Studies, for example, might study law; a student in the School of Agriculture could explore international relations; and a student in the School of Arts and Letters may choose to delve into business strategy. This multifaceted approach to learning will equip you to tackle complex social issues from multiple perspectives.

Encountering and understanding these new perspectives will enable you to internalize diversity and develop the ability to confront today's challenges with flexibility and depth. This is learning that truly embodies the spirit of "Rights and Liberty, Independence and Self-Government." The Minor Program will be a valuable opportunity to expand your intellectual curiosity and unlock new possibilities for yourself. I hope you will grasp this exciting opportunity.

Meiji University will support you on your journey through both scientific inquiry and diverse human connections. Your years on campus will not only be a time to acquire knowledge, but also to refine your values, develop your character, and shape the future together with your peers.

One hundred and forty-four years ago, the three young founders of Meiji University, still in

their twenties, created this institution with a firm resolve to break through the barriers of their time. The baton of their passion has been passed down through the generations, and now, it has been entrusted to every one of you.

Cherish each day of your university life. Do not fear challenges. Seek out new knowledge, new people, and new worlds. As members of Meiji University, carve out your own future, and at the same time, gain the strength to help shape the future of Japan and the world.

Now, new students—this is the beginning. When faced with adversity, stand tall. When in doubt, take that first step. Beyond that step, new horizons and new friends await you. Together with your fellow students at Meiji University, laugh, learn, and take on new challenges as together we “Go Forward.”

With great faith in your courage and determination, I conclude this address.
Congratulations once again on your admission!