

Presidential Address

Masao Ueno
President of Meiji University

To all 340 students of you who have studied at Meiji University and are graduating today—whether you are completing a degree or another program—please accept my heartfelt congratulations.

Your presence here today is a powerful reflection of your dedication and perseverance. You have approached your studies with sincerity, supported one another through challenges, and continued forward with determination. Today marks the culmination of your individual efforts, and I wholeheartedly commend you for all that you have achieved.

I would also like to extend my sincere congratulations and gratitude to your families and to all those who have supported you throughout your journey and helped you reach this day.

Today marks the beginning of a new chapter in your lives. Some of you will enter the world of work. Some will continue your academic pursuits, while others will embark on entirely new challenges.

As you begin this new chapter, I would like to share three thoughts with you.

First, value not only finding answers but also asking good questions.

During your years at university, you acquired knowledge and sought solutions to many different problems. Once you enter society, however, you will increasingly encounter situations in which the real challenge is not simply finding an answer but determining what the problem itself is and what goals we should pursue.

“Why is this the way it is?”

“Is this really the way it should be?”

“Is there not a better way?”

New discoveries and new challenges often begin with questions such as these.

What matters in life is not always having the right answers. As the times change, and as we ourselves change, the answers may change as well. That is why I hope you will never be afraid of questions that do not have easy answers. I hope you will continue to ask questions of your own.

This spirit of asking questions is closely connected to the founding principles of Meiji University: “Rights and Liberty, Independence, and Self-Government.”

To think for oneself, to make one’s own judgments, and to forge one’s own path—all of this

begins with the ability to formulate one's own questions.

Second, cherish your encounters with others.

None of us can grow through our own efforts alone.

There will be people whose ideas are different from yours. There will be people whose abilities surpass your own. And there will be people who, at times, challenge you and make you question what you believe.

It is often through encounters with such people that we discover possibilities within ourselves that we had never seen before.

When you look back on your life, I believe it is a great blessing to be able to say:

“Because I met that person, I was able to come this far.”

For that reason, I encourage you not to distance yourselves from those who are different from you. Instead, learn from one another, inspire one another, compete, when necessary, support one another when needed, and continue to grow together.

And one day, strive to become the kind of person of whom others can say:

“Because I met you, I was able to take a step forward.”

Our encounters with others have the power to bring out possibilities in one another. Throughout your lives, I hope you will cherish the relationships that challenge you, encourage you, and bring out the very best in you.

Third, use your abilities to help make society a better place.

As you enter the wider world, you will encounter unreasonable and unfair situations that you may never have experienced as a student. Hard work does not always guarantee success. Nor is what is right always recognized or rewarded as it should be.

But that does not mean that society is beyond hope.

Society can be improved, little by little, through the efforts of each and every person who lives in it.

We are living in an era of longer lives. You have many decades ahead of you. I hope you will use those years not only for your own happiness and fulfillment, but also to help create a society in which the generations that follow you can live a little more freely, securely, and with greater hope for the future.

When you encounter something that seems unreasonable, do not simply say, “That is just the way things are.”

Instead, ask yourself:

“Why is it this way?”

And with that question in your heart, continue to learn from one another, challenge one another, and work together. Step by step, help move society in a better direction.

Meiji University's guiding philosophy of "Individual Empowerment" does not mean merely strengthening oneself.

It means expanding one's own potential, drawing out the potential of others, and contributing positively to society.

That is the kind of "strong individual" I hope each of you will become.

Today marks the end of your student life, but at the same time, it marks the beginning of a new journey.

Please continue to ask meaningful questions.

Meet people who inspire you and help each other grow.

And with your own efforts, help build a better society.

No matter how dramatically the world may change, the knowledge and wisdom you have cultivated at Meiji University, and the bonds you have formed with those who have shared these years with you, will remain a solid source of strength as you move forward through life.

Carry with you the pride of having studied at Meiji University and go forth to help shape a new future—for yourselves, for those around you, and for society.

It is my sincere hope that the long journeys ahead of you will be rich, fulfilling, and filled with meaningful accomplishments.

I wish each and every one of you every success and happiness as you embark upon this bright new chapter of your lives. With these words, I conclude my address on this memorable occasion.

Congratulations, and may the journey ahead of you be bright, inspiring, and filled with possibility.