

Presidential Address

Masao Ueno
President of Meiji University

To all new students: Congratulations on your admission to Meiji University's undergraduate, graduate, and professional graduate programs.

It is my great pleasure, as President of Meiji University, to welcome you today as new members of our university community here in Surugadai, the place celebrated in the Meiji University school song with the words "shirakumo nabiku."

I would also like to extend my heartfelt congratulations to your families and to all those who have supported you throughout your journey—those who have watched over you with warmth, encouraged you, supported you, and, at times, given you the push you needed to move forward.

I hope that your family and others will continue to watch over and support you warmly as you grow and flourish here at Meiji University.

Today, you begin a new chapter of your life. From this day forward, you will learn and grow in a new environment.

At university, you will acquire specialized knowledge and skills. But that is not all that you will learn here.

University is also a place where, through your own choices and initiative, you can go beyond who you have been and create a new version of yourself.

No one can become who they are entirely on their own. Aristotle famously described human beings as "social animals." We learn and think through our relationships with others.

Through those relationships, we come to understand who we are and, in turn, recreate ourselves.

From this day forward, you will encounter many people whose ideas, cultures, experiences, and interests are different from your own.

You will meet people who hold different views, people who come from different cultural backgrounds and have different life experiences and people who study fields different from your own. Through such encounters, disagreements may arise. You may even feel that your own views have been challenged or rejected.

But when that happens, do not stop there. It is precisely when we encounter something different from ourselves that we have an opportunity to look more closely at who we are and reconsider what we believe.

Respecting diversity is not only for the benefit of others; it is also essential for our own growth.

In this regard, there is a new opportunity that I strongly encourage all incoming

undergraduate students to take advantage of. Beginning this academic year, Meiji University has introduced the Minor Program.

Through this program, you can systematically study a field different from your major while continuing to pursue specialized studies in your own faculty.

Deepening your knowledge in one specialized field is, of course, important. At the same time, encountering knowledge and ways of thinking from different disciplines can help you see things that you may never have noticed before.

By meeting students who study different fields and discovering different ways of looking at the world, you may come to see your own field of specialization from a new perspective.

Learning across disciplinary boundaries can also expand the boundaries of your own possibilities.

So, I encourage you not to limit your world to your own faculties and graduate schools. Make full use of Meiji University as a broad and diverse community of learning.

And there is one more thing I would like you to remember.

Take a step forward.

Whenever something interests you, try it. Whenever you feel even the slightest desire to pursue an opportunity, take on the challenge.

Of course, you will sometimes fail. In fact, there may be more times when things do not go as planned than when they do. But failure is not the end.

Indeed, there is great value in experiencing constructive failure, learning from it, and finding the courage to try again. That is one of the most important lessons a university education can offer.

At Meiji University, there are countless opportunities for you to take that first step: through seminars, extracurricular activities, study abroad, volunteer work, engagement with local communities, and many other experiences.

As you take part in these activities and experiences, you will gradually become people who think for yourselves, make your own choices, and take responsibility for your own actions.

This is closely connected to the founding spirit that Meiji University has cherished since its establishment: "Rights and Liberty, Independence, and Self-Government."

Freedom means thinking for oneself, making our own decisions, and taking responsibility for the choices we make. And because we value our own freedom, we must also respect the freedom of others.

Meiji University hopes that you will grow into such free, independent, and responsible individuals.

At the same time, there is no single predetermined answer to what your university life should be.

What will you study?

Whom will you meet?

What challenges will you undertake?

And what kind of person will you become?

The people who create the answers to these questions are none other than you yourselves, as free and independent individuals.

When you graduate from university, you do not need to have become a well-rounded person.

Rather, I believe that one of the greatest outcomes of a university education is to leave with a desire to continue shaping who you are and pursuing self-realization throughout your life.

Self-realization is not about reaching a single destination or achieving one final goal. It is a lifelong process of continually shaping who you are through encounters with others, studying seriously, taking on challenges, and, at times, experiencing failure.

I hope that the years ahead of Meiji University, beginning today, will become an important part of that journey.

And when you find yourself uncertain or at a crossroads, remember that even the smallest step is meaningful.

Take one step forward.

That single step can lead to a new encounter, a new opportunity to learn, and ultimately to a recognition of a side of yourself that you have not yet discovered. Meiji University will be here to support you as you take that step.

With all my heart, I wish each and every one of the 85 new students a fulfilling and rewarding journey ahead. It is my great pleasure to offer you these words of congratulation on this memorable occasion.

Once again, congratulations on your admission to Meiji University.