

2019 Okayama University Graduation Ceremony

Congratulatory Speech

It is my great honor and pleasure to attend the 2019 Autumn Graduation Ceremony of Okayama University together with the Academic and Executive Staff Members. I am delighted to express my sincere congratulations on the successful completion of your courses in the Undergraduate and Graduate schools.

Among the 104 graduates today, 61 students completed doctoral degrees, 21 completed Masters Degrees, and there are 22 who have finished their undergraduate studies.

I was appointed as President of Okayama University in April 2017 and one of my first priorities was to announce my “Makino Vision” as the operating principle of the university.

Basically, our university has continued efforts to create “academic capital” in Okayama over the past twelve years. From the 12th president, Mr. Chiba, who initially set out the idea of “academic capital” and then our previous president Dr. Morita with his idea of “beautiful academic capital and the beautification of the campus” to my term where I believe it is high time for realization of academic capital.

Okayama University has 11 Faculties, 8 Graduate schools, 1 course 3 Authorized Research Institutes, a University Hospital, and Attached Schools. I am sure we would all agree that these different parts have made great achievements; however, I feel there is a need for greater cooperation. We should create a Meta-Academia working together to create new value which cannot be achieved otherwise by each part alone.

A good example of what can be achieved through cooperation can be seen in the recent recognition of Okayama University as a key source of research in Japan. Okayama University has been recognized as “the Program for Promoting the enhancement of Research Universities” since 2013 and “Top Global University Project” in 2014. Two years ago the University Hospital received approval as a “Cancer genome Clinical Core Hospital” in addition to “Clinical Research Core Hospital by Law” and the “Project of Translational and Clinical Research Core Center.” Moreover, the University is one of only 8 universities in Japan that have been selected for all of the above 5 major projects.

We named our Top Global Project the PRIME program, which stands for developing “practical-oriented human resources in a global community”. Under the PRIME program, students will be able to acquire strengths found in the liberal arts, linguistic ability, and specialized knowledge, but also be given opportunities to utilize these capacities through inter-disciplinary, inter-social and inter-cultural activities on a global stage.

Graduates, you will be able to act globally after solving problems and acquiring the ability to make the right decisions and take the appropriate actions, and thus assuming leadership in whatever the field. I am sure you have established your identity and the ability to express yourselves during your study in our university so from now you can push yourself in your next stage of life.

No matter what, however, we must remember that our activities take place in the real world. Our actions have real effects on the environment. You must have been unsettled by the heavy rain fall and flood in July last year in Okayama. Tayphoon No 15th hit Chiba area and caused black out for many

days. These were terrible but there is no country in the world that is not experiencing first-hand the drastic effects of climate change. Disaster risk management including climate change is one major challenge but there are many intractable problems such as obtaining cheap, safe energy, dealing with low birth rates, and financial and employment issues.

In 2015, the United Nations set 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 targets to be achieved by 2030. Okayama University is promoting SDGs on the basis of Action Guidelines of Okayama University. We have undertaken many steps regarding SDGs with United Nation Agencies, local business communities, local governments and Okayama University received “SDGs Partnership Award” in the first Japan SDGs Awards in 2017. Last July I was invited to United Nations to give a talk on whole institutional approach toward achieving SDGs at High Level Political Forum.

We have learned that the solutions for the environmental, social, industrial, and financial challenges facing our society can only be found in collective, global action. You graduates must foster this global sensibility and lead in the innovation of global knowledge to promote international cooperation. For academics like us, who work to expand knowledge, we need to respond to the demands of society. Therefore, we all should be aware that it is OUR mission, to resolve the global challenges facing us.

You are graduating from Okayama University today, but your pursuit of knowledge will never end. Your ties with the University will continue throughout your life. There may come a time when you want new challenges. Okayama University will always welcome you back if you wish to return to study more.

I would also like to mention that Okayama University has established 55 alumni associations all over the world. Through these associations, we would like to strengthen the ties among Okayama graduates. I do expect international students graduating from our university today to play important roles in this project. Please join the chapter in your home country so that many more students will have a chance to study at Okayama University and students from Okayama University can have the chance to study in your home country. Let's work hard together for an even better Okayama University in the future.

Last, I want everyone to be proud of your education at Okayama University and your respective degrees. Your ongoing success will set an example for the next generations. In this way, Okayama University will continue to expand through the contribution, knowledge, experience, and hope that all graduating students pass on to their juniors.

I once again express my heartiest congratulations to everyone on your graduation, today.

Hirofumi Makino,

President, Okayama University National University Corporation

September, 25th, 2019