

令和4年度入学式 学長式辞

埼玉大学のキャンパスのある大久保の地に、今年も春が巡ってきました。樹々が芽吹き、桜咲くキャンパスに新しい仲間を迎えることは、我々にとってこの上ない喜びです。

本日、埼玉大学に入学された学部学生 1,605 名、博士前期課程学生 590 名、博士後期課程学生 31 名の皆さん、ご入学おめでとうございます。教職員一同、皆さんの入学を心より歓迎いたします。また、これまで深い愛情をもって新入生の皆さんを育て、支えてこられたご家族、関係者の皆様にも、心よりお祝い申し上げます。

この2年あまり、新型コロナウイルス感染症拡大に伴い、数度にわたる緊急事態宣言が発出され、社会、そして皆さんの生活は様々な制約を受けました。そのような中でこれまで多くの困難を乗り越えて勉学、研究に励み、本日、埼玉大学へ入学された皆さんの努力を心より讃えたいと思います。

さて、埼玉大学は、73年前に、埼玉師範学校、埼玉青年師範学校、旧制浦和高等学校を引き継ぐ形で、教育学部と文理学部を擁する大学として開学しました。当初のキャンパスは旧制浦和高等学校のあった現在の北浦和公園の地でしたが、大学の発展に伴い、より充実した環境を整えるべく、56年前に現在のキャンパスのある大久保の地に移転しました。

本学の前身の一つである旧制高等学校は、旧帝大への予備教育を行う修業年限3年の学校でした。その中でも、旧制浦和高等学校は名門校として知られ、各界で活躍する多くの卒業生を輩出しました。その中に、昨年亡くなられた作家、半藤一利さんがいます。半藤さんは、昭和史に関する優れた著作を数多く残しましたが、中でも、御前会議において太平洋戦争における日本の降伏を決定し、ポツダム宣言受諾を国民へ知らせるまでの経緯を綿密な取材と証言を基に書いた「日本のいちばん長い日」は、秀逸なノンフィクションとして長く読まれ、映画化もされています。

半藤さんは、旧制浦和高等学校はとてもよい学校で、多くの書物と出会い、見聞を広める経験を積むことができたと言われています。その時のエピソードのひとつが私の心に残りました。当時半藤さんが所属していたボート部では、夏休みに行われる全国大会に出場すべきかどうかという問題が持ち上がりました。「ボートを漕ぐことの意義」や「終戦後に食べるものもロクにないときに無理して出場することの意義」など様々な意見が出たのちに決がとられ、半藤さんは「出場すべき」と思いつつも、場の空気に気おされて「不出場」に手を挙げました。ところが、出場すべきとした一人が立ち上がり、窓を開け「浦和高等学校ボート部、ここに崩壊せり！」と叫んだのを見て、他の意見に流された自分を情けなく思ったそうです。この経験から、人生において、やると決めたことは忠実に最後までやるという人生観が生まれたと語っています。

半藤さんが旧制浦和高等学校において後の人生の基盤となる学問、経験を重ねたように、皆さんもまた、埼玉大学で学び考えながら様々な経験を重ねて自己の確立を目指してください。

そんな皆さんに、入学後に取り組んで欲しい二つのことについて話したいと思います。

一つ目は、学問をとおして考える力を鍛えて欲しいということです。そのために必要なのは、まず授業を通して学問の基礎を会得することです。先人が長い歴史の中で掴んだ真理とそこに至るまでの思索や研究の道筋を知ることが、学問の入り口に立つこととなります。学問とは、学んだ知識を基に、自ら問題を発見し、納得いくまで考え、様々な手法を用いてさらなる真理を追究し、新しい知を創造することです。こうした学問を積み重ねていくことによって、皆さんの考える力が鍛えられます。また、真理を追究するためには、常に既存の物事、常識を「疑う」ことに加えて、自分自身の考えさえも批判的に見る目が必要になります。このような姿勢は、将来学問の道に進む時はもちろん、より複雑化する社会の中で仕事をする時にも、また、個の確立した人間としての成長にも重要なことです。

二つ目は、幅広い経験を積んで欲しいということです。学部学生の皆さんは、アルバイト、サークル活動、旅行、ボランティア、インターンシップなど、未知の世界を経験して欲しいと思います。そこで様々な人々と出会い、対話することが、皆さんの視野を広げ、考えを深めることにつながります。また、大学院生の皆さんは今までに学んだことを基にさらに専門性を究めていってください。その道は決して平たんなものばかりではなく、苦悩することがあるかもしれません。しかし、それを乗り越えていくことによって自らの経験値が上がり、自信が芽生えてきます。

そして、学部学生、大学院生の皆さんともに、海外への留学も是非検討してください。異なる文化の日常に触れ、そこに生きる人々と交わることで、時には自分の中にある常識が覆され、このことが皆さんの視座を高めます。同時に、自分とは異なる意見にも耳を傾けて議論し、自分はどうすべきかを考えて判断する経験を重ねることによって、皆さんの思考はよりたくましいものへと成長していきます。

埼玉大学はすべての学部・研究科が一つのキャンパスにあります。これは、多彩なバックグラウンドを持つ学生や教員が身近にいることを意味します。ぜひ、この環境を最大限に活かして行ってください。

どんな時も、皆さんが学び、研究する日々を、私たち教職員は全力で支えていきます。そして、よりよい教育と最先端の研究のために私たちも日々前進してまいります。

本日はご入学誠におめでとうございます。

令和4年4月6日
埼玉大学長 坂井 貴文

President's Address at the 2022 Saitama University Entrance Ceremony

Spring has come around once more in the Okubo area, the location of the Saitama University campus. There is no greater joy for us than to welcome new friends to our campus, where the trees are budding, and the cherry blossoms are in full bloom.

Today, I would like to congratulate 1605 Bachelor's students, 590 Master's students and 31 Doctoral students on their admission to Saitama University. All of our faculty and staff members would like to extend you a sincere welcome. In addition, to all of the parents and other related parties, who raised our new students with deep love and affection and supported them up to this point, you have our heartfelt congratulations.

Over the past two years or so, the spread of COVID-19 has resulted in the declaration of a state of emergency on several occasions. Society and your lives have been restricted in many ways. I would like to commend the efforts of our new students, who have overcome many difficulties in your studies and research, and who, today, have been admitted to the undergraduate faculties and graduate schools.

73 years ago, Saitama University opened as a university with the Faculty of Education and the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, taking over for the Saitama Normal School, Saitama Youth Normal School, and Urawa High School. Initially, the campus was located on the land of Urawa High School, which is now Kitaurawa Park. As the university developed, arranging for more robust facilities became necessary, and 56 years ago, the university moved to a place in Okubo, its present-day campus location.

Urawa High School under the old system of education, one of Saitama University's predecessors, was a three-year school that provided preparatory education to the former imperial universities. Urawa High School was known as a particularly prestigious school, and produced many graduates who played active roles in various fields. The writer Kazutoshi Hando, who passed away last year, was among the school's graduates. Mr. Hando wrote many excellent books on Showa history. Among them, his book "Japan's Longest Day"—which covers the process of Japan's decision to surrender in the Pacific War and announce its acceptance of the Potsdam Declaration at the Imperial Conference, and is based on in-depth interviews and testimonies—is an excellent nonfiction book that has been read for a long time, and was even made into a movie.

Although Mr. Hando studied at Urawa High School for only one year due to postwar school

system reforms, he described it as a very good school, where he was able to encounter many books and gain experience in broadening his horizons. At the time, the question was raised at the rowing club, where Mr. Hando was a member, as to whether or not the club should participate in the national tournament held during summer vacation. After the club members expressed various opinions, such as "What's the meaning of rowing a boat?" and "What's the meaning of forcing ourselves to compete when we barely have food to eat after the war?" a vote was taken. Mr. Hando felt that the club should participate in the competition, but the atmosphere in the room made him raise his hand to vote in favor of not participating. However, another one of the members of the club, who had thought the team should compete, stood up, opened the window, and yelled, "Here, the Urawa High School Rowing Club has collapsed!" He felt ashamed of himself for being influenced by other opinions. Mr. Hando said that this experience gave him an outlook on life of faithfully doing the things he had decided to do, and seeing them through to the end.

Just as Mr. Hando accumulated knowledge and experiences at Urawa High School that would form the foundation for the rest of his life, I hope that you will also aim to establish yourselves through a variety of experiences while learning and thinking at Saitama University. At the same time, we, humanity, now stand at a crossroads in terms of whether or not we can build a sustainable society. Carving out the complex and difficult path of coexistence with nature and other people, and building a sustainable society, are precisely the tasks entrusted to all of you for the future. For those of you who bear that responsibility, I would like to talk about two things that I hope you will learn at this university.

First, I want you to refine your ability to think. The first step in this process is to master the basics of academics through classes. Knowing about the truths that our predecessors grasped over the course of their long history, and about the paths of contemplation and research which led them to those truths, is to stand at the gateway to learning. Learning is to discover problems on your own, to think about them until you are satisfied, to pursue further truths using various methods, and to create new knowledge, based on the knowledge you have learned. By continuing to build on this sort of learning, your ability to think will be refined. To pursue truths, you also need to constantly doubt existing things and what is common sense, and even look critically at your own ideas. Having this sort of attitude is important; not just for your future academic career, but also for working in an increasingly complex society, and for developing as a person with an established identity.

Second, for undergraduate students, I would like you to consciously accumulate a wide range of experiences. Experiencing the unknown—like taking a part-time job, doing circle activities,

traveling, doing volunteer work, and taking an internship—and meeting various people through those experiences, then engaging in dialogue, will lead you to expanding your horizons and thinking about things in more depth. In addition, to the graduate students, continue to develop your expertise even further, based on what you have learned up to this point. That path will not necessarily be a smooth one, and you may suffer. However, you will gain experience by overcoming those difficulties, and your confidence will grow. I encourage both undergraduate and graduate students to think about studying abroad. By experiencing everyday life in a different culture and interacting with the people who live in that culture, your own common sense will sometimes be overturned, and this will enhance your perspective. At the same time, through the experience of listening to and discussing opinions that differ from your own, then making decisions based on what you think you should do, your ability to think will grow stronger.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, as various restrictions have been imposed over these past two years, we have once again been made aware that we all have different learning styles. At the same time, the significance of studying at university is being debated once more. Going forward, we will continue to hold discussions and seek out a new form for Saitama University. However, irrespective of the era, it is an unchanging truth that studying on campus with a diverse group of people, and interacting with your peers and university faculty, will deepen your knowledge even further and help you grow as a person. All of Saitama University's faculties and graduate schools are located on one campus. This means that students and faculty members with diverse backgrounds are near at hand. Please utilize this environment to the fullest.

No matter the circumstances, we faculty and staff members will do our utmost to support you in your days of learning and research, and we will also move forward each day for better learning.

Once again, congratulations on your admission to our school.

April 6, 2022

Takafumi Sakai
President, Saitama University