



GRADUATION CEREMONY SPRING 2020



Kyutech
Kyushu Institute of Technology



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President's March Graduation Ceremony Address for AY 2019

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In view of the expanding impact of the novel coronavirus infection (COVID-19), it has been decided that the Academic Year 2019 Graduation Ceremony for Kyushu Institute of Technology (Kyutech), which was scheduled to take place at Kitakyushu Soleil Hall, will be cancelled in order to minimize the risk of further spread of infection, out of consideration for the health and safety of our students, their families and everyone concerned. For graduating students and their families and guardians the Graduation Ceremony is a precious milestone event and I am sure that you will all have been waiting for this day to come. It is therefore extremely regrettable that we had to make this decision out of a desire to prioritize the safety of all concerned and prevent the spread of further infection and I very much hope for your understanding.

Although we are being faced with such circumstances, today I would first like to congratulate all of you who are embarking on promising careers. I would also like to extend my heartfelt congratulations to the proud parents, guardians and other family members in attendance who have provided the graduates with material and emotional support during their paths leading up to this point.

As we celebrate your graduation from Kyutech, I would like to take the opportunity today to consider together with you all what is important for your continued success and achievements into the future. To this end, I would like to touch on two topics. First is the infrastructure that is required to continue to maintain a healthy society. Second are the necessary qualities that individuals need in order to lead rich and fulfilling lives.

Firstly, I would like to talk about the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) that from the end of last year started spreading from Wuhan City, in Hubei Province in China. As you are all only too well aware, this virus has now spread around the entire world and the situation remains unpredictable. In addition to offering my condolences to the families and acquaintances of those who have succumbed to the virus, I would like to also express my sincere sympathies to those who are suffering from the virus-related disease. In today's world where many people crisscross international borders daily, there is an inevitable possibility that infectious diseases too could expand rapidly beyond international borders. Our own social lives, as well as domestic and international economic activities have all been greatly affected by this latest outbreak. An era in which globalization continues to advance and diverse people engage in exchanges means that we must all continue to improve our mutual understanding and response skills relating to emerging infectious diseases, both at the national level and the

grassroots level. It is at times like these when we must promote the publication and sharing of appropriate information at home and overseas, and it is of ever greater importance not to seek to divide or discriminate, but rather cooperate.

Bearing that in mind, I would like us to think about what it means for a society to remain healthy. In *La Prospérité du vice. Une introduction (inquiète) à l'économie (The Prosperity of Vice: A Worried View of Economics)* the French economist Daniel Cohen observes that economic growth in modern states relies on modern frameworks of the nation-state and that in order to generate wealth, what are needed are capital, human resources and efficient social systems. Cohen also points out that human resources require both education and public health. The Kojien dictionary defines public health in this way, “Organized hygiene activities organized by public and private health institutions and regional and occupational organizations to maintain and promote public health.” Public health also includes measures to combat communicable diseases, which encompasses infectious diseases such as COVID-19. Furthermore, with regard to health, the preamble to the World Health Organization (WHO) Constitution states the following: (WHO website: https://www.who.int/governance/eb/who_constitution_en.pdf) “Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. The health of all peoples is fundamental to the attainment of peace and security and is dependent upon the fullest co-operation of individuals and States.” We can understand, therefore, if a society is to remain healthy and vibrant it requires enhanced mechanisms that give due consideration to people’s health. At the same time, with regard to education it is important to have mechanisms in place that provide rich learning opportunities. It could well be said that it is also of ever increasing importance for these things to be adequately understood at both the national and grassroots levels.

Next, I would like to consider the foundation that we all need as individuals to live happy and meaningful lives. This is something that shares various aspects in common with what is needed for society to remain healthy, which I have already mentioned. In other words, with regard to education and health, it is important for individuals to have a desire to continue to learn and study and to continually strive to maintain their health. If you possess the two qualities of education and health, you are able to engage in various personal and social activities in society. With regard to the kinds of qualities and skills that are needed for such activities, another French economist, Jacques Attali, sets out seven principles for surviving the 21st century in his book *Survivre aux crises (Surviving Crisis)*. Among these principles, Attali notes the necessity of self-respect, empathy, and creativity. Firstly, self-affirmation, or recognizing the validity of our own existence is important. It is based on this that we are able to recognize the importance of respect for others and maintaining a sense of responsibility. Secondly, empathy and curiosity are considered to be “qualities that include the skill to understand values and customs of other cultures and to penetrate and appreciate others’ thoughts.” Creativity is judged to be necessary

as the “power of positive thinking to create opportunity from adversity.”

Today in the present and even more so with regard to the future, we only have access to incomplete and insufficient information. What is more, society and the world are constantly changing and we are obliged to make decisions and take action against this ever-changing backdrop. Accordingly, there is a high possibility that an undesirable problem may emerge for you personally or for the organization to which you are affiliated. It is my earnest hope that even if a challenge or crisis emerges, you will face up to it with sincerity, engaging your powers of positive thinking to create opportunity from adversity, and drawing on your qualities of empathy as you cooperate with others to change crisis into opportunity. It is you who will lead us to the future.

To conclude my farewell address, I would like to wish you all great success as you embark on your future careers, drawing on the positive experiences and encounters that you have accumulated here at Kyutech. Once again, my heartiest congratulations.