

Congratulatory remarks

I would like to offer my heartfelt congratulations to the 3 students who have been awarded doctoral degrees today. Of the graduates today, 1 of you is an international student who chose to leave your home country to study and complete your research here at NAIST.

Including the graduates today, NAIST has conferred 8,332 master's degrees and 1,704 doctoral degrees since its establishment, with international students comprising 358 master's and 341 doctoral degree recipients.

From when the new coronavirus was first confirmed in Japan in Nara prefecture in late January of this year, the infection gradually spread throughout Japan and there were fears of an explosion of infections. From early April when a state of emergency was declared for certain areas of Japan and in mid-April the state of emergency was then extended to all prefectures, Nara prefecture was under a state of emergency for about one month.

As TERADA Torahiko said, "Natural disasters strike when they are forgotten about." and in Japan the coronavirus infection was the first massive infection disaster in 100 years since the Spanish flu.

Until the states of emergency were lifted, NAIST was requested to temporarily stop its operations to prevent the spreading of the new coronavirus infection, and we decided to implement the policy where students were not to enter the campus except for special cases. This period was exactly when you were putting the final touches on your doctoral theses. At one point it was thought that there may not be any graduates this June. I salute you for your hard work during such circumstances in obtaining your degrees today.

All of you today will now set out on your careers as professional researchers and engineers and currently science and technology is facing an era of revolutionary changes. It is without exaggeration to say that recent developments in science and technology are based on ICT technology innovations in both hardware and software.

This science and technology revolution's influence has clearly reached areas of science and technology outside of information science. For example, in the field of biological science there is the research area of bio-informatics and in materials science the presence of materials informatics, a new research area, is increasing.

It can be said that, in pursuit of a 'Super Smart Society' in which a myriad of things are

connected to the internet fusing the ‘cyber world’ and the ‘real world’ and which is based upon analysis of huge amounts of real time-collected data that may be accessed from around the world through networks, a new research paradigm is developing called ‘data-driven science’ or ‘AI-driven science.’

You have achieved specialized knowledge and experience focused in your specific field of either information or biological science. However, from now I hope that you will widen your view to the surrounding fields of study to be active as researchers and engineers, responding flexibly to developments in science and technology to continually pursue the opening of new frontiers for exploration.

Through your doctoral thesis research, you have the valuable experiences through which you developed the ability to identify problems, explore and implement solutions to these problems, evaluate the outcomes, and write academic papers on the outcomes through discussions with people having various viewpoints.

While this experience, along with the unforeseen hardships due to the new coronavirus infection, may have presented you with difficulties at times, I am confident that the networks you have created here will assure your successful future.

NAIST’s role does not end with us sending you out into society. Rather, NAIST faculty and staff members consider our role as facilitating the building of strong relationships with alumni so that each and all of you will be able to continue your creative lives in an ever-changing community of science and technology.

Recently, every year we hold our Homecoming Day along with the Fall Open Campus and we hope to continue hold this kind of event will be held again. Please return to our campus at that time as role models for our future students. In the ‘new normal’ of the post-coronavirus world, we will consider an online participation format and, if that case, Homecoming Day will be a blend of real and virtual participation format.

In concluding my message, I would like to congratulate you again on receiving your degrees today. We look forward to your future endeavors and achievements.

YOKOYA Naokazu, President, Nara Institute of Science and Technology
June 25, 2020