

Valedictorian Speech

My name is Hiroaki Nawa from the Graduate School of Public Policy. On behalf of all the graduates, I would like to express my sincere gratitude for holding this degree conferment ceremony. It feels surreal to be standing here today, delivering this speech at the University of Tokyo, which seemed out of reach when I was a high school student about 10 years ago.

I began my studies as a working student in the spring of 2020, and thanks to the long-term course system, I was able to complete my graduate program in four years. These past four years have been marked by various crises, from the COVID-19 pandemic to the Noto Peninsula earthquake on New Year's Day this year.

During this time, my personal life also underwent significant changes. I was promoted to manager at work, where my responsibilities and perspective on management changed. I also became a father of one. While my resume may look impressive, it was a period of hardship, filled with more failures and regrets than successes. There were times when I struggled to meet expectations at both work and school, and I felt frustrated by my lack of progress. Looking back, I realize that my past successes have led to overconfidence and complacency.

From these struggles, I have learned three important lessons.

The first lesson is that I am not as exceptional as I once thought. When I achieved something, I tended to believe that it was solely due to my abilities. However, I have come to deeply understand that my accomplishments are the result of various factors and support from others.

The second lesson is the need to be aware of my limitations. Even after four years of study, the knowledge I have gained is only equivalent to a single bookshelf. It is important to acknowledge this reality and continue learning with humility, without being blinded by my limited knowledge or rationality.

The third lesson is that life's turning points can come unexpectedly and suddenly. Societal changes are no exception, and we must be prepared for them before they happen. My area of expertise lies in cultural policy, particularly as it pertains to museums and other cultural institutions. My master's thesis examined the challenges surrounding the preservation and utilization of cultural properties. Considering the current state of Japanese society, I believe that this field will require urgent attention in the near future. Though I do not yet have a definitive answer for how to implement effective policies in the future, I will commit myself to exploring this issue through my daily work. I believe that this process of trial and error, with the aim of contributing to society, is the role and responsibility expected of graduates from this university.

The graduates here today are about to embark on different paths. I look forward to the day when we meet again, having overcome the uncertainties of the future and grown as individuals. Finally, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude and respect to my professors, family, friends, and everyone who has supported us. Thank you for everything.

Congratulations to all of us on our graduation!

March 21, 2024

Hiroaki Nawa

Valedictorian, Graduate School of Public Policy