

June 2023 Commencement Address

First of all, I would like to extend my heartfelt congratulations to all of you who have been conferred doctoral degrees today. I know you have faced many difficulties in the unprecedented circumstances of the coronavirus pandemic. Still, you have worked day in and day out on your research and reached the great goal of obtaining your degrees today. I hope you will take pride in what you have accomplished at NAIST. May the joy of this day be etched in your heart for a long time to come.

I would also like to extend my congratulations to your family and friends, as well as to your professors, who have worked with enthusiasm to guide you through your thesis research. It must bring tremendous joy to all those who have supported your studies at NAIST in different ways.

You have all worked hard for years, starting from elementary school, and now you have completed graduate school with your doctorate degrees. Maybe you won't be attending another school in your life. However, your learning does not end here. John Dewey, a prominent philosopher of American pragmatism, once said, "I believe that education, therefore, is a process of living and not a preparation for future living." You can find a great example of this in your professors. They completed their graduate studies long ago, but they continue pursuing further learning to stay current with the latest research and instruct their students.

What would happen if we stopped striving to continue to learn? You may be familiar with the Second Law of Thermodynamics or the Law of Entropy Increase. You may know that I am a biologist. In biology, it is known that living things, including humans, work hard to maintain impressive order and structure in their bodies by taking in energy from food and other resources. If this activity of maintaining homeostasis ceases, the order of life forms will be lost according to the Law of Entropy Increase. For example, the body temperature becomes the same as the ambient temperature, approaching a state of equilibrium with the environment, which is the "death" of the organism.

Have you ever heard of the name Jeff Bezos, the former CEO of Amazon? He resigned as CEO the year before last. In his last letter to Amazon shareholders, Bezos used an interesting analogy of the characteristic of life activity, which is constantly resisting increasing entropy, as I mentioned. He said that if we do not continually devote our energies, such as organisms do to sustain their lives, we will fall into a state of equilibrium with our surroundings, meaning that we will lose our distinctiveness and originality. To be ourselves and to be

original without becoming the same as those around us, we must continue to make tireless efforts. And I believe one of the ways to do this is to continue to learn.

There are many ways to learn. In addition to reading books and learning knowledge and skills from teachers at school, you can seek various learning opportunities on your own. As you leave NAIST and go out into the world, you will meet new friends and colleagues. You may get to know people who are very unique or have atypical experiences and backgrounds. By learning about their different ways of life or careers, you may discover possibilities and options you could not have known through your own experiences. Or you may find a role model who illustrates a career path you are unaware of. Looking back on my own career to date, I have had many encounters at crossroads in my life, such as going to the U.S. for postdoctoral study and becoming a professor at the University of California.

Today you have been awarded a doctoral degree, which can be compared to a driver's license. It is a driver's license to embark on a journey to further your evolution. A doctorate is never the goal. Even after graduation, I hope you will continue pursuing what Jeff Bezos called "your distinctiveness." Keep learning and pushing your limits one after another through relentless efforts with NAIST's spirit of "Outgrow your limits" in mind. I am sure you will be a valuable role model for others one day.

I want you to remember that you will be a part of NAIST's community even after graduating from NAIST, united by our spirit of "Outgrow your limits." Your connections with our community, including the faculty and staff, will be one of your greatest assets. NAIST has graduated more than 10,000 students to date, and our alum association has become a global network of those. I hope that you will make use of your connection with NAIST in your future careers through the NAIST Alum Association and our annual Homecoming Day in the fall.

In closing, I would like to congratulate you again on your doctoral degrees and wish you all the best in your future endeavors.

Kaz SHIOZAKI
President