

2023 Fall – President’s Commencement Address

This is a special day for you and for everybody who knows you. Let me begin by congratulating each member of this graduating class, on which I have just conferred 24 Doctoral degrees and 31 Master’s degrees.

As you know, the commencement ceremonies during the COVID-19 pandemic were very different from what we have today. Getting together here to celebrate your accomplishments doubles the festivity on this graduation day. You all have been striving toward one of the milestones you have reached today, even amid the unprecedented obstacles forced by COVID-19. We are proud of your resilience and what you have overcome. Well done!

In addition to recognizing your hard work and achievements, today is a day to show appreciation towards those who have helped and supported you, such as your professors, family, and friends. I am sure many of you are also thankful for the attentive support from our administrative staff and the Health Care Center throughout your campus life. Not all of them may not be here, but why don’t we give them a round of applause?

This is a perfect opportunity for you to reflect on your days at NAIST. Some of you may now be remembering all the sacrifices you made to reach today’s goal—lack of sleep, working in the lab on weekends, missing family and friends back home. You might have been worried, anxious, and sometimes stressed out in the middle of your challenges, but how do they appear when you recall them now?

“It’s funny how some distance makes everything seem small. And the fears that once controlled me can’t get me at all”, Queen Elsa sings in the movie “Frozen.” Hard times never last, as you may have realized on this day of celebration. I would also like to remind you that all progress takes place outside of the comfort zone. If you feel your graduate study was not easy, you surely have made progress. American politician Bob Riley said, “Hard times don’t create heroes. It is during the hard times when the ‘hero’ within us is revealed.” I am sure you are different from who you were before you came to NAIST.

Now, I want you to think how different you are after studying at NAIST. You may say that you have learned cutting-edge knowledge in science and technology. But even the latest knowledge you have will be outdated soon after you step out of this campus.

After this commencement ceremony, why don’t you go out from this Millennium Hall and walk up to the Takayama Science Plaza once more? You can see a big face mirrored on its glass windows. Who is that? Yes, Albert Einstein. The giant in

theoretical physics once said, “Education is what remains after one has forgotten what one has learned in school.” Through your thesis research, you have developed the scientific skills and ways of thinking to objectively observe, logically ponder, and critically evaluate your own thinking and what is happening around you. Such abilities won’t be forgotten even after many years, and they are essential qualifications for global leaders to tackle diverse problems and tasks.

In other words, you chose a particular education program, a particular laboratory, and a particular thesis project to acquire skills and abilities that can be applied to a wide array of tasks, issues, and obstacles. Such skills and abilities are sometimes called “transferable skills.” Having completed your study at NAIST, you are now ready for new challenges, even outside the particular research field you chose for your thesis research. Don’t just stay in your comfort zone. “Outgrow your limits.” Your graduate degree is a driver’s license to start a new journey to discover your potential that you are not aware of yet.

Our planet is currently facing multiple imminent issues that could lead to calamity, but there is no planet B. You are our best chance to steer the globe onto the right path. The world may not know you yet, but they count on you. Make us proud, our newest alums! NAIST is always here to celebrate your accomplishments and achievements even after you leave this campus, as universities are assessed by the success of their graduates. Please stay connected with NAIST through our Alumni Association. Today, you are joining more than 10,000 alums who have also been trained here at NAIST and are trying to make this world a better place.

I’d like to close my commencement address by quoting a French philosopher, Henri Bergson. In his book titled “Creative Evolution,” Bergson wrote:
“For a conscious being, to exist is to change, to change is to mature, to mature is to go on creating oneself endlessly.”
Upon your departure from NAIST, I wish you the best in your new journey to go on creating yourself endlessly.

Once again, congratulations!
Go now and outgrow your limits!