

April 3rd, 2024

Congratulatory Address for the Spring 2024 Entrance Ceremony

Yasunori Mitani, President
Kyushu Institute of Technology (Kyutech)

Congratulations on your admission to Kyutech. It is a great pleasure for all of our faculty members, staff, current students, and the many people supporting our university to be able to welcome you today with this grand entrance ceremony in the midst of beautiful spring. On behalf of Kyutech, I would like to express my gratitude and offer my congratulations to all the new students, as well as to their families and relatives who have supported them.

As our daily life is finally returning to normal state after three years of constraints of the pandemic, I have begun to realize that it was just a misunderstanding to think everything around us was forced to be stopped due to the pandemic because I have realized and amazed by the fact that the world has been changing rapidly and moving forward despite of the constraints already; so again I am impressed by the resilience of human nature.

In particular, we are seeing various technologies are developing from the fields of digital transformation and green transformation, and the use of digital devices is now common in your learning spaces; and with the advent of generative AI, we are entering an era in which knowledge based on large amounts of data can be easily obtained.

The world is changing very dynamically with big turbulent waves which Japan is also in the midst of, and you have come to the right place here in the North Kyushu where you will be blessed from environment with the perspective of advancing science and technology historically and geographically.

Our university was opened in 1909 as a private institution originally named “Meiji Senmon Gakko” or “Meiji College of Technology” in Tobata, founded by Mr. Keiichiro Yasukawa, to train students to become engineers to support the

industrial development of Japan. Mr. Yasukawa, our founder, contributed significantly to the industrial revolution of Japan by establishing various enterprises including the coal mining company in “Chikuho” area, where our Iizuka Campus is now located, to supply coal to the Imperial Steel Works of Japan (Yawata Steel Works) which began operations in 1901.

When Meiji Senmon Gakko was established, our first president, Dr. Kenjiro Yamakawa, set forth the philosophy of founding spirit to “educate students to become “Shikunshi” with excellent technology proficiency”. “Shikunshi” means a person of great academic skills with a great personality, and as we transformed from a private institution to a national university, and from a national university to the national university corporation Kyushu Institute of Technology, we have been fulfilling our duties of education, research, and social contribution to inherit our founding philosophy by training students to become engineers of great academic skills and a full of intelligence with excellent technology proficiency to create new technologies and innovations.

We are reminded that engineers who can play an active role in today's uncertain society, which cannot be foreseen even in the distant future, must acquire ethics, a business mindset, and a global mindset all together. We are strongly demanded by our society to educate and train such human resources. In this sense, I am extraordinarily amazed by the foresight of Mr. Keiichiro Yasukawa and Dr. Kenjiro Yamakawa who in 115 years ago advocated the philosophy of founding spirit to “educate students to become “Shikunshi” with excellent technology proficiency” which has never worn out in modern society.

In addition, more than 38 years ago, Kyutech foresaw the significant importance of information technologies, which we are now seeing the emerging demand of human resources in the field of data science and information technologies such as big data and generative AI, so we have established Japan's first campus to teach computer science and information technology in Iizuka City which needed to transform from old coal-mining city to new technology city.

At present, Kyutech consists of 3 campuses in Tobata, the site of the establishment of Meiji College of Technology, Iizuka, a former coal supply site, and Wakamatsu, a prosperous coal loading port; and they are updating their history and develop with the region where technology has been accumulated. To date, we have produced more than 70,000 engineers with excellent technology

proficiency who have been playing important roles in various industries in Japan and in overseas.

With the recent advent of generative AI, some says that AI may take jobs from us; and it could happen to you if you spend most of your university life just to memorize what textbooks tell you. Therefore, I expect you to always confront things and problems with curiosity and a critical thinking approach. Critical thinking is sometimes translated as criticizing way of thinking in Japanese, so some people may understand it a little incorrectly. The etymology of English “critical” is “able to discern / to separate / to identify / to choose”. The idea of being analytical, evaluative, and essential in forming judgements, decisions, or opinions is fundamentally important.

Kyutech is building a diverse "campus where future technologies can be encountered" with a co-creation space where various players such as the Beyond 5G environment and startups gather to establish next-generation communications standards. I believe that if you appreciate chances to encounter for the various things that you will experience here, and if you develop a skill of critical thinking to see whether the information that we provide is correct, you will be able to be competitive with AI. The meeting of technology and people brings unexpected good fortune, is a source of innovation, and enables you to do things that any other person cannot do even with today's cutting-edge technology. In this privileged environment, I expect you to cultivate the ability to challenge things with curiosity, analyze things from an objective perspective, and solve problems.

Finally, COVID-19 still stays here as the same risk of infection as influenza, and we cannot have zero-risk situation, but I sincerely hope that all students who enter our university will be able to manage risks in your life, think about their irreplaceable daily lives and the value of human life, pay full attention to your health, enjoy socializing and learning with friends, and enjoy a meaningful campus life. Congratulations today.