

President Address AY 2021 Entrance Ceremony

To all our new students, congratulations on your admission to Gifu University. We are extremely pleased to have 1,323 new undergraduate students, and 624 graduate students join our campus this new academic year, and on behalf of the University faculty and staff, I welcome all of you. I am sure you are excited and eager to embark on a new journey. We all share and welcome the sense of freshness you will bring into this new place of study. I would also like to take this opportunity to appreciate all the people including your guardians and supervisors who have supported you every step of the way.

Due to the spread of COVID-19 both in our community and around the world, I know how very difficult and disappointing it is to cancel the scheduled AY2021 Entrance Ceremony. When you look around this auditorium, you will notice only 21 student representatives from their respective faculties and schools in attendance among us today at this opening ceremony. The university board members have also been limited to myself, the vice presidents, the deans of each faculty and graduate school, and the director of the University Hospital. Congratulatory messages from President Hideaki Hara of Gifu Pharmaceutical University and Ms. Akiko Asai, President of Gifu University Alumni Association can be viewed on the Gifu University website. I encourage you to view them at your ease as we share this joyous occasion in marking one of the most important transitions in your lives.

As an institution that is committed to excellence in higher education, the National University Corporation called “Tokai National Higher Education and Research System” was launched on April 1, 2020, bringing together two academic institutions of excellence – Gifu University and Nagoya University – into a single framework. This consolidation will further enable our two universities to engage in a wider range of joint educational and research activities, such as the joint operation of Academic Central for general basic education, and the establishment of four core educational and research directives, namely, Institute for Glyco-core Research (iGCORE), Healthcare Data Integration and Research, Intelligent Production Technology Research and Development for Aerospace, and Agriculture Education Research. The Tokai National Higher Education and Research System strives to enhance our global competitiveness and contribute to the well-being and prosperity of our local communities and citizens; metaphorically speaking, like “two wheels of a single cart.” Given the unprecedented challenges brought about by the outbreak of the pandemic since the beginning of last year, significant operations have

already been accomplished owing to the strenuous efforts by members of our organization through active engagement in opinion exchanges, elaborate coordination and arrangements to move to virtual classes and meetings. Fortunately, the response by our dedicated staff in deploying digital innovation dynamics on campus shows the remarkable speed and resourceful undertaking on all our behalf. “Creating our future with strong commitment and courage” is of primal importance here at the Tokai National Higher Education and Research System. Gifu University remains deeply committed to being a place for everyone to “learn, explore and contribute.” As a valued member of this institution, I call on every one of you to take up this challenge in reaching out from the Tokai region into the global arena.

Transition to university marks an important chapter in your academic life. I invite you to discover what it means to “learn.” As president, I can assure that you will be exposed to a different stage in your educational life that is distinct from what you had experienced previously. Over the next four years, as you face enormous amount and degrees of challenging work in your academic disciplines, in your interactions with fellow students and academics in your respective fields of studies, and in your deeper search for understanding and knowledge in such distinct fields as natural sciences, humanities, and social sciences, I hope you can come to deeper understanding of the meaning of “learning.” Along this journey in your academic discipline, you will discover new scientific knowledge and establish ways of thinking about things on your own.

Your first year at university will be extremely important in building your study habits and methods. Your university success will strongly depend on the academic foundations you build in your first year. One of the most important aspects of this transition is to remain focused and disciplined.

Tremendous changes in university education have been brought about by the latest pandemic. University lectures are now offered both online and in-person depending on the needs and purposes necessitated. For newly enrolled students, more face-to-face classes and campus activities not only facilitate more effective engagement between you and your instructors and classmates, but also enrich your extracurricular activities. In contrast, certain curricular activities that require knowledge acquisition or repetition drills, using “on-demand” educational materials may better fit the purposes. The combination of both in-person and virtual teaching has been recognized as fit for our educational purposes on campus. Currently, 70% classes are offered in-person to first-

year students, whereas in-person, online, and hybrid classes are offered to second-year students onward in equal proportions (excluding actual experiments and practical training sessions). Distinct differences in the operation of classroom teaching and co-curricular activities by each faculty and school are in effect, so it is important that you obtain the proper information at your departmental orientation.

The foundations of modern higher learning is built-up on the seven liberal arts which are often represented by figures of seven goddesses flying high, for example above the hall of some old libraries in the West referred to as the “branches of knowledge” that focused on: rhetoric, grammar, astronomy, logic, algebra, geometry, art, and their underlying philosophy. Pursuing a liberal arts education and your own specialized field of study will eventually equip you with the tools necessary to be a responsible and participatory member of the larger society.

You have made the right decision to enter Gifu University because of our long, proud history. Gifu University, which was founded in 1949, consists of diverse faculties each with its own rich history and solid reputation. For example, Gifu Prefectural Normal School (the present Faculty of Education) was established in 1873, making it the fourth oldest institution of higher learning in Japan. And this year marks the 148th anniversary. Subsequently, the Faculty of Applied Biological Sciences was established as early as 1923, and both the Faculty of Engineering and the School of Medicine were founded in the 1940s. As you wander through our campus, take your time to explore – the history of Gifu University by viewing the university archives both on and off campus.

On June 1, 2019, Gifu University celebrated its 70th Anniversary which was marked by celebratory and eventful activities throughout the year. The university’s possession of innumerable academic and artistic resources which have been preserved over the decades made the realization of "Campus Museum Concept" (Phase 1) possible to showcase the entire campus as an "open museum" for the public. In addition to the commemorative exhibition at the University Library, the campus has gracious open spaces with rich greenery that provides an ideal setting for an open museum. With interactive campus maps uploaded from the university website onto smartphones and tablets, visitors can enjoy a walk on campus and “learn”.

As a university we relish in our rich past, but equally as important, we project into the future with Vision 2027 of the Tokai National Higher Education and Research System.

Guided by the motto, “*Regions for the world and the world for regions,*” we fortify our deep commitment to offering a solid general education for our students with special emphasis on strengthening the two distinctive focus on practical English education and mathematical data science education. I encourage all students regardless of your discipline to delve deep into different courses of studies and anticipate with excitement the development of these evolving facets of teaching and learning.

Gifu University also embraces its role as a center for community revitalization as well as nationwide and international education and research hub in its fields of expertise. Gifu University's Center for Collaborative Study with Community plays a pivotal role as a cross-sectional center for community revitalization. Its major mission includes the implementation of “Center of Community” (COC) and COC+ programs, which was propelled by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) to assemble human resources that can spearhead community revitalization. Gifu University had the honor to receive the highest evaluation from MEXT three times in 2016, 2019 and 2020 for its successful execution of COC and COC+ in Japan. As a three-time recipient of this highest evaluation from MEXT, no other universities in Japan has ever made such an outstanding achievement as Gifu University has since the launch of the COC programs in 2013. This confidence-booster will help propel our role as the center for regional revitalization.

In addition, the University enjoys the support and active engagement from the national government for its international and national education and research bases, namely: "Life Sciences Area: Center for Highly Advanced Integration of Nano and Life Sciences (G-CHAIN)," "Environmental Sciences Area: Next-Generation Energy Research Center," "Manufacturing Field: Advanced and Smart Die Engineering, Composite Materials," and the Medical Education Development Center (MEDC). Furthermore, the establishment of new research bases in livestock science, food sciences and aerospace production technology has been underway on campus over the past two years. G-GHAIN and aerospace production technology bases are expected to play an integral part in two relevant research bases of the Tokai National Higher Education and Research System. I believe that the reinforcement and extension of academic functions in these fields will help propel further growth in education and research soon in the coming years.

Gifu University currently has active agreements with 47 universities overseas, and hosts over 600 students and researchers from abroad annually. An average of 300 to 400

international students study on our campus, the majority of whom are fluent in both English and Japanese. The diversity of our student population makes it a great opportunity for Japanese students to interact with international students right here on campus. However, I also urge our students to venture outside Japan once COVID-19 subsides and travel abroad is safe and possible again, in order to experience for yourself other cultures and ways of living & thinking especially in your undergraduate years. In our midst, we already have undergraduate students who have entered international research contests, some of whom have won awards in the fields of space engineering, gene biology and construction engineering. We are proud to have an effective framework in place to assist students interested in international challenges.

To all our incoming students this year my hope is that you become responsible members of society and devote yourselves to the growth and prosperity of Japan and the world. Let me share a quote from Professor Toshihide Masukawa, the theoretical physicist who was awarded the 2008 Nobel Prize in Physics, and whom I personally had the honor to meet in 2017. "*Young people should have aspirations, dreams and hopes. Your constant, strenuous efforts to attain them will be a driving force for growth.*"

Gifu University holds a place for all our students to be the best they can be in achieving their ideals as “glocal” (local and global) citizens.

Finally let me conclude by reminding you again that supporting you in fulfilling your aspirations, dreams, and hopes is central to the mission of our faculty members and staff at Gifu University. We are here to guide you in your growth to achieve your full potential as contributing members of society. Join us in making your university years the best ever.

April 7, 2021

Hisataka Moriwaki

President

Gifu University

Tokai National Higher Education and Research System