

April 6, 2022

President's Address
Academic Year 2022 Entrance Ceremony

Yasunori Mitani, President, Kyushu Institute of Technology

To all new students, together with your family members and relatives, congratulations on your entrance to Kyushu Institute of Technology (Kyutech). It is a great pleasure for all of our staff, students and our friends to welcome you to Kyutech on this auspicious spring day. I am certain that your family members and relatives who have supported along the way are very much proud and happy today as much as you are. On behalf of Kyutech, I would like to express my sincere congratulations to you all.

Two years ago, due to the expanding impact of the novel coronavirus infection (COVID-19), we unavoidably had to cancel the entrance ceremony, but last year we were able to hold the ceremony with the limited minimum number of participants. This year, I am quite happy that we can hold the ceremony with many more students than last year including our valued international students who had long been waiting for the border to be opened to enter Japan under the circumstances that the pandemic has been advancing and retreating in repeated waves with still no sign of coming to an end. Although we are all becoming accustomed to the presence of COVID-19 in our daily lives, I understand that you have experienced various hardships during the past few years. I would like to express my deepest respect to you all for overcoming adversity to greet this day.

As you begin your academic life at Kyutech, I would have you know that our school was originally opened in 1909 as a private institution called the Meiji College of Technology. Our founder is Mr. Keiichiro Yasukawa, famed also as the founder of YASKAWA Electric Corporation, which to this day has its headquarters here in Kitakyushu City. I would like to take a little look back to the geography and history of those days. At the time the Japanese government was following the successful example of Germany, which had espoused a policy of "steel as the lifeblood of the nation." Under this policy the government established the Imperial Steel Works, Japan (Yahata Steel Works), right here in Kitakyushu, where in 1901 operations of the Higashida Daiichi Blast Furnace commenced. It is said that one of major reasons to choose this site was the accessibility for transporting coal by rail and along the Onga River from the rich coal seams of the Chikuho Coalfield, which was located close to present-day Kyutech Iizuka Campus.

Many people were involved in the development of the Chikuho Coalfield, one of whom was Mr. Keiichiro Yasukawa. Mr. Yasukawa launched a wholesale business of coal, then established Meiji Mining Company, a coal mining company in present-day Iizuka City. He contributed to the establishment of various other related companies, including Kurosaki Fire-Brick Manufacturing Company Limited, a manufacturing company of fire bricks for steelmaking furnaces. He also established YASKAWA Electric Corporation to develop and supply electrical equipment for the Meiji Mining Co. Ltd., which was also established by Mr. Yasukawa.

Thus, such a major industrial Input-Output link was created in the northern Kyushu region, which has made great contribution to the industrial and economic development of Japan. In order to train the engineers who were essential and important for such industrial development, Mr. Yasukawa invested his own personal funds to establish the Meiji College of Technology, the predecessor of Kyutech. One of the significant visionary things about Mr. Yasukawa is that he knew the importance of engineers, who are essential to industrial development, and invested in the future which takes a long time to produce results. Today coal has become one of the biggest climate villains in terms of global environmental protection, but meantime the coal and steel industries have also brought about a great variety of technologies, some of which are now contributing to the transformation of a decarbonized society; and this means that we can always take over these traditional technologies and properties and advance them in many ways.

Dr. Kenjiro Yamakawa served as the first President of the Meiji College of Technology. In the final years of the Tokugawa Shogunate through to the early years of the Meiji era, he spent his youth in the turbulent Aizu region, mobilized as a member of the *Byakkotai* (White Tiger) military unit. After various escapades and close encounters with death he decided to pursue a career in science, and had the opportunity to study in the United States, where after he overcome various difficulties in his studies he became the first-ever Japanese to earn a Doctor of Science Degree. There is no doubt that the time he spent studying in the United States had an enormous impact on Dr. Yamakawa's life and career, and it is definitely an important opportunity for personality development when you eager to pursue to know the outside world. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has taken away our opportunities to travel around the world. Before the pandemic, around 700 Kyutech students travelled overseas to experience study and research abroad in every year. In the past two years, while overseas travel has been restricted, remote conferencing systems have developed, providing students with opportunities to connect with other countries. Even so, as the old adage says, "To see is to believe," and being able to go or not is as different an experience as chalk and cheese. By seeing and experiencing the world with your own eyes, you can encounter events that will transform your outlook on life. It is my sincere hope that once the pandemic is over, our new students will be able to return to normal academic life as soon as possible and gain many stimulating experiences. As we have also come to appreciate the benefits of being able to connect the world easily with each other online, "blended" style of learning should be further promoted to standardize the best combination of virtual learning and physical mobility where students both connect with each other online then also visiting places in the real world.

When our school was opened, Dr. Yamakawa, our first President, declared Kyutech's founding principle to be "Educating gentlemen with excellent knowledge and skills in technology". This was an expression of his desire to nurture engineers who are not only technically proficient, but who are also equipped with a moral compass. Another of Dr. Yamakawa's observations that he left to posterity was that even if you have successfully mastered your own field of specialty, you cannot consider yourself a specialist engineer without first having mastered various other fields of knowledge. He was truly a pioneer in seeking to nurture engineers with the social skills and rich culture and learning capable of interacting with the wider world, given that developing global human resources is as essential now as it was back then. It is these founding principles that have been

adhered to all the generations and still guide us today after more than 110 years. I hope that you will enjoy a fulfilling university life here at Kyutech by exploring the technical fields that interest you most, while also gaining many other interests, making many friends, and connecting with the world.

Today, aiming to develop “campuses where you can meet future technology” to welcome all of you, we are currently engaged in various initiatives, including the unmanned store on campus, 5G network as well as the development of test environments for Beyond 5G communication technologies, and setting up co-creation spaces that bring diverse people together. By developing campuses in this way, we aim to bring together not just students and faculty members, but also people brimming with passion from the corporate sector and entrepreneurs seeking to launch startups. These interactions will enable us to identify model cases through which it will be possible to envision our future. Interactions among different technologies and different people can create innovations.

Challenges spur technological advances, and technological advances in turn give rise to new challenges. However, in response to such challenges, it is you who will create technologies and methods that do not exist today and find solutions with your own flexible thinking. I stand here today to ask you to learn, think, and try many things during your time at Kyutech, so that you can contribute to finding solutions to challenges to create social value, by accepting diverse ways of thinking, sharing knowledge, identifying the potential risks technology poses, and overcoming those risks. Kyutech is dedicated to creating such a community and we look forward to welcoming you.

In concluding my address, let me say that although the COVID-19 pandemic has imposed various constraints on our lives, I sincerely hope that you, our new students, will give thoughts to the irreplaceable importance of various activities in our daily lives and the preciousness of human life, and taking good care of your own health, enjoy life and learning, and pursue a meaningful undergraduate or graduate student life. Once again, my sincere congratulations.