

Commencement Address 2018

Dear graduates,

It is such a pleasure to offer congratulations on all of on your graduation. I'd like to extend my sincere congratulations once again to you all!

You are the cream of the crop of KAIST education and research. This day will be marked as a proud moment in the history of KAIST. On this day of celebration, we are honored by the presence of Minister Young Min You of Science and ICT, Assemblyman of the Party for Democracy and Peace, Kyung-Jin Kim; Chairman of the KAIST Board of Trustees, Dr. Jang-Moo Lee; Chairwoman Soo-Young Lee of the KAIST Development Foundation, Sojon Farm Chairman, Baeng-Ho Kim; Ms Sam-Youl Kim, and our many other distinguished guests.

On behalf of KAIST, I would like to offer congratulations to the Chairman of Samsung Electronics, Oh-Hyun Kwon, who is the first alumnus to receive an honorary doctoral degree from KAIST.

Dear parents and family members of graduates!

Thank you for all that you have done. Your love and support have helped the heroes and heroines stand here today. I'd like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude and respect to all of you.

Dearest graduates!

Please stand up for your loved ones - parents, spouses, family members, and friends. Please thank them with a big round of applause.

Now, how about another round of applause for the faculty and staff who have been there through thick and thin?

Let's also give a big round of applause to the government, citizens, and donors whose support has allowed you to commit to studying and research. Graduates, you may now be seated.

Since its establishment in 1971, KAIST has produced 61,100 graduates, including 12,400 Ph.Ds. Our alumni have played a pivotal role in the advancement of science and technology and industrialization in Korea. You will find many KAIST alumni serving in key positions in leading universities, research institutes, companies, and government agencies. Our graduates account for 23% of high-ranking officials and leaders in science and technology.

For instance, one in every four Ph.Ds working in the semiconductor industry of Korea, which is recognized as the most competitive one in the world, are KAIST graduates.

KAIST is now acknowledged as a world-class university beyond Korea.

In the QS World University Rankings, many of our departments ranked within the top 20. For the second consecutive year, Thomson Reuters has ranked KAIST as the first most innovative university in the Asia-Pacific region, the sixth in the world.

Astonishingly, all of this achievement was made in just a half century since KAIST's establishment in 1971. This story inspires many developing countries as a role model.

Korean people believe that KAIST is the future of Korea. Whenever I witness the success of alumni in various domains of society and their positive influence on the university's reputation, I come to think twice about the role and responsibility of KAIST for the years ahead.

KAIST will serve as the new hope for the future of Korea. KAIST is no longer merely one of the universities in Korea. KAIST is the university for the nation and all Koreans. We have a responsibility to foster global leaders in science and technology and to create new knowledge, so as to enhance the international standing of Korea.

When inaugurated as the first alumnus president of KAIST, I declared “Global Value-Creative World-Leading University” as our new vision. This is the beginning toward the new journey of KAIST.

The creation of world-class knowledge, technology, and “economic value added” will be the new mission bestowed upon KAIST and its alumni in this era.

Dear graduates!

Your graduation is a new beginning. So the graduation ceremony is called a commencement ceremony in English. As you embark on this new chapter in life, I’d like to stress the following three messages.

First, you must embrace challenges.

Leaders should be courageous enough to take the road less taken. If you take the well-trodden path, you won’t be able to make a difference. Earlier generations of our alumni mostly chose academic careers. Chairman Kwon, the first alumnus to receive an honorary doctorate degree, jumped into the semiconductor industry instead. Today, he is an unsurpassable leader in the field, both at home and abroad. If he took the road to an academic career like most of their colleagues did, he would not have made this significant global impact in the industry.

Now, the world is facing the great wave of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. Chairman Klaus Schwab of the World Economic Forum, who coined the term “the Fourth Industrial Revolution,” once said, “the Fourth Industrial Revolution comes to us like a tsunami.”

The scope and the speed of the transformation that the Fourth Industrial Revolution will bring about during the next half century is beyond our imagination. What we can say for sure is that

the changes will be far greater and far faster than during the previous three industrial revolutions combined over the past 250 years.

The Fourth Industrial Revolution will bring about significant transformations that no single country has experienced before. The fast-follower strategy Korea used to employ will no longer guarantee the same success. For sustainable growth in the age of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, you should be the first movers. Take the lead and choose the road not taken.

KAIST has educated you to overcome challenges that you will face as you pursue your career. I hope you will adamantly pursue new challenges and endeavor to become the world's first, best, and most unique. I encourage you to undertake projects that others already have failed at or not even tried.

Second, collaborate actively with others.

One megatrend of the Fourth Industrial Revolution is hyper-connectivity. Humankind is now interconnected by 9 billion mobile devices. By 2020, the number of mobile devices will increase to 12 billion. Even further, the Internet of Things (IoT) currently connects approximately 30 billion electronic devices worldwide. By 2050, every electronic device in the world will be interconnected. In 30 years, we will be living in a hyper-connected society where information will be exchanged between humans and devices at the speed of light.

In a hyper-connected society, the world will share knowledge and information based on collective intelligence. Crowdsourcing via cloud computing will be a platform to seek business partners and sharing economy companies will thrive in this new world.

The key to success lies in the acknowledgement of your peers as partners for mutual growth. Your partners will make up for your weak areas and become your most important asset. May you expand your personal network by finding valuable partners not only within your laboratory and workplace, but beyond Korea.

Third, always care about others.

“Their work is superb, but they’re too self-centered.” This is what many CEOs say of KAIST graduates. This is painful to hear to me especially as a president, but we must accept such criticism and reflect on ourselves.

“Creativity” and “Challenge” were KAIST’s core values. Students have studied hard and embraced those values. Our creativity and challenge will be highlighted further when combined with a “Caring” mind.

You will be leaders in the horizontal organizations that will exist in the hyper-connected society of the future. Our society will achieve more balanced, sustainable growth if led by leaders who have caring minds for others, including the socially marginalized. When you see any conflict happening within your organization, please think first what will best serve the interests of your organization. When you think of your role as better serving the greater interest of the organization, such a caring mind will seed the foundation of your organization and society. Even more, you will find yourself nurturing your career in the long run.

Dear graduates!

Now, the world is yours.

You are fully charged for the world with a global-level education from KAIST.

Dream big and aim high. Go out into the world and change it as a global shaper, innovator, and mover.

As both an educator and university president, I am more than thrilled whenever I hear our alumni have contributed to the development of Korea and humankind through their excellence in their chosen field.

I hope that each and every one of you will add benefits the world and your legacy will be

remembered for generations to come. This is your obligation as a graduate of KAIST. I am confident that those of you graduating today will be the bearers of good news in the near future.

Don't hesitate to reach out to the school if you need support. Your alma mater, KAIST, will always support you wherever you are, just as a mother would for her child.

You may change your nationality; however, you cannot change where you graduate from. The degree of KAIST will stay with you forever.

I wish everyone here today greater blessings in the years ahead. Congratulations once again. Thank you.

2/23/2018

Sung-Chul Shin

President, KAIST