



## The President

1 May 2020

Dear Students of Keio Academy:

I send you my greetings in the hope that you and your families are safe and well. We are all living through an extraordinary period in human history, from which we have many lessons to learn about our health care systems, our responsibility to preserve the environment for future generations and how we need to take care of each other in our communities.

The Coronavirus situation has caused me to think about what our Founder, Yukichi Fukuzawa, said about personal independence. I think he thought about independence as something to be lived and developed in community, family, school and university; not as detached individuals. What did he mean when he encouraged personal independence? He did not mean personal independence without restriction: independence to drive on the wrong side of the road, or steal from the shop, or ignore the rules of the game, or bully another person, or not turn up to class, or devalue personal independence by using it in a trivial way. No. Fukuzawa believed that to live harmoniously in a community we must agree to surrender certain personal freedoms to minimise conflict and maximise order for the happiness of the majority.

Fukuzawa encouraged personal independence as a path to growth in wisdom, to take responsibility for one's actions and decisions, to live one's life in a self-disciplined way, to discipline one's emotions, to think rationally and avoid blindly following the herd, to inform oneself of facts before coming to a conclusion, to exercise tolerance when others have a different point of view. Yes, that is the personal independence Fukuzawa meant to encourage, an independence which combines a practical level of personal freedom with the sacrifices we have to make in order to live together happily. That is the kind of independence we try to develop in the community of Keio Academy.

Let me now move to practical matters. I am sure you are aware that the progress of the Coronavirus is still very unpredictable, around the world, including Japan and New York. We hope to be able to receive you all back on campus in New York in September, but this might not be possible: we cannot take any risk with your health and well-being. If we are unable to receive you back in New York in September, we will carry on teaching you online until December. We expect to decide about this in the middle of June, as we have indicated to your parents. It will be sad for us all if a return to New York in December proves impossible.

But there is good news too. We will hold an online Graduation Ceremony for Grade 12 on 6 June. We are presently working with an IT company to develop the format. We will keep you informed about this as we draw closer to the date. So at least most of us will see each other then.

Meanwhile, keep fit and keep working hard for your teachers, as our Founder would expect you to do!

With warmest good wishes,

*R. A. Townsend*