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APU Entrance Ceremony Chancellor's Greeting (April 2, 2009)

On behalf of all faculty, staff and students, I would like to extend a warm welcome to all of you who have come to Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University from Asia and all over the world. It is a great pleasure for me to congratulate you on your entry into the University. Please allow me to also extend a word of congratulations to your parents who supported your efforts over many years. They may feel slightly uneasy because their children live so far from home. Please rest assured. The University shall do its utmost to provide new students with the support they need. I would like the parents to believe in the academic ability of all the new students and their potential to grow to be independent.

Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University is the only truly internationalized university in Japan, and is at the very forefront of meeting the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. All of you will grow to be citizens of the world within this environment. Let me explain the advantages that the University can offer you. Do you know a story called "If the world were a village of 100 people?" This picture book tells that if it were a reality, everyone could understand diverse problems around the world very clearly. The University is indeed such a village and represents a microcosm of the world. Every year, the University welcomes new students from 87 countries and regions. I strongly encourage you to become friends coming from all over the world and to learn diverse cultures. You will be connected to a global network as global citizens. Having chances to embrace diversity is the privilege of all APU students. From today, you will also become members of the Ritsumeikan Academy, with its 108 years of history and 300,000 alumni members. The Ritsumeikan Academy, in addition to Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University, consists of Ritsumeikan University with its 12 colleges located on the campuses in Kyoto and Shiga, as well as 4 junior high schools and senior high schools, and one elementary school. Thus, the Academy is a prime representative of private education academies in Japan. All of you will be members of the oldest and largest, private academy in Japan and will join its alumni network of 300,000 members.

The name, Ritsumei, has its origins in the thoughts of the classical Chinese scholar Mencius. He thought that the Chinese character "mei" indicating destiny "transcends all human wisdom." In other words, the character means "the world brought forth by heaven or God." The Chinese character "*ritsu*" means "to fulfill." Finally, the character "*kan*" refers to a place of learning. Hence the name, Ritsumeikan, means a place of learning where one shall do all that is humanly possible to realize the will of heaven.

Ritsumeikan was established in 1869. It was immediately after the Meiji Restoration that

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announced the beginning of modernization in Japan. Ritsumeikan was founded as a private school, located in the Saionji residence within the Imperial Palace. The school was owed by Prince Kinmochi Saionji who was, then, only 20 years old and later became a political leader of Japan. He aspired to break down an old system and to establish a new society. He saw commonality between his aspirations and the thoughts of Chinese scholar Mencius. This is why the Japanese young prince dared to take the name of his school, Ritsumeikan, from thoughts, although Japan viewed the Chinese scholar as dangerous at that time because he had valued people during the unpredictable time of civil conflicts in China.

Since the establishment, Ritsumeikan has foreseen great trends in history and forthrightly attempted to respond to them. The “Ritsumeikan Charter” outlines its history and mission. The Charter states that the mission of Ritsumeikan... “as a Japanese university located within the Asia Pacific region, (is) an honest contemplation of its history, and the creation of a multicultural, harmonious institution through international understanding.” Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University is thus physical manifestation of that mission.

When the Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University was being established, we received generous support from Oita Prefecture and the local community of Beppu City, and assistance from many Japanese leading corporations and government organizations. Through such aid, the University became a reality. The University strives for creating a place where the youth of Japan and other countries in the Asia Pacific region come together. This is a mission not just of the Ritsumeikan Trust, but of Japanese society in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. APU was born from the expectations of many people, and thus has continued to grow to this day. It has been about 10 years since the University opened. During these years, your predecessors who graduated from the University met the expectations in an excellent way. Many Japanese corporations have welcomed APU alumni as new staff members. In many parts of the world, APU alumni have been playing leading roles. Hence, if all of you study hard to accomplish successes in your academic works at the University and graduate from it as matured citizens of the international community, these will be the best way to express your appreciation for all the support we received prior to the foundation of the University.

I would like to close my speech by saying a word of welcome to all of you once again and promising that we will thoroughly support you as you rise to meet new challenges.

Thank you.