

SOKA UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA, ALISO VIEJO

Cornerstone Laid for SUA, Aliso Viejo Library

ON May 3, 1999, the cornerstone for the Daisaku and Kaneko Ikeda Library was laid on the campus of Soka University of America, Aliso Viejo, Calif. Founded by Daisaku Ikeda, the four-year liberal arts college will be dedicated on May 3, 2001. (The SUA graduate school in Calabasas, Calif., was opened in 1994.)

Among the 700 participants were representatives from surrounding cities and county, and musical groups including those composed of local school children.

A message from the founder to commemorate the occasion reads in part:

If we desire to live a truly humane life, advancing toward happiness together with our fellow members of humankind, then I am convinced that the only recourse left to us is education. Education founded on the bedrock of the noble ideals of humanism may be considered a truly sacred undertaking that serves the innermost needs of the individual, of nations and, indeed, of the entire world.

Among the speakers was the dean of faculty, Dr. Gail Thomas, a professor of sociology, a Fulbright scholar and previously on the faculty at Texas A&M University. Her address follows:

The Role of Educators Is To Bring Out the Creative Power in Students

I WANT to briefly share my vision of the role and commitment of Soka University faculty.

Our major focus will always be on students and on creating and maintaining a student-centered environment. Our faculty will be committed to both teaching and mentoring students. We will teach in small groups and classes with a student/faculty ratio of 9:1.

Teaching and learning will be highly interactive and dialogue based. This will allow us to get to know students—and our students to get to know us.

My expectation is that Soka faculty will be committed life-long learners. We will be learning from our students, from one another, and from you, our community.

The founder of our university, Mr. Daisaku Ikeda, has said that “the role of educators is to bring out the creative power latent in students.” Therefore, we will work to evoke creativity from our students. To do this, we must and will be creative ourselves.

We must and will be committed to constant renewal and continuous professional and personal development. In addition, as faculty we will strive to exhibit patience, persistence, courage, compassion and affection in teaching , mentoring and learning from our students.

Soka faculty will assist students in finding meaning to enhance their lives and

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those of others. Thus, in addition to nurturing and fostering academic excellence, we will work to enhance and foster personal and civic responsibility among students.

It is also important that our students become global citizens. Therefore, each student will study a foreign language for three years and will participate in an internship abroad for a semester. The fee for this will be included in their tuition.

Our students will also work in "learning clusters." These will be small groups directed by one or two faculty members in which students will pursue research or some service activity with faculty. Faculty will also engage in collaborative or team teaching. This will give students multiple views and approaches to subjects.

In conclusion, we envision that Soka faculty, staff and students will become a model of diversity and harmony. Our goal is to become a real community that can educate and equip students with the ability to assist us in expanding our humanism and in deriving greater benefit and appreciation from our diversity and from what we commonly share.

Today, more than ever, I believe we need the kind of young people who can help us improve our world and assist in finding solutions to our human and social problems.

Our founder, Mr. Ikeda, noted that whether youth have the ability to improve society depends on the attitudes and behavior of the men and women who educate them.

To this end, we pledge as Soka faculty to model personal and professional excellence and to be an example of what we expect Soka students and graduates to be. Thank you! □