

THE CULTURE DEPARTMENT MAKES A NEW START

Twenty-five national representatives of the Culture Department met Jan. 30 with the Department's newly appointed leader, Eric Hauber, for their first conference in six years. The summit, held at the Los Angeles Friendship Center, began with a congratulatory message from SGI President Ikeda (see below), the announcement of new leadership appointments (see the Jan. 15 World Tribune) and encouragement from SGI-USA General Director Fred Zaitso.

The participants powered through a full day reviewing their mission statement and discussing objectives and strategies for revitalizing the Culture Department nationwide. The conference included four sessions — a combined brainstorming session and smaller group discussions and reports.

The SGI-USA Culture Department was formed by President Ikeda on Feb. 17, 1990, for the purpose of “developing capable people equipped with faith and intellect” toward the development of American kosen-rufu. Consisting of various professionals — in the fields of education, academia, arts, healing arts and law — President Ikeda envisioned the Culture Department as a group that can have a great influence on society.

Amanda Rivera, principal at Ames Middle School in Chicago, gives her impression: “It was timely to clarify our mission as the Culture Department before the start of the 21st century. I feel we are now all on the same page together with President Ikeda.”

Wrapping up the final session, Eric Hauber refreshed everyone's resolve by reminding them of the importance of compassion as “the fundamental source of our life energy.” He also reminded everyone of President Ikeda's strategy to always focus on the here and now, to put 100 percent into every meeting and personal encounter.

— STEPHANIE CELANO

Capable People of Shining Intellect

To the members of the SGI-USA Culture Department, who are traveling through the era of wisdom, congratulations on your departure under the new leadership of SGI-USA Culture Department Leader Eric Hauber.

In 1990, during the opening of a new era for American kosen-rufu, I formed the SGI-USA Culture Department. This was because I firmly believed that producing promising capable people equipped with faith and intellect would be vital for the development of America.

As we approach the 21st century, I want each of you to deeply confirm this fundamental reason for the department's formation by fostering a steady stream of capable people, who are brimming with hope, in your land of freedom.

I ask each of you, who are taking leadership for the next generation, to study Buddhism more deeply and seriously than ever before. Also, side by side with the members, please broaden the circle of dialogue filled with sincere encouragement and assiduously polish your compassion and wisdom.

I am looking forward to meeting all of you, capable people of shining intellect, in the United States soon.