

## **AN ESSAY BY SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA SUA IS A GREAT LIGHT OF HOPE AND PEACE**

**‘The Aliso Viejo, Orange County, campus of SUA — which is destined to become a great light of hope and peace for the 21st century — will finally open its doors on May 3, 2001,’ SGI President Ikeda writes. ‘I can hardly contain my excitement.’**

Where there is hope, there is peace,” wrote the great French writer Victor Hugo in his last years, while in exile on the isle of Guernsey. Those words, in his own writing, together with a photographic portrait of a white-bearded Hugo, are among the treasures of Soka University of America.

The Aliso Viejo, Orange County, campus of SUA — which is destined to become a great light of hope and peace for the 21st century — will finally open its doors on May 3, 2001. I can hardly contain my excitement.

Looking back, it was in autumn 50 years ago that my mentor, second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda said to me: “Daisaku, let’s found a Soka University. It would be wonderful if we could realize this while I am still alive and well, but it may not be possible. If that should be the case, Daisaku, then I will leave it to you. Let’s make it the best university in the world.”

Though his business was in a crisis then, Mr. Toda gazed out toward the world with bright, optimistic eyes. He envisioned a grand future.

On another occasion, he declared to a group of youthful followers, “Since you uphold the greatest philosophy in the world, you are already world leaders!” Engraving his profound conviction in my heart, I vowed to reach out and embrace the world, and make it the stage of my activities. I pledged that a steady stream of capable leaders for the 21st century would flow from the great reservoir of talent of the Soka Gakkai. That is why, from the time I founded Soka University in Japan, in 1971, I have been determined to someday build a university overseas that will contribute to the welfare of humanity.

The first step was the establishment of the Soka University Los Angeles campus in Calabasas, Calif., which opened in 1987. Now, more than 10 years later, the time has come for Soka education to spread its wings and soar into the next millennium.



Located about 56 miles southeast of Los Angeles, the Aliso Viejo campus is being built on a hilltop gently caressed by fresh breezes from the Pacific Ocean. The weather there is sunny and warm. The campus covers some 103 acres and is surrounded on three sides by lovely valleys. It is here that this glistening new school, its design based on images of water, greenery and sunshine, is now taking shape.

The university has received a number of commendations and awards from the local community, including a Welcome Resolution from the Orange County Board of Supervisors in July 1995, an Ethics in America Award from the South Orange County Chamber of Commerce in June 1998 and an award from a local citizen’s group acknowledging SUA’s accessibility and spirit to contribute to the community. The design of the campus, aimed at bringing nature and people together in exquisite harmony, also received a Merit Award for Planning and Urban Design from the American Society of Landscape Architects in November 1997.

I am overjoyed that the university will open amid friendship and the welcoming applause of the community.



SUA will begin as a four-year liberal arts college. This is a traditional structure for a university, focusing on fostering well-rounded, capable individuals, as well as developing knowledge in specialized fields of learning. In a liberal arts college, education takes priority over research, and class size is kept to a minimum to cultivate a close, informal relationship among teachers and students. Most of America's best private universities with the longest, proudest traditions began as liberal arts colleges.

I want to nurture talented individuals and leaders for the new century, and SUA will be a leading seat of humanistic education for that purpose. In the words of Charles William Eliot, one of the greatest presidents of Harvard University, "Enter to grow in wisdom; depart to serve thy country and thy kind." SUA is generations younger than Harvard, but I hope it will advance with the noble spirit to produce people who, when they leave its doors, will dedicate themselves to the causes of peace and human happiness.

As SUA founder, I recently offered some guidelines or goals to which I hope the school will commit itself:

- 1) Fostering leaders of culture in the community
- 2) Fostering leaders of humanism in society
- 3) Fostering leaders of pacifism in the world.

To these three, I now want to add a fourth:

- 4) Fostering leaders for the creative coexistence of nature and humanity.

These four principles articulate qualities that, I believe, civilization in the new century will require of human beings, particularly leaders.



The great educator Robert M. Hutchins, who became University of Chicago president at the young age of 30 in 1929, predicted, "In the 21st century, education may at last come into its own." He was looking forward to the arrival of a "learning society," in which education would no longer follow the dictates of government and business but would instead be the main focus; a society in which all institutions would strive to enable people to realize their full potential and live with utmost dignity.

For decades, I have been calling for the establishment of education as a separate function of government existing alongside but not as part of the legislative, judicial and executive branches, as well as for the creation of a "United Nations of Education." Let's make the 21st century a century of education! This goal resonates deeply with the mission of the SGI to realize a century of humanism.

The students are central to any university; they are its life. Universities originated from students who wanted to further their studies coming together to form a learning community.

Why do we study? The greater and more profound our reason to study is, the brighter and higher will burn the flames of our desire to learn.

Applications for the first class of SUA are now pouring in to the admissions office from people of exceptional talent the world over. The applicants transcend barriers of race, religion and language. It is my wish to meet and speak with the students and also give

lectures from time to time at this brilliant new campus, which shines as a sun of hope for the new century ahead.

The SUA staff and faculty are working very hard to be ready for the school's bright start next year. I am deeply grateful for the wholehearted efforts of SUA President Daniel Habuki, a member of the first graduating class of Soka University in Japan, Graduate School Dean Tomoko Takahashi, Vice President for Academic Affairs Eric Hauber, Dean of Faculty Gail Thomas, Dean of Students Edward Feasel, Vice President for Administration Arnold Kawa-saki, Vice President for Administrative Affairs Archibald Asawa and every other member of the dedicated staff.

My profound gratitude also to the SGI-USA members for their tremendous support, directly and indirectly. They are all comrades united by lofty ideals whom I regard as the university's founders, as magnificent pioneers and builders. All of their sweat and hard work will without a doubt give rise to a noble, immortal legacy of achievement.



Soka University in Hachioji, Japan, opened in 1971, the year marking the centennial of first Soka Gakkai president Tsu-nesaburo Makiguchi's birth. And this year, as we celebrate the centennial of Mr. Toda's birth, construction work on SUA's new campus is nearing completion, with the school scheduled to open next year, the 30th anniversary of the founding of Soka University in Japan. How happy this would surely make both Mr. Makiguchi and Mr. Toda!

Recently, a trail leading around the campus was designated a Community Millennium Trail by the White House Millennium Council. Young lions who will shoulder the next century will make their start from this trail! Leaders dedicated to peace in the new millennium will depart from this dawning path!

I can hear the sound of their lively advance, brimming with boundless passion and intellect. And I live my days with their vibrant youth and vitality as my greatest hope and joy.