

## DEDICATION OF A DREAM: SOKA UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA, ALISO VIEJO

**The long-awaited opening of SUA, Aliso Viejo has finally arrived. The 103-acre, fourteen-building campus is just about complete and the dedication events are scheduled for May 2–5. Living Buddhism is proud to feature Founder’s Hall of SUA, Aliso Viejo as our May cover in commemoration of this historic event.**

### **A Brief History of Soka Education**

*“What our world most requires now is the kind of education that fosters love for humankind, that develops character — that provides an intellectual basis for the realization of peace and empowers learners to contribute to and improve society.”*

*Daisaku Ikeda*

*Founder, Soka University of America*

*Rajiv Gandhi Foundation lecture*

*New Delhi, India, October 21, 1997*

Helping students learn how to create value in their lives, their communities and the world is a central tenet of the Soka schools founded by Daisaku Ikeda, an educator and the current president of the Soka Gakkai International (SGI). The Soka schools, which range from kindergartens to the 8,800-student Soka University of Japan, have established a tradition of humanistic learning and scholarship where the focus is on each student’s growth and development. *Soka* means “to create value.”

Soka education has its origins in the work of Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, a Japanese educator and Buddhist leader. During World War II, Makiguchi was arrested by Japanese military authorities for his opposition to the war and for his defense of religious freedom. He died in prison in 1944.

The small education society that Makiguchi founded in 1930 has since grown to become one of the world’s largest lay Buddhist organizations. Today, members of the SGI work for education, cultural exchange and peace in 163 countries and territories.

In 1987, President Ikeda founded Soka University of America (SUA) as an independent not-for-profit organization with its first campus in Calabasas, California. SUA, Calabasas currently offers a graduate program specializing in Second and Foreign Language Education.

In 1995, SUA acquired a 103-acre site in Aliso Viejo for a private non-profit four-year liberal arts college that will accept its first freshman class in August 2001.

### **Mission**

“The mission of Soka University of America is to foster a steady stream of global citizens committed to living a contributive life.”

Soka University of America, Aliso Viejo is a selective, independent, non-profit, co-educational, comprehensive institution of higher learning. The university offers a comparative study of Eastern and Western perspectives integrated across a traditional liberal arts curriculum. SUA seeks both national and international students. Founded on the Buddhist principles of peace,

human rights and the sanctity of life, SUA is open to students of all beliefs and is committed to diversity in its academic community. Soka University, Aliso Viejo will open this fall 2001 to its first 120 freshmen students. Ultimately, the university plans to serve 1,200 residential, undergraduate students. The student–faculty ratio will be 9 to 1 (5 to 1 the first year).

Other programs, including educational access for adult students and graduate programs, through the doctorate, are planned for the future.

SUA is founded on the belief that student-centered education is the best way to promote peace and human rights by fostering a global humanistic perspective on the world in which we live. The university prepares students for graduate studies and the world of work in an increasingly diverse and global society.

The initial degree offered is a B.A. in Liberal Arts, with concentrations in Humanities, International Studies, and Social and Behavioral Sciences. Degree offerings and concentrations will increase in number and range consistent with enrollment increases and student interests. In addition to a well-rounded general education program, SUA offers classes in fine and performing arts, science, communications and other areas.

The uniqueness of the SUA approach lies in the comparative teaching of international perspectives, the Core Curriculum and Learning Clusters, and an emphasis on language, art and culture.

The Core Curriculum is a series of four sequential courses taken by all students, focusing on central issues facing our world in the twenty-first century. These courses examine comparative perspectives in areas including views of the self, the relationship between self and the physical environment, the relationship between self and society, and global issues involving peace, culture and education.

The Learning Clusters are courses in which small interdisciplinary teams of students and faculty work together to do research and develop proposals and solutions addressing local, regional and world issues. Acquiring the critical tools of investigation and analysis is integral to the Learning Cluster experience, as well as the integration of knowledge and service.

All SUA students concentrate on a foreign language and culture. All students participate in an internship/study abroad relevant to their language and field of study.

Classrooms are centers of dialogue and discussion, emphasizing seminar course settings. Students work in small teams in the classroom and with faculty on research projects, as well as with peers in residence hall learning activities. Advanced computing and telecommunication capabilities are widely available in all buildings and outside gathering areas, supporting a laptop computer campus. Information technology facilitates student–faculty and student–student interactions.

The university’s research institutes contribute to the uniqueness of the learning environment by providing undergraduates with the opportunity to interact with faculty and visiting scholars on a range of vital issues. The institutes, including the Pacific Basin Research Center, a policy institute founded in 1991, bring together individuals and organizations whose work relates to the institutes’ thematic issues.

For more information, please visit SUA, AV’s Web site: [www.soka.edu](http://www.soka.edu) or write: Soka University of America, Aliso Viejo, 1 University Drive, Aliso Viejo, California 92656. The main toll-free number for Admission and Financial Aid information is: (888) 600-SOKA.