

**SUA WELCOMES FIRST CLASS
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On Aug. 24, on the beautiful new Aliso Viejo, Calif., campus of Soka University of America, the 120 members of the university's first entering undergraduate class were officially welcomed in a joyous entrance ceremony.

Nearly 1,000 people filled the school's gymnasium for the event, which included a keynote speech by Dr. Arun Gandhi, grandson of Mahatma Gandhi, a performance by renowned Jazz flautist Nestor Torres and words by Hiromasa Ikeda, a vice president of the SGI and son of the university's founder, SGI President Ikeda.

Addressing the new students, Dr. Alfred Balitzer, SUA's dean of faculty, said: "We are gathered here today because of one person — Daisaku Ikeda. Never forget that it was his vision and commitment that made SUA possible. Now is the time to respond to the founder by getting an education, by discovering that spark that makes us human so that you can demonstrate to the world what you have learned and become at SUA."

"I have total faith in the principle of humanism and in the power of culture and education to make positive changes in my country," declared Gonzalo Obelleiro of Argentina, one of five students to share their determinations on behalf of the first class. "In that respect, the mission of Soka University of America is enormous in meaning. You can imagine my pride and gratitude in being a member of this first class."

SGI Vice President Ikeda traveled to the ceremony on behalf of his father, whose message was also read (see p. 6). In his own remarks, Vice President Ikeda said: "The opening of this campus has garnered interest from many in the media and society at large. I believe this is proof of the fact that the vision of an education based on humanism, initiated by the father of Soka education, Tsu-nesaburo Makiguchi, responds to the needs of the 21st century."

"This campus was not built with the wealth of any single millionaire," he continued, speaking to the students. "SUA is the crystallization of the sincere hearts of many, many ordinary people, who stand together with the ideals of Soka education. Without their support, not even a single nail in the classrooms or tile in the dining rooms could have been purchased. Many of these millions of supporters never went to college and you will probably never meet them. You may also not meet the thousands of people who were involved in the construction of this campus. Can you visualize the faces of the people who worked and sweated under the glaring sun to make this campus ready for your grand start?"

"Soon after Soka University opened in Japan, my father repeatedly encouraged the first class of students to become creative people. It requires imagination to be creative. The power of imagination enables you to feel compassion for others, which is something selfish egotists can never do. This kind of imagination cannot be born out of knowledge or empty theory. Please always remember to ask yourself for what you are studying."

The first class, which includes students from 18 countries and territories, began classes on Aug. 27.