

STUDENTS HAIL FROM AROUND THE GLOBE

The first freshman class at Soka University of America, Aliso Viejo includes students from 18 countries on five continents. On Aug. 23, some of the international students sat down with World Tribune Staff Writer Jamie Liptan and described their experiences in coming to SUA.

Conny Kull *Switzerland*

In 1999, I attended a language school in Santa Barbara, Calif. While I was there, I participated in the SGI-USA's Grand Youth Culture Festival. After the festival, we went to a barbecue in Aliso Viejo and took a tour of the new SUA campus construction site. I was amazed. This vision was really starting to happen. I was a little jealous of the future students, thinking that they would have it really nice there.

Then I went back home to Switzerland. In the back of my mind, I was thinking it would be great to go there, but doubts kept coming up—it's too expensive and maybe I'm too old [24]. I was subscribing to the *World Tribune* and *Living Buddhism*, which had lots of information about applying to SUA, so I eventually decided to challenge it.

Although it's always hard applying to school in another country—translating your records, taking tests—the struggle against my own doubts was the most difficult. I had to believe I was capable enough to become part of the first class. The people around me didn't really understand what I was doing.

When I started really looking into SUA, I liked the wide range of courses. It is very different from other universities. Up until now, I have learned how to survive, to make money. But I want to know more about the world I live in and how I can contribute. I think SUA will help me lay that foundation.

In a way, it was a risk to come here, because it is a brand new school. But I really trust Daisaku Ikeda, the founder of this university. He is taking real action for peace, developing deep human bonds with so many great people. My admiration for him played a big part in coming here. And the staff here have been so helpful, really making me feel at home.

Edinam Konu *Ghana*

The SGI office in my country has a relationship with the University of Ghana, where my father is the registrar. So through my father, I heard about SUA.

I decided to pursue attending SUA because I am very interested in the philosophy of the founder, Daisaku Ikeda. A viewbook for SUA was handed out at the University of Ghana during a ceremony where he had donated some items.

I applied to several universities around the world. It was important for me to have the opportunity to learn to live my life for world peace and to give back to my community. Since that is the foundation on which Dr. Ikeda founded this school, I thought it was the right choice. When I meet him, I will thank him for the opportunity to attend this great school and commend him on the great work he has done all over the world.

My family was very happy about my coming here to SUA. My father was very supportive in my decision.

The classes here are small, so the attention given to each student is much greater here. Since we are a smaller group of students and faculty, I think the relationships we are developing will be deeper. I know the philosophy will make better people of us and the curriculum is geared toward international citizenship. I like that aspect a lot.

In Ghana, the standard of living is not very high. I want to use my education from SUA to help the economy of my country and improve people's lives.

I feel that the students of the first class have a lot at stake. We are the ones who have to create the school's history and tradition. But I think we are up to the task. I have been very impressed with my fellow students.