

Message from SUA Founder Daisaku Ikeda

To the Dedication Ceremony on May 3, 2001

Soka University of America, Aliso Viejo

*I hear America singing, the varied carols I hear...
Each singing what belongs to her, and to none else...*

Thus declared Walt Whitman, the poet and standard-bearer of the American Renaissance.

America. The sound of your name makes my heart sing. Dreams and visions spread out before me. Because, more than anything, your land of freedom and hope was pioneered through the victory of knowledge, the victory of learning, the victory of the university.

That struggle began in 1636 with the founding of America's oldest institution of higher learning, Harvard University, a mere 16 years after the arrival of the Mayflower in the New World.

To illuminate human society with the light of scholarship and education. This was the founding spirit; this was the ardent wish of fathers and mothers shedding the sweat of construction in a new land.

The entering student body in 1640 consisted of four youths. The first president was a mere thirty-three year old.

This single droplet, fresh and pure, was to grow into a might river of intellectual endeavor, a great flow that would come to reach and touch every part of the world. This brilliant achievement will shine forever in the annals of history.

President Charles William Eliot (1834-1926) is known as the father of modern Harvard. He declared that the university exists for the sake of the common people. "We seek to train doers, achievers," he declared, people whose successful careers will serve the public good.

Today, May 3, 2001, Soka University of America (SUA) takes its first fledgling steps on the long journey into a new century, a new era of education. As we set out, we are deeply inspired by the educational tradition of the United States, which sees the university as always

being at the service of the people and the public. This is indeed just the kind of university we aspire to become.

I would like to express my heartfelt welcome, appreciation and gratitude to the distinguished representatives of so many different countries, sectors of society and fields of endeavor who have been so gracious to join us today for the dedication of SUA, Aliso Viejo.

And I would like to take this opportunity to express my particular gratitude to our friends and neighbors throughout Orange County who have continued to express their interest in and support for the ideals and aspirations of SUA.

As founder, nothing could be more deeply gratifying or reassuring than that this new university should commence its departure under the warm, protective gaze of so many good friends and supporters.

I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

Further, I am delighted to be able to note that the Governor of the State of California has declared today “Soka University of America Day.”

Please be assured of our profound commitment and determination to grow and develop into the kind of university that will truly respond to your hopes and expectations, one that can embody the educational ideals of the 21st century.

It is my sincere hope that we will continue to enjoy your warm support as well as your frank advice and guidance.

Here I would like to address the superbly gifted teaching faculty of SUA, the intellectual “engine” who will drive and propel the new university forward. First, my heartfelt gratitude to you for your generosity and courage in participating in the planning and development of SUA, an uncharted venture into the unknown. It is my earnest request that you will pool your strengths and talents as you unite around President Habuki, and that you at all times give highest priority to the welfare and best interests of the students.

I am deeply confident that your talents and commitment will enable SUA to develop into a world-class center of higher learning. I look forward to your unfettered and dynamic activities dedicated to the future of human education.

My own commitment to education was further deepened by my encounters with Arnold Toynbee, one of the great historians of the 20th century.

Our first meeting was in spring, the mayflower time, of 1972. We met at Dr. Toynbee's home in London. At the time, he was eighty-three and I was forty-four.

At the start of our discussion, I expressed my hope that our conversations would offer some suggestions to the people of the future, that they might find some hints for resolving the issues they will face.

I will never forget his response: "I, too, think in terms of the next century. I am much concerned, as you are, about what's going to happen long after even you and certainly I are no longer in this world."

What does one leave to humanity after one's passing? From Dr. Toynbee I learned and reconfirmed the importance of living one's life focused on that overarching question.

For me, the answer is education. It is the university.

The embracing nature of genuine education makes it a force for peace. It can correct and restrain the tendency of religion to become dogmatic, for example. It can connect and build bonds between people the world over.

More than any other human institution, the university can serve as a source of illumination and hope, lighting with wisdom humanity's path into the far future.

Another crucial point Dr. Toynbee stressed was this: "A human being can be manipulated insofar as he can be dehumanized." Nothing more glaringly exemplifies this truth than education—indoctrination—that glorifies, promotes and perpetuates war.

During the dark and maddened days of World War II, the first and second presidents of the Soka Gakkai, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi and Josei Toda struggled, at the risk and cost of life itself, to challenge such war-promoting education and to protect people's humanity from manipulations.

As a result, Japan's military authorities suppressed the Soka Gakkai, jailing both men as thought criminals. The father of Soka Education, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, died in prison at age seventy-three.

To bequeath to humankind an eternally enduring monument of humanity and justice, and imperishable bastion for the culture of peace...this was the burning desire of the first and second presidents of the Soka Gakkai. I believe that has been the anguished cry and hope of all those whose rights and lives have been trampled by violence and tyranny. SUA has been built in an effort to fulfill those hopes and dreams.

At the same time, I personally embrace a profound sense of appreciation to the United States for the role your country played in returning democracy and human rights, including freedom of religion to post-war Japan. SUA thus also represents some small attempt on my part to repay that truly enormous debt of gratitude.

In the American Declaration of Independence, we find this famous enumeration of inalienable rights—life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

It is striking that Thomas Jefferson chose to replace “property”—which had been seen as the cornerstone of rights—with “the pursuit of happiness.” The profound aspiration and insight into human nature that this reflects is, I believe, the eternally unchanging spirit of America.

President Makiguchi likewise declared that happiness is the true goal and purpose of education.

In this land of hope, dedicated to pursuing the universal value of happiness, SUA will strive always to be an institution of higher learning dedicated first and foremost to human happiness.

This is our belief and conviction: That all people on Earth have the right to happiness. That it is through fulfilling their unique and noble purpose in life that each person may realize maximum happiness both for themselves and for others.

The world needs leaders who possess the kind of philosophy and vision that can awaken each individual to that unique mission, that can bring forth that capacity for happiness, that can unify humankind toward the noble goal of peace. Education that fosters such leaders is our foremost necessity.

The great Swiss educator, Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746-1827) left us these words: “Lack of knowledge of your own nature, o man, curbs your wisdom still more than all the external restrictions forced on you.”

It is my hope and desire that an unbroken succession of outstanding leaders will depart from these gates to serve humanity in the 21st century.

It is my hope and desire that the waves of world citizens, united and awakened to a genuine global ethic, will spread without cease into an ever more brilliant future.

Thus, I have asked that the following principles will serve to guide SUA in its endeavors.

1. Foster leaders of culture in the community
2. Foster leaders of humanism in society

3. Foster leaders of pacifism in the world
4. Foster leaders for the creative coexistence of nature and humanity

I would like now to address the representatives of the entering class. First, my heartfelt welcome and congratulations! At the same time, I would like to express my most sincere gratitude to you for having chosen, of so many renowned universities worldwide, to study at the university which I founded.

I place all my trust and hopes in you. I entrust you with the realization of all my dreams for the future. At the same time, you must know that you are the focus of the hopes and expectations of so many of your fellow citizens worldwide. I hope that you will bear the weight of this great burden of expectation with patience and grace. For it is indeed the first graduating class that will set the direction and determine the success or failure of SUA.

It is my wish that you will cross over me to ascend the hope-filled peaks of the 21st century. It will be my pleasure to serve as a foundation and stepping stone for your efforts.

I will pour my entire life into creating the kind of university experience that you can look back on and state without hesitation: “I am glad I chose to study at SUA!” I look forward to the day when we can meet and share thoughts on this beautiful campus.

To the SUA graduate students past and present, and to the Soka University of Japan students who are visiting for an English language training program—thank you for participating in this significant ceremony. As senior members of the Soka Educational family, I hope you will all continue to grow and develop.

I would like to offer my particular appreciation to the past and present graduate students as well as the faculty and staff of SUA, Calabasas for the many efforts, seen and unseen, which you have exerted to assure the success of today’s departure. I will never, for all eternity, forget the pure and precious love for your alma mater that your efforts embody. You all are the “founders” of SUA. As your fellow practitioner of value-creating education, I embrace the greatest imaginable faith and trust in you. I am praying constantly for your well-being and success.

To all our friends gathered here today. Thank you from the bottom of my heart. In the near future, I hope very much that I will have the opportunity to meet with you and express my appreciation in person.

In closing, I would like to express my hopes and appreciation by sharing again a passage from Walt Whitman, whose poetry I have loved since my youth:

Pioneers! O pioneers!

All the past we leave behind;

We debouch upon a newer, mightier world, varied world,

Fresh and strong the world we seize, world of labor and the march,

Pioneers! O pioneers!