

## **Message from SUA Founder Daisaku Ikeda**

### **To the Second Undergraduate Commencement Ceremony Soka University of America**

To the second Graduating Class of Soka University of America, Aliso Viejo, I wish to extend my warmest felicitations on this most joyous day of departure for you. I cherish each of you with my very life and being, as you are all shining treasures of humanity in the twenty-first century.

I wish to share my heartfelt joy with all the members of your families and your friends, and extend my most sincere gratitude to President David Roselle of the University of Delaware, as well as to our many distinguished guests and well-wishers, who have so kindly attended this Ceremony today despite your busy schedules.

Allow me to acknowledge, too, the members of the Class of 2005, who have returned to their alma mater for this auspicious occasion, together with the undergraduates, graduates and exchange students of the SUA campuses of Aliso Viejo and Calabasas. Thank you, indeed, for your gracious show of support.

Thomas Carlyle, the celebrated British historian whom I came to admire as a youth, called out: “Honour to him who first ‘through the impassable paves a road!’ Such, indeed, is the task of every great man....”

Having engaged in your studies with unrelenting courage and fortitude, every member of the Class of 2006 has forged on with the spirit that you yourselves are the founders of SUA, proudly blazing new paths “through the impassable” for the thousands of men and women who are to follow in your footsteps. And for this, I remain eternally grateful.

Though you may leave this campus today, we will never be apart, for I will cherish you and your unwavering brilliance in the innermost depths of my heart for all time. I will be watching over all of you from afar, longing to exchange firm handshakes with each of you and crown you with a laurel of victory.

To our great honor, President Roselle of the prestigious University of Delaware has kindly joined us on this day. I recall a moving episode he once shared concerning a woman who

donated funds to construct a circle for his campus. Though he suggested on a number of occasions that it be named in her honor, every time the matter was brought up she would respectfully decline.

In the end, officials at the university decided that the circle should bear the name of what the institution valued to be most noble and worthy. Upon thorough deliberation, they concluded that nothing was more deserving of recognition by the university than its mentors and their legacy. The plaza was thus christened Mentors' Circle.

Today, at the entrance of the beautifully built Circle stand two bronze plaques honoring the Reverend Dr. Francis Alison, who founded the university.

I was very moved by this story. The students of SUA are truly blessed, embraced so thoroughly by caring people around the world, people who will always extend their concern and support, who make your growth and success their own pride and joy. For you to continue with your refinement as individuals and become worthy leaders dedicated to the service of humanity—that, more than anything, is the way to repay your debt of gratitude.

Thomas Jefferson, the third President of the United States and a founding father of American democracy, also founded a university. There, he offered the following recollection of the people who mentored him in his youth:

I had the good fortune to become acquainted very early with some characters of very high standing, and to feel the incessant wish that I could ever become what they were. Under temptations and difficulties, I would ask myself what would Dr. Small, Mr. Wythe, Peyton Randolph do in this situation? What course in it will insure me their approbation? I am certain that this mode of deciding on my conduct, tended more to its correctness than any reasoning powers I possessed.

Nothing is as certain, profound and compelling than to walk the path of mentor and disciple throughout the course of our lives.

In any event, the world in which we live today, jarred as it is by inexorable, dramatic change, demands new expressions of creative wisdom. It eagerly awaits the appearance of individuals that are imbued with the vision and energy that can be trusted to build a grander, better world. And it is you, the students and graduates of SUA, who will meet these lofty expectations of our era by serving as the pioneers of a new frontier in this century.

For you embrace a robust *philosophy* that reveres the inherent dignity of life.

You possess the responsive *wisdom* that joyfully creates value.

You possess the *character* that nurtures harmony while respecting diversity.

And you possess the *courage* to remain true to your convictions.

I ask you to inspire hope where there is suffering, amplify unity where there is conflict, and impel progress where there is stagnation—and in doing so, usher in a truly global renaissance by fulfilling the roles which you were meant to fulfill.

Nothing would be more dear and meaningful to me than to know that you will always treasure the splendid bonds of friendship nurtured at SUA, ties that cannot be equaled anywhere in the world; that you will care for and encourage one another as you triumph over every adversity and challenge encountered upon the great stage of life.

My wife, Kaneko, and I will be praying day after day for your continued health and enduring success.

In closing, allow me to dedicate to you these words of resolve from the late Mrs. Rosa Parks, whom I will always feel privileged to have known and who held SUA in the highest esteem and expectations: “I have learned that in order to bring about change, one must not be afraid to take the first step....”

Once again, my congratulations—and thank you for all that you have accomplished, and will accomplish!

Daisaku Ikeda  
Founder, Soka University of America  
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