I would like to offer my heartfelt congratulations to the members of the first graduating class of Soka University of America. As the founder of Soka University, this is an unparalleled occasion of joy. From Japan, I am following the reports of today's events with profound emotion.

I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to Professor Montgomery and to the other distinguished guests and professors who have so kindly made the time to attend today's ceremony.

Further, I would like to join with the families of today's graduates in celebrating this most auspicious occasion.

And finally, I would like to express my profound appreciation and gratitude to the members of the faculty and administration of the University who have, in seen and unseen ways, worked so hard to protect and foster these invaluable students.

There is an Eastern axiom, "The deeper the roots, the more prolific the branches. The farther the source, the longer the river." As members of the first graduating class, I feel that you are the roots and source, and that you have laid the foundation for a truly magnificent tradition that will carry on into the twenty-first century.

This year marks the sixty-fifth anniversary of the publication of Tsunesaburo Makiguchi's *Education for Creative Living*. The vision set out in that work, of truly human-centered and humanistic education, has been realized, has come to fruition, here in the United States.

It was with particular joy that I learned that many of you plan to follow careers in the field of language education. Truly, there can be no more noble contribution than the work of studying and teaching language as a means of gaining and sharing knowledge of cultures different from our own, and in this way fostering the spirit of mutual appreciation and understanding.
At what point in our history did humanity acquire the ability to use language? According to the recent findings of American researchers, some 2.5 million years ago, amidst the enormous environmental changes that accompanied the start of an ice age, the human brain underwent a fourfold increase in its capacity. It is thought that human language ability developed as part of this effort to survive and respond to unprecedented environmental challenges. This is symbolic, I feel, of the fact that the greatest opportunity for dramatic new advance is to be found in a potent response to the challenges presented by crisis.

It can be said with some certainty that change, in all its scope and richness, will be the one constant of your lives from here out. But I hope that you will meet each challenge courageously as you continue to move forward, to explore new paths, and to lead lives of contribution in fulfillment of the unique mission you each possess. And I hope that you will always remember the pride of being a member of this first graduating class.

Lastly, I would like to share with you three invaluable directives for life left to us by Mr. Makiguchi, in the hope that you will embrace them in the depths of your being.

Never peddle your knowledge, nor force it meaninglessly on others. Rather, be truly sagacious leaders who proffer the “keys of wisdom” which enable others to unlock the treasure houses of knowledge.

Be people of character, who partake of the joys and sufferings of your fellow citizens, and who can create the harmonious coexistence, the mutual prosperity of self and other, of the individual and the community.

Never be satisfied with passive goodness. Be a person of courage and mettle who clearly debates and distinguishes right and wrong, and who takes bold and committed action for good.

I would like to close my message of congratulations with this expression of my heartfelt prayers for your limitless glory, friendship and victory. To the eternal prosperity of the first graduating class!

Daisaku Ikeda
Founder