

2016 Soka University Educational Vision

Full-fledged Launch Towards the 50th Anniversary of Soka University's Founding!

- Establishment of a System to Foster Creative Global Citizens-

April 2016

President Yoshihisa Baba

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I feel humbled to be appointed as the president of Soka University for a second term. Upon this reappointment, I would like to envision a plan for the next 3 years as well as this coming academic year, to prepare for the 50th anniversary of the founding of the University.

After the announcement of the Soka University Grand Design Initiative in 2010, the University was selected for government subsidy programs that promote globalization such as the Go Global Japan Project (2012) and the Top Global University (SGU) Project (2014), and we steadily advance in our efforts towards the goals set forth in each section of the Grand Design Initiative. We owe these achievements to our efforts in responding to Japan's prioritized policies in higher education, expediting the attainment of internationalization strategies (numerical goals) set forth in the Grand Design Initiative and expanding the scope of these goals.

Last academic year, we reviewed the first half of the Grand Design Initiative (2009~2014) and decided mid-term strategies to further develop our plans towards the 50th founding anniversary, looking ahead to the environment and changes that the University will face. The Soka University Grand Design Initiative 2015-2020, a new mid-term plan designed as a further development of the original 2010 Soka University Grand Design Initiative, was announced on November 18 of last year. Simply put, the revised Initiative is a roadmap for establishing a system to foster Creative Global Citizens and for achieving the goals we set by using our limited resources efficiently through a selection and concentration strategy.

In the process of deliberating on the new Initiative, we paid very close attention to the issue of articulation between high school and the University, including admission reforms. The Report by the Central Council for Education (December, 2014) was an attempt to make significant changes in Japanese education by integrally reforming secondary education, higher education, and the admission system connecting high school and university. The admission reforms to connect high school into university was a particular focus of attention. Our Grand Design Initiative clearly states that Soka University will pay close attention to this issue and make preparations; as a concrete action, we will review the Three Policies: the Diploma Policy, the Admissions Policy, and the Curriculum Policy.

In the Diploma Policy, Soka University aims to clarify its institutional learning outcomes by expressing its expectations of students. Each faculty will endeavor to express the uniqueness of Soka University in its respective diploma policy and in light of its expectations about standards of degrees in a range of subject areas.

The Admissions Policy delineates the level of students' knowledge and basic skills at the time of admissions in order to achieve the University's institutional learning outcomes. In particular, the policy will reflect the perspective on how to measure students' critical thinking skills and independence as discussed in the Admissions Deliberation Committee.

The Curriculum Policy will be written so that readers can grasp the intent of curricula designed to fulfill the expectations about standards as set forth in the Diploma Policy.

All faculties are scheduled to have new curriculum revisions by the 50th founding anniversary in 2020.

First, the University will review the Three Policies and set clear goals. The agents of Soka University, the faculty, staff, and students, will share the vision, and be aware of their own responsibility to establish a system to foster capable individuals. I would like to conclude the explanation of Education Vision this academic year by calling on all the agents of Soka University to collaborate towards this goal.

1. Education Strategy

(1) Further Advancement of the Globalization of Education

By steadily accomplishing the goals set forth in the proposal for the SGU Project, Soka University will advance the globalization of education. As concrete measures, we will start with increasing English-medium courses, then we will increase the number of English-medium programs in which students can complete the entire curriculum in English to graduate. The University will also prepare English or English/ Japanese syllabi in a planned manner. We will also intensify educational services for the benefit of international students, whose numbers are annually increasing.

(2) Deliberation on the General Education Curriculum based on the New Global Citizen Course Category

The University will start reviewing the General Education curriculum by launching a Global Citizen course category in order to implement education to foster global citizens with the themes of Peace, Environment, Development, and Human Rights. These were the global issues proposed by the Founder in a lecture entitled, “Thoughts on Education for Global Citizenship,” delivered at Teacher’s College, Columbia University.

(3) Curricula Incorporating the Outcomes of the Acceleration Program (AP)

Many faculties are currently reviewing their respective curricula to be implemented in AY 2019. In the new curricula, classes to assess students’ growth in the acquisition of basic skills to be developed in the AP project will be a required part.

(4) Promoting the Use of Learning Portfolios

The University will promote the use of student Learning Portfolios so that students can look back and trace their learning through the courses they have taken. The University will also encourage faculty members to utilize these Learning Portfolios to assess students’ process of learning.

2. Research and Teaching Activities

(1) Enhancement and Intensification of a Comprehensive Research Support System

The University will enhance and intensify its comprehensive research support system for fruitful and efficient faculty research activities. As a concrete step, we are preparing for the launch of a Research Promotion Center (working title) this academic year.

The primary scope of this Center will include the following objectives:

- ① To promote interdisciplinary research
- ② To strengthen both domestic and international research collaboration
- ③ To enhance support for female researchers
- ④ To encourage the creation and dissemination of research outcomes that are recognized internationally

(2) Acquisition of Competitive Research Funds

The University offered research support to obtain competitive funds by holding briefing sessions and research support seminars for faculty members selected for the Kakenhi (Grants-in-Aid for Scientific Research) last academic year, and the University will further intensify the support system this coming academic year. We will especially focus on reviewing the University's internal research promotion system and establishing systems for consultation and support for proposal review. Additionally, we will also hold research support seminars centered on the explanation of concrete methods to be used in writing proposals. Furthermore, we will ensure faculty members' research time by introducing remote teaching and simplifying the administrative procedures for research funds.

(3) Prevention of Fraudulent Research Activities

The University will create and provide a variety of programs in order to prevent fraudulent research activities and secure fair research activities, initiated by the Committee for Ethics in Research Activities. This committee will develop materials about research ethics for faculty members and graduate students to promote research ethics education.

(4) Incentives Based on Research Achievements

Through programs initiated by the Comprehensive Faculty Performance Assessment Committee, the University will prudently deliberate on prioritized allocation of university research funds and strategic allocation of funds for indirect costs based on the achievements of faculty members. Through enhancing the environment for prioritized research themes, we will also quantify and evaluate faculty member's research activities to encourage their individual research interests.

3. Student Support

(1) Expansion of Scholarship Opportunities

Soka University's scholarship programs are one of the utmost well-developed programs in Japan, and we will further expand scholarship opportunities for students. This academic year, Soka University will increase the number of recipients of the Soka University Faculty of Nursing Makiguchi Scholarship from 120 to 230, with plans to award 350 scholarships by 2018. The number of recipients of the Soka University Kyufu Scholarship will also be increased from 90 to 100, up to 120 by 2018. Starting this academic year, Soka University will also provide more scholarship opportunities by implementing a Soka University Kyufu Scholarship for Siblings Concurrently Enrolled in Soka University.

(2) Further Development of Student Dormitories

This academic year, in addition to the establishment of international dormitories for male and female students to be completed in March 2017, the University will adopt a new management system with residence assistants in each dormitory. Students will receive support for their study and assistance with day-to-day issues from dormitory advisors appointed from faculty and staff members.

(3) Enhancement of On-Campus Part-time Job Service

The University will develop a Soka University Part-Time Job Browsing System and students will have free access to information about on-campus part-time jobs. This is to create an environment in which students in difficult financial situations will be able to study at ease. Through this system, information will be broadly disseminated to students, and students can select jobs that fit their interests.

(4) Support for Job Placement and Further Schooling for Students Seeking Employment in Their Hometowns

In coordination with the Soka Alumni Association, the University will hold exchange meetings for students who seek employment in their hometowns, to provide them with information on local companies. We will also offer financial support for students who intend to return to their hometowns to have job interviews or to take the Civil Service Examination or the Teacher Employment Examination.

(5) Strengthening Career Support for International Students

As part of the initiatives set forth in the SGU Project, we receive an increasing number of international students year after year and expect more international students who intend to work in Japan. This academic year, the University will launch Career Development Courses and explore internship opportunities and potential corporations so that tangible career support for international students can be provided from the next academic year.

(6) Promotion of Understanding of Extracurricular Activities Guidelines

Last academic year, the University announced the Extracurricular Activities Guidelines for the full-fledged development of global human resources and student career opportunities. This academic year, each club association and group will review the balance between job placement and extracurricular activities and promote the understanding of these Guidelines to ensure students' appropriate career paths.

(7) Further Enhancement of Student Life

The Smoke-Free Campus Policy that was implemented in April 2013 has almost taken root. Now, the Campus Beauty and Health Promotion Committee is set to deliberate issues including how to deal with students who do not abide by the policy. This academic year marks the 4th year since the policy was implemented, and the Committee will continue to discuss future visions.

4. Initiatives by the SGU Project

Soka University's proposal for the SGU Project was selected in Academic Year 2014, and the outcomes in the third year of the Project will be evaluated as a mid-term assessment. The objectives of this academic year regarding the four initiatives set forth in the proposal follow below. By advancing University reform and globalization through achieving these objectives, the University will fulfill its mission as a global hub to take initiative in humanistic education and lead the globalization of society.

(1) Global Mobility: Globalization of the Campus Environment by Sending More Domestic Students Abroad and Accepting More International Students

- The number of international students: 600 (7.3% of the entire student body)
- The number of domestic students studying abroad per year: 868 (11.1 % of the Japanese student body)

To encourage the international exchanges, the University will review a tuition reduction/waiver system, scholarships, and funds for international students.

(2) Global Learning: Globalization of Undergraduate Program Fostering Creative Global Citizens

The number of courses taught in foreign languages: 248 courses

The number of programs in which students can complete the curriculum in foreign languages: 2 programs

The number of students who reach specified foreign language proficiency levels: 700 (8.5% of the whole student body)

The number of courses in which syllabi are written in English: 936 courses (18.2% of the total courses)

In addition, some of Graduate Schools will start September admissions. Some financial support will be offered to offset the fees for taking foreign language proficiency tests.

(3) Global Administration: Globalization of the University Management and Decision-Making Process

The number of students who live in the dormitories where both domestic and international students live together: International students: 110; Japanese domestic students: 300

The ratio of full-time faculty members who are non-Japanese nationals or who have obtained an academic degree overseas out of the whole faculty body: 48.7%

The ratio of full-time staff members who are non-Japanese nationals or who have obtained an academic degree overseas out of the whole staff body: 6.7 %

(4) Global Core: Global Hub to Take Initiatives for Humanistic Education

This academic year, the University will launch the Global Core Center to foster capable individuals with expertise who can contribute to addressing global issues and advance the preparation of the Graduate School of Peace and Global Civic Education (working title).

5. Initiatives by the Division of Correspondence Education

This year marks the 40th anniversary of the founding of the Division of Correspondence Education. As an event commemorating its 40th anniversary, the Division will provide scholarships to ease the financial burden of 100 students annually who take face-to-face schooling courses. Also, as part of its initiative to offer student support, the Division has offered a Report Writing Training Course since 2013 and more than 5,000 students in total have taken this course. Starting this academic year, we will begin a Study Plan Advisory Session throughout the country to create a learning-friendly environment. Furthermore, the Gakko (light of learning) Festival will be conducted in the Summer Schooling this academic year, integrating the commemorative events for the Alumni Association of the Division of Correspondence Education, Koyu Group, and Gakko Seiki Group on the 40th anniversary of its founding.

