

2017 Soka University Educational Vision

Toward the 3rd Stage of the Grand Design Initiative

-Fostering “Creative Individuals” Based on the Founding Principles-

April 2017

President Yoshihisa Baba

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Within the history of Soka University, last year was one in which our students accomplished particularly outstanding feats in many areas. In the international arena, as representatives of Japan, our students participated in numerous conferences and youth exchange programs, an example being participation in the G(irls)20 Summit 2016, an international girls’ conference for which one representative from each of the G20 countries is selected to attend. Furthermore, a Soka University student was selected for the Grand Award given to the best presenter at the Japan-Africa Student Innovators Expo, a part of the Sixth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD VI) that the Japanese government organized in the Republic of Kenya. These are just some of the numerous accomplishments Soka University students achieved throughout the world.

In addition, students participated in contests organized by the Consortium of Universities in Hachioji and Network Tama, taking first prize in both. Some students had developed bread made from rice flour extracted from locally grown Hachioji rice. This is an example of how our student body is contributing to local communities and putting their daily studies on full display by joining various contests, competitions, and conferences held in Japan.

Meanwhile in sports, two of our students from the baseball team have become professional baseball players as the first and second picks in the 2016 Japanese Professional Baseball Draft. Soka University also qualified for the Hakone Ekiden Relay Race after competing 2 years ago; this time the team posted a much better record than last time. For the first time, we were able to pass on the team sash to the last runner and cross the finish line.

Elsewhere, Soka University students passed demanding national exams as well as recruitment exams to get jobs at highly desirable companies. In fact, we don’t have the space to list all the ways students displayed their “potential” as cultivated at our university. We would like to express our heartfelt gratitude for the efforts of the students and to the faculty and everyone else who gave support.

This school year, the Soka University Grand Design Initiative, formulated in 2010 looking towards the university’s 50th anniversary, finally enters its third and final stage. This Grand Design Initiative is a roadmap for constructing a system to educate Creative Global Citizens, and over the next 4 years we aim to complete that system. This academic year will see the first interim assessment of the Top Global University Project started in 2014, so we would like to advance each and every one of our plans in a steady manner.

Last school year we revised the Three Guidelines for each faculty that set the policy in three areas: Diplomas, Curricula, and Admissions. The guidelines state the purpose and the nature of the education provided by each faculty. With regard to Diploma Policy in particular, the guidelines state that students should acquire the following in their education to become Creative Global Citizens:

Knowledge Base: Extensive knowledge and advanced expertise

Practical Competencies: The ability to adapt knowledge to the society and communication skills

International Qualities: The ability to appreciate diversity and cooperate with others

Creativity: The ability to integrate and engage in creative thinking

So that each and every student can acquire these assets, we are working towards building and operating an Internal Quality Assurance system to continuously improve education at the university. The first step of our plan is to initiate discussions on the nature of school-wide guidelines and organizations concerned with Internal Quality Assurance.

This academic year we will digitize the Founder's words, a compilation of the many speeches and other messages he has given to students since announcing plans to establish Soka University in 1964. The archive will provide students with the opportunity to explore the numerous speeches that have formed the framework for the talent our university cultivates. When this year's freshmen graduate in 2021, it will be Soka University's 50th anniversary. We hope that the faculty and students will come together to study the Founder's words and embark on a new journey towards the golden anniversary. This is our request to all of you who bear a responsibility for the future of Soka University—to do all we can to tackle the tasks we shall face in this academic year. Following are the points of our educational vision for the year.

1. Enhancement of Education

(1) Preparation of a new curriculum for supporting globalization

This fiscal year, the new curriculum implementation preparation will enter the final stage with the installation of new English-track courses for four faculties and the reconstruction of general education courses, with 「Global Education Course」 introduced as the pillar. Moreover, we will introduce flexibility into our admissions and will accept fall entrance as a standard grade calendar. We will also consider having a GPA system as a global standard.

(2) Three new policies regarding evaluation of learning outcomes

Based on what we have set as the new Diploma, Curriculum, and Admission standards, including curriculum level, each course and the assessment of the three policies will be taken into consideration for learning outcomes.

(3) Enhancing of introduction education and first-year education

Last fiscal year, the university launched the 「First-Year Education Promotion Center」. Having this as the center, pre-university education, first-year education, and specialized courses are to be systematically introduced and promoted. Based on the changes in high school-to-university connection reform, we aim to train students in the basic skills so they can study without problems in our undergraduate programs.

(4) High school-to-university connection reform

This fiscal year, in answer to the demands of high school-to-university connection reform made by the Central Council for Education of Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology of Japan, we will implement the PASCAL examination (Performance Assessment of Students' Competency for Active Learning). One of the recommended active learning styles, LTD (Learning through Discussion), will be used to perform evaluations of three academic abilities multilaterally and comprehensively through group work, essays, and interviews. The university has vigorously

implemented active learning for first-year education and will present this PASCAL university examination as a new model of high school-to-university connection reform.

(5) Further expansion of graduate school programs

As the trend toward globalization advances, the intake of international students into the Graduate Schools has also increased, especially in the “English-Track” graduate programs in which students can complete their curricula by taking English-medium courses. The University will further develop the Graduate Schools by adopting a fall admission system, controlling student intake, and enhancing career support for students. In the next academic year, 5-year combined bachelor/master's programs will start in the Graduate Schools of Economics, Law, and Engineering.

2. Faculty Research and Educational Activities

(1) Establishing and strengthening the research support system

This academic year will see the opening of the Research Promotion Center. The Center will be involved with the following activities:

- 1) Development of research strategies,
- 2) Proper management of research funding,
- 3) Enrichment and strengthening of the research support system,
- 4) Initiatives for effective promotion of research ethics and compliance to laws and rules.

(2) Reviewing the support system for obtaining competitive research funds

In order to increase the number of applicants selected for Kakenhi (Grants-in-Aid for Scientific Research), the university will review the outcomes of initiatives that have been taken so far. These initiatives (the subject of the review) include support seminars and consultations for faculty members and public reading of application documents as well as the Research Promotion Fund, which is aimed at supporting faculty members who were not selected for Kakenhi, in order to help them qualify in future years.

(3) Efforts for the prevention of research fraud

To prevent fraud in research activities, we have implemented a variety of research ethic programs, centering on the Research Activity Ethics Committee, which is aimed at ensuring the fairness of the research environment. Last academic year, research ethic programs for full-time faculty members and graduate students were held. This academic year, research ethic programs targeting undergraduate students aiming to becoming researchers in the future are under deliberation.

(4) Provision of incentives according to the performance of faculty members

The university will determine methods to assess faculty performance comprehensively by taking the components of research, education, administrative duties, and social contribution into consideration in a balanced manner with reference to examples of other universities. Rules stipulating how incentives are given to faculty members will be enacted and announced university wide. A working group will be deliberate on concrete steps to be taken for the earliest possible implementation. Furthermore, the assessment of faculty performance will be promoted to invigorate education and research activities, not only of individual faculty members but also of faculties/departments and the university as a whole.

3. Enhancement of Student Support

(1) Enhancing scholarship programs

The Soka University Scholarship for Concurrently Enrolled Siblings was implemented last year, and some freshmen who fulfilled the conditions have received this scholarship. This academic year, the newly installed Soka University Makiguchi Foundation for Education Scholarship for Graduate School will enable 50 graduate students enrolled in both arts and science majors in Graduate Schools to receive 200,000 yen each. Moreover, the number of students who will be eligible to receive Soka University Makiguchi Foundation for Education Scholarship for Undergraduate Program and Soka University Kyufu Scholarship will increase.

(2) Enhancing student dormitories

Takiyama International Dormitory (400 male students) and Manyo International Dormitory (144 female students) opened this April with the new system of Residence Assistance. In the dormitories, international students and Japanese domestic students will live together and experience cross-cultural exchange that will help them grow into global citizens. Additionally, faculty and staff members will be assigned as dormitory advisors in order to enhance both living and learning support for students.

(3) 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 in order to provide them with information on local companies. We will also create agreements about job placement support with prefectures to further advance career support for students intending to return to their hometowns. Since the last academic year, we have provided financial support through a special program that covers a part of transportation fees borne by students who return to their hometowns for the purpose of participating in company job interviews, the Civil Service Examination, or the Teacher Employment Examination.

(4) Strengthening career support for international students

Together with the increasing number of international students as part of progress in the Top Global University Project at Soka University, starting this academic year we will launch Career Development courses (Foundation of Career-planning and Career Vision I) as concrete career support for international students. We will further strengthen such career support by actively implementing internships (in Japanese and English).

4. Top Global University Project

In the academic year 2012, the University was selected for the Go Global Japan Project and completed its 5-year project in academic year 2016. Soka University was also selected for the Top Global University Project in 2014, and this academic year will be the 4th year to receive a mid-term assessment, along with the final assessment of Go Global Japan Project. Most of the numerical goals in the following four initiatives created by the University have been accomplished and we will continue to strive to achieve all our goals:

(1) Global mobility

As described above, Japanese students and International students live together in the newly built

Takiyama International Dormitory and Manyo International Dormitory, and there are many opportunities for students to encounter others with diverse backgrounds and to learn to appreciate different values. This will create an environment in which students can grow to be creative global citizens on the level of daily student life. Last academic year, an agreement was reached with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) through which the University will accept refugees and provide them with the opportunity to receive higher education. This academic year, we will welcome the first cohort of students admitted through this agreement.

(2) Global learning

The University will advance its preparation for implementing “English-Track Programs” in the next academic year through tackling challenges, especially the issue of academic gap years. By doing so, the university can establish an environment in which both domestic Japanese and international students can study specialized courses in their respective fields in English.

(3) Global administration

This fiscal year, we are planning to sign an agreement with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). We believe collaboration with such an international organization will offer increased opportunities to foster global citizens. Furthermore, Soka University will be the host University for the general meeting of the Association of Southeast Asian Institutions of Higher Learning (ASAIHL) at the end of this academic year. In addition to our Beijing Office, Soka University launched branch offices in Thailand and Korea last academic year. This fiscal year we are aiming to open a Philippines Office. These initiatives will promote the humanistic education of Soka University in Asian countries and other parts of the world.

(4) Global core

The University is proceeding with our application to launch a Graduate School of International Peace Studies (working title) next April. The majority of faculty members in the Graduate School will be international and will, in principle, provide English-medium courses. Practical research activities including fieldwork will be conducted abroad to foster capable individuals who can contribute to international organizations or associations that are working towards world peace.

5. Initiatives Taken by the Distance Learning Division

Last year, the Distance Learning Division celebrated the 40th anniversary of its establishment by conducting a commemorative scholarship project to alleviate financial burdens on students who attend the face-to-face schooling program. With a Report Writing Training Course that will open as a part of student support services, the Division will set up an introductory level class for further enrichment of the course.

Next fiscal year, the Division will also launch a new program of the Faculty of Letters (application and approval are in process). By initiating the opportunity to submit and correct reports online, the Division will also enhance its e-learning environment.

