

2019  
President Vision

April 2019  
President Yoshihisa Baba

## 2019 President Vision

At the last academic year's Board of Trustees meeting, I was reappointed as the president and will continue to fulfill the President's role for the next three years. With the cooperation of all the people involved with our university, I am determined to do my best to develop Soka University to its full potential.

Soka University is engaged in the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology's Top Global University Project, by partnering and cooperating with faculty members and students across departments to achieve common goals. We are steadily achieving these goals, and we are grateful for the support from everyone involved in the project. As we look towards 2023, the final academic year of the project, we will continue to promote the creation of a diverse campus and nurture creative Global Citizens who will make local and international contributions. Most of the plans announced in last year's President Vision have been either implemented or completed as a result of the cooperation and dedicated efforts of everyone involved. For this, we express our heartfelt gratitude.

Last year saw impressive efforts made by our students. One of our students represented Japan in the G(irls)20 Summit 2018, marking the fourth consecutive year that our students participated as Japan's representatives. In addition, Professor Choi's team, SOBITS, in the Faculty of Science and Engineering won second place in the Partner Robot Challenge (Virtual Space), where they competed with groups from around the world. A seminar group led by Associate Professor Yasuda was given the top prize at the 58<sup>th</sup> Japan Students Economic Seminar Kanto Division. The Soka University Economic Theory Association won first place in Japan at the Economics Record Examination (ERE) University Contest, marking the second consecutive top-prize win for a group from our university. Our Soka University Team won the gold medal in the Team Cheer Hip Hop Doubles category of the International University Sports Federation's first World University Cheerleading Championship in Poland. Soka University's Pioneer Wind Orchestra won the gold medal at the 66<sup>th</sup> All-Japan Band Competition for the first time in 11 years, marking their fourth gold win. Our students demonstrated the fruits of their efforts in many other areas as well, including international conferences, contests, qualification examinations, career development, and regional contributions. We are proud of our students' endeavors.

Our university also had various research achievements in the previous year. The kickoff

symposium for our interdisciplinary arts and science research project, *Research & Development of Appropriate Technology for Establishing a Recycling-oriented Society in Developing Countries and a Foundation for New Community Industries*, was held last year, marking the launch of full-scale research and development. In addition, Professor Ken Furuya of the Graduate School of Engineering received the 11<sup>th</sup> Ocean State Promotion Meritorious Award (Prime Minister's Award) in the Science and Technology Category for special contributions in promoting the ocean state of Japan.

The preparations towards our founding anniversary are officially in process with the announcement of the university's 50th anniversary commemorative project this April. At the same time, we will develop Soka University's Grand Design 2021 – 2030 (hereinafter referred to as the New Grand Design) to prepare for our next milestone—the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Soka Education on November 18, 2030—based on insight into the expected state of the social environment and higher education in 2040. The purpose of the New Grand Design is for Soka University to develop strategic plans and implement them in order for the university to continue its development in achieving its missions in society, where the falling birthrate, aging population, and globalization are having profound effects. We intend to complete our draft for the New Grand Design and gain feedback from faculty, students, and alumni. We plan to make a public announcement in the next academic year of our New Grand Design after taking these insights into consideration as much as possible.

I would like to present this statement as the President's Vision for this year with the hope of gaining further cooperation and understanding from faculty, staff, and students. We hope to make this year hopeful and fruitful, welcoming our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary while at the same time aiming to become a university that cultivates creative global citizens through resolutely challenging for reforms.

## **1. Educational Strategy**

### **1) The start of the New GPA System**

Starting with the incoming students of this academic year, the implementation of the new GPA system begins. Under the new system, we will differentiate grade evaluations by creating subdivisions within the evaluation ranges of the previous system and increase international applicability while maintaining the strictness of evaluation. This will make it possible to better reflect student achievement in the grade evaluation.

## **2) Enhancement of Global Citizenship Education**

Following the curriculum revisions in the General Education Courses and the six Major Courses that occurred last academic year, the curricula of the Faculty of Science and Engineering (General Education Courses and Major Courses) and the Faculty of Nursing (General Education Courses) will be revised this academic year. By doing so, all undergraduate students will be able to take the Global Citizenship Education Courses in fields such as Peace, Human Rights, Environment, Development, etc. From this academic year, Special Studies in Global Citizenship Education will be held, and we will further enhance the Global Citizenship Education courses.

## **3) End of Acceleration Program for University Education Rebuilding (AP) and Beyond**

This academic year will be the final year of the AP project. In order to sustain its achievements, it is essential to enhance FD (Faculty Development) within each faculty. Specifically, from these assessments, we will examine the extent to which outcomes listed in the Diploma Policy are achieved through the undergraduate programs, confirm the degree of achievements, and connect to the next improvement cycle. Thereby actively making transitions from assessment to reform for each faculty. In doing so, we will effectively utilize AL (Active Learning) masters and coworkers' meetings.

## **4) Entrance Examination System Reform**

This academic year is the final year of the current entrance examination system and is also the preparation period of the common university entrance examination for AY 2021 (conducted in the following year). Even at our university, we have applied a multifaceted comprehensive evaluation appropriate to each generation for all entrance exams, and have been reviewing the new system to acquire students that conform to our admission policy. Following the outline announced last December, the details will be announced to the current high school second graders who will be the target group.

## **5) High School-University Link and the First Year Experience**

In the revised educational guidelines for the current courses, "subjective, interactive and extensive learning" is strongly emphasized. Within this, it is important to expand subjective learning so that students are able to look back on what they have learned and implement their learning in their new endeavors. This is important to validate the high school-university link, as well as stress the importance of learning in the first year. For the AP project, assessment courses have already started the reflective process for students' learning throughout the semester. In the future, we would like to increase the opportunities for students to reflect on

and evaluate learning outcomes, not only in assessment courses but also in various other courses. We will further enhance the learning experience by having the students create their “Culmination of Learning” to document their achievements in their 4-years of learning reflections.

#### **6) Enhancement of Inspection and Evaluation System for Student Participation**

From last academic year, we have been promoting the assessment of learning outcomes based on the assessment policy implemented in the university, and in each faculty and graduate school. Furthermore, we will initiate the participation of student representatives in the inspection and evaluation cycle for the three policies including the diploma policy. Also, as an organization promoting the PDCA (plan-do-check-act) cycle of education quality assurance, we will establish an internal quality assurance promotion committee. By cooperating with the IR (institutional research) office, the committee will promote internal quality assurance by sharing the annual plans of the university, and of each faculty and graduate school with the others.

## **2. Research Strategy**

### **1) Strengthening the Base of Research**

Last academic year, we were examining the in-campus research promotion system in a specialized committee of the Research Promotion Center. This academic year, we will strengthen our research environment by establishing the “Academic Papers Publication Fund” and changing the system of the “Research Development Promotion Fund” that we have been implementing so far. In addition, to further enhance the research environment, we will design the Research Support Roadmap and work on improving the research environment for young researchers including graduate students and female researchers. For the Private University Research Branding Project in which we conduct distinctive research, we will further accelerate research and public relations activities to disseminate its research outcomes.

### **2) Expansion of a Support System for Competitive Research Funds**

With the aim of increasing the number of recipients and funding received from public competitive research funds including the Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research (*Kakenhi*), we will hold seminars on how to write research proposals, strengthen the consulting system, and further enhance the contents of seminars related to *Kakenhi* in addition to supporting international faculty members. Also, we will analyze past adoption results and examine future action plans. From this academic year, for the purpose of revitalizing research activities, we will review the qualifications for *Kakenhi* application.

### **3) Increasing the Number of International Scientific Papers**

As a global university, we will hold lectures on how to write academic papers in English and establish a fund to support proofreading fees, translation fees and publication fees for English papers with the aim of promoting international dissemination of research results and increasing the number of academic papers recognized internationally. In addition, we will assess and analyze accurate research capabilities of the university by taking measures including reorganizing database, so that data necessary for future research strategy will be quantified.

### **4) Promotion of Appropriate Research Activities and Efforts to Secure Research Time**

By regularly examining relevant regulations and research ethics education, we will make effective efforts to establish an environment where no unauthorized use of research expenses or fraud related to research activities take place. In addition, we will examine concrete measures based on survey data on the working situation of all researchers in order to ensure research time for researchers.

### **5) The Management of the Faculty Performance Evaluation System (FPES)**

This academic year, we will conduct an evaluation of the performance of faculty members during the last academic year in the following 4 areas: teaching, research, university administrative duties, and social contribution. In addition, we will officially commend faculty members who are highly evaluated for their achievements. We aim to activate educational and research activities throughout the university by appropriately evaluating the diverse tasks of each faculty.

## **3. Enhancement of Student Support**

### **1) Rebuilding the Scholarship System**

In our university, we have expanded our benefit-type scholarship system and have provided financial support for students. Last academic year, we reached the completion year of the original plan, having the highest amount of and the largest number of recipients so far, in turn providing academic support to many students. Meanwhile, preparations by the government to make higher education free starting next year are in progress. Based on this system our university aims to further expand the current scholarship system to support a wide number of students.

### **2) Further development of student dormitories**

With the opening of the Takiyama International Dormitory and the Manyo International Dormitory in 2017, international students and Japanese students are able to experience cross-cultural exchanges through living together and are able to enrich their dormitory lives. Starting from this academic year, the resident assistant (RA) system will also be introduced in the Soshun Dormitory. To accommodate an increasing number of female students (including international female students), we will enhance the living environment and dormitories. At other dormitories, faculty and staff will assume the duties of dormitory advisors and make efforts to enhance the support provided in the two aspects of academics and living.

### **3) Strengthening Career Support**

Last October, the Japan Business Federation announced its intention to abolish "guidelines on recruitment selection" for students graduating in March of 2021 and onwards, thereby creating the concern that corporate recruitment activities will start earlier than past years. Therefore, we will provide career support which will cater to any situation that the students may face. Companies engaged in internships are expanding. Therefore, while carefully looking at the recruitment trends of companies and enhancing career support both inside and outside the classroom, we will try and raise student awareness of internships towards achieving their chosen careers.

### **4) Strengthening Career Support for International Students**

Along with an increase in international students, we have established career development subjects for international students (4 Japanese courses, 1 English course) and provide internships in Japanese and English. This academic year, we will provide internships in the university which are tied to private enterprises in order to improve the employment skills of international students seeking employment in Japan.

## **4. International Strategy**

### **1) Towards the next "Top Global University Project" mid-term evaluation**

The "Top Global University Project" adopted in AY 2014 will undergo the second mid-term evaluation in AY 2020 based on the results of AY 2019. Through achieving the numerical targets for "Global Mobility: accelerating the globalization of the campus through the enhancement of study abroad and accepting international students," "Global Learning: fostering "Creative Global Citizens" through undergraduate and graduate programs that meet the global standards," "Global Administration: further globalization of the university management and decision-making process" and "Global Core: taking global initiative for

humanistic education,” we would like to fulfill the role of driving the globalization of higher education in Japan.

Furthermore, in the next mid-term evaluation, it is said that through focusing on outcomes, each university should be approaching its ideal form for the overall project. We will further increase our efforts to visualize the results of globalization including an analysis of study abroad and learning outcomes.

## 2) Educational initiatives to foster Global Citizens

In our university, “Taking Global Initiative for Humanistic Education – Fostering Global Citizens for Building Peace and Sustainable Prosperity” is defined as the theme of this Top Global University Project and “educational initiatives to foster Global Citizens” is the core idea for the new Grand Design Initiative, as well as the 50th anniversary commemorative project. In this academic year, as a part of the projects mentioned above, a variety of projects are planned to be held following the perspective of “SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals) × Value Creation,” and we believe that many students, staff, and faculty can learn through participating in these programs.

We will also focus on "Overseas graduate school entrance," "Employment in global companies," "Participation in overseas volunteer and internship programs," "Study abroad and language learning in non-English speaking countries including Africa" and so on, as Soka University's independent goals for the Top Global University Project Initiative. Also, with the "Peace Research Institute" and "Soka Education Research Institute" as the core, we will expand our network to domestic and international institutions, and spread our university's peace creation values.

Although this project is granted subsidies until AY 2023, project continuity is requested so that each university will be self-supporting afterward. We have been promoting the "Top Global University Support Donation Project" since last year, and due to the cooperation of many stakeholders, the collection of donations is proceeding smoothly. I would like to express my sincere appreciation for these efforts.

## **5. Initiatives by the Distance Learning Division**

### 1) Expansion of on-demand classes

We will expand the "Media (On Demand) Course" which can be taken on the Internet, by



focusing on subjects in the Faculties of Economics, Law, and Education. Eight new courses will be added to the twelve subjects from the last academic year and in total there will be 20 subjects (we plan to add 10 subjects in the following year). Also, for new courses, the content will be divided into about 15-minute segments, and except for the final examination, students will be able to study through online lectures using smartphones and tablets.

## **2) Addition of special registered courses**

Last academic year, we began to offer special registered courses for the Faculty of Letters (Distance Learning Division). In this way, subjects can be freely selected as the "Course Registration (Free Selection Course)" has 230 subjects to choose from. Also, we will offer a three-subject theme-based "Soka Select Pack" where students can learn history, literature, and philosophy.

## **3) Improved learning convenience**

Course registration will also be possible from smartphones, and the convenience of various other procedures will greatly improve in conjunction with the application of schooling and subject exams. In addition to delivering various guidance videos on the web that can be viewed on smartphones, this year we will also broadcast a "report preparation lecture (introductory version)" which supports report writing.

## **4) Enhancing ICT support**

To respond to the rapid change surrounding ICT and to provide an environment where more people can learn with reassurance, we will expand the ICT helpdesk in cooperation with the accomplished call center. At the helpdesk, we will support students who are not familiar with PCs and learners who study on holidays and at night, so that many people can receive a quality education in a wide range of fields.

