

**TRAILBLAZERS!
LIVING WITH PURPOSE
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This lifetime will never come again; it is precious and irreplaceable. To live without regret, it is crucial for us to have a concrete purpose and continually set goals and challenges for ourselves. It is equally important that we keep moving toward specific targets steadily and tenaciously, one step at a time.

— SGI President Ikeda,
Faith Into Action, page 35

As members of the student division, attending college is our first big step into the realm of adulthood. For many of us, this is the first time in our lives we are living away from our families and are faced with the task of truly taking responsibility for our lives. While many times we may question our own judgment when dealing with problems, this is the time when we can cultivate the strongest core of character.

Like many other students, when I first started college I was ill-prepared to take full responsibility for my actions. Because my professors did not take attendance, I felt that I could skip class, telling myself that it was OK—I would study the material on my own time. Rather than go to class diligently, I would hang out with friends instead. Because I failed to take responsibility for my education, I earned the first “D” of my life in my first semester in college.

From this experience, I was awakened to the fact that I have to take ownership of my own life. If I want to succeed in school and in life, then I need to take the actions that will help create this success. I have come to realize that what is gained from my college experience depends completely upon the earnestness by which I approach life.

Because we are college students, we have the unique opportunity to interact with others that share our same academic interests. At our respective universities are countless other young adults—SGI members and non-members alike—that are gaining a wonderful education and carry the firm belief that we are the future. As we strive to meet the goals we have set for ourselves at school, this is the perfect opportunity to share our Buddhist philosophy with our colleagues in academia. There is perhaps no better time than in our college years when it is perfectly natural to set lofty, life-changing goals for ourselves. Rather than just remaining as lofty goals, we have the full ability to realize our dreams based upon our Buddhist practice.

As we welcome in this first year of the new century, there has already been tremendous growth for our student division. Within the last year, several new campus clubs have sprung up throughout the nation. In the Los Angeles Coastal Region, four new campus clubs have been started in the Santa Monica, Long Beach and Torrance areas. This is a trend that I’m sure is mirrored throughout other cities around the nation that have universities nearby. We have also seen students across the nation working with the junior high and high school divisions to spread the message of nonviolence through the Victory Over Violence initiative.

In the last few years, the student division has also been fortunate enough to have conferences each summer at the Florida Nature and Culture Center. This conference—to be held this year August 2–5—is another opportunity for us to

create bonds of friendship and jumpstart our practices. In attending the student division conference last year, I was grateful to meet so many inspiring students. In sharing our struggles and triumphs with each other, we all left the conference with renewed spirits and refreshed vigor to share Buddhism with others at our schools.

As brothers and sisters in faith, let's continue to strive for success in all that we do. Toward our zone family youth festivals this summer, let's be the first ones to stand up and take action. As we ring in the second set of Seven Bells, the youth of the SGI are poised on the brink of breaking through to greater growth and development!