

## AN ESSAY BY SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA WE ARE ALL SUA FOUNDERS

**‘Soka University of America is a university that has been founded by the people, for the people,’ SGI President Ikeda says. ‘Each and every person who has made an effort that contributed to its establishment is one of its heroic founders.’**

I offer these words of the great American philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson to my young friends starting out on a new journey: “The day is always his, who works in it with serenity and great aims.”

On Aug. 24, Soka University of America, Aliso Viejo, in Orange County, Calif., held its first entrance ceremony. It was an event that I and SGI members around the world have been eagerly anticipating for a long time. I am extremely happy to see this day. A total of 120 carefully selected, outstanding students from 18 countries and 18 American states have entered as members of the historic first freshman class.

The future belongs to you. The construction of the future rests in your hands.

Awakened to a desire to participate in the creation of new value, you have turned down prestige and tradition to gather at SUA. I want to shake hands with each one of you and cry out with all my heart: “Congratulations! Do your best!”



I have been told that on the historic day of the entrance ceremony, the morning’s gentle mist lifted to reveal a bright blue sky enveloping the campus.

On May 3, the significant day when the new campus was dedicated, Southern California was also blessed with brilliant, cloudless blue skies. No doubt the protective forces of the universe were rejoicing on this wonderful occasion.

Unfortunately, my schedule prevented me from attending either ceremony, but I prayed earnestly from Japan for the success of both these important events.

We received congratulatory telegrams for the entrance ceremony from more than 70 countries, and U.S. President George W. Bush and many others sent congratulatory messages and telegrams on May 3. SUA is beginning its history against a backdrop of high expectations from a multitude of supporters around the world.

I will never forget the warm words of encouragement Dr. Joseph Rotblat, world-renowned physicist and Nobel Peace laureate, sent to me on the occasion of the school’s dedication: “Your dream has come true.”

Establishing a university dedicated to Soka Education was the boundless dream of Tsunesaburo Makiguchi and Josei Toda, the first and second Soka Gakkai presidents, and it was my dream as their spiritual successor. Furthermore, to eventually establish a university outside Japan has been my dearest wish since the opening of Soka University in Hachioji, Tokyo, in 1971.

Actually, this determination was already burning in my heart three years prior to that, when I founded the Soka Junior and Senior High School in Kodaira, Tokyo. As a disciple, I was resolved to fulfill my mentors’ vision without fail. And I patiently waited until the time was ripe.

Now we have realized the first step in the dream of a grand educational revolution,

which presidents Makiguchi and Toda and I have cherished and worked toward over three successive generations. I am overwhelmed with emotion.



On July 25, the *New York Times*, one of the world's leading newspapers, introduced SUA in a large, front-page article, under the headline "New West Coast College, Born of the Far East" (see the Aug. 10 *World Tribune*). In addition, the Associated Press, the world's largest news-gathering organization, released an article on SUA that was picked up by some 40 U.S. papers. This is evidence that many people are deeply interested in the direction of higher education in the 21st century.

The SUA campus, surrounded by nature, sits on a hilltop with valleys on three sides. It rises gently to the southwest from the gym, where the entrance ceremony was held. Just beyond a low mountain to the west lies the vast, sparkling blue Pacific Ocean.

The *Orange County Register* called SUA "the school on the hill." A hill can be thought of as a symbol of striving and working to develop oneself in the pursuit of the highest ideals.

Founders Hall is the central building on the campus. I regard this use of the plural form—"Founders"—as a commemoration of all those who have to this day endeavored with me, in every possible way, as I pursued the educational ideals of presidents Makiguchi and Toda.

SUA is a university that has been founded by the people, for the people. Each and every person who has made an effort that contributed to its establishment is one of its heroic founders.

And to my dear students of the freshman class of SUA: I hope that you, as "youthful founders," will channel your intellect and enthusiasm toward the development of our university and the creation of a magnificent self.



Classes will be held in the Linus and Ava Helen Pauling Hall and the Mohandas and Kasturba Gandhi Hall, named, of course, after the famous U.S. Nobel laureate and his wife, and India's legendary leader of nonviolence and his wife. The Linus and Ava Helen Pauling Hall was opened in May. The Mohandas and Kasturba Gandhi Hall was opened on Aug. 23, the day before the entrance ceremony, with Arun Gandhi, grandson of the hall's namesakes, and his wife, Sunanda, in attendance.

Some have expressed surprise that both of these buildings are named for people who are neither Buddhists nor Japanese, but this is only appropriate given the founding principles of SUA. We are free of the spell of narrow ideology; we value pluralism. While respecting differences of race, ethnicity and culture, we are dedicated to working for all humanity, for the people and for the dignity of life.

We are committed to actively carrying on the spiritual struggle of outstanding humanists in every part of the globe, who have dedicated their lives to eliminating the root causes of unhappiness in this world rife with misery and suffering. And we will continue to advance together with people who share this spirit.

Naming our first two academic buildings after towering giants of East and West in the fight for justice and peace in the 20th century is an expression of our lofty commitment to fostering global citizens who will unite for the cause of world peace.



The great Dr. Pauling did not have an easy time when he was a student. After finally being accepted at Oregon Agricultural College (now Oregon State University), he was forced to leave school for a time to earn enough money to pay for tuition and his living expenses. He was able to continue his studies because of the support of his teachers, who wanted to make it possible for the brilliant young man to bring his talents to full flower. Dr. Pauling was always grateful for the university's warm encouragement and support.

SUA is likewise completely student centered. Caring about students is the same as caring about the future.

Having excelled in his studies, Dr. Pauling could have attended graduate school at some prestigious university, but he chose instead the newly established California Institute of Technology. His many subsequent academic honors and accolades as a great scientist, including the Nobel Prize for Chemistry, became the honors of his school as well.

You, the members of the first class of SUA, also had opportunities to attend other institutions, yet you unhesitatingly decided to join in the creation of a new university. I am grateful to you young pioneers, and I am confident that outstanding leaders in all fields of human endeavor will emerge from your ranks.



In my message for SUA's first entrance ceremony (see the Sept. 7 *World Tribune*), I touched on the school founded by the great Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore. It is also well known that Mahatma Gandhi, seeking to make education in India independent from the colonial powers, founded several schools, one of which was Gujarat Vidyapith, a national academy in Ahmedabad, Gujarat, in 1920.

Gandhi was eager to build a new Indian spirit and a new India. The French author Romain Rolland, praising the tremendous significance of Gandhi's endeavor, writes, "He is a builder of a new humanity."

SUA also aims to build a new humanity. Our goal is to produce pioneers of a truly global civilization!

The Gujarat Vidyapith students assisted Gandhi in preparations for the famous Salt March of 1930, one of the galvanizing events in the movement for Indian independence. They visited Gujarati villages in advance and gathered data, playing a crucial role in the success of the demonstration.

The following year, Gandhi visited the school to praise the students' efforts: "When the history of the fight [the Salt March] comes to be written, the contribution of our *vidyapiths* [schools] to the struggle will occupy a large space in it. Even the world will be proud of your glorious record."

I am convinced that the pioneering efforts of our wonderful, enthusiastic students of SUA—an institution that is my very life—will shine in the annals of history, too.



The great poet of the people, Walt Whitman, once dedicated a poem to a pupil, calling him "dear friend" and urging him: "Commence today to inure yourself to pluck, reality, self-esteem, definiteness, elevatedness, / Rest not till you rivet and publish yourself of your own Personality."

My dear friends of the first class of SUA: Everyone is waiting expectantly for your growth, victory and success! This brand-new century will unfold together with your spirited advance.

*This essay was published in the "Thoughts on The New Human Revolution" series in the Aug. 29 Seikyo Shimbun, the Soka Gakkai's daily newspaper.*