

FROM HAWAII TO THE WORLD

The first freshman class at Soka University of America, Aliso Viejo includes students from 18 countries on five continents. On Aug. 23, some of the international students sat down with World Tribune Staff Writer Jamie Liptan and described their experiences in coming to SUA.

Mitsuko Takahashi

Hawaii

I was attending a four-year university in Hawaii, but when I heard of the values and ideology of Soka University of America—to create well-rounded, global individuals who could do well anywhere in the world—I had no doubt that I could achieve my goals there.

I grew up in Hawaii where multiculturalism and diversity are valued. It is hard to find schools in other places that respect the same things. But SUA values and promotes multiculturalism, and the students do as well. Also, the administration and faculty here truly care about the students, and the students really value higher education, which is rare.

I find it easier to remain focused here because there are so many people supporting you; not just your advisors, but your peers as well. I feel at home with the students on the campus. They have goals and a sense of mission, they're focused on why they're here. My goal is that after my four years at SUA that we continue to stay as a family.

I respect that Dr. Ikeda has followed through completely on his and his mentor's dream. Knowing that he is the founder really comforted me in leaving home. My father told me that Dr. Ikeda limited the amount of students so that he could individually take care of us. When I heard that, my fear of crossing the Pacific Ocean to come to this university disappeared.

I want to study law, and become a person who can defend people anywhere in the world. Initially, I wanted to go into constitutional law, but now the more personal issues in individual people's lives inspire me more. Every time I forget why I am here, I look around and remember that there are so many people in the world that are discriminated against, that are denied their rights, and that re-ignites my fire for law.

I expect to gain a lot of confidence here at SUA, to overcome my fear of the rest of the world, and become a leader who can inspire others in the different areas of my life.

The World Tribune has printed four other student interviews: Gonzalo Obeillero of Argentina and Priyanka Sabarwal of India in the Oct. 26 issue, and Conny Kull of Switzerland and Edinam Konu of Ghana in the Nov. 30 issue. These five students represent the five continents that are home to the first 120 students at SUA.

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