

2010 Soka University Educational Vision

**Toward the 50th Anniversary of the University's Founding:
Embarking on the first year of the Grand Design Initiative**

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President Hideo Yamamoto

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This year, as the university celebrates its 40th anniversary, we are pleased to announce the Soka University Grand Design Initiative, a long-term plan formulated with a view to the 50th anniversary. In this sense, this year can be positioned as the first year of the Grand Design Initiative.

Under the current harsh environment for university management, including the declining birth rate and economic depression, the higher education segment in Japan is under intense pressure to assure and improve the quality of education, including issues surrounding discipline specific quality assurance or the evaluation of learning outcomes. In formulating the Grand Design Initiative, we had many discussions concerning the important viewpoint of not only earnestly working on these issues, but also actively transmitting the achievements of our efforts both internally and externally, as well as obtaining appropriate evaluations. What was confirmed during the discussions was the importance of returning once again to the original mission of the university, which is to graduate individuals who are rooted in the founding principles of Soka University into society. Therefore, the framework of the Grand Design Initiative was created with a view to reconstruct specific educational and research systems to achieve this mission, while presenting the path to develop a comprehensive environment to support such education and research.

As the ultimate goal to be recognized by society, the university will aim to foster and graduate persons who embody the unique characteristics of Soka University—decided to be expressed as “fostering creative individuals.” Specifically, the university will foster individuals who have experienced a student life filled with opportunities to further develop their intellectual capability and strength of character, as well as the lifelong ability to train themselves. The construction of a definite education to achieve this goal, forms the basis of human resource development at the university. Based on this recognition, the university has presented the following nine points as specific measures related to education under the Grand Design Initiative:

- Establish the School for Excellence in Educational Development
- Enhance the first-year and introductory education programs, and open the Student Performance Acceleration Center
- Enhance the Soka Core Program and organize the university's liberal arts education
- Open the Global Citizenship Program
- Establish new faculties and reorganize existing faculties and majors
- Establish a comprehensive educational environment centered around the construction of the new educational building
- Enhance student support with a focus on expanding the scholarship programs and providing career support
- Establish new targets and promote the university's international strategy
- Establish a new university operating structure and work to improve the strength of the brand

By sharing the targets of these measures and criteria (standards) for measuring the achievement of the targets among all members of the university, it will be possible to take powerful strides toward the realization of Soka University's ideal image of "fostering creative individuals" in the 50th anniversary of its founding, as stated in the Grand Design Initiative. Thus, the 2010 educational vision is positioned as an action plan for achieving the Grand Design Initiative, based on which we will start working toward the 50th anniversary of the university's founding.

1. Enhancement of education

The university, with the goal of fostering creative individuals, will establish the School for Excellence in Educational Development and open the Global Citizenship Program under the action plan for the first year of the Grand Design Initiative. These measures and others are as described below.

(1) Establishing the School for Excellence in Educational Development

This year, the university will establish the School for Excellence in Educational Development and aim to improve the quality of the education provided under the undergraduate program in regard to both the general education courses and the specialized courses. The new organization will oversee the General Education Course Operation Center, which has been in charge of class-related operations for the general education courses; the World Language Center (WLC); and the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL), which has been in charge of supporting education and learning. It will also aim to expand the education in the undergraduate program in general and further accelerate the quality assurance for students' learning. In addition, the new organization is expected to play a leading role with regard to the issue of outcome evaluations, which is currently under consideration in the higher education segment.

(2) Enhancing the first-year and introductory education programs, and opening the Student Performance Acceleration Center

The initiatives under the "Establishment of the Learning Support System for Assisting First-year and Introductory Education" adopted by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology's Education Support Good Practice (GP) Project last year will be rolled out in full scale. While carrying out these initiatives, the university will aim to open the Student Performance Acceleration Center, in line with the planned completion of the new building, Global Square in 2013.

(3) Enhancing the Soka Core Program and organizing the liberal arts education

In order to enhance the Soka Core Program introduced last year as the course requirement standard, the details of the program will be examined. This will take place in conjunction with the promotion of standardizing contents and methods of classes, mainly with regard to language courses.

(4) Opening the Global Citizenship Program

The Global Citizenship Program (GCP) will commence from this year. Under this program, the university will provide full-scale support to students who aims to work in international corporations, organizations, etc. in the future or who aims to study at overseas graduate schools. Thirty students will be selected from among all faculties, and will receive detailed guidance spanning their four years at the university in addition to a solid foundation in English and mathematical training. Furthermore, the university will work to grasp the learning outcomes in all of the subjects of the GCP, with the program functioning as a pilot program for outcome evaluations.

Enhancing learning support tools

The Student Portfolio introduced on a trial basis in some faculties last year will be fully introduced in all faculties this year. This system provides the four functions of Student Life Portfolio, Learning Portfolio, English Learning Portfolio, and Career Portfolio. In addition to fostering self-management skills, the portfolio will be used by instructors for the provision of academic guidance and by students for peer education.

This year, accompanying the transition of the student identification cards to IC cards, an attendance system will be introduced. This system will make it possible to quickly confirm the attendance status of students. Operation of the new system will start on a trial basis this year, and the university is aiming for full-scale operation in 2013.

(5) Promoting e-learning and digitization of subject guidance content

The university will aim to expand the contents of e-learning subjects (computer literacy) that were introduced for the first time last year. Also, as a result of its selection under the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology's strategic cooperation Good Practice (GP), the university will advance the establishment of a system to enable e-learning to be utilized in extracurricular learning. Furthermore, in order to help students select courses, having the Faculty of Economics as the model, the content of the subject guidance will be digitized and will be available through the portal site.

The Distance Learning Division offers schooling through e-learning while ensuring mutual interaction, and the university plans to work more actively to develop this schooling.

2. Further intensification of faculty's research and educational activities

In relation to the enhancement of education as mentioned above, as the basis of such education, the university regards it essential to further intensify the research and educational activities of the university faculty. As measures to achieve this, the following three points are listed.

(1) Supporting acquisition of competitive research grants

Last year, new research grants, including the Strategic Research Foundation Grant-aided Project for Private Universities, the Next-generation Joint Research Project, and Funding for the Promotion of Research Development by Soka University Faculty, were implemented ahead of the plan set forth under the Grand Design Initiative. In addition, the Faculty Affairs Office has begun providing detailed information regarding external research grants. This year, consultations for acquiring external funds will be further enhanced, a move that is expected to further intensify research activities at the university.

(2) Developing further Faculty Development activities

When the university-wide Faculty Development (FD) Committee was established two years ago, the university decided to work on the substantiation of credits, particularly the increase in students' study time outside the classroom, for a period of three years. This year will be the final year for achieving the target. Each faculty, led by the Dean, is expected to make its best effort to achieve the target. Based on this, this year, the university will formulate the direction of the FD activities for the next year onward in order to secure educational quality.

(3) Introducing a comprehensive faculty performance assessment system

Private universities are expected to contribute to society through education and research, and this mission and responsibility are important for each and every instructor. Therefore, universities need to

provide society with some form of assurance regarding the educational and research quality. The university's comprehensive faculty performance assessments are aimed at further intensifying faculty's educational, research, and other internal/external activities. This year, the university will establish the Committee for Comprehensive Faculty Performance Assessment to determine the evaluation items, and aim to conduct comprehensive faculty performance assessments on a trial basis next year.

3. Establishment of a new faculty and reorganization of existing faculties and majors

With sights set on the ideal image of Soka University in the 50th anniversary, the next 10 years will be divided into three stages, during which the university will work to reorganize its research and educational organizations. First, the university will launch a committee to study the establishment of a new faculty to bring Soka University into line with the needs of the current era and more clearly realize the university's educational philosophies. In addition, the study discussions will start including the idea of reorganizing existing graduate schools and faculties.

4. Preparation of a comprehensive educational environment centered on the construction of the new building

Scheduled for completion in 2013, the construction of the new general education building named Global Square will start this year. Currently, the design of the building is in the final stage. The concept of the building is to provide the ultimate student-oriented educational and learning environment, and the university will continue to hold discussions with the aim of embodying this concept in classrooms, study spaces, learning support spaces, and other areas.

5. Enhancement of student support with a focus on expanding scholarship programs and providing career support

Due to the rapid deterioration of the economic situation triggered by the global financial crisis, students' household budgets have been under strain, while tough conditions have severely impacted career paths and employment opportunities of graduates. While the Grand Design Initiative focuses on the enhancement of education, the enhancement of the student support systems is also essential in order to ensure the university education provides beneficial results. The university is implementing the following four specific initiatives.

(1) Enhancing the scholarship programs with a focus on benefit-type scholarships

In terms of scholarships, from 2007, the university has introduced the Soka University Benefit-type Scholarship Program (reduction or exemption from tuition fees) for students from families undergoing financial difficulties. Based on the experience gained through this program over the past three years, the university realized the need to expand the scholarship program. Thus, with the cooperation of the alumni association and other concerned parties, the university will aim to enhance its scholarship programs.

(2) Enhancing career support

It is said that the employment ice age has returned for new graduates, and amid a strengthening tendency among companies being very selective when hiring, it is becoming increasingly important to establish a system for providing career path and employment support to all students throughout their four years at the university. This year sees the establishment of the Soka University Career

Development Committee. In addition to numerical targets in relation to the career path and employment for the entire university, this new committee will start studying specific measures aimed at improving students' awareness and capabilities regarding their career paths and securing employment.

(3) Implementing initiatives for a safe and healthy student life

In order to protect the lives and health of our precious students, the university will strive to ensure traffic safety and crime prevention at all times. Last year, the university strengthened the crime prevention measures on campus, such as installing high security lighting. This year, the university is aiming to improve students' awareness of safety and crime prevention through traffic safety campaigns and various crime prevention seminars. In addition, from the perspective of protecting students' health, following discussions of the university-wide Smoke-free Campus Examination Committee and the Campus Representative Committee, it was decided that the university campus will be smoke-free from April 2013. This year, a smoke-free campaign will be held for the first time, and we will start to work toward reducing the number of smokers and preventing people from starting to smoke.

(4) Supporting club activities

With regard to the club activities of the Student's Association (Gakuyukai), the university respects the autonomy of the students and promotes the continuation of good traditions. Based on this, the university decided on its Basic Policy and Basic Principles regarding Club Activities last year, in order to appropriately position club activities within the overall education. In response to this, the Student's Association prepared the "Guidelines for Appropriate Club Activities" with consent from each club. I would like to recognize this as an independent initiative by the students themselves to make club activities more appropriate. This year, a Club Advisory Meeting will be held in order to expand the support provided to each club.

6. Establishment of new targets and promotion of international strategy

Directed toward the 50th anniversary, the university will make effort to expand the number of exchange students accepted and the scale of study abroad programs for enrolled students. This year, we will endeavor to make improvements from the perspective of the organizations and systems, as outlined below.

(1) Establishing the Japan Studies Center to improve the education services for exchange students

With the aim of improving the education services for international students, Japan Studies Center (JSEC) will be established. JSEC will offer special Japanese language programs for exchange students. In addition, Japan Studies Program (JSP) general education course, in which students learn about the circumstances in Japan in English language, will be enhanced under the direction of JSEC. Moreover, targeting exchange students from partner schools, the university will actively offer short-term (about two weeks to one month) Japanese language and culture training programs.

(2) Introducing new study abroad programs for students with a medium level of English

Mainly targeting students with a medium level of English proficiency, the university will prepare to establish a new foreign exchange course lasting one semester to allow them to steadily improve their language ability.

(3) Expanding opportunities for study abroad and short-term study programs in non-English-speaking regions

Targeting students who have a high level of English proficiency, the university will offer opportunities to study abroad in non-English-speaking regions with the aim of acquiring proficiency in a second foreign language. In addition, the university will implement short-term study abroad programs for the major second foreign languages. Also, if proactive cooperation is obtained from local partner schools in other non-English-speaking regions, we will consider offering short-term cultural experience programs (English language medium).

7. Establishment of a new university operating structure and steps to improve the strength of the brand

In this age of lower birth rates, the governance of each university is being called into question. With an aim of strengthening its governance and brand strength, the university will work on the following three initiatives.

(1) Establishing the University Education and Research Council as a new decision making organization

This year, the University Education and Research Council will be established as an organization to replace the former University Professors Conference. This has accompanied the revision of the School Regulations and other related regulations. Through this initiative, the university will strive to organize the various conferences and expedite the decision-making process with regard to academic issues. In addition, newly the Presidential Office Meeting will be established for the purpose of gathering and coordinating opinions and facilitating intra-university communication. As well as promptly responding to changes in the social environment in which all universities operate, Soka University aims to show the results of these initiatives with an awareness of becoming the front runner in university reform.

(2) Studying the establishment the Stakeholder Coordination Promotion Bureau

Strengthening cooperation with stakeholders who support the university and reflecting feedback from stakeholders into university operations will lead to improvement in the evaluation and reputation of the university. Therefore, the university will strive this year to establish the Preparatory Committee for the Stakeholder Coordination Promotion Bureau and, while cooperating with the other divisions, will aim to improve the services it provides to stakeholders, such as information disclosure.

(3) Studying the public relations plan being conscious to improving the strength of the brand

Throughout the entire Grand Design Initiative, while clarifying the ideal future image of Soka University, the university will formulate a strategic public relations plan while establishing and developing its brand. We will work on initiatives that provide a sense of unity to the designs and specifications of the university's statement of "Discover your potential" and logos. We intend to make the university's features and attractions visible and appealing.

