

2011 Soka University Educational Vision

Toward the 50th Anniversary of the University's Founding,
Unending Reform Aimed at Fostering Creative Individuals

April 2011
President Hideo Yamamoto

Toward the 50th Anniversary of the University's Founding

- Unending reform aimed at fostering creative individuals-

First of all, I would like to extend my sincere condolences to the victims of the Great East Japan Earthquake on March 11, and I also would like to express sympathy from the bottom of my heart to the afflicted people of the disaster and their families. I pray for the safety and well-being of those who have faced unprecedented difficulties and for the recovery of the affected areas.

In the course of formulating the Soka University Grand Design Initiative (announced in April 2010; hereinafter referred to as the “Grand Design Initiative”) aimed toward the 50th anniversary of the University's founding, we delineated the vision of the University to be achieved at time of the 50th anniversary year from the viewpoints of education, research, and campus facilities and we reassured that the fundamental mission of the University is to foster Creative Individuals. On the first stage to realize that mission, we launched initiatives to improve and strengthen our educational services to students last academic year when the Initiative started in effect. Specifically, we established the School for Excellence in Educational Development (SEED), formulated learning outcomes for the General Education Courses, and prepared a system to carry out the assessment of the learning outcomes. In this way, we have just started working to establish a PDCA cycle for educational improvement at the university based on the clarification of the contents and level of the basic skills that capable individuals fostered at Soka University are expected to acquire.

In addition, the Global Citizenship Program (GCP), aimed at fostering global citizens as one of the educational philosophies of the university, has also begun as a university-wide educational program offered by SEED. Each faculty has reviewed and announced its educational goals (diploma policy), curriculum formulation and implementation policy for realizing those goals (curriculum policy), and the policy for admitting matriculates (admission policy). Going forward, we will further effectively interlock the General Education Courses offered by SEED and the Departmental Courses offered by each faculty to fulfill our mission to foster Creative Individuals.

Based on these basic objectives, this year, we will also work to enhance education in regard to the following points.

- Establish new faculties and prepare for the reorganization of existing faculties based on the review of the areas in which the university will foster capable individuals
- Enhance the SOKA Program 21 (the University Studies and Soka Education course category) reassuring the purpose of learning at Soka University
- Conduct initiatives to develop employability skills.
- Newly establish a Social Work major in the Faculty of Letters.
- Establish the Japan Studies Center for accepting diverse international students.

1. Establishment of new faculties and preparation for the reorganization of existing faculties

In June of last year, we established the Soka University Faculty Organizations Study Committee and six subcommittees in order to study how the faculties should be reorganized in the future. Under the Grand Design Initiative, the university is seeking to establish new faculties in the second stage (2013 onward) and have established the Faculty Establishment Preparation Bureau this March. By accurately grasping various changes that the current society faces and the needs of potential students and studying the fields in which the university should foster capable individuals, we will prepare for the establishment of new faculties and reorganization of the existing faculties and departments.

2. Education strategies

(1) Enhancement of the Soka Program 21 (University Studies and Soka Education course category)

One of the important missions of the University is to carry on and deepen the founding principles and educational philosophies of Soka University as espoused by founder Dr. Daisaku Ikeda. The current course category “University Studies and Soka Education” was renamed as “Soka Program 21,” and its contents will be further enhanced to provide an opportunity for the next generation of students to learn the founding principles of Soka University. First, the university will renew the contents of a course “Humanistic Education and Soka University” taken by a large portion of students so as to enable students to learn the founding principles in a structured manner to reassure the purpose of learning at Soka University. Also, in addition to the Soka Education Lectures in which students learn the historical lineage of Soka education in a structured manner, a Soka Education course offered in English and taught by native English faculty members will be established this year. Through these courses, the university will endeavor to contribute to strengthening students’ Strength of Character.

(2) Initiatives to develop employability skills

Following the collapse of Lehman Brothers in 2008, a difficult environment for job seekers still remains due to the deteriorating economic situation in Japan. As companies are very careful when selecting incoming employees, institutions of higher education are once again required to foster students’ “employability skills.” At the same time, potential students also place top priority on “gaining advantages for finding a job” when selecting a college.

At Soka University, a program led by the Faculty of Economics was selected to be part of the “Employability Development Program GP(Good Practice)s,” of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), and specific initiatives aimed at enabling students to acquire “employability skills” have begun in the undergraduate programs. In addition, with a view toward the 50th anniversary of the university in 2020, the “Career Development Committee” has set numerical targets for the successful career outcome rate in AY 2015 for the time being and has formulated a plan for developing “employability skills” in order to achieve the targets. Moreover, numerical targets have been decided for each faculty. Going forward, based on the example of the Faculty of Economics, the university will carry out the university-wide initiatives and aim to deliver results as a competent university for job placement.

(3) New establishment of a Social Work major in the Faculty of Letters

The Social Work major is offered in the Faculty of Letters from this year. Students who have completed the designated subjects will be eligible to take the national exam so as to become a certified social worker, and if the student passes the exam, the student will be able to obtain national qualifications as a certified social worker upon graduation. Certified social workers provide consultations for elderly people, people with disabilities, single-parent families and others, and also provide advice, guidance, and other social services. After graduation, students can work at a prefectural or municipal welfare office, as an employee of a Social Welfare Council, as a local government official in charge of welfare administration, or as a social worker. This new major is the pioneering initiative to foster personnel in new areas within the educational programs offered by the University.

3. Further intensification of research and educational activities

(1) Establishment and enhancement of the research environment

Based on the Grand Design Initiative, the university has introduced research support systems including “MEXT Supported Program for Strategic Research Foundation at Private Universities,” “Next Generation Joint Research Project,” and “Research Development Promotion Fund.” As a result of these new systems and the consultations that have been given to faculty members for the application of the Grants-in-Aid Scientific Research (*Kakenhi*) since Year 2008, both the number of projects approved for *Kakenhi* and the amount of the grants have significantly increased compared to the previous year. Going forward, the university will promote the enhancement of a research environment and will aim to further intensify research activities at the university.

Moreover, it is planned to establish a “Female Faculty Support Preparation Bureau” during the first stage of the Grand Design Initiative. We will start preparations for the opening of the Bureau this year.

(2) New objective of faculty development activities

For the three years up through to the last academic year, the university carried out initiatives to ensure the validity of credit as a university-wide faculty development objective. As a result, we were able to improve students’ average study hours outside of the classroom for all subjects based on the results of course evaluation assessed by students. We will continue making efforts to further ensure the validity of credits by setting a new goal, which is to “ensure the quality of education by further utilizing and enhancing the syllabi,” as part of our faculty development activity and showing its achievement.

(3) Trial introduction of the Comprehensive Faculty Performance Assessment System

Led by the “Committee for the Comprehensive Faculty Performance Assessment” established last year, the university as a whole has been studying the evaluation components and criteria. The purpose of introducing this assessment system described by the Committee is to “check and assess individual faculty members’ teaching and research activities in a more fair and objective manner and enhance these activities.” Based on feedback gained from a number of faculty members and staff, the evaluation components were determined and the trial introduction of this system will begin from this year. Going forward, we will strive to establish a better evaluation system in order to achieve the above purpose.

through sincerely listening to feedback from various perspectives.

4. Improvement of student support centered on expanding the scholarship program

(1) Expansion of the scholarship programs

The university has newly started the “Soyu Scholarship Program” in which scholarship will be assured for applicants before enrollment to the University. In this program, screening will be conducted based on applicants’ household income prior to entrance examinations, and the guaranteed recipients will be announced in advance. We will welcome the first students that receive a scholarship under this program this year. The existing “Soka University Scholarship Program (tuition waiver)” for enrolled students will also be continued and expanded in order to increase support for improving the learning environment of students.

(2) Implementation of a “student dormitory advisor program”

At Soka University, more than half of first-year students live in student dormitories. While maintaining the good traditions that have been built up since the founding, the university will actively provide support for students to maintain good health, prevent accidents, and improve their studies. In February of this year, we have assigned faculty members and staff to each dormitory as advisors. Moreover, we intend to further respond to the needs of the students living in dormitories by holding study support seminars and social gatherings. We will also continue to enhance the support of first-year students living off-campus.

(3) Increased awareness about health and crime prevention, along with promotion of smoke-free campaign

The university will further strengthen the initiatives to protect the precious lives and health of students. Through traffic safety campaigns and crime prevention seminars, we will raise student awareness. Moreover, this year marks the second year of the smoke-free campaign aimed at the prohibition of smoking campus-wide from April 2013. The university will work to further reduce the number of smokers on campus by creating a smoke-free environment that will also help those intending to quit.

5. Establishment of new targets and advancement for international strategy

(1) Acceptance of diverse international students through the establishment of the Japan Studies Center

This year, the Japan Studies Center (established last year) will start offering courses in the Japanese language and Japanese culture for international students. Building on this foundation, the university will actively accept international students for English-medium non-degree courses (short-term study abroad programs with no diploma acquired) combining the JAS (Japan-Asian Study) Program offered by the Faculty of Economics and the General Education Courses of “Japan Studies” and so on.

(2) Expansion of the second foreign languages

After making the second foreign language courses (in General Education Courses) mandatory (required to obtain four credits in one foreign language) two years ago, the university has worked to introduce short-term language programs for major second foreign languages, and as of last year, short-term programs have been implemented for Chinese, Korean, Spanish, and Italian. This year, we will work to prepare for the implementation of short-term language programs for German and French.

6. Improvement of the campus facilities and the financial plan

(1) Construction of a new General Education Building and a new Student Center

Regarding the new Hall of Learning for which the groundbreaking ceremony was held last year, the construction of the building frame will start this year. The construction will be carried out with the aim of completing the building by the end of May 2013. On the west side of Ground No. 1 (Central Tower side), the construction of a new Student Center (for student extracurricular activities) is planned (to be completed in January 2013). The renovation work for Ground No. 1 will start in April, and the construction of the new Student Center will commence in fall.

(2) Upgrade of the student dormitories and other facilities

Yuko Dormitory and Ryokufu Dormitory will be fully upgraded this year. In addition, the air conditioning equipment in the Faculty of Engineering Building E will be renewed. The university is committed to improving and enhancing the educational environment and supporting campus life.

(3) Promotion of the solicitation of donations for the 40th anniversary

The solicitation of donations for commemorating the 40th anniversary (target amount: 2 billion yen) that started in February last year will be carried out until January next year. It is planned to appropriate the donations to the construction of the new Hall of Learning Building, for the improvement and enhancement of the education and research environment at Soka University and Soka Women's College, and as funds for expanding scholarship programs. The university will place its full effort into soliciting donations this year.

7. Establishment of a new university management structure and initiatives for leveraging the University's brand recognition

(1) Integration of the decision-making organizations related to the Graduate School and Professional Graduate Schools

Last year, following the establishment of the "University Education and Research Council" and the "President's Office Meeting," we have expedited decision-making and rationalized meetings. In addition, we have integrated the Graduate School Regulations and Professional Graduate School Regulations so as to unify the decision-making organization for the entire Graduate School into the "Graduate Schools General Committee" This year, we will set up a system in which coordination among Graduate Schools and Departments are made at the Graduate School Deans' Meeting , and will also rationalize the meetings and proceed with the reform of the Graduate School.

(2) Study of the public relations plan in light of promote brand recognition

Last year, we standardized the specifications of our university motto, “Discover your potential,” and its university logos and other items as promoting our brand recognition. This year, we will implement an appealing public relations strategy that makes the features and attractions of the university visible to potential students and their parents or guardians. In the study of the strategy, we will incorporate a method for grasping various touch points with potential students and whether they have applied to our university, and we will assess the effects thereof.

