

2012 Soka University Educational Vision

**Towards the 50th anniversary**  
**– Advancement through new challenges**

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**President Hideo Yamamoto**

# Towards the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary – Advancement through new challenges

Looking forward to the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2020, Soka University announced the Soka University Grand Design in April 2010, with the vision of being “a university that fosters creative individuals.” To support these enhancements, this Grand Design, aiming for “fostering creative individuals” through educational research and student support, was separated into three stages, to make sure each stage is achieved. This year will be the final year of Stage 1. The Grand Design was decided based on the University founding principles, and presently the strategies and business of each one are moving forward. In order to assess the contribution of the vision, all the situations are being looked at.

On the other hand, in our society, given the difficult financial situations and the tragedies of the East Japan Earthquake and the atomic radiation incident, it is exactly “human security” that is the biggest problem. In order to improve human security, even when we are living through unexpected situations, capable people with a global vision, who can decide for themselves and take action, are needed.

At Soka University, in order to foster such global citizens, we started our “Global Citizenship Program” at the same time that we announced the Grand Design. Utilizing the strengths of our university, both “multilingual and multiregional,” Soka University is now aiming to foster the kind of people who are needed in the present world.

This year’s Soka University Education Vision is an action plan and includes a general overview of the Stage 1 of the Grand Design along with plans for Stage 2. In order to make advances in Stage 2, we at Soka University will work on each project that we have planned for 2012.

## **1. New Faculty and Faculty Reorganization**

The Faculty of Nursing, planned for opening next April, will be the first new faculty since the opening of the Faculty of Engineering in 1991. With advancement into this new academic area, we will begin to meet the challenge of fostering educated people with professional expertise in order to respond to the needs of the continuously changing world and to the requests from the people in the community who need human care.

Furthermore at the University, along with preparing the application procedure for the opening of the Faculty of Nursing, in recognition of the exact needs of the society and stakeholders, we will continue to reform for further advancement. This year, aiming toward the opening in 2014 or later, we are also considering the reorganization of Faculty of Engineering and other faculties along with the new idea of a new faculty.

## **2. Education Strategy**

### **(1) Learning outcomes and internal quality assurance system**

The School for Excellence in Educational Development (SEED), established in 2010, will be

implementing the measurement and evaluation of the learning outcomes of all the University's faculties and departments. These efforts establish a cycle for the internal quality assurance system and include setting educational goals, issuing explicit syllabi, and improving curricula and lectures as part of the faculty development activities. These efforts are evaluated highly as one of the pioneering systems in domestic higher education institutions.

We believe that this will be an engine toward achieving the goal of becoming "a university that fosters creative individuals," stated in the Grand Design as we aim for the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

## **(2) Reformation of the Faculty of Letters**

The Faculty of Letters will start a new curriculum for this year's newly entering students. The curriculum will change from eight specializations to 11 majors and one specialization (in social welfare). By abolishing the former eight specializations, students will be able to freely take classes of their own intellectual interest.

In the Double Degree course, in addition to the course with the Beijing Language and Culture University, a course with the University of Buckingham in the United Kingdom will be starting. These are courses in which students polish their language skills to earn two degrees in four years and which foster students that can contribute worldwide after graduation. We await new students to accept the challenge.

## **(3) The expansion of educational materials corresponding to e-learning**

In 2013, around the same time as the completion of the new educational building, the establishment of an educational support center for students with the function of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) education is planned. Last year, we established the "Exploratory Committee for ICT Support for Teaching and Learning." In this committee, along with the basic topics of the Comprehensive Information Center and Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning, we have discussed support for e-learning and education using the methods of ICT. This year, we are aiming to organize an internal framework to develop educational materials, especially media-related materials that are needed by the Distance Learning Course.

## **(4) Future development of employability cultivation**

Cultivating students' employability is of significant importance in the difficult employment environment of today. Through the initiative of the Faculty of Economics' Employability Support program, we will conduct a university-wide career assessment test and develop a system to assist students in making tentative decisions about their careers. Through these initiatives, we hope to encourage students to pay attention to their career paths at an early stage.

## **3. Actions regarding research and teaching activities of faculty members**

### **(1) Arrangement and enhancement of research environment**

"Strategic Research Foundation Grant-Aided Project for Private Universities," "Next Generation Joint Research Project," and "Research Development Promotion Support" were introduced as a new research support system in 2009. These internal supports were initiated to activate faculty members'

research activities.

Through these efforts, the number of adopted Grants-in-Aid for Scientific Research from 2009 to 2011 were 27, 39, and 47 (total of newly adopted and continued grants), showing a smooth increase. We will increase opportunities for seminars and consultations on how to earn competitive research funds and aim for a greater increase in the total number of grants earned through the arrangement of a better research environment. The university will consider an evaluation system for the research support system and grant system.

We have also established a “Preparation Committee for Female Faculty Support” that will consider support systems for female faculty members’ teaching and research activities.

## **(2) Acceleration of Faculty Development activities**

Further enhancing and utilizing the syllabus that we put in force last year, we aim to assure education quality by improvement of classes. Faculty will show the general outline of a course by issuing a syllabus at the beginning of the class or by using a course guidance video. Students enrolled in the class will receive explanations about what kind of tasks are required and why, and what the faculty expects from them. At this time, in order to encourage students’ self-study, we will specify as much as possible the evaluation standards for learning outcomes, considering the course characteristics.

## **(3) Introducing “Comprehensive Performance Assessment System of Faculty”**

With the goal of improving faculty members’ individual activities such as teaching and researching through objective review and evaluation, we introduced a “Comprehensive Performance Assessment System of Faculty” last year on a trial basis. Presently, we are developing a system that can control all registration, announcements, and evaluations of a faculty member’s performance at one time. The activities that the faculty member has registered are announced through the university homepage. This year, we will prepare for the installation by gathering feedback from faculty and staff in order to assure that this assessment system leads to the improvement of teaching and research activities.

## **4. Enhancement of student support**

### **(1) Expansion of scholarship system**

Last year, after the Great East Japan Earthquake, we provided special free tuition for students who were affected. We will continue to provide this special measure. Furthermore, we will enhance the scholarship programs to improve students’ learning opportunities, including the Soyu Benefit Scholarship (advance reservation scholarship program) and the Soka University Scholarship (tuition exemption scholarship program).

### **(2) Campaign against smoking**

This year will be the final preparation period toward a non-smoking campus, which will start in April 2013. We will ensure the success of this non-smoking campus campaign through campus-wide promotions, seminars about health hazards from smoking, support programs to quit smoking by the university’s Health Center, and other promotion campaigns.

### **(3) The settlement of student life policy**

We will develop an environment to encourage students' fruitful campus life through organizing rules regarding student life and design a "Student Life Policy" that will be their guideline for their days at Soka University.

### **(4) Support for commuting students**

In addition to the conventional support given to the dormitory students, this year we will enhance the support of commuting students, both students who live alone and those who live with their families. For students who live alone, dietary education for self-catering, traffic safety, and crime-prevention seminars and social gatherings with faculty or staff representatives are planned. As to support for students who live with their family members, to improve the convenience of commuting, we are now considering operating a shuttle bus between Shinjuku and Soka University. Starting this fall semester, we will be operating this bus on a trial basis.

## **5. Promotion of international exchange**

### **(1) Enhancement of Japanese Study Center programs**

Soka University will expand acceptance of students into the Non-degree Program (six-month or one-year study program not leading to a diploma) that started last year. In addition, expansion of the number of participants in short-term study abroad programs with exchange partners is planned.

### **(2) Expansion of 2nd foreign language overseas short-term training courses**

Strongly affected by the earthquake last year, we could not promote new overseas short-term training courses, but this year again, are planning to conduct new courses for two languages (German and French) in addition to the courses we already have in Chinese, Korean, Spanish, and Italian.

### **(3) Network building with overseas exchange partners**

In addition to exchanges with universities overseas through attendance at international conferences such as NAFSA (National Association of Foreign Student Advisors), APAIE (Asia-Pacific Association for International Education), and ASAIHL (Association of Southeast Asian Institutions of Higher Learning), we will seek a new exchange style by participating in the wide international network between universities.

### **(4) Strongly promote Soka University's "Strength in overseas exchange and study abroad"**

Soka University had already enhanced overseas exchanges before the Grand Design concept was decided: for example, the high percentage of students sent to study abroad as compared to other universities (Soka University averages 10% who experience study abroad whereas other universities in Japan average 2%). In addition, we have continuously put effort into offering scholarships to almost all international students, providing dormitories for all first-year students who have applied, and conducting student exchanges between top-level universities around the world. Through media inside and outside campus, conferences, symposiums, and admission public relations, we will specifically and

aggressively send out information regarding overseas exchange programs and the results of sending and accepting international students.

## **6. Campus environment improvement and financial planning**

### **(1) Construction of Global Square and the new Student Center**

As the construction of “Global Square” was the main project for the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of Soka University, it is now rapidly nearing completion in June 2013. This new building will be over 50,000 m<sup>2</sup> including the East wing, Central wing, and West wing. Furthermore, the construction of a new Student Center is planned next to the west side (the side near the Main Building) of the athletic field. This Student Center will support students’ after-school activities such as clubs (Gakuyukai) and student council. We also plan campus environment improvement with a view towards the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary after the completion of the Global Square.

### **(2) Construction of Faculty of Nursing Building**

On the north side of the athletic field, construction of the Faculty of Nursing Building is planned, aiming for completion in April 2013. The building will be four stories high, made with steel frames and concrete. Inside, there will be lecture rooms, practical rooms, faculty offices, administration office, a student lounge, and a library. On the roof, solar panels will be installed.

### **(3) Consideration of mid- and long-term financial plans**

As seen above, the University is planning large construction projects and continuous remodeling. The necessary budget increases including depreciation fee for these buildings is a cause of concern. Furthermore, with the establishment of the new faculty, an increase in employment costs is anticipated. We will maintain the management base by considering a mid- and long-term financial plan. We will establish the “Financial Plan Study Committee” to consider financial tasks.

## **7. Organizing a new university management structure**

### **(1) Administrative organization restructuring and staff performance assessment**

In August last year, we established the “Staff Organization / Human Resource Reform Committee” and started considering the restructure of the administrative organization and staff performance assessment system. This year, this committee will be reconsider the appropriate number of staff in each office department and look at a new reformation plan.

### **(2) Enhancement of long distance education and lifelong education**

In addition of restructuring the long distance education course, to meet the demands for learning opportunities at Soka University, we will be considering a project for lifelong education. We aim to further connect with society and the local area by expanding the choices for learning opportunities.

