

2013 Soka University Educational Vision

**Aiming to Become a Global Hub for Humanistic Education and
Decisively Implementing the Grand Design Initiative**

April 2013
President Yoshihisa Baba

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I am appointed as president, taking over former President Yamamoto. I view it as my mission to work hard together with students, faculty members, staff, alumni, and supporters of the University to realize the vision depicted in the Soka University Grand Design Initiative (hereinafter referred to as the “Grand Design Initiative”) directed toward the 50th anniversary of the University’s founding. With a resolution to decisively implement all of the initiatives under reforms aimed at developing Soka University into a global hub for humanistic education, I hereby announce an Education Vision for this academic year as my resolution upon appointment.

In April 2010, under the initiative of former President Yamamoto, Soka University formulated and announced the Grand Design Initiative. Directed toward the 50th anniversary of the founding of the University, to be marked in 2020, the Grand Design Initiative aims to foster Creative Individuals. In order to improve the University’s education, research, and student support as well as sustain these supporting structures, we have formulated a three-stage action plan for the years starting from the announcement of the Grand Design Initiative to the 50th anniversary of the University founding. During the first stage, starting from the announcement of the Grand Design Initiative through last academic year, we established a framework to implement the entire Grand Design Initiative and developed the vision that will underpin the establishment of new faculties and the reorganization of existing faculties.

In the second stage of the Grand Design Initiative starting this academic year, we aim to implement and realize the plans and visions well developed during the first stage. Specifically, the Faculty of Nursing, which is the first medical faculty at Soka University, will open this year. We will also begin full scale preparations for the scheduled opening of the Faculty of International Liberal Arts in academic year 2014 and embark on a major reorganization of the Faculty of Engineering to establish the new Faculty of Science and Engineering. In addition, the four Faculties of Economics, Business Administration, Law, and Education will launch new curricula in 2014. The Faculty of Letters has already launched new curriculum last academic year based on a major-based system in unconventional learning styles. In this sense, the second stage, starting this year, will be a period of university-wide transformation that will bring drastic changes in education at Soka University.

The university was able to acquire two major boosts to work on these significant transformations to our educational programs. One is the long-awaited completion of the new Hall of Learning in June this year. Not only will the new Hall be magnificent in scale, but the facilities and spaces throughout the building will literally embody the concept of a “university for students”, with a learning commons to facilitate a variety of learning activities such as autonomous learning and collaborative learning. Furthermore, various innovations have been imbedded in the classrooms and other facilities to enable active participation by students, which will significantly assist the rollout of the new educational programs.

Another boost is the selection of Soka University's proposal for the Go Global Japan Project initiated by MEXT. In our proposal, we aim to apply the concept materialized in the International Program (IP), a program that had been developed for the period of more than 10 years in the Faculty of Economics to teach economics in English, into all faculties in a form suited to each faculty's features. I truly believe this is a great opportunity for faculties to interrelate missions and goals to foster create individuals upheld by each faculty with the initiatives to foster global human resources and review their curricula and educational methods.

Whether we will be able to accomplish the educational vision of this academic year will have a decisive impact on the successful completion of the second stage of the Grand Design and ultimately the Grand Design Initiative as a whole. Together with students, faculty members, and staff, I intend to do my utmost to make this year one of great advancement in education and research at the University through the realization of this Education Vision.

1. Establishment of new faculties and promotion of reorganization

Under the Grand Design Initiative, we have deliberated the establishment of new faculties and reorganization of existing faculties, over the past several years. As a result, thanks to the dedicated efforts of many faculty members and staff, we launched the Faculty of Nursing this April. This year, we will proceed with our preparations for 1) the establishment of the Faculty of International Liberal Arts and 2) the reorganization of the Faculty of Engineering into the Faculty of Science and Engineering, with the aim of opening these faculties in April 2014.

The Faculty of International Liberal Arts will develop students' cross-cultural understanding, in addition to advanced English proficiency and academic skills through a one-year study abroad program starting from the second semester in first year, etc. Moreover, this Faculty offers an educational program in which students can learn liberal arts as a new source of knowledge expected by the international society in the 21st century with fully committed support provided by the University.

The Faculty of Science and Engineering will be established by integrating the three existing departments of the Faculty of Engineering into a one-department under one-faculty. The Faculty will develop students' foundation in science and engineering in an interdisciplinary manner through courses based on experience-oriented activities and departmental integrated courses to foster capable individuals who have a flexible and tenacious thinking and interdisciplinary perspectives. The faculty also establishes the International Technical Cooperation Educational Program and Teacher Training Educational Program.

2. Education strategy

(1) Full-scale operation of the SPACe (Student Performance Acceleration Center)

The Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) has been working on a variety of learning support activities. From the second semester this year, the Center plans to embark on the full-scale development of these activities, which will be based in the Learning Commons to be created within the new Hall of Learning building. Creating a fixed venue for support programs will promote students' recognition of support services and stimulate their active use and participation of the services. In addition, as an institute to operate comprehensive learning support activities, the SPACe (Student

Performance Acceleration Center: working title) will be established within the CETL.

(2) Roll-out of university-wide initiatives for fostering global human resources

As the initiatives for the Go Global Japan Project, the English for Study Abroad (ESA) and English for Career Development (ECD) programs will be offered as General Education Courses. Moreover, the number of TOEIC and TOEFL tests available on-campus will be increased along with the financial support for registration fees of such tests. The 2014 curriculum of each faculty will incorporate a new learning program in which students can take English-medium departmental courses of respective faculties.

(3) Formulation of a new curriculum aimed at realizing the “mission and goals to foster capable individuals”

The University is working to formulate a new curriculum to be implemented in 2014 in the four Faculties of Economics, Business Administration, Law, and Education. The purpose of this revision is to more effectively realize the “missions and goals to foster capable individuals (diploma policy)” set forth by each faculty. Furthermore, with regard to the General Education Courses, we will work to formulate a new curriculum in order to realize the university-wide goal of fostering Creative Individuals. Specifically, we will develop students’ writing skills, improve their mathematical ability, and organize and integrate the courses offered. At any rate, the University will strive to specify which courses students should take to acquire expected skills as clearly as possible.

(4) Enhancement of career education

The "Determine-Your-Provisional-Career" System (using employability test and questionnaire on students’ career path) has been implemented in all faculties with reference to the initiatives led by the Faculty of Economics, an initiative deliberated in the Career Development Committee and proceeded under the Employability Skills Development Support Program. This academic year, individual advisory service provided by faculty members will be further enhanced like what the Faculty of Economics implemented in “My Map” (a curriculum design plan in accordance with student future career plan and their current competencies) based on the improvement of feedback collected after the employability test. Otherwise, we will achieve the successful career outcome rate set towards 2015 as our mid-term goal, through strengthening support for student job placement services and enhancement of career development education.

3. Further intensification of faculty members’ research and teaching activities

(1) Establishment and enhancement of the research environment

The University has actively promoted faculty members’ research activities as illustrated by the growing number of projects approved for competitive research funds and the amount of grants received. This owes to the standardized internal application rules for the “MEXT Supported Program for Strategic Research Foundation at Private Universities” and research support systems including the Next Generation Joint Research Project, the Research Development Promotion Funds as well as research support seminars conducted twice a year and consultation service to support Kakenhi

application.

Faculty Sabbatical Leave System enables faculty members to concentrate on their research activities while being exempted from university administrative duties at the University. Its related rules were revised this April to operate this system more fairly and properly. This revision is expected to result in more active research activities. This year, the University plans to improve the research environment by strengthening the research support division.

(2) Promotion of Faculty Development activities

The University will establish an internal quality assurance system for the improvement of classes through further enhancement and utilization of syllabi, as initiated by Faculty Development Committee for the period of two years, as well as sharing the learning objectives written in syllabi from this academic year. To specific, we will enhance the cycle of class enhancement effectively by presenting and sharing course objectives with students at the start of courses as well as sharing know-how of setting learning objectives and the measurement of such learning outcomes among faculty members. All General Education Courses, specifically, will measure students' learning outcomes written in syllabi from this academic year and the result is supposed to be submitted once in three years as a self-study report.

(3) Toward the full-scale introduction of the Comprehensive Faculty Performance Assessment System

With the aim of checking and evaluating individual faculty member's teaching and research activities in a fair and objective manner, as well as improving those activities, the Comprehensive Faculty Performance Assessment System has been introduced on a trial basis. The newly-developed online system to input faculty members' performance is also operated well, and the status of the teaching and research activities of faculty members is released on the University's website. This year, the University will prepare for the full-scale introduction of the performance evaluation system scheduled in 2014, which will lead to the improvement of teaching and research activities.

(4) Improvement and enhancement of the review system by Institutional Review Board for Human Research

Alongside the efforts to protect personal information in research and investigation with human subjects and to improve trust both inside and outside the University with regard to such activities, the University will this year further improve and enhance the review system conducted by Institutional Review Board for Human Research based on results obtained so far.

4. Expansion of student support

(1) Expansion of scholarship programs

Last year, the Soka University Makiguchi Foundation for Education Scholarship for Undergraduate Students named after Mr. Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, the founder of Soka Education, was newly established. Through this and other programs such as the Soyu Scholarship Program, which assures applications of scholarship prior to enrolment, and the Soka University Scholarship Program (reduction

of and exemption of academic fees) for enrolled students, the University has strived to expand its scholarship program. Going forward, in line with the reorganization of the faculties and the reform on the entrance examination system, we will comprehensively reconsider our scholarship programs including the Special Scholarship Program

(2) Prohibition of smoking on campus

Since 2009, the University has been promoting various smoke-free campaigns, including university-wide public relations activities, awareness activities, and provision of support from the Health Center for quitting smoking. From April of this year, with the support of all students, faculty members, and staff, a total ban on smoking on campus will be initiated.

(3) Decision on Student Life Policy

As a guideline for the pursuit of academic study and personal growth based on the founding principles of the University, the Student Life Policy will be formulated. In line with this policy, the University will create safe and secure learning and living environments and support students to lead a fulfilling student life.

(4) Support for commuting students

Last year, the University held a dining gathering with representatives of faculty members and staff with the attendance of President, Chairman, and Dean of each faculty, for first-year students living in apartments or at home with family. The event was viewed as a useful gathering. The University plans to hold such a dining gathering again this year in order to stimulate communication among students on campus. In addition, a shuttle bus between Shinjuku Station and the University campus, which was operated on a trial basis last year, will continue to run this year as a full-scale operation in order to improve the convenience for commuting students as part of student service.

5. Promotion of international exchange

(1) Enhancement and expansion of overseas training and study abroad programs

Under the Grand Design Initiative, the University has set a goal of sending a total of 1,000 students overseas in 2020. Under the Go Global Japan Project initiated by MEXT last year, the University is striving to achieve this goal in 2016—earlier than originally planned. In order to achieve this goal, all faculties will offer new short-term overseas training programs from this year. In addition, overseas training programs for the French and German languages will also be provided as part of the training in learning a second foreign language.

(2) Reform on admissions for international students

This year, the admission system for international students in undergraduate courses will be changed to enable more international students to apply for Soka University. Specifically, we will implement systems for Pre-arrival Admission and Admission with Conditions which admits international students on the condition that they take Preparatory Japanese Language Program. In addition, to achieve the numerical target set in the Grand Design Initiative, the University will also actively participate in

public relations activities, including study abroad information sessions overseas.

(3) Participation in multilateral university network

Since last year, the University has been participated in two international university networks—APAIE (Asia Pacific Association for International Education) and NAFSA (Association of International Educators; a conference in the United States for university personnel in charge of international exchanges)—to actively promote international exchange activities. This year, as part of our efforts to find universities with study abroad programs in popular countries including the U.S. to which many students wish to travel, the University is planning to join ISEP (International Student Exchange Programs; a non-profit organization based in the United States which promotes studying abroad).

6. Reform of the Correspondence Education Division

(1) Provision of high-quality education in response to the needs of the times

The Division of Correspondence Education plans to reorganize its systems and launch a new curriculum from 2014 with the aim of providing high-quality education in response to the needs of the times. Courses will be drastically revised under the new curriculum, and in addition to providing students with the opportunity to learn cutting-edge academic knowledge, the syllabus will be enhanced and made public. In terms of the system, the division will establish an annual course registration system, impose upper course load limits on registration, and set expiration for acquired credits. In addition, the Division will integrate classes using various types of media into the face to face schooling to enhance the quality of education expected of the undergraduate programs.

(2) Enhancement of the learning support structure

The university will hold Learning Consultation Sessions, Study Follow-up Guidance Sessions, and Report Writing Consultation Sessions. Meanwhile, the University will strengthen the learning support structure by appointing full-time Correspondence Education faculty members as academic advisors to provide learning support for first-year students to make a smooth start.

7. Improvement of campus facilities, and financial plan

Completion of the Faculty of Nursing Building, new Student Center, and new Hall of Learning

In March of this year, the Faculty of Nursing Building was completed, and the faculty opened in April. The building has a number of facilities, including a library and student lounge, as well as photovoltaic cells on the roof. On the west side of Ground No. 1 (Central Tower side), a new Student Center will be built to support students' extracurricular activities such as the Students' Club Association (Gakuyukai), Student Union, etc. In addition, the new Hall of Learning which is the main project for the University's 40th anniversary, is scheduled for completion in June. It comprises an east wing, a central building, a west wing, and a multipurpose hall capable of seating 1,000 people, and its total floor space is more than 50,000 m²

(1) Formulation of the future construction plan

The General Construction Committee was established last year to discuss the future campus

maintenance plan after the completion of the new General Education Building. This year, a renovation plan reflecting the purpose of use for the future will be formulated, taking in the renovation of the Faculty of Education Building, the Building C, and the International Exchange Center, and the rebuilding of the Science Laboratory Building. In addition, we will look into rebuilding the student dormitories, libraries, and other buildings over the med-to-long-term.

(2) Study of med- to-long-term financial plan

As mentioned above, the University is planning major facility renovations in the future, and increase in expenditure including depreciation cost is expected. In addition, a temporary increase in personnel expenses is expected as well due to the opening of the new faculty, etc. The Financial Plan Study Committee was established last year, and this year it will continue to study the med-to-long-term financial plan with the aim of maintaining a strong financial foundation.

8. Establishment of a new university management structure

(1) Study for the reorganization of the administration organization and introduction of the Staff Performance Assessment System

Last year, the Staff Organization/ Human Resources Reform Committee conducted questionnaires and interviews of full-time university staff for the purpose of reorganizing the administration organization, and prepared a proposal. This year, with the aim of introducing the Staff Performance Assessment System, the committee will examine specific structures to be installed based on a survey on other universities and private companies.

(2) Strengthening support for female instructors

The Preparation Committee for the Establishment of the Female Faculty Support Bureau was established last year, and with its sights on the University's 50th anniversary, it will examine the various issues related to achieving a female faculty ratio of 30% and enabling them to balance their teaching and research activities and life events.

