

2014 Soka University Educational Vision

New Development of Humanistic Education in Global Society -Fostering Global Citizens in a Diverse Environment-

April 2014
President Yoshihisa Baba

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-Fostering Global Citizens in a Diverse Environment-

The mission of higher education lies not only in the development of capable individuals who meet the expectations of society through discerning the trends of society, but also in the cultivation of those individuals who break through stagnation in society and create an ideal society. To realize that mission, Soka University has set its goal to be the university that fosters “creative individuals” in its Grand Design Initiative, aiming towards the 50th founding anniversary in 2020. Academic year 2014 marks the second year on the second stage of the Grand Design Initiative and is a milestone year, as the university will go through certified evaluation and accreditation for the second time and many faculties will launch new curricula. On this milestone, the university will mainly address the following three matters:

1. To devote every effort to smoothly start new faculties and curricula
2. To introduce and promote active learning that bridges the classroom and the real world
3. To review the admission system and develop unique recruitment strategies

Followed by the opening of the Faculty of Nursing last April, the Faculty of International Liberal Arts has started this year. This faculty was designed based on a vision forecasting the needs of the time, taking the university’s longstanding and various international exchanges as its foundation. The faculty incorporates a curriculum in which students are required to study abroad at partner universities for one year from the second semester of their first year. In addition, as was begun in the Faculty of Letters two years ago, the Faculty of Economics, Faculty of Business Administration, Faculty of Law, Faculty of Education, and the Division of Correspondence Education will each start a new curriculum based on their respective visions for fostering capable individuals. The Faculty of Engineering will review its educational contents, taking the reorganization of its departments into account. A major curriculum revision has also been implemented for the General Education Courses, which provide the foundation of undergraduate education. With this revision, Soka University will dedicate itself to embodying the vision in its educational reforms and will accumulate results as tangible evidence for a deeply rooted culture of “assessment” that tirelessly advances self-study on campus.

Recently the term “quality assurance” has become a high profile keyword in Japanese higher education reforms and a series of discussions have been started. The opinions have largely converged on one conclusion: students’ active learning is the most important element to enhance the quality of education. At Soka University, students actively learn at a learning commons, the Student Performance Acceleration Center (SPACe), in the Hall of Learning, Global Square, which opened last September. However, in order to widely encourage students’ active learning, there is an urgent need for improvement and enhancement of the classes. If the purpose of learning is not shared among the teachers and the students, active learning may never emerge. From that perspective, Soka University will initiate the incorporation of, for instance, service learning into individual educational programs as a part of active learning that bridges real-life experience and learning in classrooms.

As universities advance towards globalization, there is an increasing need to ensure diversity in the student body. Although many of the universities in Japan face difficulty in ensuring regional diversity among their Japanese domestic students, more than 60% of the student intake of Soka University is

from outside of the Kanto region. In addition, approximately 300 international students from around 40 countries and territories, including exchange students, study at Soka University. Given our goal of fostering global citizens in a diverse environment, it is necessary that Soka University recruit diverse individuals from both within and outside of Japan. This academic year, the university will start developing other unique admission strategies.

While the Grand Design Initiative depicts the blueprint of reforms aiming towards the 50th anniversary, it is possible that changes in the environment and the conditions surrounding the university will be beyond our expectations. From that perspective, during this second stage of the Initiative, Soka University will make the most of the time to discern the necessary changes, as well as to establish a fundamental internal system with flexibility that can respond to any future changes. In an increasingly globalized society, the university will endeavor to achieve its vision through the united efforts of all faculty, staff, and students in order to foster capable individuals who respect diversity, can make decisions, and will take actions on their own.

1. Establishment of New Faculties and Implementation of Faculty Reorganization

Soka University has launched new faculties based on its Grand Design Initiative. Following the establishment of the Faculty of Nursing last April, the Faculty of International Liberal Arts will launch this year.

Moreover, the university will consolidate two departments—the Department of Bioinformatics and the Department of Environmental Engineering for Symbiosis in the Faculty of Engineering—into one department this May, and reposition the Faculty of Engineering as the Faculty of Science and Engineering. In the new department, students in their first year will learn a wide range of fundamentals in the fields of science and engineering, and study groups divided by themes will help stimulate students' interests. From the fall semester in the second year, they will select their specialization out of the following four fields, integrating science and engineering to deepen their academic expertise: Applied Physics, Material Science and Engineering, Bio-Science and Engineering, and Environmental Science and Engineering.

Also, the Educational Program (EP) for international technical cooperation and the Education Program (EP) for teacher education will be established to facilitate students' educational/career activities.

2. Academic Strategy

(1) Concentration of Efforts on New Educational Programs and Cultivation of a “Culture of Assessment”

Along with the launch of new faculties, the Faculties of Economics, Business Administration, Law, and Education will also begin new curricula accentuating each individual faculty's vision for fostering capable individuals. Moreover, a new curriculum will start in General Education Courses that places emphasis on mandatory “Japanese Academic Writing” courses to develop the writing skills of all undergraduate students and on more courses to enhance the mathematics and science skills of students in arts majors, meanwhile conducting overall systematic reorganization and consolidation of courses. This academic year, Soka University will go through the certified evaluation and accreditation procedure carried out by the Japan Universities Accreditation Association. As part of its initiative, the university will endeavor to nurture an authentic “culture of assessment” by measuring learning outcomes, accumulating evidence, and conducting self-study and evaluation based on these learning outcomes and evidence.

1) Full-Scale Implementation of Global Human Resource Development

After being selected for the “Project for Promotion of Global Human Resource Development” initiated by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) in 2012, the Project led the total number of students who have taken a TOEIC test to 7,104 last academic year (compared to 5,882 in 2012). The number of students who obtained a TOEIC score of 730 or higher, or a high score in other various language tests has also reached 269 (compared to 225 in 2012), which demonstrates the improvement of the university-wide language learning environment and the effectiveness of study abroad programs led by individual faculties. This academic year, many faculties will start new curricula in which students can study specialized departmental courses in English. In order to enhance the quality of these English-medium classes, faculties will conduct training courses for their faculty members at overseas partnership universities and invite lecturers from overseas to give lectures at Soka University. In this way, the university will promote the establishment of high-quality education programs to meet the demands of the global society.

2) Promoting Active Learning with SPACe

The Learning Commons, SPACe—opened concurrently with the opening of the Hall of Learning, Global Square, last year—and its operation has been much smoother than expected, accommodating more than 2,000 visitors and students per day on average. In order to make the most of this learning commons, which is equipped with various learning support programs and functions, close coordination between SPACe and regular classes is essential. On one hand, faculty members teaching courses will consider effective use of this Learning Commons, which has been widely recognized as a learning hub for students. On the other hand, personnel at SPACe will seek further ways to aggressively interweave the functions of SPACe with individual classes. This will lead to the creation of a university-wide support system propelling students’ active learning.

3) Enhancement of Career Education

Determine-Your-Provisional-Career-Path System (using the Employability Test and the questionnaire about each student’s desired career path) has been conducted at the end of freshman year in all faculties since last year. This System drew on the outcome of the Project for Supporting Undergraduates’ Employability initiated by the Faculty of Economics after the deliberation of the Career Development Committee. This academic year, the university will further enrich faculty-student career consultation services by improving the contents of feedback based on the Employability Test, which is similar to the My Map project, a curriculum planning conducted in the Faculty of Economics to analyze students’ current competencies in light of their desired career paths.

The new curriculum implemented this year allocates more Career Subjects in each faculty. The university aims to achieve the career outcomes rate set as a mid-term goal for academic year 2015 by providing a variety of courses throughout four years and further enhancing the Peer Support System.

3. Vitalization of Faculty’s Research and Teaching Activities

1) Enhancement of Research Environment

Research support funds such as the Supported Program for Strategic Research Foundation at Private Universities, the Future Generation Joint Research Project, and the Research Development Promotion Fund have been widely recognized in the university and have

advanced research activities. The conducting of seminars and consultation sessions explaining the application for *kakenhi*, the Grants-in-Aid for Scientific Research, has contributed to the increase in the number of proposals selected for *kakenhi* and their grant amounts. The acceptance rate of *kakenhi* among those who received the Research Development Promotion Fund in the previous year was 18% in 2011 and 25% in 2012, showing a steady improvement. The *Tokubetsu-kenkyuin* system (or sabbatical leave for special researchers) that allows researchers to concentrate on research for half a year while being exempted from class loads and university administrative duties has also been implemented in a fairer and more appropriate way, which has created a more researcher-friendly environment.

2) Promoting FD Activities

“Improvement of classes by sharing the goals and objectives in syllabi” is one of the university’s FD initiatives since last year, and the measurement of learning outcomes and the submission of self-study reports in all General Education Courses are set to be implemented for the coming three years. As we have reached a consensus specifically in describing goals and objectives in the syllabi, the measurement of learning outcomes and improvement of the quality of classes will be an expected outcome in the Departmental Courses of each faculty.

3) Implementing “Faculty Comprehensive Performance Assessment System”

Soka University has deliberated on the implementation of the Faculty Comprehensive Performance Assessment System in order to evaluate the faculty’s achievements in teaching, research, university administrative duties, and social contribution in a more objective and fair way and to advance these activities further. Towards its full-scale implementation, faculty members have input their achievements themselves in 2011 and 2012 as a trial. Comparing the average evaluation scores, the results show that the research category accounts for 50% and the teaching category accounts for 30% of the total contribution. Based on these data, we will implement the Comprehensive Faculty Assessment System at full scale this year.

4. Enhancing Student Support Services

1) Scholarship Opportunities

The Faculty of Nursing Makiguchi Scholarship was established last academic year. This academic year, the university will further expand scholarship opportunities for students by establishing the Faculty of International Liberal Arts Makiguchi Scholarship for international students as well as the *Hosokai* (Legal Profession Group) Scholarship. Moreover, the *Soyu* Scholarship was launched four years ago, and based on the review on this scholarship, the university will deliberate further comprehensive scholarship opportunities.

2) Development of International Dormitories

Starting from April 2014, the university opened international dormitories for female and male students, in which international students and Japanese students live together, experiencing diverse cultures to become global leaders. Dormitory advisors have been appointed from faculty and staff members to support the living and learning communities.

3) Announcement of the Student Life Policy

A draft of the Student Life Policy was proposed at the Student Affairs Committee meeting in 2012 and was finalized last year at the Deliberation Committee meeting with students’ participation. The Policy was announced to all students this year and will be thoroughly implemented in order to create a comfortable learning and living environment based on the

founding principles of the university by further elaborating the following three points: “Expectation of Soka University Students,” “Important Points of Student Life,” and “Concrete Codes of Conduct, Prohibited Matters, and Advisories”.

4) Enhancement of Student Services

The university will promote students’ health by further implementing the Smoke-Free Campus Policy started in April 2013. According to the smoking survey conducted each year by the Health Center since 2009, the number of smokers has declined to 6.6% of the study body. Since academic year 2012, the university has also held receptions, inviting students commuting from apartments or family homes, including the attendance of the chairperson and president of the university. These gatherings have received positive feedback as occasions to promote exchanges among students and between faculty members and students. Hence, the university will continue this initiative.

In addition, there is an increasing number of students who use the shuttle bus service between Shinjuku and the University which started in October 2012. The university will make efforts to improve the convenience of transportation and student services.

5. Promotion of International Exchange

1) Enhancement and Expansion of Overseas Study Tours and Study Abroad Programs

As Soka University was selected for the Project for Promotion of Global Human Resource Development by MEXT, we aim to send 1,000 students abroad annually by 2016. Last year, unique short-term study tours, internships, and volunteer programs were organized. As a result, the total number of students who participated in short-term study abroad programs, exchange programs, or fee-paying study abroad programs exceeded 800. This academic year, the university will maintain the quality of the diverse programs and ensure their safety operations. Furthermore, the Faculties of Law, Letters and International Liberal Arts will implement new study abroad programs for more than one semester, which will further increase the number of students going abroad.

2) Increasing the Number of International Students

Last year, a new admissions framework for undergraduate international students was introduced for the first time based on the two major systems: the Pre-Arrival Admission Approval System as well as Admission Offers with Conditions for applicants who have insufficient proficiency in Japanese. This returned the number of international applicants to the level reached pre-2011, before the Great East Japan Earthquake. This academic year, the university aims to increase our intake of international students by aggressively promoting our well-established environment in order to accommodate international students with the implementation of a pre-arrival admission approval system in the Graduate Schools and the provision of a variety of scholarship opportunities. Moreover, we will endeavor to improve the quality of short-term study tours, exchange programs, and undergraduate non-degree programs, which have shown a steady rise in number.

3) Commemorative Events with International Partner Universities and Institutions

In December 2013, a symposium celebrating the 25th anniversary of the signing of the agreement of mutual exchange between Nairobi University, Kenya and Soka University was conducted with the theme of youth, education, and peace, attended by representative faculty and staff members. This year marks the 40th anniversary of the founder’s first visit to China.

The university will organize an international symposium on the founder's philosophy in cooperation with our partner institutions and research centers in China.

6. Campus Maintenance and Financial Plan

1) Renovation of the Faculty of Education Building

This academic year, the Faculty of Education Building will expand its facility by utilizing the site of the Science Laboratory Building, and the current Faculty of Education Building will be connected to the International Exchange Center with a connecting corridor. The renovation is scheduled to be completed in May 2015 to provide a well-developed environment starting from September 2015. The extended Faculty of Education Building is four stories with facilities including two classrooms accommodating 200 people each, a middle-size music room, and research rooms. In addition, the International Exchange Center will be repurposed as an affiliated facility of the Faculty of Education comprising science laboratories, piano practice rooms, art rooms, and research offices.

2) Future Construction Plans

The General Construction Committee established in October 2012 deliberated the renovation of the area around the Faculty of Education Building along with the utilization of the A and C buildings. This academic year, the university will make a reconstruction plan of the dormitories and a maintenance plan of the campus facilities for the next ten years.

3) Deliberation on Mid-Term Financial Plan

Following the establishment of the Hall of Learning, Global Square, the university is scheduled to have a large-scale renovation as discussed above, and expenses including depreciation cost are expected to grow consequently. The Financial Plan Study Committee will lead the discussion on cost reductions and increase in income to maintain the stable management bases.

In addition, the Tuition Fee Deliberation Committee, consisting of the board of trustee members, faculty, and staff members, deliberates the revision of tuition fees every 4 years, and the deliberation started last academic year. Tuition fees after the academic 2015 year will be determined this academic year.

7. Reforms to Enforce University Management

1) Reorganization of Administrative Organization

Following the reorganization plan of the staff administrative organization deliberated in the Staff Organization/ Human Resources Reform Committee in academic year 2012, the Preparatory Committee for the Stakeholder Coordination Promotion Bureau was established last academic year; then the reorganization plan of the staff administrative organization centered in the University Administrative Office was complied. The university will continue discussing reorganization of the administrative organization to improve services for the people who support the university by opening Extension Courses, etc.

2) Introduction of the Staff Performance Assessment System

Towards the implementation of the Staff Performance Assessment System, the university will administer a pilot implementation in cooperation with several departments this academic

year. Initiatives to root this assessment system, including the internal training sessions for evaluators, will be actively taken upon its implementation.

8. Reforms on the Division of Correspondence Education

The Division of Correspondence Education will celebrate its 40th anniversary in academic year 2016. As it approaches the 40th anniversary, it will initiate new challenges based on the principle of “students first” propounded by the founder.

A new curriculum will start in order to provide the high quality education expected in undergraduate education. In the General Education courses, the Soka Core Program was implemented so that students can acquire broader knowledge and develop their strength of character based on the founding principles of Soka University. A book “The Founding Principles of Soka University” will be distributed to all the students in the Division as core material. It also offers well-developed education in its face-to-face schooling, incorporating video lectures on DVD. Moreover, it will establish the Learning Support Services that provide comprehensive learning support to ensure bidirectional interaction for course studies using various types of media.

