Message from the President

Four years ago we opened the doors of the SUA, Aliso Viejo campus to a class of 120 adventurous students. These were eager young people that believed in a new university dedicated to fostering global citizens who will lead a contributive life and wanted to be a part of the first entering class. It is with great pride that we now graduate these brave and talented students and send them off into the world to make their way towards a bright future and better world.

I hope you will join me in this special feeling of honor as we watch our students go out into the world. Their education would not be possible without the kind and generous contributions that you, our precious donors, make so selflessly. The gifts that you graciously give to SUA are used to help fund an education that otherwise might not be available to many of our students. Therefore, I hope you feel especially proud of the accomplishments our students achieve because you have played a vital part in enabling them to reach new heights.

There are always many exciting happenings on the campus of SUA. The best way for you to see your investment in action is to visit the campus. Thank you again for your continued support.

Daniel Y. Habuki, Ph.D.
President
You are cordially invited to celebrate the
Soka University of America
Inaugural Gala
Building a Culture of Peace

Patrick Duffy, Guest Host

Matilda Buck
Event Co-Chair

Lucy Steinberg
Event Co-Chair

Saturday, October 1, 2005
Six o’clock in the evening

Welcome reception, silent auction, gourmet dinner,
celebrity entertainment, live auction
Black Tie

At the Athenaeum of
Soka University of America, Aliso Viejo

For further information, please contact
Shawn Dailey at 949/480-4075 sdailey@soka.edu
Each year on the anniversary of the terrorist attacks on the United States, the SUA community holds a memorial service to honor those people who lost their lives that day. This past year a very special message was delivered to the audience by George Aoyama ('07), a sophomore at SUA, whose father was on the first plane that crashed into the World Trade Center tower in New York City. His speech provides great insight into the kind of students that choose to study at SUA.

Here is the speech that George delivered on September 11, 2004:

Thank you very much for attending the ceremony tonight and for allowing me to speak. On September 11, 2001, I was still a 17-year-old high school student. On that morning, I woke up and got out of my bed as usual. But, on my way to the restroom, I saw the television. I saw a large building that was damaged and burning. Obviously, it caught my attention, but it took me a while to get a hold of what was happening. Thinking about the victims, I felt sad, but then I moved on to wash my face and eat breakfast. Before I left for school, as I was watching the replay videos of the plane crashing into the tower, I thought to myself, "is something tragic like this really happening?" Then I saw on the bottom of the TV screen the moving text of which airplane flights were hijacked, and one of them was from Boston. My father, who was on a business trip in that region, was supposed to be coming back. At this moment, I became very anxious. Nevertheless, I went to school and continued with my day. As afternoon rolled by, I couldn't handle the anxiety anymore so I got permission to leave school early. The first thing I did was to pray with the hope that he is safe and alive. I couldn't think of anything else to do. My mother called the airport several times to see whether my father was on board one of the flights. But we couldn't get any confirmation. When my father goes on trips, he often calls home to let us know how he's doing. How I longed for his phone call. Throughout the afternoon, many of my father's friends visited us. One of the leaders whom I had much respect for started to talk to me and my sister. He shared with us what kind of person my father was, and he was using the past tense in the description. At this moment, I felt in my heart that I would never see Dad again.

How am I going to deal with this situation? I had never imagined I would experience something like this at my age. And yet, my strongest feelings at that time were gratitude for my father and happiness for his noble life. He provided me so much care and warmth, and I did not want his earnest effort to raise me well go to waste. Instead, I wanted to be strong and live a life with hope and happiness. I made a determination to work for nonviolence. I determined to contribute toward establishing a peaceful society so that tragedies like this would stop occurring and that people would not experience anything similar to what I was experiencing, I became increasingly aware of the importance of family.
My father's love for me became a source of energy, and his character and the way he lived his life working for peace inspired me. He was a bright and good-hearted person. He never ordered me to do anything, even schoolwork. Both my father and my mother trusted me for who I was, and they have been supportive of my growth and a source of motivation for successful achievements. My father usually came back home after work with a smile and strong spirit. I had a feeling that his work and responsibilities were demanding and that he was working very hard, but I never heard him complain about anything. He poured his energies into my healthy and positive development. I want to carry on his spirit and become a great person. In addition, I have my mother and my sister. They have been very strong facing the death of a husband and a father. My family and their support have been encouraging me to live optimistically.

The Founder of this university, Daisaku Ikeda, wrote a 2004 Peace Proposal in which he talks about the value of family. It reads: "Without cultivating the spiritual dimension the goal of lasting peace will remain distant; and ... the family—the smallest and perhaps earliest human community—is where this crucial work must be undertaken." A family is a fundamental microcosm of the larger human community, of society, and of the world. Family can be extended to many people. Our classmates and co-workers can be our family. A nation is composed of various people: wealthy people, disadvantaged people, educated people, illegal immigrants, the people from the middle class, but they are all family members of a nation. Our world is composed of Caucasians, Africans, Asians, Hispanics, and various ethnicities, and they are all a family of the earth. In order to expand the scope of family to the larger community and treat all people well, we must first begin with how we interact with our immediate family members.

And, this is the challenge. To paraphrase the words of Wayne Dyer, most people would rather be right than have peace. To have peace in our relationships, we have to give up our desire to always be right. For me, there were certainly times in my life, out of selfish reasons, when I have been upset or angry with my parents and my sister. Even with my family members whom I love, do I try to be right or do I try to have peace? Not only within my family, but how do I deal with all my human relationships? On the other hand, on the day of my father's death, my focus was positive. I did not bother to think about revenge against the terrorists. What I desired was my family's happiness and a peaceful world to be established. I have the capability to extend this compassion to others. We all have the capability.

Family relationships are vital to establish an ideal society. The closer and stronger the bonds of these relationships, the more people foster healthy and warm relationships within the family, the more united and caring societies will become, for the reason that people carry out what they experience in their families to their relationships with others. If we want to minimize conflict and violence, then fostering positive family relationships is very crucial. If we want communities interwoven in warm, cheerful, and bright human relationships, then we must practice building peace in our families.

What can we do for our family members as a way to promote a peaceful society? Is there a person to whom you can say "I'm sorry"? Are there people who have been consistently supportive whom we take for granted? Is there someone to whom you can say "thank you"? We have the power to spread love. How do we treat our family members? What can we do for them? These are questions we can ask if we want the world to be more peaceful.

George Aoyama

09.11.2004
Student Profile
Machu Picchu Dreamin'... 
and Soka Makes His Dream Come True

When Sheldon Lopez '05 took Spanish I, the cover of his textbook featured a picture of Machu Picchu. "I made a promise to myself that I would someday go there," Sheldon recalls. Soka University made it happen. For his semester abroad, Sheldon studied in Santiago, Chile. While there, he traveled to the ancient city of Machu Picchu, in neighboring Peru. "I made it!" And, in the process, learned a lot about himself. "Being abroad in a whole different culture...was an opportunity to reinvent myself. I came back much more confident in who I am...with a stronger conviction to pursue my goals and greater confidence in knowing that I will succeed."

A Jamaican native who grew up in Houston, Sheldon chose Soka "because the values and outlook reflect my own outlook on life." A typical Soka student, Sheldon explains, "studies too much, sleeps too little, and always has a paper due. We spend way too much time worrying about the state of the world. We're involved in too many student organizations...we speak more than one language, and we're passionate about everything we do." Most important he adds, "We love humanity, and will always answer the question, 'can one person make a difference?' with an affirmative 'yes!'

Sheldon's Soka coursework was one reason he headed to Santiago. "The most interesting paper I've written here was, street kids and child labor in Latin America. After about two months of work...I turned it in as a 'work in progress. The issue was much too complicated and required solutions which were not easily conceived. But it motivated a research project which I did while on study abroad, which then served as motivation for my senior thesis."

Choosing a social & behavioral sciences concentration, Sheldon has focused on economics because of the potential the discipline offers, "for addressing poverty, inequality...and the other ills of society."

didYOUknow?
SUA's logo depicts the nib of a pen flanked by the wings of a legendary Chinese bird that can fly great distances and comes to Earth only where there is something precious. The pen represents wisdom; the wings symbolize the ability to put knowledge and wisdom into the service of humanity.
Red-Letter Day: May 22, 2005

On May 22, SUA Aliso Viejo’s first graduating class, the Class of 2005, will participate in the University’s first commencement ceremony for the undergraduate program.

didYOUknow?

SUA’s official mascot is the lion, a symbol of courage and strength. The Chinese characters for lion can individually be translated as "mentor" and "student"—an appropriate symbol for a university that prides itself on nurturing each student’s potential.

Luis and Linda Nieves Family Foundation Names SUA as Beneficiary of a $5 million Endowment

Luis and Linda Nieves of Napa Valley, California, have named Soka University of America as the sole beneficiary of the newly formed Luis and Linda Nieves Family Foundation. The foundation has been funded with an initial donation of $2.5 million and the promise to grow the endowment to $5 million within the next three years.

The foundation was based on one of the basic tenets of the university: using dialogue to reach a consensus. The foundation will meet once a year to discuss current campus needs and decide where to spend the proceeds of the endowment. This arrangement offers much flexibility as the University grows and our needs change.

SUA CAMPUS SERVES AS FILM LOCATION FOR "ELIZABETHTOWN"

When Paramount Pictures' "Elizabethtown" premieres next summer, SUA students will be watching closely for scenes shot on the Aliso Viejo campus in October.

The film, which stars Orlando Bloom, Kirsten Dunst, Susan Sarandon and Alec Baldwin, is the story of a suicidal industrial designer, Drew Baylor, who is traveling to Kentucky to attend his father's memorial service, but discovers on route that amazing things happen when you least expect them.

"Elizabethtown" is written and directed by Cameron Crowe, whose films include "Fast Times at Ridgemont High" (1982), "Jerry Maguire" (1996), "Almost Famous" (2000), and "Vanilla Sky" (2001). The film is now in post-production.
I will never forget the concentration inscribed on his face. Having just finished an afternoon session at the Florida Nature and Cultural Center Student Division Conference, I was rolling along on my bike when we first met. He sat cross-legged and alone underneath a tree planted a few yards out from Toda Lake.

"Why are you sitting here alone, man?"

"Well...this tree was planted for a member of my family who passed away...This is my first time here."

I hesitated before asking, "What's your name?"

As our conversation unfolded, the young man's words began naming the story already suggested by his countenance. He spoke of hard times past and hard times to come. After a few minutes of talking, his eyes returned their focus to the base of the tree. In an even voice he then told me that he would enter boot camp soon.

"I just signed up."

"Does...does that mean you will have to go to Iraq soon?"

"Yup."

"How do you feel about that?"

He shrugged his shoulders indifferently. Several minutes passed in silence before he finally said, "I really want to go to SUA, but I don't know what to do. I'm not sure if I can make it."

other university for that matter) don't let anything stand in your way.

It was not until I renewed my practice of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism at the age of 17 that my attitude towards learning fundamentally changed. Between the ages of 17 and 20, I made every possible effort to strengthen my application for entrance to the first class of SUA. I read great literature, prayed as if my life were on the line, took classes for one year at community college and got straight A's to show that I could do that kind of academic work, sought advice from elders, gained real world experience in the workplace, and contributed to the growth of the local youth division of the SGI-USA.

Since coming to SUA, all of my struggles as a teenager to take full responsibility for my education have enabled me to fully engage life as a college student. In May 2002, I was elected as the second Soka Student Government Association President of SUA. In January 2004 I assumed responsibility as Editor-in-Chief of The Pearl, SUA's student newspaper named after slain Wall Street Journal reporter Daniel Pearl.

I lived in Buenos Aires for my study abroad program, recently began studying Japanese and have done quite well overall in my classes at SUA. Perhaps my high school guidance counselor would reexamine her approach to working with problem students if she could see how far off she was in forecasting my academic future.

Not unlike my friend at FNCC, the world too is at a crucial turning point. Having nearly completed my
Though the exact circumstances may vary, I am sure most people applying to college might feel either overwhelmed or unsure of where to start. For every student who has taken advanced high school classes and SAT-prep courses, there are just as many who feel hopeless about school and the future. I used to be stuck in this latter category.

In the months after my parents' divorce I began drinking, doing drugs and getting on the last nerve of my teachers at school. I was eventually expelled from junior high school for instigating a fight that escalated, in the words of the school district, into a "mob assault." I spent the next several months either attending no school at all or "alternative school."

I was allowed to re-enter public schools as a freshmen in high school. However, my hatred for school had by then completely rotted my will to learn. For the next three years, I continued running from education: drunk, high, absent from class and absent from life.

As students we are repeatedly told that our junior year will determine our future. This is when SATs are taken and college applications are prepared. Dragging a solid D average in this most academically important of years, teachers and administrators had few encouraging words to say about my future. I was told by my high school guidance counselor not to even bother taking the SATs. "Some people just aren't cut out for college, Nathan."

To those who have heard this, I urge you not to believe. There is nothing one cannot do when determined to learn. If in your heart you know you must attend SUA (or any

John F. Kennedy once said that "civilization is a race between education and catastrophe." Though we may approach the starting line at different times and with different abilities, this is clearly not a race that can be won alone. The first four classes at SUA have come off the blocks like lightening.

Look to your future. What will it hold? Who has the courage and determination to grab the baton?

(Reprinted from the SGI-USA World Tribune)

**didYOUknow?**

"Soka" means "To create value." And that's what Soka University does. The creation of value is, as Nicole Chu '05 put it, 'the very core of my experience at SUA...it means to use your creativity, imagination, universal energy, vitality, determination and struggles as a way to accomplish your dreams."
By: Mallory Denny (Class of 2007)
What is it like to be an SUA student? The question of life at SUA is not an easy answer. Rather, it’s an experience; one that will change not only our lives but hopefully the lives of others around the world as well. I will try my best to explain what it’s like to be studying at this amazing university.

A prevailing attitude that all students seem to share here is gratitude. We are grateful for our teachers who devote time and energy to each student, taking classes beyond the classroom, focusing not only on national and global issues, but also reaching students on a personal level.

Classes here are small to ensure that we develop relationships with our professors. Even their offices neighbor our classrooms, so that we feel encouraged to stop by and talk.

We have enough clubs, lectures and residential programs to make sure we always have something to do. (Not to mention the wonderful food served in our cafeteria!) We are grateful for our laptops, our large dorm rooms and our beautiful campus.

We are so grateful to all the people supporting us...donors, our families, and staff like the cafeteria lady who is a mother to us all, reminding us that her dream is for us to spread peace to the world.

We are grateful to our role models: Mahatma Gandhi, Daisaku Ikeda and Martin Luther King Jr. among others, who never cease to stir in us a sense of inspiration so indescribable and unbelievably powerful that only 400 students feel they can change the world.

More than anything, we are grateful for each other. The life and soul of SUA is its students. We are a support system for each other, serving as reflections of each other's good intentions and reminders as to why we came here.

There is always someone willing to do homework with you, share club responsibilities, support you emotionally or just go with you off campus for fun. In a place where the purpose of the education is to serve humanity, it comes as no surprise that's exactly what the students do: serve each other.

The best way we can thank all of those who have supported us is by working hard and enjoying our time here. SUA is a gift that we cherish so much. Each student is here because of a higher calling to achieve something greater than themselves.

The pressures of such a responsibility are huge, but we have the gift of SUA to help provide the means and the support to achieve our dreams. We all know that we will lead more fulfilling lives and do great things because we are powered by the wishes of our founders and everyone who has supported us to be here. If we are the future, then a bright future this world has coming.
When I was a junior in high school I first thought about coming to Soka University of America, Aliso Viejo. I had seen the campus and moreover I had seen the changes it had brought to my sister, which left me stunned. She had grown to be a strong, confident individual within one year.

Initially I did not want to come to SUA because I was more interested in physics and a liberal arts degree was. Nevertheless I learned more about the university and the degree and finally decided to apply half-heartedy. Even before I fully realized my acceptance to SUA, it seemed that I had arrived on the beautiful campus of Aliso Viejo.

Ever since my arrival, life has been a roller coaster ride. This was my first experience living away from family and to make it worse, my sister left for her study abroad 10 days after my entrance ceremony and I was left lonely and all by myself.

Back at home I had never done a lot of things like making my bed, or doing laundry or just washing my dishes. Everything was a new experience and a hard one. At first, I missed my sister, as I was dependent on her for all these things. But SUA taught me everything. Not only that, SUA has helped me grow as an individual. Being a small university of only 400 students, no one here is ever lonely.

One time I stressed out because of my studies and suddenly an upper classmen I had never met, who was late to her class, stopped, hugged me and asked why I was crying. She gave me all her time even though she reached class even later.

The professors are just part of our small family. They eat meals with us, sometimes stay for dinner and share their experience and provide guidance. Every year we have on-campus faculty. They make life worth living here. They offer us special events like watching the elections and feeding us with popcorn and cookies, or just inviting us over to their apartments for such events. Some of us have even knocked on their door to ask some questions if we were taking their classes.

With students from 32 countries on campus we experience different cultures, religion and traditions everyday. Life is an ever growing experience here. With all the clubs here, you can be part of someone's culture, like the way I learned salsa and hip-hop.

With so many options sometimes we tend to have a hard time deciding what to do or what not to do. But then that's what SUA is all about, learning and growing but with self control and time management.

Soka University has made me more compassionate and humane towards others and made me look at the world with optimism. Here we share each other's problems, help and take care of each other just like family.

I came here due to one sister but SUA has given me another 400 sisters and brothers.
Many people who support our mission at SUA say they derive great satisfaction from their generosity and would like to do even more. Here are some creative ways to support us that you might not have considered. If you are interested in further exploration of any of these suggestions, please contact Linda Safran, Director of Philanthropy, at 949-480-4072 or lsafran@soka.edu.

Annual or year-end gifts

"In memory of" gifts

"In honor of" gifts—A cash donation can be made in honor of anyone you choose on the occasion of his or her birthday, graduation, anniversary or other opportunities. It is the perfect gift for someone who has everything.

Life insurance—Do you have life insurance policies that are no longer needed? You may either donate the life insurance policy to us, or simply name SUA as the beneficiary of the policy.

Bequests—Have you made provisions in your will to benefit SUA? Bequests are the most popular type of planned gifts. Anything you leave to a charitable organization will reduce the size of your taxable estate while helping a good cause.

Securities—Stocks and publicly traded securities are easy to give and offer great tax advantages. The best stocks to use for charitable giving are those that have increased greatly in value while producing a low yield. Appreciated securities that have risen in value and that you’ve held for more than one year are best given by transferring them. That way you will pay no capital gains tax and you can deduct the fair market value.

Real estate—A gift of real estate offers you the opportunity to make a significant charitable contribution with a tax-friendly outcome. There are several ways to donate real estate depending on your situation

Retained life estate—Transfer the deed of your personal residence or farm to us now and retain the right to use the property for your lifetime and that of your spouse.

Bank accounts and CDs—Simply name SUA as the "payable-on-death beneficiary". You own the assets for your lifetime and have them available for your use. Upon your death, the assets pass directly to SUA without going through probate.

Retirement plan assets—Because our tax laws often subject retirement plan assets to the highest combined income and estate taxes, charitable donations of these assets may be the most efficient estate planning options.

Gifts that give back to you—There are several ways you can make a significant future gift to us while retaining, or in many cases increasing, the income you receive from the asset used to make the gift. The amount of income you receive depends on several factors including the fair market value of the asset and your age.

Charitable gift annuity—pays you a fixed dollar amount (or annuity) for your lifetime and that of another individual.
Deferred charitable gift annuity—offers current tax benefits but delays the payout until you reach a specified age.

Charitable remainder annuity trust—a trust that will pay the donor a specified annuity income either for life or a period of time not to exceed 20 years.

Charitable remainder unitrust—pays the donor a fixed percentage of the market value of the trust assets as determined annually. While the percentage cannot be changed the amount paid out will vary from year to year.

Charitable lead trust—pays income to one or more charitable organizations, typically for a period of years, and then the remaining assets of the trust pass to noncharitable beneficiaries, such as family members.
You are cordially invited to visit the new SUA Planned Giving Website

The next time you visit the Soka website you will find an up to the minute resource for your planned giving needs. Simply log on to www.soka.edu and select the tab on the top of the page marked Donors & Friends. Here you will find a variety of ways to support SUA. We have done our best to briefly explain how each option works and included a gift calculator to help you evaluate different options. You will also find a glossary of terms related to planned giving, a reading room full of articles and a place to request more information in the form of ebrochures.
Aliso Viejo campus happenings

May 7
Soka University of America’s
4th Annual International Festival
On the campus

May 22
Soka University of America’s
First Undergraduate Commencement Ceremony
In the Recreation Center

May 23
Soka University of America’s
First Annual Golf Tournament
at Aliso Viejo Golf Club

October 1
Building A Culture of Peace
Soka University of America’s
First Annual Gala
At the Athenaeum

For more information about anything in this newsletter please contact Linda Safran, Director of Philanthropy, at 949-480-4072 or lsafran@soka.edu.
Be sure to visit our new donor website at: www.soka.edu for up to the minute information about ways to support SUA.