A Message from the President

Dear friends and supporters,

Welcome to the fall 2007 issue of SUA Founders. There are many exciting developments unfolding at Soka University of America. Our campus is thriving now that we have all our university programs, graduate and undergraduate, located on one campus. We are also proud to have successfully held our third annual Peace Gala, *Celebrating a Vision of Peace*, on October 13, 2007 at which time we announced plans to build a Performing Arts Center and new academic building. In addition, we have launched a number of new academic programs.

In August 2007, Gail Thomas, Professor of Sociology, took a ten-day educational study tour to South Africa together with five undergraduate students sponsored by the Luis and Linda Nievas Family Foundation. We are fortunate that the Nievas foundation has also funded a new Distinguished Visiting Scholars Program, which brought Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Betty Williams to SUA for one week in September 2007. Ms. Williams taught a class of 20 SUA students and gave a lecture to 1,400 local high school students and community members. We also welcomed Ambassador Anwarul Chowdhury, former Under-Secretary-General and High Representative of the United Nations, as our second Distinguished Visiting Scholar in mid-October 2007.

Our students enjoy numerous opportunities as members of the SUA community. With your invaluable support, they live in a beautiful environment full of state-of-the-art facilities and technology, and receive substantial scholarships and grants. Such financial support allows them to enjoy a variety of programs, including our mandatory study abroad program, which sends them out into the world during their junior year to actualize their Soka, or “value-creating,” education. Our students are very aware of the generous support offered to them. They are inspired by the trust you have in them and in turn, these bright, young people wish to contribute to the happiness of others.

On behalf of the entire SUA community, thank you for your dedication to our students and your kind support of our university. Your generosity ensures a promising future for our university, providing many more generations of youth with the opportunity to engage in Soka education.

Sincerely,

Daniel Y. Habuki
President, Soka University of America
This fall marked the launch of the Gandhi, Pauling and Ikeda Distinguished Visiting Scholars Program, sponsored by the Luis and Linda Nieves Family Foundation. The program welcomes prominent scholars and humanitarians who represent the values upheld by Mohandas and Kasturba Gandhi, Linus and Ava Helen Pauling, and Daisaku and Kaneko Ikeda - the namesakes of SUA's academic buildings and library, respectively. The scholars visit the University for an extended period of time and provide special seminars to the students.

The first Pauling Distinguished Visiting Scholar was Nobel Peace Laureate Betty Williams, who visited SUA from Sept. 17-21. Ms. Williams spent five days interacting with the students and teaching a class titled “Peace is Action Not Words.” In addition, she addressed 1,200 students from high schools in the area, and 200 members of the community about her life and work.

The second distinguished visiting scholar was Ambassador Anwarul Chowdhury, former Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States at the United Nations, who visited SUA from Oct.15-19. Throughout the week he interacted with students, attended classes, and gave a lecture titled “The Culture of Peace: The Need of Our Time,” which was attended by more 215 participants from SUA and the local community. He also held two U.N. career workshops for those students who are interested in learning more about working at the United Nations or in a career in international relations.
I have just returned home to SUA after being away for nearly the entire year. I spent this past spring in Beijing, China for my study abroad. Yes, Beijing is very different from my hometown of Belleville, Illinois, but Beijing quickly became my home.

Much like Beijing itself, the weather there is dynamic. A few days after I arrived in late February, it snowed enough that snowmen stood all over the Beijing University campus. As time passed, the snow quickly melted, and Beijing bloomed beautifully. As summer approached, the weather became rather muggy and hot, but the city retained much of its spring beauty. Being in California at SUA for the past two years, I had forgotten how wonderful the temperate zone can be.
As for my struggles studying abroad; yes, I can honestly say that I struggled. But my struggles were not about living in China – they were more about the timing of my study abroad. I finished my junior year in Beijing.

I missed the class of 2007’s graduation – the graduation of my friends, as well as one of my older brothers. I have one year left at SUA to study with my wonderful friends. I have to write my capstone. I have to figure out what topic I want to write about. I have to take the GRE. I have to apply for graduate school. I have to make sure I graduate next spring. I found that my greatest struggle was to prepare happily for my future, while fully enjoying and embracing where I was and what I was doing at each moment.

Although sometimes I got caught up in my worries, someone or something such as messages from my friends at SUA, packages in the mail from family, or even the sight of a Daisaku Ikeda/Zhou Enlai book being sold on the street, always reminded me to never forget, even for a moment, the beauty of life.

I am back at SUA now, beginning my senior year. Although I had much anxiety over study abroad, and about what this year would bring, I now feel excitement, focus, and determination toward making this year a success. China strengthened my character and opened my mind and heart, training me for future struggles, not only at SUA, but throughout my life. I am not sure what my future entails, but I know I must, and will, be victorious.

My determination to get into SUA, and subsequent struggle to manage the work load while there, made me realize the importance of constantly working towards reaching one's full potential as a human being. After having been on the waiting list for some time, I was told it was too late for me to be a part of the first class of 2005. Luckily, a few weeks later, I received a call from an SUA administrator informing me that they decided to extend the initial 100 admitted students to 120, therefore, I was accepted just a couple months before school was to begin.

I was challenged to keep up with the incredible amount of homework each day while working at my job off-campus to pay tuition. Fortunately, I received funding from the SUA Student Scholarship Fund, or else I would not have survived financially.

Since graduating from SUA I have thought hard about what the role of an SUA graduate should be in the world. I have read many things from the founder of SUA that suggest that the true worth of a university is what its graduates accomplish in the world. For that reason, I have tried to bring the same energy and enthusiasm I discovered while at SUA to help me accomplish many things that I hope will help change the world into a better place.

After graduation, I moved to Japan and started working in junior high schools and elementary schools teaching English. But I am an artist at heart, and plan to employ the arts to help repay my debt of gratitude to SUA and to all the people who donated to make my studies there possible.

I am a musician and a singer/songwriter, and recently formed the "Mammoth Musical Movement," a group of 15 international singer/songwriters, working together on a collaborative musical CD intended to raise funds for the Soka Student Scholarship Fund.

Also, having had the experience of publishing a few of my own books, another project on the horizon is the formation of a non-profit publishing company, "Second American Renaissance," with the goal of publishing the works of SUA students and SUA graduates.

I want to thank all the people around the world who have donated so much to SUA to make it possible for its graduates to share the message of Soka education with the entire world.
Soka University of America's Third Annual Peace Gala, Celebrating a Vision of Peace was held at our exquisite campus in Aliso Viejo on October 13, 2007. We are thrilled to announce that we exceeded our goal of $1 million, providing a net benefit of approximately $825,000 to go directly to SUA students via the Scholarship Endowment. Nearly 560 guests experienced an evening of elegance and inspiration, culminating in a breathtaking musical performance by Tony – winner Duncan Sheik.
The concert featured the haunting music from the Tony Award-winning Best Musical, "Spring Awakening." Duncan was accompanied by a string section which included talented SUA student musicians. Also, by popular demand, Patrick Duffy returned for the third consecutive year as the Master of Ceremonies for the evening.
Seiji Takaku joined Soka University of America in 2002 as a professor of psychology. Before joining the faculty at SUA, he was an assistant professor in the Department of Psychology at Minnesota State University. He received his B.A. with magna cum laude from UCLA, his M.A. from California State University, Long Beach, and his Ph.D. from Claremont Graduate University. His dissertation on a cross-cultural examination of forgiveness won the Arthur H. Brayfield Dissertation Award for the “Most Meritorious Dissertation in Psychology” in 2000.

His research interests focus on cross-cultural examinations of people’s apology (and excuse)-giving behavior, interpersonal forgiveness, and various strategies involved in interpersonal/inter-group conflict resolutions. He has published several articles and book chapters on these topics.

In his spare time, he enjoys reading good books and playing golf. He also enjoys pumping iron every morning, as he once dreamed of becoming a professional bodybuilder. Recently, his morning workout routine has inspired a group of student athletes on campus who call themselves “Seiji Wannabees.”

He resides in Aliso Viejo with his wife Takako (Kiko), and their twin boys Max and Leo.
in South Africa

and get a feel and view of government affairs and arrangements there.

One of the highlights of the trip included a tour to Cape Town's Robben Island, where former president and human rights activist Nelson Mandela spent 18 of his 27 years in prison for his fight against apartheid. Another highlight was a visit to the apartheid museum in Johannesburg. This visit gave the group an extensive historical and graphic understanding and view of apartheid and the major struggles and protests led by students, women and other South Africans to bring about social change. We visited the Cradle of Humankind where the group learned about the origins and evolution of the environment and humanity and some of the significant ties to Africa. Another highlight for the group was meeting a young man in a secondary school whose name was "Soka."

In addition to making friends and experiencing personal growth from our journey, another important goal of the group was to contribute something, or perform some service of value while in South Africa. The opportunity to do the latter presented itself when we were invited by friends to participate in a community outreach project in Johannesburg in honor of National Women's Day, which is celebrated annually throughout South Africa on August 9. The project entailed contributing and taking blankets, towels and toiletries to individuals with cancer or HIV/AIDS who were confined to their homes. We learned about the magnitude of the AIDS virus, its increase among children, infants, and the growing orphan population; and its negative and substantial effects on families, on students' and teachers' school attendance and performance, on schools and universities; and on employment and the work environment.

In initially assessing what we learned about the status of education in current day South Africa, we first acknowledged that our brief journey and local "grass-roots" approach only provided a snapshot view and a brief insight into a society that remains in transition, one with limited resources and a substantial agenda towards change. At the same time, we felt that the South African post-apartheid government must be applauded for its impressive new constitution which highlights freedom, choice and reconciliation for all citizens. In addition, many of the educators and school administrators that we encountered noted that extensive and aggressive national policies were crafted on a timely basis following the 1994 election and formation of the new South African government. These policies were aimed at decentralizing education administration and curriculum; changing the education curriculum to reflect a national identity that embraces and respects and assures the rights of all culture and equalizing education access and education funding for all South Africans.

All members of the SUA South Africa group gratefully acknowledge that our journey would not have been possible or as successful without the tremendous support and assistance of great friends in South Africa and the opportunity provided by Soka University and its donors. We also realize our fortune in having participated in this invaluable educational adventure, and hope that others in the SUA community will have similar opportunities in the future.
SUAS Graduate School: Calabasas to Aliso Viejo and Beyond

Tomoko Takahashi, Ed.D., L.H.D.
SUA Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs & Dean of the Graduate School

I am delighted to report that the SUA Graduate School successfully transferred its programs to the Aliso Viejo campus and resumed its operation this summer. At the same time, the SUA Calabasas campus, which had been home to the Graduate School from 1994 to 2006, completed its mission and closed its doors on June 30, 2007.

As the founding Dean of the Graduate School, I wish to express my heartfelt appreciation and gratitude for your support of SUA Calabasas.

In 1987, Soka University Los Angeles (SULA) - a forerunner of SUA - was established in Calabasas as a branch campus of Soka University in Japan, to provide English instruction for students from Japan.

Seven years later, in 1994, the university opened its first school - the Graduate School offering a Master of Arts (MA) program in Second and Foreign Language Education with a concentration in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL). With the opening of the Graduate School, the university became a freestanding independent institution separate from Soka University in Japan, and changed its name to Soka University of America (SUA).

When the SUA Graduate School opened in 1994, the university's Founder, Daisaku Ikeda, said, "The mission of Soka University of America is to foster a steady stream of global citizens committed to living a contributive life. To study and learn, to take on difficult challenges, to continue to take action for the sake of the happiness of your fellow citizens - this is the key to a life that is ever youthful, value-filled, unhindered and expansive."

The first sentence has been adopted as the mission statement of SUA.

The SUA Graduate School has since graduated 12 classes totaling 96 students, with a 96 percent graduation rate. All of their alumni are in positions of great contribution and respect.

In May 2001, the university opened a new campus in Aliso Viejo. As one university with two campuses, the university applied for regional accreditation through the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) in October 2001. Throughout the accreditation process, the Graduate School played an important role.

Because of its excellent track record of graduating outstanding students, although the undergraduate program has not graduated a class, the achievements of the Graduate School helped SUA acquire its institutional accreditation in June 2005, four years earlier than scheduled. And in many other ways, the Graduate School and its 96 graduates have contributed a great deal to the development of SUA.

Following the 12th and last graduation at SUA Calabasas in December 2006, the Graduate School began its transition to the Aliso Viejo campus. It completed its physical relocation this April and resumed its program operation in June by welcoming 59 students from Soka Women's College (SWC) in Japan, who participated in an Intensive English Language Program for the first time at Aliso Viejo during the summer months of June and July. We also offered the Summer University Bridge Program (SUMP) to 14 international students, who studied English intensively before beginning their undergraduate studies this academic year.

This fall the Graduate School welcomed six students into its 13th class. In addition, 21 students joined the Extended University Bridge Program, which is a one-year college preparatory English as a Second Language (ESL) program; students accepted into this program have been granted conditional acceptance into SUA's undergraduate program starting next academic year.

This is an exciting time for all of us at SUA. We are truly grateful for all the support you have given us. We look forward to your continued involvement, friendship and participation as we continue this great adventure of building a world-class university for the 21st century.
SEPTEMBER 11 – DECEMBER 31

Natasha Shoro Mixed Media Art Exhibition, Founders Hall Art Gallery, M-F, 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. Free.

DECEMBER 2

Celtic Christmas Faire presented by occelticfestival.com. Recreation Center and Peace Fountain area, 10 a.m. – 7 p.m., $12-$15, Free for children 12 and under. Tickets go on sale October 20. Questions: 562.500.3551 or www.occelticfestival.com

DECEMBER 7

Lecture: The Earth in Balance. Colloquium on Asian Religions and Ecology: A Contemporary Perspective with Christopher Chapple (LMU), Sthaneswar Timalsina (CSU San Diego) and Sandra Wawryti (CSU San Diego). Religious, philosophical and cultural views on man, environment and nature in Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Daoism. Pauling Hall 216, 3:30 – 5:30 p.m. Free.

JANUARY 18

Jazz Monsters Concert with Charles McPherson's Quartet, Founders Hall 3rd Fl, 7 p.m., $10 for adults, free for under 18. Tickets sold at the door. Questions: info@soka.edu, 949.480.4081

JANUARY 18 – APRIL 18

Richard Artschwager: Large Concepts in Small Formats Art Exhibition, Founders Hall Art Gallery, M-F, 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. Free!

FEBRUARY 22

Jazz Monsters Concert with Mike Garson, Chris Howes and Bob Magnusson, Founders Hall 3rd Floor, 7 p.m., $10 for adults, free for under 18. Tickets sold at the door. Questions: 949.480.4081 or info@soka.edu

FEBRUARY 26

Capistrano Unified School District's High School Choral Festival, Founders Hall, 10 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. Questions: bscholl@capousd.org or 949.234.0502

MARCH 28

Jazz Monsters Concert with John Proulx (vocal and piano) and Chuck Berghoffer (bass), Founders Hall 3rd Fl, 7 p.m., $10 for adults, free for under 18. Tickets sold at the door. Questions: info@soka.edu, 949.480.4081

MAY 3

Soka University's 7th Annual International Festival, Peace Lake area, 10 a.m. – 6 p.m., $5, free for under 18. Tickets sold as you drive in. Free parking. Enjoy more than 30 international performing groups on three stages. SUA's International Festival is part of the Imagination Celebration held in cooperation with Arts Orange County and the OC Department of Education.

MAY 9 & 13

Student Music Recitals I & II, Founders Hall 3rd Fl, 7 – 9 p.m. Free and open to the community!

MAY 16

Jazz Monsters Concert Under the Stars with great Cuban vocalist Havana Carbo, Outdoor Campus Green Stage, 7 p.m., $10 for adults, free for under 18, Lawn Seating. Questions: info@soka.edu, 949.480.4081

MAY 20 – JULY 15

Class Works 2008 – Student Art Exhibition, Founders Hall Art Gallery, M-F, 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. Free.

MAY 23

Commencement for Class of 2008, Recreation Center, 2 p.m. By invitation only.

JULY 11, 14-18, 21-25


JULY 14-18

LIFT Leadership Institute for Teens, Pauling 216, 2 – 7 p.m. Questions: www.liftus.org

OCTOBER 11

Soka University's 4th Annual Peace Gala, Celebrating a Vision of Peace. For more information or to receive an invitation, please contact Linda Safran at 949-480-4072 or lsafran@soka.edu.

DECEMBER 5 & 12

Student Music Recital I & II, Founders Hall 3rd Fl, 7 – 9 p.m. Free and open to the community.

For more information on these events, please contact Soka University of America at 949.480.4000 or visit www.soka.edu.
Have You Moved Recently?

We would like to keep you informed of the wonderful news from SUA, so if you have a new address, please let us know by sending an e-mail to Colleen Scherf-Ghara at cscherfghara@soka.edu or contact her directly at 949.480.4073. If you know someone who has mentioned they no longer hear from SUA, please make sure they contact us so we can update their information.