A Message from the President

Dear friends and supporters,

Welcome to the summer issue of SUA Founders. It is hard to believe that the Class of 2016, the last of the first four entering classes into SUA’s undergraduate program, has graduated. Their arrival marked a fresh beginning for the university as a full-fledged liberal arts institution comprised of four full undergraduate classes. Their departure, too, signifies a fresh departure for the university as it begins its seventh year of operation at Aliso Viejo, and further matures into an academically rigorous, top-quality, international university.

I am very pleased that once again our graduating seniors are showing their true ability and the quality of their Soka education through the types of positions they have accepted with various employers around the world, including the Peace Corps, Free The Children and teaching English to Japanese students. Others have decided to attend such prestigious graduate schools as Harvard, London School of Economics, New York University, and the University of Maryland Law School.

It is my sincere hope that you will join us for the fourth Annual Peace Gala, Celebrating a Vision of Peace, to be held on the campus on Saturday, October 11. We are very pleased to have Academy Award, Grammy and Golden Globe winning songwriter Paul Williams joining us for this special evening. www.soka.edu/peacegala

As you read the stories contained in this newsletter, I hope you realize that none of these wonderful happenings would be possible without your generous support. The entire SUA community of students, faculty and staff extend to you our most sincere appreciation for your generosity because it ensures a promising future for fresh young minds that want to improve the world around them.

Sincerely,

Daniel Y. Habuki, Ph.D.
President, Soka University of America
My study abroad experience was all things incredible, scary, daunting, ridiculous, enervating, amazing, unbelievable, awe-inspiring, motivational, and inexplicable rolled into one. Overall, it became an experience that changed my life.

Living in Spain was like living in a different world. My sleep schedule was so strange that I never actually got over my jetlag while I was there. I woke up at about 8:30 a.m. for class, came back at about 12, took a siesta, or nap, until 4, and then went back to class until about 8. Dinner was at 9 or 10 p.m., and no one actually went out until about 1 a.m. The Spaniards are all about the nightlife and love to throw parties. The streets were always alive at night and there were always things to do – and best of all, everything was only a metro ride away because the public transportation was unbelievably amazing. My classes were fantastic and I had great professors that really engaged with the students and the material they were teaching. As a Humanities major, being able to study Spanish texts in their original format and in the very language they were written really inspired me and helped me understand the beauty of Spanish literature. Toward the end of my stay I slowly began to feel like a true Spaniard and a lot less like a tourist.

One of my favorite parts of my study abroad was the ability to travel around Europe. In addition to visiting various parts of Spain, I also traveled to Paris, Germany, Austria, and Switzerland. Each country had something new and exciting for me to discover.

I think before we leave for study abroad most of us may think we know exactly who we are, and what our priorities are in life. We all think we have some understanding of what we want, and what we aspire to be. But I began to realize that there was a lot more to me than I even knew was there, and once my priorities were put to the test, I was awakened to my own strength and ability to conquer my weaknesses. Sometimes we need to step out of our comfort zones, to not only appreciate who we are, and what we have in our lives, but to examine ourselves on every level to ensure that we are exactly who we want to be.

Due to the unending support from my family back home and my amazing friends in Barcelona, I literally became a more positive person. My family was constantly reminding me what a unique opportunity I had, and I can say now, with absolute certainty, they were right — I am so happy I went!

My study abroad in Barcelona was the experience of a lifetime, and an incredible adventure every step of the way. I definitely feel like I am now one step closer to truly being a global citizen.
The fourth undergraduate commencement ceremony took place at Soka University on Friday, May 23, 2008, concluding a week of celebratory festivities. Activities included the End of the Year Celebration BBQ, at which awards were presented to Professors of the Year John Kehlen, Ariel Rabin, and James Spody, and to Adjunct Professors of the Year Chun-Ya Chen, Amparo Font, and Veronica Quizada, the Donor Appreciation Luncheon, the Parent Appreciation Reception, and the Annual Alumni Meeting.

During the ceremony, SJA President Danny Hasek presented the Founders Award to Karla Down Mager, and SJA Board of Trustees Chair Steve Dunham honored Iani and Linda Nieves with special Board recognition of their dedication and commitment to Soka University through their family Foundation. Vice Provost for Internationalization and Director for the International Legal Studies Program at the University of Denver, Dr. Ved Vande, delivered this year’s commencement address titled "From Civilizational Conflict to Civilizational Harmony."
2008 Alternative Spring Break United Nations Tour

by Lili Castilla (2008)

In March 2008, 13 SUA students traveled to New York City to spend their one-week spring break at the United Nations Headquarters participating in the university's third UN Study Tour; an activity generously funded by the Leu and Linda Nieves Family Foundation.

Accompanied by SUA Director of Student Services Hyon Moon, and Professor of International Studies Lisa MacLeod, students attended nearly 20 workshops with UN officials, discussing topics such as counter-terrorism and children in armed conflicts.

As in previous years, the one-to-one connection forged between students, UN officials and staff workers is the tour's major accomplishment. Participants expressed that such experiences deepen their understanding about the UN.

"Prior to this trip, I didn't really see how effective the UN was as a local level," said Milli Sato (09) "but one of the speakers addressed the crucial relationship between the UN and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) around the world, which made me reflect on what it really means to contribute locally."

Similarly, Kuniko "Mossa" Takeda (10) stated that she was "very cynical about the UN idealism in solving problems on a global scale." Last year, Takeda participated in SUA's Alternative Spring Break in Tijuana, Mexico, where she witnessed the poverty-stricken living conditions of orphaned children, some of whom could not even attend school. "At the UN, however, I noticed that officials are constantly working toward improving conditions for all children, especially in education."

In contrast to similar UN Study Tour programs hosted at other universities — most of whom must make international studies to participate, SUA students are eligible to apply regardless of their concentration. "The dominant model includes students with substantial background in UN topics, but the advantage SUA has is more inclusive," said Prof. MacLeod. "And the experience might influence students’ choices in the future."

Phat Vu is a professor known widely by many students around campus as more than a mere educator. To the students at SUA, Professor Phat Vu is a friend and mentor with an unwavering spirit that encourages his students to crave more. So it comes as no surprise that Vu has won the Professor of the Year award for five consecutive years. He is an Associate Professor of Physics as well as Assistant Dean of Faculty here at Soka University of America, and has been with the university since its inauguration in 2001.

Born in Saigon, Vietnam, Vu left as a refugee only two days before the fall of the war where he was just nine years old. Once here in America, he pursued his education and his love of basketball. Vu finished his B.A. at Williams College and completed his M.A. as well as his Ph.D. at Cornell University. In fact, while he was completing his Ph.D., he also trained 10 hours a week for two years in order to participate in a dance team competition in Blackpool, England. His team placed third.

Vu admits that he chose to enter into the world of physics because of pure ego. He wanted to challenge himself and others by choosing a subject that was known for its difficulty. He had a change of heart, however, while teaching physics as a graduate student. While trying to make the subject interesting for students he realized just how beautiful and meaningful it really is.

Since being at SUA, Vu has also taught a number of courses outside of physics, including Enduring Questions of Humanity, Modes of Inquiry and Social Ethics. Vu manages to teach from a very unique angle. While still implementing a scientific approach, he also incorporates a more general philosophical and historical perspective in his subjects. In doing so, he has created a fusion of science and humanism, which more students can easily relate to. Through innovation and imagination, Vu has managed to create an entirely new approach to learning. It is for this reason that his classes have become some of the most popular among the students at SUA.
Introducing the Young Founders Alumni Magazine

On May 3, 2007, the inaugural issue of the Young Founders Alumni Association Magazine was released. This will be an annual publication. Subscriptions are available for $4 per year. If you wish to subscribe, please send a check payable to SUA to Grace Christianson, Soka University, 1 University Drive, Aliso Viejo, CA 92656.

Celebrating a Vision of Peace
FOURTH ANNUAL PEACE GALA

You are cordially invited to attend the 4th Annual Peace Gala, "Celebrating a Vision of Peace," on the beautiful campus of Soka University of America on Saturday, October 11, 2008.

The evening will feature a cocktail party, a silent auction, live auction, dinner and special guest entertainers. Academy Award, Grammy and Golden Globe winning songwriter Paul Williams. Also, back by popular demand, Patrick Duffy will be returning for the fourth consecutive year as Master of Ceremonies.

The proceeds of the Gala will provide scholarships for Soka University students who come from around the world to experience Soka’s unique educational experience founded upon the principles of peace, human rights and the sanctity of life. SUA founder Daisaku Ikeda explains, “The ultimate goal of a Soka education is to foster people of character who continuously strive for the greatest good—that of peace.” For more information contact Linda Jahren at lahren@soka.edu or 949-480-4072 or visit our web site at www.soka.edu/peacegala.

2008 calendar of events

MAY 22 – JULY 15
Class Works 2008 - Student Art Exhibition, Founders Hall Art Gallery 1st Floor, 11:45 a.m. - 5 p.m. Free.

JULY 7 – 11, 14 – 18, 21 – 25

JULY 14 – 18
LIFT, Leadership Institute for Teens, Pauling 216, 2-7 p.m. www.LIFTus.org

AUGUST 29
Jazz Monsters Concert with Bruce Camerons San Diego All Stars, Outdoor Campus Green Stage, 7 p.m. $15 for adults, free for under 18. Lawn Seating Tickets sold at the door. Questions: info@soka.edu, 949-480-4081

SEPTEMBER 26
Jazz Monsters Concert with Peter Sprague Classical Jazz Sextet, Founders Hall 1st Floor, 7 p.m. $15, free for under 18. Tickets sold at the door. Questions: info@soka.edu, 949-480-4081

OCTOBER 18
Lions Roar Open House, For Elementary and Middle School Students and Families, 9 a.m. – 2:30 p.m. Enjoy a guided tour, workshops, lunch and Talent Blast!

OCTOBER 24
Jazz Monsters Concert with world famous guitarists Gene Bertoncini from New York and Bob Magnusson, bass, Founders Hall 1st Floor, 7 p.m., adults $15, free for under 18. Tickets sold at the door. Questions: info@soka.edu, 949-480-4081

NOVEMBER 21
Jazz Monsters Concert with New York jazz greats Giora Stewart, tenor sax, and Tadash Hammers, piano. Founders Hall 1st Floor, 7 p.m., adults $15, free for under 18. Tickets sold at the door. Questions: info@soka.edu, 949-480-4081

NOVEMBER 22
Lions Roar Open House, For High School and Middle School Students and Families, 9 a.m. – 2:30 p.m. Enjoy a guided tour, workshops, lunch and Talent Blast!

DECEMBER 5
Student Music Recital I, Founders Hall 3rd Floor, 7 – 9 p.m., free and open to the community

DECEMBER 12
Student Music Recital II, Founders Hall 3rd Floor, 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/sokanews.
SUA Announces New Tuition Policy

In an effort to promote greater diversity and access to higher education for both US and international students, the Board of Trustees for Soka University of America in Aliso Viejo, CA has approved a new tuition policy beginning in the 2008-2009 academic year. All admitted students whose annual family income is $50,000 or less will receive free tuition. Room and board fees will still apply.

"Soka University is proud to be one of the few private colleges in California who have been able to offer this exceptional opportunity to outstanding students whose families might not otherwise be able to give their child the education they desire," said President Dan Y. Nakamura. "We house this offer open to many current high school students who have been consdered attending a private university because of cost. So now all students who qualify are able to both US and international students.

The Mission of Soka University is to foster a steady stream of global citizens committed to living a contributive way of life.

A New Way to Support Your Favorite SUA Fund

The Development Department now has the ability to set up recurring online credit card donations. Just call Colleen Schief-Ghita at 949.480.4073. Every month your donation will be charged to your credit card and automatically deposited in the Soka fleet of your choice. What could be easier?

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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 Schief-Ghita at cschief@bkids.com 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.