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**Soka University of America**

**10th Annual Peace Gala | Saturday, October 11, 2014**

**Six o’clock in the Evening**

**Gourmet Dinner & Live Auction**

*Entertainment by Ivan Rutherford, Broadway star of Les Misérables*

**Proceeds benefit the SUA Scholarship Fund**

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**Purchase tickets online now at: gala.soka.edu**
Welcome to this issue of SUA Founders. I hope you enjoy browsing through these pages to take a closer look at Soka University of America (SUA) as I share a few highlights from our spring semester.

On May 23, 2014, we held the Commencement Ceremony for the undergraduate Class of 2014 in the Soka Performing Arts Center. We were honored to welcome this year’s Commencement speaker, Nobel Laureate Dr. Amartya Sen. Dr. Sen is currently the Thomas W. Lamont University Professor and Professor of Economics and Philosophy at Harvard University. Prior to Harvard, he was the Master of Trinity College, Cambridge. He is also a senior fellow at Harvard Society Fellows. Throughout his career, he has taught at a variety of distinguished universities including, Oxford University, University of Calcutta, London School of Economics, MIT and many more. In 1998, he was awarded the Nobel Memorial Prize for Economic Sciences for his research on welfare economics. Dr. Sen has served as President of the Econometric Society, the American Economic Association, the Indian Economic Association, and the International Economic Association. He was formerly Honorary President of OXFAM and is now the Honorary Advisor. With his research, he has published many important papers and books.

Among other activities in the spring, 20 students participated in the United Nations Study Tour with Professor of International Studies, Lisa MacLeod, and Manager of Career Services, Jennifer Cunningham. The UN Study Tour is a week-long trip to the UN Headquarters in New York City. In addition to touring the UN Headquarters building, I was delighted to hear that the students attended an informal gathering hosted by one of our donors. We are very fortunate to have donors who not only make financial contributions, but also contribute their time and homes to share and connect with our students. It truly demonstrates the spirit of our benefactors who believe in the mission of SUA and look forward to the accomplishments of our graduates.

We are truly indebted to all of you, as your generous support directly helps our students attend and enjoy a meaningful academic experience, including our Learning Clusters. This year they had wonderful opportunities to represent SUA and conduct research throughout the U.S. and the world in such locations as New York, Boston, Washington D.C., San Francisco, Argentina, Switzerland, Japan, Peru and Costa Rica. The chance to travel and gain firsthand experience in their fields of interest was made possible through the generous support of the Luis and Linda Nieves Family Foundation. Back at SUA, the remainder of the underclassmen and faculty conducted their Learning Clusters locally with impressive topics including immigration, urban planning, natural history, sustainability, social entrepreneurship, media and film. It is my hope that students will gain a deeper understanding of our university’s mission through such experiences.

In closing, we will continue to do our best to offer the level of academic excellence and access for all students, regardless of need, that will foster the future leaders for peace. We wish you and your families the very best and thank you very much for your support.

Sincerely,

Daniel Y. Habuki, Ph.D.
President
The tenth commencement ceremony took place in the Soka Performing Arts Center on Friday, May 23rd. The audience of 835 students, friends, family, faculty and donors watched as global citizens received their diplomas.

The ceremony began with the Soka student chorus singing the National Anthem. SUA President Danny Habuki provided a warm welcome followed by a message from the university founder Daisaku Ikeda, which was read by Dr. Jay Heffron, Dean of Students.

continued on next page
The student chorus and orchestra performed the university song, *The Light of Hope*, composed by university founder Daisaku Ikeda and Wayne Green. Then Dr. Amartya Sen, Thomas W. Lamont University Professor, and Professor of Economics and Philosophy at Harvard University delivered a commencement address titled “Justice in the World.”

The crowd cheered as academic degrees were conferred by Dr. Edward Feasel, Dean of Faculty, and presented to 90 students by President Danny Habuki. (Earlier in the week, students and staff gathered to hold a special pre-Commencement Ceremony for three seniors who were competing in the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) track championships on the day of Commencement.)

Three student speakers were chosen by their classmates to represent the Class of 2014 at the ceremony. Chelsea Dugger, Franzel Velasquez and Yoshiko Ogushi shared comments about their experience at SUA and their hopes for the future.

President Habuki then presented Chelsea Dugger with the prestigious Founders Award, the highest honor given to a student by SUA. From the podium, Chelsea thanked her parents, family, friends, professors and donors for their support.

The student chorus and orchestra concluded the ceremony with a moving performance of *Seasons of Love.*

A dessert reception on the lawn provided a wonderful opportunity for everyone to join in the celebration.
SUA Alum Michael Strand (Class of 2008) founds a publishing company

**Michael Strand graduated from Soka University of America in 2008.** For the next few years he experienced different work opportunities. After a while, he found everything made him miserable. He realized he needed to create his own job, his own future. He wanted to become a novelist, but he didn't want to deal with the publishing business as it is today. Michael felt other SUA grads were in the same spot. In order to bring value-creative literature to the world, he decided to team up with his friends to become a publisher.

In 2012, Strand started Sic Semper Serpent Publishing alongside Thomas Crouse, a friend from high school and fellow writer. Their 10-year relationship led to the creation of an independent publishing venture focused on producing nourishing and value-creative art. The company, located in Minneapolis, Minnesota, currently publishes young adult science fiction and fantasy created by Minnesota authors.

“As a SUA alum, getting to do value-creative art with non-Soka people is a dream come true,” Strand said. “In this company I can see these various worlds coming together and entering into dialogue. To me, the future of value creation is the shared struggle to make things that reflect the values of SUA in broader society.”

He says his education at SUA comes in handy every day. “Not a day goes by when I don’t draw on some skill or experience from SUA. But the most valuable thing to me is my friendships. Through technology I can stay in touch with all my friends from SUA, and they continue to encourage and inspire me all day every day,” Strand said. Creating his own company was not an easy decision, but he hopes his efforts will inspire others to make their own project, too.

“The world is a big place filled with all sorts of wonders, and publishing can be a great portal for people to see that. We want to be that portal, to help people see the larger universe they belong to, and to help them find their place within it,” he added.

While attending the Soka Education Conference in February, Michael presented the Ikeda Library with a copy of his company’s newest publication, *The Adventures of Israel St. James, Volume 1: Archimedes’ Insight*.

Find out more at www.sicsemperserpent.com
Norman Hashizume (Class of 2009) believes a crucial element in modern education is for teachers to use their knowledge for the sake of others. He felt an education based on Buddhist philosophy would have an immensely positive impact on this element because of the focus on creating value for others. As a result, he chose the Graduate School at SUA for his graduate studies.

Norman remembers how a university professor changed his life by providing guidance and encouragement and by putting one hundred percent trust in him. He learned that the amount of trust a student places in the teacher directly correlates to the success the student attains in the class. Norman diligently works to encourage trust in and from the students he teaches at Kansai Soka Junior High School in Japan.

Writing the thesis for his Master’s degree was Norman’s favorite class at SUA, and his favorite professor was his mentor for the project, Dr. Mathis. He says, “She was very strict and provided lots of advice. Now that I am a teacher I fully appreciate her kindness and strictness.”

Norman treasures the friendships he made while a student on the SUA campus and stays in touch via email as often as possible.
Pioneering a new trail, Los Angeles native Luisa Fernanda Madrid (Class of 2015) was the first SUA student to study abroad in Africa. Luisa studied French during her freshman and sophomore years and was excited to give the new words she had learned a reality test.

In August, Luisa headed for the study abroad program in Dakar, Senegal. She found a great atmosphere with her Muslim host family, which consisted of four older and three younger siblings. It didn’t take long for Luisa to discover that the dominant language in the area was Wolof, not French, providing another layer of difficulty but also another chance to learn.

Among her favorite classes in Dakar was Environment and Development in Senegal. Here her thoughts about the environment, how people use it, and their reasons for protecting it changed. Luisa had to learn a lot about Senegalese culture and different ethnicities to understand their view of the environment. While doing so, she discovered that much of Senegal’s most beautiful forests remained intact not because of laws or policies designed to protect the environment but because the forests are considered sacred. The locals believe their ancestors inhabit the forest so they should not cut down the trees.

Luisa was able to spend two weeks in rural Africa and found it to be very different from the cosmopolitan city of Dakar. Popenguine-Serrer is the name of the fishing village where she stayed and involved herself in the daily activities. Fishing is considered a man’s job, and the locals were surprised when she expressed a desire to hop on a boat to try her hand catching fish. She felt like a failure when the trip had to be cut short because she could not overcome seasickness. She also experienced harvesting peanuts in very hot, humid weather and discovered in her bedroom, of all places, the biggest bugs she had ever seen.

CARTIS is an international Catholic organization that helps refugees and immigrants coming to Senegal from other parts of Africa. Because Luisa’s parents are both immigrants from Guatemala, she jumped at the chance to help others by accepting an internship at CARTIS. Her job was to welcome those who came to the office, record their stories along with their request for help, and eventually sit on the committee to help decide who would be awarded aid. Luisa felt empowered to make a positive impact on the lives of others while performing her work.

While in Senegal, Luisa was never in her comfort zone. She was immersed in a predominantly Muslim country whose inhabitants spoke a language she was not familiar with, and she often found herself the only white-skinned person in the area. People stared at her everywhere she went, but they were also curious enough to try to engage her in conversation. Luisa says, “I have always been a passive person but found my voice in Senegal. I now feel comfortable voicing my opinion and standing up for myself...even in a non-native language.”
Please provide a brief background about yourself
I was raised primarily in Claremont, a small community in Southern California known for its consortium of private colleges and graduate schools. I became familiar with academia from a young age because I was raised in an academic family. My father worked as a professor of mathematics at a private liberal arts college, and my mother worked first as an education director at a botanic garden and later as a chief administrative officer at a graduate institute. While I was growing up, I also lived abroad in Italy, Britain, Canada, and New Zealand.

From which institutions do you hold degrees?
I received my B.A. in sociology from Rice University, and I received my Ph.D. in the area of environmental management and policy from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

What attracted you to SUA?
I was attracted to SUA by its student-centered approach to instruction and its internationally oriented mission. I particularly admire the combination of small class sizes, outstanding facilities, and excellent financial support that SUA provides for students. I also appreciate the opportunity to live and work in the very beautiful region of the California coast where SUA is located.

What distinguishes Soka students in your opinion?
Soka students are very interested in pursuing projects that require independent initiative and learning, including the research term papers that I assign in my environmental management and policy courses. These research paper projects help students build the skills needed for lifelong learning through independent initiative, thereby equipping students to adapt to a rapidly changing world. In addition, the international character of the SUA student body creates many opportunities for the exchange of ideas and knowledge drawn from across the world.

What inspires you?
I am inspired by the natural world, and I have found that the protected natural areas near SUA offer many opportunities to experience nature. I often visit the nearby Crystal Cove State Park, a protected coastal area where I have seen many seabirds, dolphins, and whales. I also hike in the Laguna Coast Wilderness Park near SUA, which is a great place for bird watching. When I have time for longer trips, I enjoy visiting the extraordinary state and national parks found both in California and across the American West.

Do you have other reflections about your experience as a faculty member at SUA?
I have stayed in touch with a number of Soka alumni who have taken courses from me. It has been great to see Soka alumni move forward after graduation into careers and into leading graduate programs both in the United States and abroad. I have seen how a Soka education provides students with an excellent preparation for a wide variety of future career and learning opportunities. An education at SUA opens doors for students.

“An education at SUA opens doors for students.”

George Busenberg, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Environmental Management and Policy
The 13th annual International Festival was held on May 3, 2014. The annual event celebrates the birthday of the SUA campus by bringing the community together where they can experience diverse cultures. This year more than 9,500 guests enjoyed the wares of 262 exhibitors selling international food and cultural items while viewing entertainment by a variety of performers on three separate stages.
More than 230 participants gathered on the campus February 15 through 17, for the tenth annual Soka Education Conference hosted by the Soka Education Student Research Project (SESRP). Keynote speaker Winston Langley was joined by distinguished guest speakers Jason Goulah, Larry Hickman and Jim Garrison. Ten additional presenters including students, alumni and faculty shared their research on Soka and humanistic education, many from their perspective as educators.

Attendees also had the opportunity to attend workshops as part of the conference. Topics included:

1) Value Creative Education
2) Banned Books and the Social Control of Knowledge
3) What would the ideal second/foreign language education be like in the light of Soka Education and Progressive Education?
4) School Memories and Good Education: Remembering and Speaking

The Soka Education Student Research Project is a student-initiated and student-run project at Soka University of America. Project members engage in the study, research, and exhibition of Soka Education as a unique educational philosophy. This year is the tenth anniversary of the founding of the SESRP.
Learning Clusters

CULTURE OF PEACE LEARNING CLUSTER

Twelve lucky SUA students welcomed Ambassador Anwarul Chowdhury back to SUA to lead the fifth Culture of Peace Learning Cluster. During class, he emphasized that the core concept for creating a Culture of Peace is making peace and non-violence a part of everyone's daily existence.

Chowdhury stated that life offers many challenges that must be faced without resorting to violence or aggressive means. The Ambassador stressed that the context of peace must be within ourselves, our families, and our communities, and must be extended into the great world community. According to Ambassador Chowdhury, to become a global citizen, we must see our oneness with humanity and realize we are a part of the whole world and that we cannot be restricted by ethnic, national, gender, or religious boundaries. “No love—no peace; know love—know peace.”

COSTA RICA HUMANITARIAN FOUNDATION LEARNING CLUSTER

To foster global citizenship and leadership skills, Professor Soledad Vidal led a group of SUA students to learn about indigenous populations in Costa Rica. During the first week, students studied the latest research regarding Costa Rica’s social, racial, political, and economic problems, specifically as they relate to Nicaraguan immigrants living in La Carpio (outside Coast Rica’s capital) and the Cabecar and Bribri indigenous communities who are fighting for land rights. Under the guidance of Costa Rican Humanitarian Foundation leader Gail Nystorm, students spent the second week working with community leaders, women, and indigenous people in Costa Rica, assisting them in eradicating inequality, attaining self-reliance, and overcoming isolation. Upon returning to SUA, the learning cluster students designed models for public policy change including proposals for inclusive economic growth and cultural appreciation.
CHANGEMAKERS: THE EMERGENCE OF THE PURPOSE ECONOMY

The agrarian economy lasted 8,000 years. The industrial economy dominated for 150 years. The information economy emerged 50 years ago. What’s next? Business thought-leaders predict that purpose is supplanting information as the core driver of the economy. This was the focus of Changemakers: The Emergence of the Purpose Economy, a Learning Cluster in which SUA students studied the emergence of social enterprise, conscious capitalism, and mission-driven businesses. Field trips involved interviewing leaders of Goodwill, Kiva, Give Something Back, and other organizations whose purposes are to transform society. Visiting professor Dr. Marc Spencer is CEO of Juma Ventures, a national youth development program that helps break the cycle of poverty by ensuring that young people complete a four-year college degree. In addition to demonstrating how the purpose economy is a core driver of the overall economy, Dr. Spencer helped students create personal career development plans. Students explored what “doing good while doing well” means and the implications for this new currency in the global economy. The final project involved launching a campus chapter of Net Impact, a club that provides resources to empower a new generation to create social and environmental change in the workplace and the world.
On November 18, 2013, Soka Changemakers hosted a community forum titled “Ending Violent Extremism” that featured an unusual line-up of peace activists consisting of former extremists and survivors of violent crimes. Over 200 community members attended the Soka Performing Arts Center event to hear how this dissimilar group of individuals landed on similar paths toward peace.

The panel included Kerry Noble, the former “propaganda leader” of a radical Christian terrorist organization who had once planned to bomb a church filled with gay and lesbian Christians; Linda Biehl, mother of Fulbright scholar Amy Biehl, who was murdered in South Africa by an angry mob of anti-apartheid activists; Maajid Nawaz, a former Islamist extremist who now runs an international counter-extremism think-tank; and former Los Angeles gang members Paul Carillo and Eric Gibson, who both run gang intervention programs.

The panel was moderated by Ross Frenett, the Executive Director of the Against Violent Extremism network at the Institute for Strategic Dialogue. This global network is a partnership between the Institute, Google Ideas, and the Gen Next Foundation. The Question and Answer portion of the evening was facilitated by Michael Davidson, CEO of Gen Next, an organization dedicated to transforming the most pressing issues facing future generations.

The event engaged all levels of the Soka community. The program opened with Sarah Randolph (Class of 2014) performing a cello piece, after which Hiromi Hashimoto (Class of 2016) made a statement about how the September 21, 2013 terrorist takeover of a mall in her hometown of Nairobi affected her life and community. Joshua Gaastra (Class of 2016) emceed. Professors Seiji Takaku, Shane Barter, and Philip Grant sent students from related classes to the event, many of whom participated in the lively question and answer session that led to ideas about how to take positive action toward peace. At the close of the program, Professor Takaku’s students handed out a pamphlet which he created for audience members about the power of apology and how we each can use that simple act to create peace.

Community partners included the Center for Citizen Peacebuilding, the Center for Living Peace, Hidden House Coffee, Laguna Beach Books, The Orange County Register, and Students for Global Peacebuilding.
Conscious Capitalism

In February, Soka Changemakers hosted the community forum “Conscious Capitalism: Elevating Humanity Through Conscious Business.” The event drew an audience of more than 350 community members to the Soka Performing Arts Center, ranging from students, faculty, and staff to prominent members of the local business community. Keynote speakers Doug Rauch, former President of Trader Joe’s and current CEO of Conscious Capitalism, and Jeff Klein, CEO of Working for Good, engaged in an open discussion outlining the major components of the growing Conscious Capitalism organization, an outgrowth of the best-selling book co-authored by Whole Foods founder, John Mackey.

This event garnered considerable interest and generated lively debate within the SUA community about whether principles of capitalism could align well with those of Soka, including a commitment to creating value for all stakeholders. According to the speakers, it is only when a company focuses on a purpose beyond profit and engages and energizes its employees, customers, and the community (including the global community) that it successfully creates value.

The conversation between Mr. Klein and Mr. Rauch generated many questions from the audience, especially conscientious Soka students who wanted to understand this business practice and how it might guide their own careers. Kailey Levitt (Class of 2016) started a stimulating conversation, noting that while companies in developed countries can afford to engage in conscientious business practices, a third of the world still remains in darkness where a considerable number of people live on one dollar a day. “How are we, as global citizens, supposed to tackle a topic of this magnitude?” she asked. The answer was simple yet empowering: “It begins with you – the consumer,” said Mr. Rauch. “Every purchase and decision we make has a direct and proportional impact on the producer and, by extension, on the workers and consumers of the country producing the good.”

Overall, the message was straightforward and powerful: We, as individuals, carry the authority to influence companies to alter their business practices. The world is shrinking, but our responsibility as human beings towards each other is growing exponentially.

Soka Changemakers is a campus program that connects passionate students to purposeful work by providing coaching, networking, and practical engagement with the people, ideas, and organizations that are changing the world for good. For more information email sokachangemakers@gmail.com or visit the website at www.sokachangemakers.org.
SUA freshman Prakash Bista won first place in the Orange County Social Entrepreneur Business Plan competition, with over 115 international entries, winning the $10,000 first prize, and an opportunity to pitch the idea to social venture investors. Prakash will use the prize money to build the second location for his Modern Model Resident School, which provides education to women and poor children in an isolated area of Nepal. The business model allows families to contribute to their children’s education by volunteering time to build and operate the school, while remaining costs are funded by the profits generated from onsite business ventures, such as a copy service and a goat farm.

“It was a great experience,” said Prakash, who participated in the competition as part of the Soka Changemakers program, which helps students connect to purposeful entrepreneurial and employment opportunities. “This competition has made our spirits higher and our beliefs stronger.”

Upon learning of the honor, Soka University Founder Daisaku Ikeda sent Prakash the following message: “My heartiest congratulations! Nothing brings me greater joy than the success of a student from SUA. Please accept my warmest regards.”

Prakash will share the fascinating and gritty personal journey that led him to build financially sustainable private schools in his home district of Kalikot, Nepal, at the upcoming 10th Annual SUA Peace Gala, October 11, 2014. Don’t miss it.
Four members of the Soka University Track & Field team participated in the 2014 National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) Outdoor Track & Field National Championships that took place in Gulf Shores, Alabama, May 22 – 24.

Rachel Daley (Class of 2014) tied for third place in the women’s high jump earning All-American honors with a 5 foot 6 inch jump. This was Rachel’s fourth All-American title.

Nick Spector (Class of 2014) finished the 5000 meter race with a time of 14:53 placing fifth in the race and earning him All-American recognition.

Aaron Perry (Class of 2014), the first SUA Lion to ever qualify for NAIA National Championships in the marathon, completed 19 of the 26.2 miles before an injury forced him to quit the race.

Drake Alvarez-Cates (Class of 2016) placed 22nd out of 28 runners in the preliminary qualifying race for the 200 meter run. Coach Gigi Freeman said, “Although it may not have been the time he was hoping for, he ran well and I am proud of his performance.”
Ways to Give

Soka University of America exists because many donors selflessly contribute in different ways. Some donors give unusually large sums of money, some give what they consider a small amount, and others donate artwork, IRAs, property, appreciated stock, etc. Combined, the contributions enable SUA to offer a world-class education to young people from around the world who work to fulfill our mission.

SUA students are very appreciative of the generous financial aid they receive. The prevailing attitude on campus is one of gratitude. Many of the students who meet the criteria to be admitted do not have the means to pay for tuition, room, and board. However, because of the generosity of our precious donors, including our alumni, we are able to offer qualified students substantial financial aid packages that make it possible for them to attend SUA.

Each year the number of alumni increases, and we are pleased to see many of our graduates already giving back to SUA. Some, like Cherie Ching (Class of 2007), make a sustaining donation by setting up a monthly credit card donation equal to the year in which she graduated. Others make individual donations that represent a portion of their annual pay or a bonus they have received. Some donate money they have inherited. Others make random donations when they can. These donations, both big and small, from the undergraduate alumni have grown such that they are now recognized as Founders Circle Platinum donors with cumulative donations of more than $250,000.

SUA honors Founders Circle donors at the Platinum level ($250,000 to $499,999), Diamond level ($500,000 to $999,999) and Pillar level ($1,000,000) by installing their name in the lobby of the Soka Performing Arts Center. Engraved in the beautiful glass wall is the name given to the SUA undergraduate alumni association by university founder Daisaku Ikeda, Sohokai.

In addition, some SUA employees donate to SUA through regular payroll deductions or individual gifts.

The students, faculty, and staff want to thank you for the support you provide to SUA students, who represent our vision of peace.
SUA alum Cherie Ching (Class of 2007) credits SUA with having provided her the training to be able to thrive in any situation. Cherie believes her academic and personal experiences at SUA have helped her to build a solid foundation of self-identity, pride, and confidence and have inspired her to become a value-creating citizen who contributes to a greater society in her workplace, school, and personal life.

Cherie says, “SUA will remain Home Sweet Home in my heart. I feel so much joy whenever I think back to my precious memories at SUA. I have so much appreciation for the founder, the gracious donors, the intelligent and compassionate professors and staff, and especially my classmates. Although I am currently a law student at Suffolk University Law School in Boston who cannot give a generous amount, I want to make the effort now so that I never forget the debt of gratitude I have for the school. I will continue to make gifts toward the advancement of SUA until I can truly call my gifts generous.”

“I want to make the effort now so that I never forget the debt of gratitude I have for the school.”

Cherie Ching (Class of 2007)

For additional information about making a gift to Soka University of America, please contact Linda Kennedy, Director of Philanthropy, at 949-480-4072.
Lion’s Den Grand Reopening

Formally known as the Gameroom to students, the Lion’s Den held its Grand Opening on Monday, May 5th with a ribbon cutting ceremony to celebrate the occasion. The renovated facility proudly hosts an upgraded Sokafé along with colorful furniture and inviting areas for students to gather.
SUA Alum
Nathan Gauer
(Class of 2005)
publishes his first book.

Songs to Make the Desert Bear Fruit

Nathan Gauer is a graduate of the first undergraduate class of Soka University of America as well as the Harvard Graduate School of Education. In 2012, he moved to Istanbul, Turkey to finish writing his first book, *Songs to Make the Desert Bear Fruit*, and to take the first step toward his dream of helping to establish Soka University of Turkey at the crossroads of Eastern and Western civilization. *Songs to Make the Desert Bear Fruit* is a memoir that addresses gun violence among American youth, the harsh and still largely invisible realities of contemporary Native American reservation life, and how encountering a great mentor in life can spark a fire in even the most cynical young person’s heart. Nathan currently resides with his wife in Asuncion, Paraguay, where he is working on a new piece of literature.
Alternative Spring Break 2014
Washington, D.C.
Most visitors to the nation’s capital see grand structures like the White House, national monuments, and museums, but they often overlook the more than 6,000 homeless living “invisibly” alongside the National Mall. This year, 12 Soka students and two staff members travelled to Washington, D.C. to participate in the annual Alternative Spring Break (ASB) community service program.

ASB offers SUA students an opportunity to perform short term volunteer service while learning about a variety of human issues such as literacy, poverty, racism, hunger, homelessness, and the environment prior to and during the spring break period. While in Washington, D.C., ASB students worked with local community organizations to assist in delivering services to those living below the poverty level, especially children, the elderly, and the homeless. One student shared that after “seeing all of those challenges, I am more and more determined to become a person who continuously strives for social justice.”

In October, 2013, the students began weekly training sessions to learn about poverty throughout the city and its underlying causes. These sessions covered the history of the city, social justice issues in the D.C. area, and information pertinent to homelessness and HIV/AIDS. In addition, the ASB team held multiple fundraisers throughout the year to raise money to fund their trip.

As our students learned – in both the weekly service-learning sessions and on the streets – Washington, D.C. is, in many respects, a microcosm of American urban decay and dysfunction. Students observed firsthand the real-world impact of poverty among all affected groups. Students volunteered at the Deanwood Rehabilitation and Nursing Center where the majority of residents are supported by government assistance. On another day, ASB students volunteered at Lorton Elementary, a Title I school. During the Mobile Science Labs Family Night, ASB volunteers worked with children to make STEM learning fun and, most importantly, accessible.

Other work included preparing mailers for Christ House as Soka students worked alongside the once homeless men and women who now receive residential and medical services from that facility, delivering meals to the homes of AIDS patients through the Food and Friends organization, and organizing clothing for distribution to those in need through Bread for the City.

Students gained a greater appreciation for diversity through their own experience when they expanded their education beyond the classroom to include real problems faced by members of communities students otherwise may have never met. The ASB trips serve to humanize entire populations of people who are otherwise only identified, if at all, by little more than their inclusion in one statistical profile or another. These 12 Soka students have returned from our nation’s capital with an acute sense of the humanity of those they encountered and served. Never again will these students see the sick, the poor, the elderly, or the marginalized in the same way. Perhaps the most important thing students learned from their personal encounters is that behind every statistic is an individual with a personal story.

Never again will these students see the sick, the poor, the elderly, or the marginalized in the same way.
The work of the United Nations was the focal point for twenty SUA students who spent their spring break in New York City. Professor of International Studies Lisa MacLeod and Career Services Manager Jennifer Cunningham accompanied the students as they learned more about the work of the United Nations. During the week, students attended briefings by UN employees and NGO representatives on a variety of issues including The World Food Program, terrorism, peacekeeping, disarmament, women, and sustainable development.

Ambassador Anwarul Chowdhury provided a special treat by inviting his former Learning Cluster students to lunch in the UN cafeteria, providing a rare glimpse into daily life inside UN headquarters. Students were also treated to a reception at the beautiful home of a local donor where they had the opportunity to mingle with local alumni.

The bi-annual United Nations Study Tour is funded by a generous grant from the Luis and Linda Nieves Family Foundation.
JUNE 2014

Landscapes from the Huntington Library – Paintings by Dennis McGonagle
Date: 06.19.2014 - 08.25.2014
Time: 9:00 am - 5:00 pm
Opening Reception: 06.05.2014
Time: 5:30 am - 8:00 pm
Location: Founders Hall Art Gallery 2nd Fl

Class Works 2014
Date: 05.19.2014 - 08.25.2014
Time: 9:00 am - 5:00 pm
Location: Founders Hall Art Gallery 1st Floor

Class Works 2014
Date: 05.19.2014 - 08.25.2014
Time: 9:00 am - 5:00 pm
Location: Founders Hall Art Gallery 1st Floor

JULY 2014

All-American Boys Chorus: You Raise Me Up!
Date: 07.12.2014
Time: 6:00 pm - 8:00 pm
Location: Soka Performing Arts Center

International Youth Media Summit (IYMS)
Time: 9:00 am - 9:00 pm
Location: Pauling Hall 216

iPalpiti Orchestra of International Laureates
Date: 07.20.2014
Time: 2:00 pm - 4:00 pm
Location: Soka Performing Arts Center

SEPTEMBER 2014

The Art of Mapping: Twenty-Five Years of Paintings by Spelman Evans Downer
Date: 09.11.2014 - 12.05.2014
Time: 9:00 am - 5:00 pm
Opening Reception: 09.18.2014
Time: 5:30 pm - 8:00 pm
Location: Founders Hall Art Gallery

Jazz Monsters Series
Kornel Fekete-Kovacs and the Modern Art Orchestra
Date: 09.21.2014
Time: 3:00 pm
Location: Soka Performing Arts Center

2014 Soka International Jazz Festival
Jackie Ryan
Date: 09.26.2014
Time: 8:00 pm

2014 Soka International Jazz Festival
Jon Mayer Quintet
Date: 09.27.2014
Time: 3:00 pm

2014 Soka International Jazz Festival
Roni Ben-Hur Trio
Date: 09.27.2014
Time: 8:00 pm

2014 Soka International Jazz Festival
Jaime Valle Latin Jazz
Date: 09.28.2014
Time: 3:00 pm

OCTOBER 2014

Lions Roar Student Campus Day for Juniors and Seniors
Date: 10.18.2014
Time: 9:00 am - 3:00 pm
Location: Soka Performing Arts Center

Italian Opera Festival:
All Puccini’s Heroines
Date: 10.26.2014
Time: 3:00 pm - 5:30 pm
Location: Soka Performing Arts Center
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 going to our website www.soka.edu/giving/u.s.-donor-address-update.aspx or send an email to Coleen Scherf-Ghara at cscherfgghara@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.

News Bites

On January 10, 2014, The Peking Acrobats performed at the Soka Performing Arts Center for the second time to an almost full house of 817 attendees.

Soka Instructional Garden

The Soka Instructional Garden, a student initiated project, provides SUA students with an opportunity to grow organic vegetables on campus. Once harvested, students enjoy what they have grown as a part of the food offering in the Soka Bistro.