

liberal arts for global citizens.

liberal
arts
for
global
citizens.

SOKA UNIVERSITY

SOKA
UNIVERSITY

aliso viejo, ca



Our mission

is to foster a steady stream
of global citizens committed
to living a contributive life.

leadership
change
humanism in action
awareness
solutions
peace
struggle
imagine alternatives
activism
adventure
interdependence >>1

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who we are. we turn ideals into action.

We are all about idealism. We don't back down from words like activism, humanism, and ethics. Soka University was founded on the Buddhist principles of peace, human rights, and respect for life. You can't get much more idealistic than that. At Soka, we are all about making our ideals manifest, turning them into action. Students work in teams to propose, research, and model constructive approaches to local, regional, and global issues.

community

comunidad

kazoku

she qui

sangha

communauté, gemeinschaft

comunità

소년원

công chúng, xã hội

wahi nōho like
o ka pō'e



“AS THE WORLD CONTINUES TO GROW SMALLER, OUR ABILITY
TO UNDERSTAND PEOPLE OF OTHER CULTURES BECOMES
MORE AND MORE CRUCIAL.”

Daisaku Ikeda, Founder



“AT OTHER COLLEGES I VISITED, EVERYONE WAS ON THEIR OWN
PATH AND PURSUING SEPARATE DIRECTIONS, BUT HERE I WAS
IMMEDIATELY ACCEPTED INTO A COMMUNITY.”

Noriko Noma, Class of 2008



You can't be a student at Soka without absorbing some of our “founding” spirit. Students just can't seem to help founding things – whether it's a dance club or a major education conference. Our pioneering students – all 400 of them – take to heart our mission of living contributive lives.

Our school was conceived by Buddhist thinker, author and educator, Daisaku Ikeda, president of Soka Gakkai International, one of the world's largest lay Buddhist organizations, working for education, cultural exchange, and world peace in 190 countries. Dr. Ikeda believes that education is an essential vehicle for learning to create value and harmony in society.

africa
asia
australia
europe
north america
south america
argentina
austria
bosnia-herzegovina
cambodia
canada
china
denmark
fiji
france
germany
ghana
great britain
hungary
india
japan
kazakistan
korea
new zealand
mexico
paraguay
the philippines
peru
portugal
singapore
south africa
spain
switzerland
thailand
turkey
venezuela
zambia

We're a new college for a new millennium, and we have a new worldview. With an international student body that hails from more than 30 countries and six continents, we thrive on diversity and cultivate many points of view. Soka intends to come of age on the creative edge of this new era, to address the new issues, to help craft new solutions to the global challenges ahead.





meanings of soka.

- >> In Trinidad, soka is a fusion of calypso and Indian music.
- >> In Albania, Soka is a man's name.
- >> If you rearrange the letters, soka spells oaks, trees of wisdom, and soak, one of the ways we learn.
- >> But at Soka University, soka means creating value.

how we learn.

explore. examine. engage.

liberal
arts
for
global
citizens.

We value the liberal arts. Whatever field you enter, you'll need the creative capacities of reading meaningfully, and thinking and writing clearly, that a liberal arts education provides. At Soka, we help students create an intellectual identity that they will continue to refine throughout their lives. Our curriculum integrates across disciplines and cultures. Eastern and Western perspectives are both taught, with a special emphasis on Pacific Basin languages (Spanish, Chinese, or Japanese) and culture.

As part of our goal to create global citizens, we believe that our students need to know at least one foreign language as an introduction into another culture, its values, and its distinct ways of thinking. Unique to Soka, Study Abroad is a requirement, not an option, motivating students in the direction of a global worldview and fluency in another language. Many Soka students return from their study abroad experiences with plans to work overseas after graduation.

**“I plan to
go back to China
after I graduate and
work in social services.”**

{ Wo bi ye yi hou da suan
hui dao Zhong Guo cong
shi she huifu wu gong zuo. }

**“It became
impossible for me
to categorize myself
as belonging to one
culture or the other.”**

{ Tayo na bunka wo taikenshi
hitotsu no bunka dakeni osamaru koto
ga dekinaku narimashita. }

**“I came back
much more confident
in who I am.”**

{ Regrese mas confidenté de lo que era. }

“I’ve walked in a
waterfall,

I’ve hiked in the Amazon jungles. Right now I’m sitting in a store called Papayanet, where all the gringos in Quito go to check their e-mails. Poverty exists everywhere. It’s common to see children in the streets late at night doing dangerous stunts like fire-blowing, just to raise money. I knew Ecuador was a country of contradictions before I came, yet knowing and seeing are two different things.”

— Ruby Nagashima, Class of 2006





“In China, I am
stared at.”

I have a positive attitude about this and I often wink or wave. But sometimes I just let people stare and hope that their curiosity is quenched. Sometimes it gets tiresome. Yet, I have not put away my three-inch hoop earrings. I wear bright colors, and when I feel like it, I sport Nanjing's biggest afro.”

— WuLa Dawson, Class of 2005

**we take an
interdisciplinary
approach to
learning.**

Soka engenders breadth and depth in the liberal arts through our interdisciplinary and interactive approach to learning. Students explore our curriculum in a variety of ways – in small, seminar-style classrooms, as part of student-faculty research teams conducting field study, during local and overseas internships, and in international study.





Core Curriculum is a two-course sequence that looks at the enduring questions of humanity by studying the great works of the human mind.

A Capstone Project (senior thesis) culminates each student's course of study.

some capstones:

>> **expression of female resistance to social gender roles in japan**

>> **visions of bob: art and the culture industry**

>> **how teenagers come to define what is "cool"**

>> **the influence of black social movements in the constitutions and national politics of argentina, brazil, and colombia**

>> **politics of bilingual education in the united states**

>> **moby dick and the lotus sutra: good and evil reconsidered**

“CORE 1 CLASS CONVERSATIONS DON'T EVER REALLY COME TO A CLOSE; THEY JUST CONTINUE THROUGH A STUDENT'S TIME HERE. I'M STILL HAVING A FASCINATING, ONGOING DIALOGUE ABOUT DESCARTES WITH A STUDENT WHO TOOK MY CLASS 2-1/2 YEARS AGO.”

John Kehlen, Lecturer of Asian Literature

“I'M LOOKING AT BOB DYLAN THROUGH THE EYES OF CULTURAL CRITICS. I'M INTERESTED IN DYLAN BECAUSE HE SAID WHAT HADN'T BEEN SAID BEFORE.”

Michael O'Malley, Class of 2005

Learning Clusters are research seminars that pair small teams of students with faculty to conduct interdisciplinary study.



“MY STUDENTS WERE INTERESTED IN STUDYING CHILD LABOR. WE DID A LOT OF READING AND RESEARCH, INCLUDING ONE FIELD TRIP TO THE BORDER TO INTERVIEW A WOMAN WHO WORKS TO PREVENT CHILD SEX TRAFFICKING. ULTIMATELY, THE STUDENTS DEVELOPED A CURRICULUM THAT THEY TAUGHT IN A LOCAL MIDDLE SCHOOL.”

Sarah Martinez, Visiting Assistant Professor of Latin American Studies

half of our students are involved in volunteer service or off-campus internships.

>> a sampling...

>> developing a food distribution system in zambia

>> working with local at-risk youth using art therapy

>> writing grants for a boys and girls club

Students pursue

a B.A. in Liberal Arts,
with a concentration in Humanities,
International Studies, or Social
& Behavioral Sciences.

humanities concentration

Students examine the breadth and depth of the human search for meaning, value, and creativity through the disciplines of art history, history, humanities, literature, music, philosophy, studio arts, and religious studies. Sample courses: Modern China in Literature and Film, The Intellectual in History, Eastern and Western Philosophy: Questions of Knowledge and Reality.

international studies concentration

Students learn to integrate complex and diverse historical experiences by exploring regional, national, and global studies. Sample courses:

Introduction to Human Rights Studies, The Third World and the West, Economic Development in Pacific Asia.

social & behavioral sciences concentration

Students consider cultural diversity, social problems and human behavior by investigating perspectives from anthropology, economics, linguistics, political science, psychology, and sociology. Sample courses: Micro-economics, United Nations and World Politics, Social Movement and Social Change, Cross-Cultural Psychology.



**a soka
education is
student-centered.**

A Soka education encourages each student to find creative pathways for putting his or her knowledge to real-life use, rather than just speeding down the well-worn highway toward an inevitable career. Our faculty offers a framework within which the students take the lead, drive the discussions, and create projects.

Types of student-initiated, academically related clubs and events:

- >> Soka Education Conference
- >> Model United Nations
- >> Activist Collective
- >> Poetry Festival
- >> Interfaith Dialogue Club

A Soka education
offers a level of interdisciplinary breadth
at the beginning stages, then allows students to specialize
on the edges of a discipline, where it meets
other disciplines and where the most exciting thinking
and learning happens.



our faculty

9:1 =

**our student:
faculty ratio**

**our faculty comes
to us from leading
colleges and
universities,
such as:**

**colby
columbia
cornell
dartmouth
duke
george washington
harvard
johns hopkins
swarthmore
texas a&m
uc berkeley
ucla
university of
mysore (india)
yale**

A diverse and multi-talented group,

one thing our 66 faculty members share in common is a passion for teaching. For them, teaching is an art – creative, interdisciplinary, alive in each moment . . . and every bit as important as the book they are writing or the research project they are currently undertaking. As one professor put it: we strive to open the door, and then get out of the way.





“I find my students intelligent, inquisitive, and creative. Not long ago, as I entered the studio, I noticed that my students had written messages in Japanese on the whiteboard. I speak seven languages, but Japanese isn't one of them. The students were more than eager to translate every message, which they reported were complimentary. I wrote a sentence in Yiddish on the board, *S'vet ahykh helfn vee ah tohytn bahnykes* (It won't help you none.). Some students then started to teach me phrases in Japanese, and I taught them the same in Yiddish. It was a wonderful experience.”

— **Arie Galles, Professor of Painting/Director of Creative Arts**

“Last Spring I taught a challenging seminar, Philosophy and Literature. We read the *Odyssey*, the *Oedipus plays*, *Dante's Inferno*, *Antony and Cleopatra* along with Kafka's short stories, and texts by Nietzsche, Aristotle, Wittgenstein, Heidegger, Arendt, and Sartre. The central moment of discussion took place outside on a bright April morning. The student in charge of initiating our discussion of Heidegger's discourse on “thinking” brought her near-professional talent as a photographer to bear on our difficult reading, showing us how to translate philosophical abstractions into clear ideas and sharp images. In forty-plus years of teaching, I've never seen an undergraduate student plunge her own and fellow students' minds so deep within such a mind-boggling poetic argument.”

— **Jim Merod, Professor of American Literature**