

People of Culture and Wisdom  
*Building an Oasis of Hope, Trust and Friendship in Society*  
SGI-USA Culture Department

Selected Encouragement to the Culture Department  
from SGI President Daisaku Ikeda



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## Preface

Josei Toda, second president of the Soka Gakkai, established the Culture Department in 1954 with the realization that the kosen rufu movement was more than simply expanding the membership of the Soka Gakkai. President Toda's grand view was much larger; individuals who have experienced their own self-revolution will enable a fundamental change in all sectors of society's culture – legal, educational, economic, medical, and philosophical. In all of these fields, Soka Gakkai members, having revolutionized their lives, will infuse fresh energy into the life of contemporary society and display their abilities as Bodhisattvas of the Earth, creating great waves of change. In President Toda's far-reaching vision, it was natural then that this religious movement should find its way into all of society's divergent spheres. Clearly, the Culture Department members have a unique role in fulfilling this purpose.

For over 50 years, Daisaku Ikeda, President Toda's disciple, has promoted humanism and peace throughout the world, based on his mentor's vision to create a humanistic culture in society. When he established the SGI-USA Culture Department in 1990, he did so with the desire to produce capable people who, with faith and intellect, would be essential in creating a humanistic culture in America.

Culture Department members today are demonstrating the validity of Nichiren Buddhism in society, a point President Ikeda has consistently emphasized. The Culture Department members' patient and sincere commitment to this goal has resulted in showing actual proof through their important contributions within their professions. President Ikeda has referred to Culture Department members as great generals of kosen-rufu, who are engaged "in our struggle for the peace and happiness of all humanity." Furthermore, he reminds us of our mission as Bodhisattvas of the Earth, who are dedicated to promoting our movement of peace, culture and education based upon Buddhism while assuming vital responsibility in our respective realms of society.

In recognition of the 19th anniversary of President Ikeda establishing the SGI-USA Culture Department, the Culture Department leaders have compiled President Ikeda's words of encouragement with the hope that this collection will provide inspiration to those who are gaining trust and respect in their community, professional spheres, and society as a whole. While we have attempted to provide as much encouragement as could be found, we recognize that this is a living document and that additional encouragement will be found. For this reason, we will rely primarily on various electronic means for sharing this booklet and future updates of President Ikeda's encouragement to the Culture Department members.

We hope that you will find this booklet a vital source of inspiration as you continue to demonstrate the greatness of Nichiren Buddhism in your respective professions. Let us manifest our full capabilities in our respective fields "with the effectiveness of more than one thousand other individuals, carrying out successful activities in your individual battlefields of kosen-rufu as a 'practice-first general of wisdom.'"

SGI-USA Culture Department leaders

February 17, 2009

## Origins of the Culture Department

The Human Revolution, *Book Two, Volume 9, "New Growth," pp. 1212-1217. [The events described were set in 1954]*

[p. 1212] The Otaru Debate had ended in glorious victory for the Soka Gakkai – one rightfully deserved. But to Josei Toda the debate had merely been incidental.

It was surprising the affair should have grown to such enormous proportions on a remote northern island, and in a city where the organization's strength was still negligible. In those days, Soka Gakkai members were confronting other schools in many parts of the country. Reports of clashes frequently reached the Headquarters; they had become almost commonplace. Yet the head-on collision in Otaru was different. It alone burst into such a brilliant incident in the history of the Soka Gakkai. This was something Toda had not expected.

He promptly responded to the incident, worked out appropriate countermeasures and made deliberate preparations. The result was a perfect victory. Yet now that the Otaru debate was over, he reacted less than if a typhoon had just passed through. Since the autumn of the previous year, an idea had taken possession of his thinking. The thought spread its roots, and had now begun to bud. It was a conception of a new phase of activity. Should he put the plan into action now or await some more propitious time? He found himself forced to make a decision.

The time had come, he told himself.

Yet, on second thought, it still seemed a bit premature. The membership stood at only a little more than one hundred eighty thousand households. He should not overreach himself. Toda sank into deep meditation.

He asked Koichi Harayama, the leader to the Statistics Department, to prepare an accurate map showing the distribution of Soka Gakkai members throughout Japan. The density was greatest in Tokyo and the surrounding Kanto district. Sendai and Akita in the Tohoku (northeast) district, Hakodate in Hokkaido, Sakai in the Kansai (western) district and Yame in the Kyushu were also heavily represented.

Then he had the statistics staff obtain detailed data on the returns of the previous nationwide local elections and collate them with the distribution map. After the collation, rough as it was, the map came to Toda with dozens of circles marked on it. Each circle indicated an area in which some suitable Soka Gakkai member, should he run for local elections and be supported by the members living in that community, might possibly be elected. Many regions had become possibilities without anyone noticing it. The situation demanded Toda's decision.

Kosen-rufu is not simply a campaign for expanding the membership of the Soka Gakkai.

Members embrace the Gohonzon and devote themselves to the practice of faith. It is only fitting that first of all, as human beings, they should change their own lives. Individuals who have changed their own lives will also improve their destiny and cause a reform in their families. A group of such individuals will naturally cause a fundamental change in the local community. Not only in the local community; they will spread out to all sectors of society--- political, economic and industrial, as well as educational, culture, scientific and philosophical. In all of these fields, Soka Gakkai members, having revolutionized their lives, will display their abilities in their activities, creating great waves of change. These waves will gradually form a new tide surging toward the future, eventually leading to a change in the destiny of all humankind. This, Toda decided, should be the true activity of kosen-rufu based on the Mystic Law.

He often spoke to the leaders about this, but they only listened politely, as if it were just a dream. Now, less than four years after becoming president and launching full-scale activities for kosen-rufu, he realized that the young buds he had awaited were beginning to open.

On November 22, 1954, Toda announced the establishment of a Culture Department and appointed Minoru Suzumoto as its leader and only member. Although it was so far a one-man department, Toda had great expectations for it. He studied various data and deliberated on ways to make the new division work effectively. The new buds had sprouted almost spontaneously, but if no one cared for them, they could only wither and die. Toda resolved to bring them up under his care.

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[p.1215] “Brace yourself. The time will certainly come when the success or failure of the Culture Department will determine the victory or defeat of the movement for kosen-rufu. Yours is truly an important task. A new growth has now begun. The public is still completely unaware of it. Even the other leaders of the Soka Gakkai will not easily understand the true significance of this step.”

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[p. 1216] “Among those who practice Nichiren Buddhism, there must be some whose quality demands that they extend their activities to various fields of society. Now the time has come. No matter where you are or what the age, never forget that you are members of the Culture Department, in whose bosom resides the Mystic Law. I hope that you will live among the people, fight for the people and die among the people. Everyone in our society longs for the appearance of true statesmen who have no desire for fame and profit. I trust you; you are the very people capable of fulfilling their wishes. Fight your battle splendidly. I will not begrudge you anything. Whatever fate may await you, advance throughout your lives with the pride that you are members of the Culture Department of the Soka Gakkai. No matter what, never betray our expectations!”

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[p. 1217] Kosen-rufu is a movement based on religious revolution that aims to benefit the whole of humanity from this moment on into the eternal future. It is Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism that must infuse fresh energy into the life of contemporary society. It was natural that this religious movement should find its way into all of society's divergent spheres. Toda often spoke of this far-reaching vision at meetings of the Suiko-kai and in conversations with top leaders. But it was such an extraordinarily revolutionary plan that few could consider it a real possibility. They were merely awed by the grandeur of it all, like some utopian dream.

In just more than two decades since that time, the movement for kosen-rufu would take on a global aspect. Now, in retrospect, we realize that the Culture Department's initiation was truly an epoch-making step in the history of humankind. To say the least, it was a project unimagined in the seven hundred-year history of Nichiren Buddhism.

Because the Soka Gakkai members devoted themselves to turning Buddhist principles into reality within all strata of people, all walks of life and all age groups, it was, in a word, society itself. The Culture Department was, therefore, never intended to keep to the limited confines of the political realm. Its purpose was far greater--to extend into every field of society.

*The New Human Revolution, Volume 4, Chapter Two "Triumph," pp. 119-160. [The events described were set in 1961]*

[pp 119] Announced next was an expansion and strengthening of the Soka Gakkai's organizational structure. The Culture Department would be upgraded to a Culture Bureau incorporating departments of politics, economics, education and journalism, and charged with the mission of working for the creation of a new cultural tradition.

If Buddhism cultivates the soil of human life, then it follows that it will also support the flowering of humanistic culture. The value of religion is revealed in its ability to generate a renaissance of culture. The establishment of the Culture Bureau heralded the start of the Gakkai's broad cultural movement.

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[pp 157-160] Shin'ichi was always strict in his guidance to top leaders. This was because the entire responsibility for the Soka Gakkai rested on their shoulders.

Next on the agenda for discussion were the activities of the Culture Bureau, which had been inaugurated at the May 3 general meeting. In addition to his other responsibilities, youth division chief and director Eisuke Akizuki had been appointed to head the writers department within the Culture Bureau.

Shin'ichi turned to him and asked, "How is the activity plan for the writers department coming along?"

“Yes, we’re still looking into that,” Akizuki replied, looking apologetic.

Shin’ichi shot back in a stern tone: “That’s too slow. Our purpose in forming the writers department is clear, so you should already be coming up with concrete plans and discussing things with me if there’s a problem. Just standing by until I give you instructions is irresponsible. If youth are passive, they will lose in their struggles in society. Being reprimanded for something when you’ve actively done your best is no disgrace, but being reprimanded when you haven’t done anything out of fear of failing is shameful.”

“I’m sorry,” Akizuki replied. “What happened was that our executive staff was split on the direction the writers department should take. As a result, we couldn’t reach a consensus on an activity plan. One view is that the department should comprise authors and screenwriters writers who are presently active in their fields, to provide them an opportunity to develop their faith. Another view is that the department should aim broadly to educate many young people as writers and journalists for the future. I was hoping to get your opinion as to which focus the writers department should take.”

“Both are necessary,” Shin’ichi said. “We have to raise great authors who possess a solid grounding in the Daishonin’s Buddhism. At the same time, it is important to develop each member of the youth division to be an accomplished writer and speaker. From now on, it will be increasingly important for leaders to have good writing and speaking skills. If those who become top youth division leaders can neither write a speech nor an article, nor speak persuasively, they cannot hope to lead society.

“In that respect, too, youth division leaders should not simply entrust such activities to a select group of specially trained individuals; rather, they should ensure that all members hone their general abilities as speakers and writers. In light of that, why don’t you adopt a dual structure: one section comprising youth division leaders and another consisting of professional writers?”

Shin’ichi’s thinking was very flexible in this regard. In an instant, Akizuki’s worries about the direction of the new the department were resolved.”

“Shin’ichi next asked about the education department, which was headed by the women’s division chief and director, Katsu Kiyohara.

Kiyohara outlined the progress of preparation to set up the department, and said:

“We’ve asked each local organization to provide us with the names and addresses of any members in the teaching profession. Once we have finished compiling our list – which shouldn’t take long – we will contact those individuals. At this stage, we’re hoping to hold the department’s first meeting in June, the month of President Makiguchi’s birth.”

“That’s a good idea,” Shin’ichi responded. “Let’s hold it at the Gakkai Headquarters. President Makiguchi began his struggles to save people from misery by advocating education reform. And he found the philosophy that would provide the underpinnings for his educational theories in Nichiren

Daishonin's Buddhism. At the most fundamental level, Buddhism is the highest form of humanistic education. I think that education also will be my final undertaking.

“Japan is certainly becoming affluent. But delinquency and other problems involving young people are becoming increasingly severe. This is because the nation, the schools and teachers lack a clear philosophy of how to go about educating human beings. I fear for Japan's future and for the twenty-first century if things continue as they are.

“Providing good facilities and a proper environment is certainly important to education. But teachers themselves are the most crucial aspect of a child's educational environment. The education department of the Soka Gakkai must develop those teachers.

## **Message to the SGI-USA Culture Department Leaders**

*January 30, 1999*

In 1990, during the opening of a new era for American kosen-rufu, I formed the SGI-USA Culture Department. This was because I firmly believed that producing promising capable people equipped with faith and intellect would be vital for the development of America.

As we approach the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, I would like each of you to deeply confirm this fundamental reason for the department's formation by fostering a steady stream of capable people, in your land of freedom, who are brimming with hope.

I ask each of you, who are taking leadership for the next generation, to study Buddhism more deeply and seriously than ever before. Also, side by side with the members, please broaden the circle of dialogue filled with sincere encouragement and assiduously polish your compassion and wisdom.

I am look forward to meeting all of you, capable people of shining intellect, in the United States soon.

## President Ikeda's Messages to Culture Department Conference Participants at the Florida Nature and Culture Center

August 8, 2008

To the members of the SGI-USA Culture Department, each of whom is equivalent to a thousand, advancing joyfully and bravely to promote American *kosen-rufu*, we extend our sincere congratulations on holding your conference. We are eagerly watching over your sessions, sending our daimoku from Japan to the Florida Nature and Culture Center.

You are the ambassadors of Soka. You are Bodhisattvas of the Earth of the SGI. Your existence is as significant as Buddhist figures such as Bodhisattva Medicine King, Bodhisattva Universal Worthy and Bodhisattva Wonderful Sound. You are establishing golden towers of victory within society. We truly admire your courageous, sincere and patient commitment to showing actual proof through your valuable contributions within your respective fields of endeavor. Thank you very much. We deeply appreciate all your painstaking efforts.

To Sairen-bo, who became his disciple on Sado Island, Nichiren Daishonin states, "Now, no matter what, strive in faith and be known as a votary of the Lotus Sutra, and remain my disciples for the rest of your life. If you are of the same mind as Nichiren, you must be a Bodhisattva of the Earth" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 385). In this passage, Nichiren Daishonin teaches us that we should devote our lives to the propagation of Buddhism together with our mentor with the great conviction that we are "of the same mind" as the Daishonin and that we are, in truth, the Bodhisattvas of the Earth.

President Toda taught that: "Faith generates diamond-like courage" "Live your life powerfully" "Let's live out our lives, winning together in one challenge after another." Let us advance joyfully, scoring victory after victory with diamond-like, invincible courage, exactly as President Toda taught us.

Each of you is a great general of *kosen-rufu*. Please continue to engage yourselves in our struggle for the peace and happiness of all humanity, forging ahead dauntlessly together with us throughout your lives. The important thing is that you yourselves take a step forward, no matter what obstacles may arise. With each step, you are benefiting yourselves, your families, your friends, and the SGI-USA. Please adorn your precious lives with victory, cheering, "Hurrah for our victorious battle! Hurrah for the SGI!"

When you return home, please convey our heartfelt regards to our fellow members in your respective communities! Please stay in high spirits and good health as you take leadership for *kosen-rufu*!

July 20, 2007

To the members of the SGI-USA Culture Department who are advancing joyfully and courageously toward a new hope-filled and victorious era of American *kosen-rufu*!

Many congratulations on holding your annual conference! I understand that this is your first gathering under the new organization of the Culture Department that now consists of the Academic, Education, Healing Arts and Legal Divisions. I truly admire your efforts.

I also praise your untiring endeavors in showing splendid actual proof as irreplaceable individuals in your respective fields and thereby gaining trust and respect from your communities and American society as a whole.

The Mystic Law is the means to unleash the infinite potential that is inherent in your lives. Nichiren Daishonin states, “[When Nichiren and his followers recite Nam-myoho-renge-kyo], they are burning the firewood of earthly desires, summoning up the wisdom fire of bodhi or enlightenment” (*The Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings*, p. 11). Because the Mystic Law functions as the ultimate source of life force, it enables you to transform your earthly desires into the source of wisdom, just as fire produces light when wood is burned.

Use your sufferings as a precious stepping stone for your further growth and development. This is the drama of victoriously changing negative situations into positive ones. When you challenge yourselves based on your strong prayers, you are achieving an internal revolution consistent with the principle of “earthly desires are enlightenment.” Once your faith—the axis of your life—is solid and strong, your lives will naturally be directed in a better and happier direction. The more difficult your circumstances and the deeper your sufferings, the greater joy and fulfillment you can experience.

Nichiren Daishonin writes, “Single-mindedly chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo and urge others to do the same; that will remain as the only memory of your present life in this human world” (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 64).

I hope that, together with me, you will encounter as many people as possible, engage in warmhearted dialogue with them, and create heart-to-heart bonds with them, leading to a greater expansion of the propagation of Buddhism.

I am earnestly praying that you all will become true victors in life and glorious winners in society.

Cheers to my respected and cherished Culture Department of the SGI-USA!

Cheers to all of you, comrades of my beloved SGI-USA!

July 7, 2006

To the members of the SGI-USA Culture Department whom I respect and cherish with all my heart! My sincere congratulations on the holding of your bright summer program at the Florida Nature and Culture Center. There is no doubt that the Buddhas and bodhisattvas of the ten directions and all heavenly gods and benevolent deities are praising to the utmost your pure seeking spirit during this conference that is being held in the heat of summer.

I understand that yours is a gathering of those who are devoted day and night in the arenas of medical science, jurisprudence, academic studies, and education. You are each a Bodhisattva of the Earth with a vital mission to fulfill, as you are wholeheartedly dedicated to promoting our movement of peace, culture and education based upon Buddhism while assuming vital responsibility in your respective realms of society. The sutra says that the benefit, fortune and virtue that you will accumulate will be immeasurably vast.

Nichiren Daishonin states, "It is due to the authority and supernatural power of Bodhisattva Universal Worthy that this Lotus Sutra is propagated throughout Jambudvīpa" (The Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings, p. 190). Significant is the mission that you carry on using your virtues of wisdom and courage. It is my earnest hope that you, the members of the Culture Department of the SGI-USA, will manifest your unparalleled potential in your respective fields of endeavor with the effectiveness of more than one thousand other individuals, carrying out successful activities in your individual battlefields of kosen-rufu as a "practice-first general of wisdom."

From the bottom of my heart, I am praying for your happiness, good health, and the prosperity of your family. I am sending daimoku to you in hopes that your conference will be a most meaningful and enjoyable one. Cheers to the SGI-USA Culture Department!

July 15, 2005

To the members of the Culture Department of SGI-USA, whom I deeply respect and many of whom I dearly remember, my sincerest congratulations upon the holding of your cheerful conference at the Florida Nature and Culture Center! I truly thank you for gathering from various parts of the United States despite your busy schedules. There is absolutely no doubt that your noble seeking spirit is being praised to the utmost by all the Buddhas and bodhisattvas of the ten directions and all heavenly gods and benevolent deities.

I understand that the participants of this conference are those who are devoted day and night on the front lines in the medical, legal, academic and educational realms. You assume important responsibilities and roles in society while serving as pivotal promoters of SGI's movement of peace,

culture and education. Indeed, you are all Bodhisattvas of the Earth with a glorious vital mission, who share profound bonds from the infinite past.

Nichiren Daishonin teaches, “The voice carries out the work of the Buddha” (*The Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings*, p. 4). He also writes, “The Buddha guides the people to enlightenment through the power of written words. . . . How could the Buddha’s undertaking be achieved without the use of written words?” (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 153).

At the end of our dialogue, Dr. Arnold Toynbee stated, “There is no other way than dialogue to open the path of humanity. You are still young. I hope you will continue to carry out dialogues with the intelligentsia of the world.” For more than thirty-two years since that time, I have engaged in dialogues with world leaders and scholars more than 1600 times in response to his encouragement to me. Total commitment to dialogue is the way to change the current chaos of the world and bring about peace and humanism. I hope that you as experts in dialogue will build a heart-to-heart solidarity among world citizens. Toward this noble end, I hope, you will advance victoriously while creating a beautiful unity first in your organization and your communities based upon the friendship of “many in body but one in mind.”

I am earnestly praying for your good health and happiness every day. Please convey my best regards to your family members and friends. I am sending daimoku to you in hopes that your conference will become a gathering of the most meaningful, enjoyable and memorable dialogue.

July 23, 2004

To the SGI-USA Culture Department members, whom I deeply love and respect! My heartfelt congratulations on the holding of your conference, overflowing with the spirit of faith!

I have the deepest appreciation for your constant, earnest devotion to the happiness of your friends and the advancement of American kosen-rufu. Thank you very much for all your extraordinary efforts!

There is absolutely no doubt that all the noble struggles you undertake for the sake of kosen-rufu will adorn your lives with victory. Your struggles will enable you to shine with boundless, immeasurable good fortune, which will firmly protect your families, including your descendants.

My favorite philosopher of the American Renaissance, Henry David Thoreau asserted: “When you plant, or bury, a hero in his field, a crop of heroes is sure to spring up.” Indeed, you are steadily sowing the strongest seed of Buddhahood in your own lives as well as others’, each and every day.

The Daishonin states: “How fortunate, how joyous, to think that with this unworthy body I have received in my heart the seeds of Buddhahood!” (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p.578). In other words, there is no life more fulfilling and joyous than a life exerting ourselves in this practice.

You may encounter various trials and hardships in the long journey of life. However, no matter what happens, Buddhist practice enables us to change any obstacle into nourishment for our lives. It enables the grand eternal tree of happiness -- namely the four virtues of “eternity, joy, true self and purity” -- to grow firmly in our lives.

I ask the SGI-USA Culture Department members to advance with this great conviction and boldly lead a new era of American kosen-rufu in your communities and workplaces. As wise and courageous individuals of the Mystic Law, please exert yourselves for the people’s happiness, peace and security.

Please become first-class individuals in your respective fields and great leaders who can send unlimited courage and hope to the people.

I am sending my heartfelt prayers for your good health and fortune, and the continued prosperity of your families.

Be Heroes of American Kosen-rufu!

Be Victorious Champions of Life!

Cheers to the SGI-USA Culture Department!

November 13, 2003

My heartfelt congratulations to the Culture Department of SGI-USA on your splendid gathering at FNCC during the on the month of Soka Gakkai’s founding.

Since the inception of the Soka Gakkai, 73 years have passed. The magnificent sun of Nichiren Buddhism is now illuminating all humanity, bringing people’s joy, friendship and hope to full bloom in 186 countries and territories. Because of your noble efforts to fulfill your magnificent mission, the Soka Gakkai International has now developed into solidarity of peace, culture and education spanning the globe.

Numerous universities and academic institutions around the world, as well as local communities, are offering their praise, and recognition, their voices of thanks and appreciation, for the contributions made by the SGI.

All of this is due to your continuous efforts to contribute to your local communities with utmost sincerity and win great trust and friendship as excellent citizens. I am certain that Nichiren Daishonin-as well as all the Buddhas and bodhisattvas throughout the universe-would greatly rejoice at the sight of your respect worthy and dedicated work.

The Daishonin writes, “One who recites even one word or phrase of the Lotus Sutra and who speaks about it to another person is the emissary of Shakyamuni Buddha, lord of the teachings” (The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin, p. 331). A life committed to kosen-rufu is a life of supreme nobility and honor. In light of the Daishonin's writings and the Lotus Sutra, the benefit derived from such a way of life

is boundless and unlimited, timeless and indestructible. Those who accumulate profound “unseen virtue” will definitely enjoy lofty “visible reward” (WND, 907)

The Daishonin encouraged one of his most trusted disciples: “I entrust you with the propagation of Buddhism in your province. It stated that “the seeds of Buddhahood sprout as a result of conditions, and for this reason they preach the single vehicle.” (WND, 117). The wide spread of Buddhism begins from where we are now, with our lively and energetic efforts to talk about the greatness of Buddhism and help those around us develop their connections with Buddhism.

The great proof of Buddhism will be demonstrated through our swift initiatives and exemplary behavior for the sake of our communities, societies, and nations. All of you are living a life of profound mission. I ask that each of you please further expand the circle of hope and trust in your respective community and country, in your home and place of work, through cheerful and friendly dialogue.

“Let’s win today!” Let’s sow our victory in faith and in our daily life!” Let’s spread peace and happiness!” With those as your mottos, please lead such a glorious life of dignity that you can proudly proclaim, “I have won in my life!”

I ask our SGI-USA family to advance with good cheer and friendship. Above all, I ask you to always base yourselves on the SGI guidelines for the 21<sup>st</sup> century: by protecting in this harmonious community of believers that are carrying out the Buddha’s will and decree; by forever advancing in the unity of “many in body, one in mind”, and by walking side by side in beautiful harmony” as inseparable as fish and the water in which they swim.”

Day in and day out, I am earnestly praying for your excellent health and supreme happiness. Please convey my sincerest regards to your families and to your friends in your communities. Please take care!

### July 2003

To all the members of the Academic and Educators Divisions: My sincere congratulations on your conference! I deeply appreciate your day-and-night dedication to the sacred work of education.

President Makiguchi once said, “All schools and teachers exist for students.” A good teacher is the most important educational element for students. The basis of every undertaking is to generate and nurture people of great character. A direct, life-to-life association is essential to revitalize a sense of humanity in people. I hope that each of you, challenging yourself to revolutionize your life-condition, pray first for the happiness and growth of children and young people.

A truly great person is someone who makes everybody great and can respect everyone. The true spirit of Buddhism pulsates in your behavior as a human being. The life of Buddhism shines in the splendor of your character. It is my hope that you, with your strong, confident prayers, fully develop your

life force and overcome your small ego, fostering many precious capable leaders who will be instrumental in building peace for America and the world.

Nichiren Daishonin writes, "This sutra spreads widely due to the protection of Bodhisattva Universal Worthy" (Gosho Zenshu, p. 780). I hope that each of you, just like Bodhisattva Universal Worthy, will open the gate of kosen-rufu widely through peace, culture and education.

You, who have a vital mission, are all so important to me. I am praying every day with all my heart for your continued good health and successful endeavors.

June 20, 2002

To the members of the Academic Division and Educators Division of the SGI-USA, who shoulder responsibility for our great Soka cultural and educational movement in the United States, I offer my sincere congratulations on the holding of your FNCC conference.

I understand that today some 110 representatives have gathered from across the United States. I truly appreciate all of your consistent, strenuous efforts and struggles.

The Lotus Sutra speaks of "bravely and vigorously exerting oneself." With faith as your basis, please continue to move with energy and courage while giving full play to your knowledge and intellect for the sake of the people's happiness and for the sake of your society's fortune and prosperity. Your growth and happiness exist in such efforts. As you persevere with pure and unremitting faith, please remember one point throughout your lives--to dedicate yourselves to serving the people.

Each of you has a precious and praiseworthy mission. With strong prayer and courageous action, please develop and expand your network of wisdom. When you do so, a grand and dignified flower of Soka culture will blossom gloriously in American and the world. Please be firmly convinced that advancing cheerfully and vigorously together with ordinary people amid the "garden of Soka" accords with true happiness in life, and take the lead again today in conducting courageous and hope-filled dialogue.

I am sending daimoku earnestly each day that you all may live cheerful lives of victory and health.

May 16, 2002

My sincerest congratulations to all of you who have gathered at the Florida Nature and Culture Center for the Culture Department Healing Arts and Legal Divisions' Conference!

Please engage in dialogue to your heart's content. Relax, enjoy yourselves and, through mutual respect, make this conference into a gathering from which the circle of friendship grows far and wide.

Through this conference, I hope you will deepen your conviction that the highest healing for humanity is born out of trust among people.

I am praying with all my heart for your excellent health. Please convey my sincerest regards to your family.

June 29, 2001

To all of you, my dear friends of the SGI-USA Academics Division and Educators Division, who bring the light of hope to the twenty-first century through humanistic education--let me express my heartfelt congratulations on this gathering of seeking minds! I sincerely thank you for your noble, untiring dedication day in and day out.

First Soka Gakkai President Tsunesaburo Makiguchi once said, "Education cannot be successful without the most excellent, outstanding human resources. Education is the highest, most difficult skill and art of human life, for it is directed toward the most precious object in the world, that is, the supreme treasure called life."

Education becomes possible only through earnest interaction and collaboration among persons of character. So I ask that each of you pray more than anyone for the development and happiness of your students and challenge yourself to revolutionize the state of your life.

As Nichiren Daishonin states, "The purpose of the appearance in this world of Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings, lies in his behavior as a human being" (The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin, p. 852). The enlightenment of a Buddha becomes apparent nowhere but in his or her humane conduct. So shine with life's abundant vigor and, through your wisdom, send forth the refreshing breeze of an educational Renaissance into American society!

Upon your shoulders rests the noble mission to bring the future to blossom in the twenty-first century and beyond. You are so precious and worthy. I am seriously praying every day for your excellent health and further success. Please convey my sincerest regards to your families and friends, whom I love deeply.

November 2, 2000

My sincere congratulations to the SGI-USA Culture Department Conference. I understand that representatives from the five different divisions of your department are meeting for this hope-filled gathering to herald the opening of a new century.

It is my sincere wish that you enjoy yourselves, discuss much together and build a network of friendship and solidarity.

A person's profound faith, courage and conviction can create a great history in his or her life. In this vein, Nichiren Daishonin states: "This Law stems from a person's heart and becomes 84,000 teachings. This indicates that all people can equally attain Buddhahood by learning from one individual's great example". (Gosho Zenshu, p. 564.)

As is clear from this passage, the Daishonin's Buddhism expounds the dignity, equality and unlimited potential of all individuals.

Our objective is kosen-rufu. In other words, our goal is that every individual becomes happy. Therefore, I would like each of you to cherish, protect and care about each person. I hope that each of you is devoted for the happiness of the unsung, ordinary people who have been devoted to kosen-rufu with all their sincerity and honesty.

Your devotion based on faith will make you happy and help you expand happiness among your loved ones. All your prayers and actions for kosen-rufu will increase your good fortune and polish your character. It is my sincere hope that you will live with a total commitment to kosen-rufu expressing your potential fully in your own field of endeavor.

I am praying with all my heart for your good health and the continued success of your efforts. Please convey my best regards to those who could not attend the conference this time.

July 20, 2000

My sincerest congratulations on the holding of your SGI-USA Culture Department Educators Division conference – a gathering of valiant champions of humanistic education. I deeply respect the efforts you have been making day in and day out. If President Makiguchi and President Toda could witness your conference this weekend, I am sure they would be extremely pleased.

What is the fundamental purpose of education? President Makiguchi, the father of Soka Education, proclaimed that it lies in the happiness of students. When students sense their teacher's earnest wish for their happiness, they naturally come to trust that teacher and open up their hearts. In this sense, a teacher is the most important component of a student's educational environment. I earnestly hope that each of you, through your tenacious daily efforts based on faith, will show courageous, loving and passionate care for your precious students.

Buddhism explains that boundless meanings derive from a single Law. As educators who practice the Mystic Law in today's chaotic world, you possess an enormous mission. I ask that you please advance boldly and courageously with pride and awareness of your mission as educators of unprecedented importance who put the great teachings of Buddhism into action. At the same time, please do not forget your role as educators who live among ordinary people and strive to help them overcome their suffering.

I, too, am resolved to dedicate my life to education, for education is what determines our future; it is the very foundation upon which to build peace and create value.

I am sincerely sending daimoku to each and every one of you, my dear friends, praying for your glory and success in your endeavors. Please convey my sincerest regards to those who could not be here today.

August 28, 1997

Congratulations on your SGI-USA Culture Department conference. As Culture Department members, you are taking an active role on the forefront of society. So please have an enjoyable, meaningful conference without any accidents.

The supreme way of life—one that is happiest and noblest—is to dedicate our lives to kosen-rufu and SGI-USA members.

I ask that each of you be convinced of this and give courage and hope to others, thus establishing a triumphant and glorious life.

I earnestly pray for your excellent health and for further success in your fields of endeavor. Please give my sincerest regards to everyone in your family.