

REFRESHING THE CULTURE DEPARTMENT AND THE ARTS DIVISION

On February 17, 1990, in Los Angeles, President Ikeda founded the Culture Department composed of members working in the areas of health, law and education. Three years later, the Arts became a new Division within the Culture Department. With a strong sense of purpose for American kosenruffu and an eye clearly on 2010, today is a perfect time to refresh the Culture Department by returning to the prime point -- the early, founding directions from President Ikeda.

Based on President Ikeda's initial and continuing vision for the Culture Department, the following changes will occur for the Culture Department and the Arts Division:

Renew Our Faith Focus

- Emphasize deepening individual faith, especially with encouragement for individual members to discover their mission manifested in their professional arenas
- Strengthen study to enable the effective communication of the wisdom of Buddhism through professional contacts and to promote a correct awareness of President Ikeda and the SGI's movement of peace, culture and education around the world
- Revitalize the seeking spirit for individual connection to President Ikeda and solidify the mentor-disciple relationship

Introduce New Organizational Structures

- Separate the Arts Division from the Culture Department as a stand-alone unit with its own unique focus
- Create new mission statements and guidelines for the Arts Division and for the Culture Department
- Appoint Zone Arts Division leaders similar to those for the Culture Department
- Reaffirm the criteria for Divisional membership
- Solidify the status of the Culture Department and the Arts Division as well-understood entities whose members practice in the heart of the SGI-USA

MISSION AND PURPOSE

“We must jump in with the people, protect and fight for them. That, in fact, is the mission of the Culture Department.” (President Ikeda, 1990)

*“I founded the SGI-USA Culture Department... because I firmly believed that producing promising, capable people equipped with faith and intellect would be vital for the development of America.”
(President Ikeda, 1999)*

“As we approach the 21st 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.” (President Ikeda, 1999)

From its early years, the Culture Department was composed of members actively working in the areas of health, law, education and the arts, professions that greatly influence society. President Ikeda encourages us to change the basic problems in American society by encouraging SGI-USA professionals in these fields to accomplish human revolution and through polished lives and a deep grasp of Buddhist values, to share with their colleagues the peace, culture and education efforts of President Ikeda and the SGI throughout the world. Not only do these dialogues introduce the wisdom of Buddhism into society, but they also cultivate those friends of the SGI whose voices historically have proven to be so important in protecting our movement.

Sometimes people ask, “Yes, but, isn’t that the mission of every SGI-USA member? Why do we need a Culture Department?” President Ikeda has stated clearly that we are all equal in front of the Gohonzon. Therefore, Culture Department/Arts members are not an elite group and do not warrant special treatment. Society has always expected a great deal from the people who protect our health, oversee our legal system and nurture our children. The Culture Department/Arts is a means to provide encouragement to people struggling in these significant arenas.

There is no difference between Culture Department/Arts members and others. If there is any difference, it simply means that every role is distinct; ours just happens to be in health, education, law and arts. Theirs is equally important but distinct. Following President Ikeda’s vision, our effort is to polish our wisdom and act for the sake of humanity -- to save all people from suffering.

“To nurture promising, capable people of faith and intellect who exemplify compassionate leadership; who embrace wisdom, hope and courage; and who are vital to the humanistic development of our country.” (Culture Department Mission Statement, 1999)

ACTIVITIES THAT SUPPORT INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS

“I want all of you to single-mindedly pursue your lives as scholars and intellectual leaders of society. And live up to your mission as intellectuals. As long as you steadfastly pursue this path, you will never lose. And you will ultimately become the victor in life.”

(President Ikeda, 1991)

President Ikeda encouraged SGI-USA Culture Department members at the Nagano Training Center to be people of culture and wisdom, to be first-rate representatives of their field, and then to go beyond that to be truly respected and trustworthy.

Clearly, such tremendous challenges require activities that support and encourage people to renew themselves in many different ways. In daily, time-consuming efforts, faith activities built around warm and embracing friendships, open-hearted dialogues and empathetic ears are not only essential but are rewarding. Culture Department/Arts

members will discover support not only in their district meetings, home visitations and seeking guidance from line leaders, but find it as well with professional peers in dialogues important to becoming “respected and trustworthy” in their work environments.

For this reason, Culture Department/Arts activities will focus on faith development of individual members, especially in interaction with members of the same Division. Of course, conditions within each Zone and Region will modify how the guideline is enacted, but enhancing dialogue within the Division is the direction in which the Culture Department/Arts want to move.

The Culture Department/Arts will de-emphasize sponsoring seminars and workshops by different Divisions as an SGI-USA activity. Perhaps the greater value is to look at the example of the SGI-USA psychologists who for several years have introduced seminars, presentations and dialogues on Buddhist values during their annual American Psychological Association (APA) meetings – an example of introducing Buddhist wisdom into society. We have to promote this understanding in society, gaining credibility through our accomplishments. We have friends who are leaders in our field. Through us, they will develop a connection to the SGI movement.

Likewise, activities that are seen as "service to members," such as workshops on legal or health issues, will cease being Culture Department activities. If such activities are desired by Zone, Region or Area line leaders, they will be planned, approved and run by those line leaders. Of course, they can be supported by individual Culture Department members.

EMPHASIZE STUDY AND PERSONAL CONNECTION TO PRESIDENT IKEDA

“I ask each of you (Culture Department/Arts members), who are taking leadership for the next generation, to study Buddhism more deeply and seriously than ever before.” (President Ikeda, 1999)

President Ikeda is our role model in expressing the wisdom and values of Buddhism in everyday terms with such clarity that people of wisdom and insight grasp his meaning and they recognize a common bond. With the spirit that “I am the President of the SGI,” Culture Department/Arts members will study together and dialogue by Division seeking to understand Buddhism so that it flows naturally, thereby contributing to the humanizing of their professions. People of deep faith and humanity united with the heart of their mentor will never be defeated.