

Southern Illinois University
Board of Trustees
March 9, 2006

RECOMMENDATION FOR HONORARY DEGREE, SIUC

Summary

The President, on the recommendation of the Honorary Degree and Distinguished Service Award Committee and the Chancellor of Southern Illinois University Carbondale, presents to the Board of Trustees a resolution recommending that Daisaku Ikeda be awarded the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Humane Letters at the May 2006 commencement of the College of Mass Communication and Media Arts, Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

Rationale for Adoption

Daisaku Ikeda was born in Tokyo, Japan on January 2, 1928, to a family of seaweed farmers. His experiences during the Second World War, as well as the anguish and turmoil he witnessed in the years following, set him on a lifelong quest to root out the fundamental causes of human conflict and suffering.

In 1960, Mr. Ikeda became the third president of a lay Buddhist organization known as the Soka Gakkai; and in 1975 he became the first president of the Soka Gakkai International (SGI). With more than 12 million members in 190 countries and territories worldwide, the SGI is an organization dedicated to the promotion of peace and individual happiness through activities based on principles of Buddhist philosophy that place the highest emphasis on the dignity of life.

As a Buddhist leader, philosopher, educator and poet, Mr. Ikeda founded several institutions whose mission is to promote his underlying conviction that all individuals possess the ability to create limitless value in harmony with others. Notable among these are the Soka schools, which are based on the philosophy of value-creating education. As an educational system from kindergarten through post-graduate university level, these schools are a concrete expression of his belief that education is one of humanity's most important, long-term undertakings.

Soka University, now considered one of the top private universities in Japan, was founded in 1971. It has exchange agreements with more than 50 institutions of higher learning worldwide. The Soka University of America graduate school was established in Calabasas, California in September of 1994 and offers a Master of Arts degree in Second and Foreign Language Education. Soka University of America, a four-year, Liberal Arts College in Aliso Viejo, California graduated its first class of 100 students in the spring of 2005 with Bachelor of Arts degrees. Thirty-two of these students have already moved on to pursue graduate

degrees in universities around the world.

As a means of nurturing mutual understanding in our diverse world, Mr. Ikeda has worked actively to promote intercultural exchange. Toward his end, he established the Min-On Concert Association in 1963, which regularly sponsors tours of musical and performing groups and artists throughout the world. Min-On has grown to become the largest organization of its kind in Japan. To date, it has created venues for cultural exchange with more than 75 countries.

In 1983, Mr. Ikeda founded the Tokyo Fuji Art Museum as a vehicle for enhancing international understanding through art. It houses a permanent collection of approximately five thousand works of art – including paintings, ceramics and sculpture of East and West, ancient and modern.

Recognizing the value of dialogue, Mr. Ikeda founded the Boston Research Center for the 21st Century in 1993, and the Toda Institute for Global Peace and Policy Research in 1996, to serve as institutions that will engage in sustained efforts to foster intercultural dialogue, and to focus the world's intellectual resources on the complex issues of peace.

In 1981, Mr. Ikeda received the title of Poet Laureate, from the World Academy of Arts and Culture. Through his poetry, Mr. Ikeda has touched the hearts of millions of people worldwide.

In the course of his extensive travels, Mr. Ikeda has met with many of the world's leading thinkers, policymakers, and scholars, to discuss this principle, along with other urgent topics related to the environment, arms and war, health and welfare, and others. His many partners in dialogue include Arnold Toynbee, Zhou En-Lai, Nelson Mandela, Linus Pauling, Rosa Parks, Mikhail Gorbachev, Norman Cousins, Henry Kissinger, Rajiv Gandhi, Chinese author Ba Jin, and Brazilian journalist and human rights activist Austregesilo de Athayde. More than several of these encounters have resulted in collaborative books; most notably, his broad-ranging dialogue with Arnold Toynbee published as *Choose Life* and translated into twenty languages.

In addition to these dialogues, Mr. Ikeda is a published author in his own right, having written more than 200 books covering philosophy, collections of essays, addresses and poetry, as well as novels and children's literature. Mr. Ikeda's travels have also included the presentation of papers at more than 20 universities and institutes. Among these are Harvard University, Columbia University, Moscow State University, the Simon Wiesenthal Center, the Brazilian Academy of Letters, and the Rajiv Gandhi Institute for Contemporary Studies.

Mr. Ikeda is also an avid and critically acclaimed photographer. A collection of his photographs of natural fauna and geology has been assembled into a traveling exhibition entitled "Dialogue with Nature." Shown to appreciative audiences across the globe, the photographs in his exhibition reveal the pure-hearted perspective with which Mr. Ikeda observes nature in Japan and around the world.

Mr. Ikeda's highly evolved character, developed through his lifelong dedication to the people's happiness, has resulted in a sterling reputation that transcends national borders and cultural barriers. His actions in this regard stem from a profound faith in the ability of people to cast bridges of friendship and trust across the perceived chasms of our differences, and from a firm conviction that the accumulated weight of such endeavors will result in the tipping of even the global scales, toward peace.

In this vein, Mr. Ikeda has also demonstrated a forthright willingness to challenge any manifestation of authority that tries to undermine or destroy the value or dignity of life. As a result of his outspoken positions that place him clearly on the side of common people everywhere, Mr. Ikeda has often times found himself the object of criticism from various entrenched power structures. Nevertheless, the broad-based respect he engenders is demonstrated by the more than 180 academic affiliations and honorary degrees he has received from institutions of higher learning throughout the world; by the honorary citizenships he has received from countries, states, and cities around the globe; as well as by the memberships and prestigious awards he has received from various nations, organizations and associations. These include the United Nations Peace Award, the International Tolerance Award from the Simon Wiesenthal Center, and the Rosa Parks Humanitarian Award.

Since 1983, Mr. Ikeda has submitted an annual peace proposal to the United Nations while working to support and strengthen the singular role it possesses as a clearinghouse for global dialogue. These proposals consistently include practical steps and programs that can be implemented to reduce massive nuclear stockpiles, to protect the environment, to de-institutionalize war, as well as to improve the functionality of the United Nations itself.

Having stated that education is the mission to which he will devote his remaining energies, the following quotes represent his conviction in this regard:

"Education at its best is a process of liberation from prejudice which frees the human heart from its violent passions. It is through education that young people can be delivered from powerlessness, from the burden of mistrust directed against themselves. And those who have learned to trust in themselves are then naturally able to believe in the latent capacities of others."

“What the world most requires now is the kind of education that fosters love from humankind, that develops character, that provides an intellectual basis for the realization of peace and empowers learners to contribute to and improve society. The heart of education lies in the process of teacher and pupil learning together, the teacher drawing for the pupil’s potential and raising the pupil to surpass the teacher in ability.”

Considerations Against Adoption

University officers are aware of none.

Constituency Involvement

The Honorary Degree and Distinguished Service Award Committee of Southern Illinois University Carbondale, composed of members from the appropriate faculty and constituency groups, recommended this award. The Chancellor reviewed the recommendation from the Committee and, in consultation with the Provost and the Dean of the College of Mass Communication and Media Arts, recommends this degree.

Resolution

BE IT RESOLVED, By the Board of Trustees of Southern Illinois University in regular meeting assembled, That the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Humane Letters be presented to Daisaku Ikeda, at the May 2006 commencement or some commencement thereafter of Southern Illinois University Carbondale.