



1. The meaning of an orientation camp

The orientation camp is the first event in which Sophia University undergraduate students participate after their Entrance ceremony. As part of the Freshman Week activities, designed to welcome the newcomers, an orientation camp is scheduled from the morning of one day until the afternoon of the following day. Sophia's orientation camp was designed in 1966, ahead of all other Japanese universities, in order to enable the Sophia newcomers to quickly become used to student



This picture shows Fr. William Everett, SJ, with students at the 1966 orientation camp.

life at our university. They would become members of the so-called Sophia family as quickly as possible. The underlying philosophy of the orientation camp is an expression of the foundational spirit of Jesuit educational institutions. A school is a special place for education that has been set up to convey wisdom and technical skills to the next generation. Along with the school education, and with perhaps even more importance, a school has the function of forming better human persons, who will exert good influences on their families, on their associates in recreational activities, and on wider social groups. To achieve these related goals, the Sophia University orientation camps include not only first-year students and departmental faculty members, but also older students from each department who act as 'helpers'. These helpers manage all the events of the camp, from the distribution of meals to the advice about course selection. Such involvement by older students was characteristic of the early Jesuit seminarios or collegio schools. These student helpers have the unique realization that they are giving education at the same time as when they are receiving education. What they have recently learned they can pass on immediately to their younger colleagues in the forms of advice or coaching. This interchange creates bonds among faculty members, the more experienced student helpers, and the new students. There is an atmosphere of mutual learning and teaching. The helpers receive training in converting what they have recently learned into activities that are useful for the newly arrived students. The

resulting collaboration represents one example of the current Sophia educational motto: Men and Women for Others, with Others.

2. The Leaders' Camps



At Sophia University, training camps for student leaders preceded the orientation camp tradition. The first of these training camps for student leaders was held at Lake Kawaguchi in July of 1959. It lasted for five days. The priest in charge of student affairs at that time, Fr. Franz Bosch, proposed the leaders' camp as a way to communicate the basic ways of thinking of Sophia University. He wanted to join an enthusiasm for learning to a personalized community of the teachers and those taught. He had the planning concept that this leaders' camp would not be imposed by the university leadership but would arise from the students' independent activity supported by the university. Thus, the leaders of the student clubs who belonged to an overall student council at that time would set up an experience of joint living with some teachers and staff members. This would deepen feelings of mutual trust, facilitate the search for the meaning of extra-curricular activities, foster a greater school spirit, and work toward a grasp of the image of a true Sophia student.

The participants in the first Leaders' camp numbered about eighty. The three main themes discussed were: Extra-Curricular Activities, Leadership, and the Foundational Spirit of Sophia University. Every year thereafter the number of participants increased. The Leaders' camp was held in various locations. The last record of such an event was in 1964, the sixth Leaders' camp. No report of a later camp is available. Two years later, in 1966, the first orientation camp was held.



These three pictures show the Sophia Leaders' camp that was held in Nagano prefecture in 1960.

3. The first Sophia University orientation camp

This camp took place in 1966, without any precedent for such a large-scale overnight training program for as many as 1713 new students, who had just entered the university. So, both the planning and the execution of the plans were fraught with difficulties. The students of each department were sent on suitably arranged days for an overnight program at Hakone Kogen Hotel or at Lake Ashino Hotel. The program for each group of arriving students began with addresses of greeting given by the university president, the dean of the faculty to which the students belonged, and the department chairperson. Then each group was shown a movie about the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Founding of Sophia University. Next, there were separate meetings for each faculty and then for each department. The new students could chat with their professors and with each other until late at night. The answers to a questionnaire that these pioneering first-year students were asked to fill out included many responses from students who hoped that a similar program would be held the following year. Many opinions of strong approval assured the organizers that their plans had met with great success. The orientation camp has taken place each year since then although the Great East Japan Earthquake in 2011 forced a cancellation. The locations have included the various Hakone hotels; since 1983, the YMCA facilities at Toozanso near Gotemba have also been used.



Sophia students attending the first Sophia University orientation camp near Lake Ashino.

4. The recent orientation camps



The orientation camp held in April of 2006.

Many other universities in Japan have abandoned programs similar to Sophia's orientation camp, citing rising costs and lack of visible good effects. Nevertheless, Sophia has continued this annual program since 1966; the annual event has created a unique Sophia identity. Since 1977, the combined number of first-year students, helpers from advanced classes, and teachers and staff members has exceeded 2000. During the two days of the orientation, typically three gatherings of the new students in each department will be held. Beginning with explanations of complicated registration procedures for departmental courses and continuing with information

about various extra-curricular activities, the orientation programs provide a wide variety of introductions to a happy campus life. The student helpers spend several months of their valuable time preparing games and sports events that create opportunities for the lonely first-year students to start lasting friendships. The pleasant chats among



first-year students, helpers, and faculty members cover a wide variety of topics and continue long into the night. The written responses of the first-year students each year include favorable comments such as “I was glad to make some new friends” or “The talks at the orientation camp were very helpful for me personally, since I have a lot of things I want to do as a college student, including studying abroad and joining various circles.” Of course, the university spends time each year looking for ways to make improvements or to correct deficiencies in the orientation camp programs. However, not only for the students but also for the faculty members the orientation camp provides a non-substitutable opportunity to deepen friendships. As such, the annual orientation camp is part of the educational spirit of Sophia University.



These two pictures were taken at the orientation camps held in April of 2006.