

## Sophia University UNESCO Chair Newsletter Vol. 1

June 2025 Issue

### **Words from UNESCO Chair Holder Miki Sugimura commemorating the 1<sup>st</sup> anniversary:**

We are delighted to introduce the first issue of the Sophia University UNESCO Chair Newsletter. Established in February 2024, the Sophia University UNESCO Chair has actively engaged in various initiatives over the past year. This inaugural edition highlights those activities and achievements since its founding. The subsequent editions of this newsletter will feature upcoming initiatives that Sophia University will be undertaking, paired with activities and events from related organisations. Through this newsletter, we hope to foster collaboration and strengthen connections with UNESCO Chairs and all interested parties from around the world.



**Miki Sugimura**  
UNESCO Chairholder  
Sophia University

### **1<sup>st</sup> Anniversary of Sophia University UNESCO Chair: Highlights**

#### **28<sup>th</sup> February 2024: Sophia University UNESCO Chair Inauguration Symposium “UNESCO Chair on Education for Human Dignity, Peace and Sustainability”**

February 28<sup>th</sup> marked the day Sophia University was selected for a UNESCO Chair under the title UNESCO Chair on Education for Human Dignity, Peace and Sustainability. On this day, a commemorative symposium was held on Sophia University’s campus together with the 8 partner institutions of the Chair, with speeches and a panel discussion featuring 9 representatives from the partner institutions.

Chair holder Professor Miki Sugimura expressed her determination to realize the original purpose of the Chair – to create and share knowledge through international education and research, and to contribute to the realization of human dignity, peace and a sustainable society.



Read more:

[https://www.sophia.ac.jp/eng/article/news/topics/unescochair\\_eng/](https://www.sophia.ac.jp/eng/article/news/topics/unescochair_eng/)

### **5<sup>th</sup> June 2024: Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific Regional Policy Dialogue Meeting on the 1974 Revised Recommendation of UNESCO**

In line with Sophia University's partnerships, the UNESCO Chair supported and organized sessions at the "Asia-Pacific Regional Policy Dialogue Meeting on the 1974 Revised Recommendation of UNESCO, which was co-hosted by the UNESCO Bangkok Regional Office and the Asia-Pacific Centre of Education and International Understanding (APCEIU). Here, Professor Miki Sugimura presented a session regarding the theme "Current Landscape of Education for Peace, Human Rights and Sustainable Development in Asia-Pacific: Challenges and Opportunities in Implementation of Recommendation".



In addition, the Sophia University UNESCO Chair planned and managed the panel "Thematic Panel: Teacher Development, Teaching and Learning Materials", which discussed the role of teachers and the development of teaching materials, including presentations on ESD and Global Citizenship Education practices in East Timor, Niue, and the Philippines.

Read more: <https://sophia-unescochair.jp/en/topics/20240610/>

### **15<sup>th</sup> July 2024: Participation in Side Events at the United Nations High-Level Political Forum**

Professor Miki Sugimura, the UNESCO chair holder, joined the Higher Education Sustainability Initiative (HESI) panel at the United Nations High-Level Political Forum held at the United Nations Headquarters in New York.



Here, she highlighted Japanese university initiatives in relation to the transformative roles of higher education, such as the SDG University Platform (SDG-UP) managed by UNU-IAS, and the Asia-Pacific Network for Environment and Sustainability (ProSPER.Net) developed under UNU-IAS.

Later that day, Professor Miki Sugimura joined the Higher Education Sustainability Initiative (HESI) panel, which discussed the role of higher education institutions in achieving the SDGs.

Read more: <https://sophia-unescochair.jp/en/topics/20240716/>

### **22<sup>nd</sup> – 26<sup>th</sup> July 2024: UNESCO Chair Panel at the 18<sup>th</sup> World Congress of Comparative Education Societies (WCCES)**

Sophia University joined many UNESCO Chairs at the 18<sup>th</sup> World Congress of Comparative Education Societies (WCCES) held at Cornell University in the United States from July 22<sup>nd</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup>, where a session titled “Fostering Knowledge-Driven Transformation in Times of Uncertainty: Collaborative Research in Education” was hosted by participants from UNESCO Headquarters and various UNESCO Chairs.



Read more: <https://sophia-unescochair.jp/en/topics/20240729/>

### **30<sup>th</sup> September – 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2024: UNESCO Partners Forum “Transforming Knowledge for Africa’s Future”**

Sophia University participated in the UNESCO Partners Forum “Transforming Knowledge for Africa’s Future” as a UNESCO Chair for the first time, joining approximately 400 stakeholders in discussing ways to enhance interdisciplinary and joint research in Africa. Professor Miki Sugimura moderated a session which discussed the formation of a platform for a sustainable future in Africa, which also functioned as a way to share the activities of Sophia University with other UNESCO Chairs with activities aimed at achieving the Goal 4 education targets in the SDGs.



This was followed by an additional symposium on October 3<sup>rd</sup> to commemorate World Teachers’ Day, where the Sophia University Chair was able to share its commitment to human dignity, with various other participants agreeing regarding the importance of this aspect in the context of teacher education.

Read more: <https://www.sophia.ac.jp/eng/article/news/topics/unescochair20240930/>

## 17<sup>th</sup> November 2024: UNESCO Chair Symposium: AI in Education – Possibilities and Challenges

As part of Sophia Open Research Weeks 2024, the UNESCO Chair hosted the symposium titled “AI in Education – Its Possibilities and Challenges”, which discussed the use of AI in context of the challenge highlighted in the “Future of Education” set out by UNESCO. The Chair had the pleasure of inviting various distinguished professors, with a keynote speech delivered by Prof. Dr. Wayne Holmes of University College London titled “Artificial Intelligence and Education: A Critical Studies Perspective”.

This symposium, much like many others hosted by Sophia University, was available both in-person and online, with English and Japanese simultaneous interpretation.

**Sophia UNESCO Chair Symposium**

### AI in Education- Its Possibilities and Challenges

Today, education is being called upon to adopt various non-traditional forms of learning in the pursuit of reform. In this context, the use of AI in education and schools is being discussed in terms of both its merits and demerits. The use of AI is one of the major challenges of the “Future of Education” set out by UNESCO and is an important point of discussion for the development of our sustainable future. Sophia University, as a UNESCO Chair, will discuss the possibilities and challenges of AI in education.

**Date:** November 17, Sunday, 2024 17:00 ~ 19:00 (JST)  
**Venue:** Room 1702, Build. #2, Yotsuya campus, Sophia University (Max. 100 pers.) or Zoom  
**Language:** English (Japanese interpretation available) \*  
 \*Simultaneous interpretation available only via Zoom online. Please note that all costs and equipment for participation in the Symposium on-line will be at one's own cost. Please make sure to bring your own earphones to listen to Zoom sound from your equipment/mobile(s) at the venue.

**Opening remarks** Dr. Jonghwi Park  
**Guest Honorary Speech** Head of Innovation and Education, Academic Programme Officer  
**Keynote speech** Prof. Dr. Wayne Holmes University College London  
**Artificial Intelligence and Education : A Critical Studies Perspective**

**Discussion** Ms. Jyoti Ratnam Asia Europe Foundation  
**Panel Discussion**  
 Dr. Margus Pedaste University of Tartu, Estonia (Online)  
 Pro. Dr. Tomonori Ichinose Miyagi University of Education  
 Ms. Jyoti Rahaman Asia Europe Foundation  
 Dr. Takehito Kamata Sophia University  
 \* Moderator: Miki Sugimura Sophia University

**Closing remarks** MC: Mr. Kira Brazos Graduate School of Human Sciences, Sophia University

W. Holmes J. Park M. Pedaste T. Ichinose J. Rahaman T. Kamata M. Sugimura K. Brazos

**Zoom** **Registration** **In person**

Organized by: Sophia University Special Grant for Academic Research Project Team (2021-2023)  
 Supported by: Asia Europe Foundation (ASEF) Contact: sophiesd.project@gmail.com

**Sophia Open Research Weeks 2024** 11/5 Tue ~ 11/24 Sun

Read more: <https://sophia-unescochair.jp/en/topics/20241031/>

## 15<sup>th</sup> December 2024: International Symposium on Creativity and Critical Thinking in Higher Education

Sophia University hosted the “International Symposium on Creativity and Critical Thinking in Higher Education” on December 15<sup>th</sup>, both in-person and online with simultaneous interpretation in English and Japanese for all attendees.

This symposium discussed the role of competency-based education as a cornerstone of transformative education based on empirical research on environmental studies, service-learning and ESD conducted at Sophia University and International Christian University.

Professor Miki Sugimura gave both the introduction and closing remarks for the session, with keynote speeches presented by Mr. Shun Shirai, as well as Mr. Stéphan Vincent-Lancrin.

**ICU** **UNESCO**

### Creativity and Critical Thinking in Higher Education

**Sunday, December 15 16:00~18:00 (JST)**  
 Sophia University Yotsuya campus, Bldg. #2, Room 1701 (Max. 100 sheets) or Zoom (No limitation) Language: Japanese and English (interpretation via Zoom)

As visualization of learning outcomes in higher education becomes a global challenge, growing interest emerged in how to foster creativity and critical thinking beyond knowledge and expertise limited to traditional disciplines. In this symposium, we will discuss the role of competency-based education as a cornerstone of transformative education in OECD's discussions and the content of Japan's research on empirical research on environmental studies, service-learning and education for Sustainable Development (ESD) conducted at Sophia University and International Christian University.

**Opening Remarks** Miki Sugimura Vice President for Academic Research Affairs, Sophia Univ.  
**Keynote Speech** Mr. Shun Shirai Director, Council for Science, Technology and Innovation, Cabinet Office  
 Mr. Stéphan Vincent-Lancrin (online) Deputy Head of the Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI)/ Senior Analyst in the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)

**Discussion** Prof. James Williams Professor, International and Comparative Education, George Washington University  
 Prof. Masahito Natsu Professor of Faculty of Human Sciences, Department of Education, Sophia University

**Panel Discussion** International Christian University  
 Miki Sugimura / Tatsuo Nishizaki / Ryosuke Fujinuma  
 Sophia University  
 Taro Komatsu / Miki Sugimura / Miki Sugimura  
 Facilitator: Takehito Kamata Sophia Univ.

**Wrap-up** Prof. Miki Sugimura International Christian University (ICU)

**Closing Remarks** Miki Sugimura

**Zoom** **Registration** **In-person**

\*Simultaneous interpretation available only in Zoom. Please make sure to bring your own earphones to listen to interpretation from your equipment/mobile at the venue.

Organizer: Project team Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research (B) International Collaboration Research on Visualization of Learning Outcomes in Higher Education  
 Co-organizer: Sophia University UNESCO Chair, Sophia University Faculty of Human Sciences Department of Education

Read more: <https://sophia-unescochair.jp/en/topics/20241211/>





#### **4<sup>th</sup> February 2025: ESD and Higher Education: Reflections on an Evolving Field (Online)**

The UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN), together with York University and Columbia University in partnership with UNESCO, hosted a virtual side event as part of the ECOSOC Partnership Forum titled “ESD and Higher Education: Reflections on an Evolving Field”.

At this side event, Professor Miki Sugimura spoke regarding the role of ESD in relation to networks, particularly emphasizing the goals of networks in relation to ESD in Higher Education. The Chair engaged in a Q&A with the online audience members, answering questions regarding the importance of university networks and the usage of Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) between Japanese and African or American universities as a form of network connection.

Read more: <https://sdgacademy.org/sdsn-to-host-ecosoc-partnership-forum-side-event-on-esd-and-higher-education/>