

“If kimchi is this spicy, how do Koreans eat it every day?”

Hearing this exclamation from a foreign friend who had just tasted kimchi for the first time, everyone burst into laughter. As a supporter at a kimchi-making event in Tokyo, I explained the origins and preparation of kimchi to foreign participants and guided them through the process. At first, their hands moved awkwardly, but over time, they became more comfortable, and the session was filled with questions and laughter. Watching them enjoy their own handmade kimchi, I realized that even small cultural exchanges can create meaningful connections between people.

Kimchi-Making Workshop

キムチ作り
ワークショップ



The CAMPUS Asia program was a journey that allowed me to grow through such unique experiences. Initially, I joined the program with the goal of broadening my academic horizons, but what I gained was far more than that. The people I met, the knowledge I acquired, and the experiences I accumulated in Tokyo led to new realizations and fundamentally reshaped my perspective on life.



Living in the dormitory felt like a small experiment marking the start of the program. Sharing a space with friends from China, Germany, Indonesia, and other countries, we exchanged stories and made efforts to understand one another. What started as awkward conversations gradually turned into laughter-filled exchanges, and by sharing our home-cooked meals, we experienced each other's cultures firsthand. Through these interactions, we discovered our differences yet found common human values within them.

My studies at Waseda University deepened these cross-cultural exchanges. In the “Urban Regeneration” course, I explored how urban planning influences people's lives through case studies of Tokyo's redevelopment projects. Analyzing projects like Toranomon Hills, I contemplated how designs must balance efficiency with community harmony. Observing people gathering and interacting in public spaces like parks and benches, I realized that urban planning is not just about constructing physical spaces but also about fostering human connections.



In the “Development Economics” course, each session posed the fundamental question: What is development? While I initially emphasized economic indicators, my classmates highlighted the significance of happiness, environment, and inclusivity. These discussions broadened my perspective, helping me understand that development extends beyond mere numbers and data to encompass quality of life and human values. I came to see data as a powerful tool for capturing important narratives that are often overlooked.

The “Mechanism Design” course provided a concrete understanding of how data-driven design can be applied in real-world scenarios. By analyzing matching problems such as organ donation systems and school allocation methods, I learned how data and design can harmoniously meet people's needs. This process of identifying specific demands and creating efficient, fair systems based on data was deeply inspiring to me.



Beyond academics, the “CAMPUS Asia Cafe” became a space where learning expanded into real-life interactions. What started as a small gathering to discuss our cultures gradually evolved into a vibrant platform with participants from diverse backgrounds. We learned each other's languages, shared

traditional dishes, and connected through music and stories. This was more than just cultural exchange; it was where I learned the responsibility of being a global citizen. It was here that I truly understood that the most important values in connecting people are an open mind and mutual respect.

The baseball game between Waseda and Keio University showcased another form of cultural exchange. Amidst fierce competition, the audience respectfully listened to the opponent's school anthem, demonstrating a culture of mutual respect beyond mere sports rivalry. The applause shared between winners and losers after the match reminded me of the importance of maintaining consideration and encouragement even in competition.



Looking back, the CAMPUS Asia program was a new beginning. The lessons learned through human interactions deepened the understanding of the world and instilled a sense of responsibility to foster genuine connections. With this experience as a foundation, the hope is to continue engaging with diverse communities and contributing to a better future for people and society.