



CAMPUS Asia Study Abroad Photo Journal

2024 Spring Semester at Korea University



Introduction

This spring semester, I was privileged to study abroad in Seoul, South Korea as a Korea University student in the CAMPUS Asia Program! I am truly grateful to the CAMPUS Asia Program for allowing me this once-in-a-lifetime experience that I will treasure forever.

The CAMPUS Asia Program immediately caught my attention in a study abroad fair that was held at Waseda University last year. I was originally a bit hesitant about studying abroad, since coming from the United States technically means I am already studying overseas. Yet this program had a particular vision that differed from others: raising social innovators who can contribute to the betterment of society. With special components such as the Social Innovation Forum, Social Innovation Project, and respective CAMPUS Asia activities and events within each of the four partner universities of Waseda University, Peking University, Nanyang Technological University, and Korea University, I found this study abroad program to be best suited for me and my future career path of working in an international NPO.

Through this photo journal, I hope you can put yourselves in my shoes and visualize what it is like to be a CAMPUS Asia exchange student at Korea University. From describing my typical student life to showing my favorite cultural moments, I will go into detail about the highlights of my experience. While I was writing this photo journal, I was reminiscing and replaying my memories in my mind, and waves of nostalgia and gratitude took over me. This photo journal is filled with my reflection and digestion of my CAMPUS Asia life, please enjoy!



Academics

I was enrolled in the College of Political Science and Economics, a tad different than my major at Waseda, School of International Liberal Studies. Although I was nervous at first about my classes since I was not familiar with the foundational knowledge of political science or economics, the academic level for all of my classes was the perfect balance of acquainted information and new material.

Courses and Credits

In total, I registered for 15 credits, with 5 courses being 3 credits each. 4 of them were from the College of Political Science and Economics, and 1 was from the College of International Studies. From the former college, I took “Political Processes”, “Organizational Theories”, “Elections and Voting Behavior”, and “Southeast Asian Politics”, along with “Introduction to International Development and Cooperation” from the latter college. Through these classes, I gained deeper insight into the realm of political sciences and perceived certain concepts such as election culture from the Korean perspective. I found the content to be interesting and useful for the future since I would like to work in an international organization that specializes in development.



Professors and Students

The professors were all understanding and studious and hardworking students surrounded me. Aside from the one course in the College of International Studies, there were only a handful of international students in each class. Still, I had the opportunity to work with Korea University students through group presentations and projects. I had the chance to collaborate with other international students to create a short video, and I also gave a presentation in front of the class with my group for an election campaign project. Through these experiences throughout the semester, I was able to blend in with the Korea University student community. Whenever I needed assistance, the professors were patient and gave great guidance to improve my scores if they were not as high as I expected. Once, I had a one-on-one with a professor to look over my midterm exam score and give feedback, but after hearing about how I was stressed with numerous matters, he spent over twice the amount of time originally planned for each session to provide meaningful life advice.

Study Spots

As a student, having several go-to locations for studying and completing assignments is crucial. Korea University had a variety of locations to study, but my go-to was the newly built SK Future Hall, which had a sleek modern design.

One of my favorite studying locations off-campus was called CATCH Cafe, since they offered a free drink if you downloaded a mobile app and showed them your student ID. The cafe was always bustling with students working on their assignments. The strawberry milk was delicious! I was introduced to this place through a local Korea University student!



Korea University Student Life

Life as a Korea University student was always exciting since there were various events throughout the semester! I will share some of my most memorable experiences, during which I felt the spirit of Korea University.



KUBA (Korea University Buddy Assistants)

One advantage we had as international students was our automatic membership in a club called KUBA, which stands for Korea University Buddy Assistants! Korea University students help international exchange students adjust to life in Korea by organizing us into big groups and organizing events where we can bond with one another. One particular highlight from KUBA was going to a popular amusement park called Everland with my group 7 and group 3! The park was super spacious along with fun amusement park rides, pretty flower gardens for photo opportunities, and cute souvenir shops! Our group leaders were enthusiastic and fun as well!

ISF (International Student Festival)

KUBA also allowed us to volunteer as booth staff for its International Student Festival, where all students can enjoy a day of intercultural exchange by experiencing traditional culture and food in the main square. I participated as a member of the Japanese booth. 20 booths prepared traditional food or drinks for everyone to try, and booth staff came up with fun trivia about their country to introduce people to their culture.



There was a stage in the middle for students to participate in a combination of a fashion and talent show! We cheered as each country wore traditional wear and gave a small performance that was representative of their culture. I joined other girls in the Japanese booth staff to perform a dance medley of three trendy J-pop songs, and the crowd was very supportive and hyped!



It was a beautiful moment where students of various ethnicities and nationalities could come together to appreciate each other's culture. Korea University's student population is more diverse than I thought!



LTE (Learning by Teaching Experience)

Since my courses at Korea University were in English, I had a desire to practice my Korean skills while I was here in Seoul. I signed up for a language teaching program called LTE (Learning by Teaching Experience) where a Korean student and an international student can be paired up to teach each other their native language. I was extremely blessed to have an amazing partner, she was incredibly sweet and kindhearted! We met up regularly in cafes and near campus to teach each other English and Korean, and she took me to popular places around Seoul so I could get the full experience of Korea! Thanks to her, not only have I improved my Korean, but I also got to explore Seoul like a local! Most importantly, I gained a precious friend in my life who I will continue to keep in touch with and support each other no matter where we are in the world!

IPSELENTI (School Festival)

Probably the most thrilling and impactful event at Korea University was IPSELENTI, which is a day-long festival filled with musical performances from famous Korean artists, cheering, and bonding moments between the Korea University student population.

It was time to fully embody the Korea University spirit with its crimson school color and tiger school mascot! The stadium was a sea of red, with some tiger accessories here and there. We had the option of being in the standing zone near the stage or staying seated on the bleacher seats. My roommate and I decided to stand for the whole day, and although our legs were exhausted afterward, the view was totally worth it!

I occasionally listen to Korean artists, so I was ecstatic to know almost every singer in the line-up! Never would I have thought that I could see my favorite K-Pop group, NewJeans, performing in front of me. The buildup to announcing the next artist was fun as we all started screaming and clapping once we realized who it was. Singing and dancing to the music made it seem like a big party!

In between the performances, there were many cheering chants, and the level of commitment and passion was past the roof! Every time the intro of a cheer song played, we grabbed onto whoever's shoulder was nearby. The whole crowd was synced as we swayed to the beat, with some occasional shaking our heads to the lyrics. Everyone knew the lyrics by heart!

There were breathtaking fireworks when it became dark towards the end, which was surreal.

At this moment in time, it did not matter whether you were a full-time Korea University student, exchange student, international student, or graduate student: everyone was welcome in the Korea University family. The school spirit was racing through my veins! What a spectacular feeling! Go Tigers!



Everyday Life

I, unfortunately, did not get into the two dormitories that Korea University provides, but I, fortunately, had a very enjoyable stay at a small sharehouse a couple of minutes away from campus!



Sharehouse Experience

I was able to cultivate meaningful relationships with my sharehouse mates, and simply living together created so many memories that there was never a dull moment when I was with them. Moments such as going to the convenience store or cafe to get drinks and snacks, staying up late to do assignments, or playing board games were simple yet significantly impacted my daily life. My friends were a huge support system and have helped me numerous times in overcoming struggles or bad days through their expression of love. I could not be more grateful that I met every single one of them!

The head of our sharehouse was a sweet young couple with a baby daughter, and simply having her presence made my days brighter! My fellow sharehouse mates and I played with her whenever we had time. I always looked forward to coming home to my sharehouse members.

Family Culture

In this sharehouse, the environment was so friendly and welcoming that it genuinely felt like we were all one family. We all had our responsibilities for meal duty and cleaning like the way a family has designated chores. Whenever it was somebody's birthday, we planned a surprise for them by preparing a cake, a gift, and a message card. We also celebrated Parent's Day by gifting our sharehouse managers carnations and a handmade certificate, which was a new aspect of Korean culture that I learned! Every single member was appreciated and acknowledged, which was very heartwarming.



Barbeque Party

Our sharehouse had events from time to time, such as going on a picnic to see the cherry blossoms or watching a movie together. I appreciated how our sharehouse managers did their best to plan fun events to alleviate the stress that we can carry as students, as well as strengthen our bond.

After midterms, we had a barbeque party on our rooftop and cooked meat and other dishes, and it was one of my favorite memories of the semester. From early evening tonight, we spent time together dancing to music, eating good food, chatting with each person, and overall deepening our relationship with one another. It is definitely a day to remember!

Food and Cafe Culture

Korean food is one of my favorite cuisines, allow me to introduce you to several of the tastiest foods I have had!

Food

The food in Korea was affordable, so I found myself eating out often. The convenience stores sold a variety of food too, so I usually bought lunch from there. Some examples of my top picks for Korean food are seolleongtang (ox bone soup), buddae jjigae (army stew), yukke (raw meat dish), and samgyeosal (grilled pork belly)! I also learned how to cook Korean dishes through meal duty at my sharehouse. Every Thursday, I and two others made dinner for all of the sharehouse mates, and I was able to familiarize myself with Korean foods by cooking the meals.

One genre of foods that I tried but realized was not my cup of tea was gopchang, or intestines. Gopchang is very popular, but the taste is very intense! I am glad I attempted to expand my palate. You never know unless you try!

My honorable mentions are yukjaejang (spicy beef soup), bingsu (shaved ice), naengmyeon (cold buckwheat noodles), and bossam (steamed pork). There were also many fancy pasta plates that I fell in love with!



Cafe

One of my hobbies to do in Korea was to be on the lookout for cute cafes that served adorable sweets and drinks! I noticed that even without researching where the popular cafes are, as you walk through the streets there are cafes on every corner. There were a lot of options to choose from, and I kept going back and forth between certain drinks and desserts since I could simply not decide right away! The presentation was always spot on, and even after taking more than enough photos, my friends and I would repeat how our orders were too adorable to eat. The cakes were particularly yummy and aesthetic for social media! Just catching up with my friends while enjoying our treats was one of the best ways to spend a relaxing day off.



Korean Traditional Culture

One of my main objectives in choosing Korea as a country to study abroad in was to absorb the culture firsthand. Thanks to my local Korean friends, I had the pleasure of experiencing various aspects of traditional Korean culture!



Korean Traditional Wear

Wearing the elegant hanbok, Korea's traditional wear, was one of the first traditional activities that I partook in! I was amazed at how affordable the prices to rent a hanbok were, and you were able to wear it for many hours!

Choosing a hanbok was a difficult task since there was such a vast selection of tops and skirts! For my own hanbok, I chose a skirt style that was more modern, since I was in love with the layers and flower details. The good part about this hanbok-wearing experience is that the staff will assist you if you need advice on how to match a certain top or skirt. They swiftly guided you on putting it on, and within minutes you were done!

In the shop, there are also options to rent out handbags and hair accessories, or even get your hair done for a little extra cost. Then you are all ready to show off your hanbok to the world!

Korean Traditional Locations

In Korea, you can enter several locations for free if you are wearing a hanbok! One example is the historical Gyeongbokgung Palace, and my roommate and I looked around the area and took plenty of photos. The traditional architecture was majestic and astounding!

Close by, there is Bukchon Hanok Village, where many traditional styles of houses called hanok are lined up for the preservation of culture. The village was very cozy, and once again the architecture had so many intricate designs and details.



Traditional Food Markets

Alas, if one was hungry and wanted to try various foods at once, they could visit any traditional food market! I was able to drop by Gwangjang Market, which is one of the most well-known markets, and was stunned by the amount of booths that occupied a narrow street. Delicious smells came from every corner, and you could hear the people promoting their food with loud voices to whoever was passing by.

I ate some of the staple Korean foods, like the spicy tteokbokki (spicy rice cakes), japchae (glass noodles with vegetables), and kimbap (rice rolls with savory fillings). Every dish tasted good, and I had to resist the urge to try them all! My favorite was the bungeoppang, which was similar to a Japanese taiyaki. I recommend the custard cream!

Korean Pop Culture

Here are the two aspects of Korean pop culture that were the highlights of my study abroad experience!

Karaoke

Korea has many coin karaoke where one can sing a couple of songs with just one coin, which was a new concept that I had not witnessed in Japan. One surprising element in karaoke in Korea was that if you were paying by song count and sang a song perfectly and got a hundred percent score, they would give you one more free song to sing! The same goes if you were paying by time, from time to time they would give you a free 10 minutes as part of their service. One time, my friends and I could not stop laughing because we originally planned to sing for two hours, but we ended up staying for more than three hours because of the constant time services. Fun times!



Caricatures

One of the items on my bucket list was to get a caricature done! I saw on social media that there was a famous caricature chain where you could have your caricature done in only a couple of minutes. Art is one of my passions, so I got one done in Hongdae with my sister. Despite the drawing being completed in a span of a few minutes, the artists captured our facial characteristics accurately, which left me surprised!

Since it is very affordable, I would strongly recommend this cute activity to whoever is planning to visit Korea. It is a wonderful souvenir and keepsake!

Photobooths

In Japan, we would have the well-known purikura for photobooths, but Korea also has tons of photobooths everywhere you go! Youth were always taking photos, and I also took many photos whenever I spent time with my friends. It is perfect for keeping little souvenirs of memories, and it was also a lot of fun in general using all the props to take pictures. If I spotted a photo booth while hanging out with my friends, I would always suggest that we take photos!

Typically, these photo booths did not have any filter, which was different than the heavily edited photos at the Purikura booths in Japan. I preferred the authenticity of it actually!

I ended up taking so many photos, that my friend from Korea University gifted me a photo album to safely store all of them. I also really liked how you can easily download the digital version of your photo on your phone along with a video of the photo-taking process with a QR code that comes printed. Every photo I have makes me smile as I reminisce about that day!





Exploring Korea

Of course, it is a must to travel around the country that you are studying abroad in! I did not get the chance to travel so far outside of Seoul, but I enjoyed every bit of what Seoul had to offer. From popular tourist spots like Myeongdong and Hongdae to more peaceful environments like Seoul Forest, I had the most fun with my friends!

Back in Tokyo, my favorite cities were trendy, aesthetic, and popular amongst the youth such as Shimokitazawa, and I found the equivalent location in Seoul: Seongsu! It had many cute cafes and stores that sold pretty clothing, and I loved the pop culture atmosphere. Just by walking through the streets, you can stumble across a pretty spot for a photo opportunity! I wish to go back so I can visit all the other unnoticed unique places that I have missed. You can never be bored!

Entertainment Locations



Seoul was very entertaining since there were so many activities to do! As the weather started to get hotter during the transition from spring to summer, several of the sharehouse mates and I went to a water park called Carribean Bay to have a refreshing time!

Every person knows that Lotte World amusement park is a must-visit, and I am glad I had the chance to go with my friends! There were countless rides, and I got to experience the Korean style of an amusement park. Super cool!

Lastly, since I love anything art-related, my friend and I went to a unique art exhibition that had utopia as a theme.

Nature Locations

Seoul is a bustling city, but from time to time it was a breath of fresh air to be surrounded by nature. I liked Grand Children's Park, Han River, and Seoul Forest. In the spring, we had a picnic outing at Grand Children's Park with everyone from the sharehouse and enjoyed the cherry blossom season! I made a trip to the Han River several times with my friends and also got to see the beautiful fountain show in the nighttime. At Seoul Forest, there were flower gardens and a butterfly zone where many types of butterflies were flying around!



CAMPUS Asia Activities

Lastly, I am excited to share about the CAMPUS Asia activities that I participated in along with the other exchange students from fellow partnership institutions Korea University, Peking University, and Nanyang Technological University.

CAMPUS Asia Youth Talk – KU Beyond



KU Beyond, also known as KU International Politics Academic Society, is a club that discusses international relations and politics. They collaborate with CAMPUS Asia students each semester and collaborate in their club events!

In June, KU Beyond hosted a CAMPUS Asia Youth Talk with the exchange students and KU Beyond members! Its purpose was for each student to share about their country's culture and issues, and for the rest of us to learn from them. A total of 9 students showed up. Four of us presented our presentations based on the "East Asia" theme, and I gave a presentation on "Overworking Culture in Japan" since I come from Tokyo, but also since the term "過勞死" exists in Korean as well.



The other students presented on topics such as Singapore's Economic and Trade Policy, China's Unique Characteristics of Society, and Korea's Unresolved Emotions, and they were all enlightening content. Through this event, we all deepened our understanding of the countries of Japan, Korea, Singapore, and China!

Jeju Field Trip

The CAMPUS Asia program at Korea University organized a field trip for us to Jeju Island for two days and one night! The main purpose was to attend the Jeju Forum and understand Jeju's prominent role in peacemaking in the Asian region.

Day 1

After landing on Jeju Island on an early morning flight, we headed straight to the Jeju Peace Institute! We were given a little tour around the facility, and after lunch, we took a quick break to see the Jusangjeolli cliffs! The view was spectacular, and I began to gradually appreciate the natural beauty of Jeju Island. There was so much to admire around us!

In the Jeju Forum, I attended a session called "Global Geopolitical Crisis and Economic Cooperation in Northeast Asia", and it was an eye-opening lecture about cooperation between Korea, Japan, and China. We even were lucky to have a special lecture about the legacy of Jeju Island and we learned about how the April 3rd incident allowed Jeju to transform its island to be a catalyst for peace.

We had free time after dinner, so we decided to go bowling as a group! Afterward, we stopped by a bingsu place and chatted with each other before we headed back to the hotel to rest for the upcoming day.





Day 2

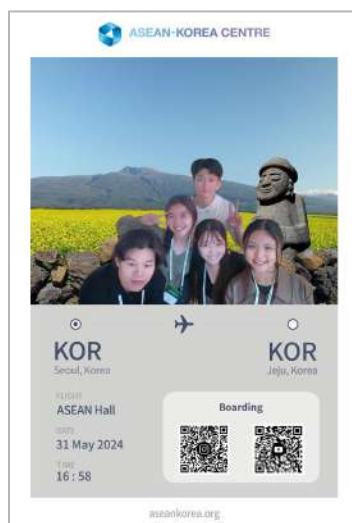
Once we finished our breakfast, we departed to go see the Cheonjeyeon Waterfall, and as soon as we arrived I was convinced that this was the most incredible waterfall I had witnessed in my entire life. The water was an ethereal blue, and the sound of the water splashing with the sun's rays hitting the waterfall could have been a whole painting! Just taking in my surroundings slowly gave me a wave of serenity and peace. I am sure all of us CAMPUS Asia students can agree that we could admire this place for a long time.

We ate a filling lunch, and traveled to our next destination: Sanbangsan Mountain and the Songaksan Olle Trail, with Yongmeori Coast as the last nature spot. Jeju is the epitome of natural paradise: the greenery, clear water, and sunny weather all played a role in conveying the pure magnificence of the island, no wonder it is listed as one of UNESCO's world heritage sites.

Last but not least, our final location to visit was the Dongmun traditional market! As usual, the food selection for dinner was astounding, and I had the opportunity to try marinated crab for the first time! Good to say I understand the hype now! As soon as we filled our stomachs up with Jeju food for the last time, off to the airport we went to return to Seoul. And just like that, our CAMPUS Asia field trip to Jeju Island had come to an end.

Despite the trip being a short period, I was able to enhance my knowledge about Korean culture by learning more about Jeju Island and its significance towards international cooperation and peace. It was truly an enriching time!

Here are some extra photos that I want to share! If you visit Jeju Island, be sure to try the local Jeju hallabong!



2024 Social Innovation Forum at Waseda University

I had the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to attend the CAMPUS Asia Social Innovation Forum representing Waseda University, along with students from partner institutions Peking University, Nanyang Technological University, and Korea University. Participating in this program has reinvented my personal definition of “social innovation” thanks to the fruitful and stimulating conversations that I had with my fellow peers who come from different cultural backgrounds. Here is a brief recap of the enriching three days of the 2024 Social Innovation Forum held at Waseda University!

Day 1

The first day of the forum began with lunch, and as we gathered into our assigned small groups and introduced ourselves, we ate lunch while getting to know one another. Our student staff recommended a popular udon shop for Waseda University students, and when we arrived, we were lucky to be seated fairly quickly. Everyone was surprised with how fast the food arrived, and how generous the portion sizes were. We all agreed on how this restaurant deserved all its popularity amongst the student population. The food was delicious, and the exchange students from partner institutions had the opportunity to try authentic Japanese udon! We pointed out other trending shops on the way back to campus.



After a brief introduction of group work, we split off into groups again to embark on an excursion to either of the four neighborhoods near Waseda: Toyama apartments, Takadanobaba, Kagurazaka, or Kishibojin. Our group was sent to Kishibojin, and by using the last local tram operating in the area, we toured the area. Although it was a relatively small area, there were many points to observe. There was a small temple, and in the area were many booths with colorful signs that seemed like preparations for an upcoming summer festival that weekend. Inside the temple was a tiny shop that sold traditional Japanese treats and postcards, and the old shop owner was kind enough to let us take a group photo with her. We walked around and looked into the shops of small businesses, such as one that sold traditional matcha powder. Although I have lived in Japan for the past several years, this was also my first time visiting Kishibojin, and I am glad I was introduced to this location. The overall serene and relaxing atmosphere left a peaceful impression on me.

Upon returning to campus, we split off into groups with new members and shared our reflections on the area we visited. Some of the comments overlapped, such as several locations not having as many people on the streets, or how convenient the region was in terms of access to a variety of services.

The first day of the forum was wrapped up with a lecture by Mr. Shigeyuki Yamamoto about the history and significance of the Shin-Okubo region. He shared the history of Shinjuku and the influx of immigrants, and with people of different backgrounds assimilating into the community, he talked about the need for brainstorming solutions to new problems that the immigrants were facing. It was an insightful lecture, and I was able to learn how Shinjuku became to be a hot spot for immigrants.



Day 2

The day kickstarted with a brief explanation of the excursion that was planned for today by Professor Koyama, and the thought processes that we should keep in mind while navigating through this particular destination that was home to diverse ethnic communities. We were encouraged to think more in-depth about what exactly we wanted to observe, and where we wanted to go.



Then it was time for the excursion to begin, and an adventure to one of Tokyo's popular locations for youth, Shin-Okubo began! Before we began exploring, our group ate lunch at a Thai restaurant, and time quickly passed by as we had fun conversing with one another about the differences in each of our home countries. It was fascinating to know more about how university or everyday life can be so unique to each country. Since myself and my student staff were Japanese, we answered questions from others regarding Japanese culture and lifestyle. As entertaining as it was, we wanted to utilize our time to the fullest, so our group hit the main streets of Shin-Okubo.

The blazing sun did not stop hundreds of people from strolling through the popular sidewalks. To escape the heat, we decided to enter a cute cafe that was designed to make it look like you entered a 2D world. The color usage of the interior played a trick in our eyes, making it seem like everything was flat like a drawing. While sipping on our drinks, we chatted some more and decided on where we wanted to go. The students from outside Japan were highly interested in the Museum for Comfort Women, so we made sure to drop by before time ran out. By then, our group was comfortable with one another, conversation flowed smoothly and laughter was continuously shared. What a blessed moment to be able to interact with people from all over the world!





While heading to the Museum for Comfort Women, we took a look around the bustling Shin-Okubo streets and commented on the architecture, shop styles, and diverse food options. The students from Korea University acknowledged how the architecture reminded them of Korea, but the environment depicted a Japanese-leaning Korean style. We also could not resist taking a photo at the Korean-styled photo booth, where we cut two sheets to split a photo equally for all the members as a little souvenir. Unfortunately, there was not enough time to look properly at the museum, so we opted to head back a little early to campus.

Similar to yesterday, the second day of the forum ended with another lecture from Mr. Shigeyuki Yamamoto, this time educating us about the community development activities in Shin-Okubo. The Shin-Okubo that I often visited with my friends to hang out, had such a rich history and community background than I realized. The active efforts that the city is taking by considering the needs of the immigrant communities were evident, and I now see Shin-Okubo through a redefined lens.

Day 3

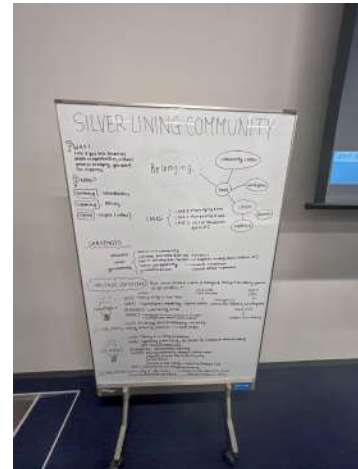
On our last day of the forum, we had the chance to hear from a couple of students who enrolled in CAMPUS Asia study programs in the morning session. I was also selected to give a presentation about my study abroad experience at Korea University since I had just completed the semester-long exchange this spring. Listening to the students from other universities highlighting their study abroad experience at Waseda allowed me to view my school through the lens of an exchange student: it was a refreshing perspective!

Then came the main highlight of the forum: designing a social innovation project with our team. This year's theme was the aging population demographic, so we discussed how we can build our communities with the elderly in mind. We each went around and described what the aging population dilemma is like in our respective countries. A common foundation was the existence of elderly disrespect: people looking down on the old citizens who are "not contributing" to the economy since they are too old to work. We brainstormed the struggles that the elderly may face in day-to-day life by putting ourselves in their shoes. Many examples were brought up, such as loneliness, being handed low-quality work, and their lack of digital intelligence in this current Internet era.



Of course, we could not continue without adding some fuel to our bodies, so we went out to get lunch at one of the famous Wase-meshi (Waseda food spots). The menu included a variety of Japanese dishes, and it was hard for everyone to choose what they wanted to eat. We enjoyed some cold noodles and tonkatsu cutlets, a staple for a hot Japanese summer! During our meal, we mentioned how the names of the noodle dishes in Japan were interesting, such as Kitsune (Fox) udon or Tanuki (Raccoon) udon. Our stomachs were fulfilled, and with a quick trip to the convenience store to stock up on snacks for motivation, we were back in the classroom and ready to resume our project.

Our project was named “Silver Lining Community” as a reference to the gray hair that the elderly start to gain as they get older, but also conveying that there is a silver lining of hope to improve quality of life even when one becomes old. We agreed upon the fact that even if people had financial wealth or opportunities, without the feeling of belonging, it is difficult to experience true happiness. We applied that theory to the aging population: even if they were financially well off or had access to plentiful opportunities, if they feel like outcasts having no place in society, they are prone to dying alone in loneliness. To prevent that from happening, we settled on three points. We could make the elderly feel more connected by creating more facilities such as community centers, feel more supported through policies directed at solving the needs that they face, and feel valued by citizens by cultivating a culture of respect.



Therefore, our challenge statement turned out to be “How can we promote a sense of belonging amongst the elderly population in our societies?” And to that, we raised two possible solutions. The first one was establishing community centers that can host psychological counseling, and regular events and offer valuable information such as specialized hotlines in case of emergencies, in order for elderly of all ages to have a sense of community. The second one was opening more job education training sessions, so the elderly who have confidence in being in the working field can be integrated with the younger generation, which raises productivity. There are a number of limitations that can be pointed out for each solution, but we were able to dissect those as well. During the final session of sharing our projects through group presentations, three representatives including myself spoke in front of the audience. When all the groups finished presenting, the professors from each university gave us constructive feedback, which was great!

And alas, an evening reception was held at a nearby restaurant called Good Morning Cafe, which everybody was excited about as it felt like a reward for using our brains continuously throughout the day. Thrilled voices and laughter filled the room as everyone helped themselves to beautifully arranged courses that appeared one after the other. As time passed by, the crowd faded one by one, and the high-pitched voices of excitement slowly turned into bittersweet tones as we all bid each other farewell and exchanged social media information. Although we do not know when we can see each other again, we have created a connection that is filled with support regardless of where we are situated in the world.



All in all, the Social Innovation Forum was an incredible event that allowed me to collaborate with students from various countries and have eye-opening conversations on pressing issues in Asia. This program further ignited a spark of passion within me that wants to be a social innovator that can contribute to the betterment of the world! I highly encourage all students to participate in this amazing experience, if one is interested in expanding their worldview and partaking in important discussions with other passionate individuals from Peking University, Nanyang Technological University, and Korea University.

Conclusion

Thank you for reading to the end! I hope you were able to put yourself in my shoes and gain a sneak peek at what it is like to be a CAMPUS Asia exchange student at Korea University. Do you feel an urge to want to go to Korea now? I sure hope so!

I strongly recommend taking a leap of faith and signing up for the CAMPUS Asia study abroad experience! Immersing ourselves in other cultures is vital for our growth, and will cultivate us to be global leaders of the future!

Once again, thank you for taking the time to read about my life-changing experience in the CAMPUS Asia program!

