

Social Innovation Forum Report

This forum was my first opportunity to engage in meaningful discussions and connect with people from diverse cultural backgrounds. Although I sometimes struggled with communication due to my limited English skills and lack of cultural knowledge, I was determined not to give up. As a result, I was able to have conversations with many participants. I realized that this was the moment when my “growth mentality” truly began to take shape. I believe this mindset will be a valuable asset as I begin my study abroad experience next semester.



On the first day, we participated in a campus tour of Peking University and attended lectures on “Tianxia” and behavioral economics. However, the moment that most shaped my “growth mentality” came after the official program ended. It was my first night in Beijing with everyone. Participants from Korea University and Peking University, friends from Waseda University, and I went to a Chinese pub and quickly became friends. We enjoyed Chinese-style lamb skewers (羊肉串), and afterward, went to another place to eat Korean food. I was a bit nervous speaking with people I had just met, especially since I had to communicate in English, but I managed to overcome my nerves and enjoy the evening.



The friendships I made on that first day continued into the next day. On the second day, we went out together and visited a famous lake (though I’ve forgotten its name). We walked around, had conversations, and spent an enjoyable time together.

What surprised me most during these conversations was how many students

from Korea and China could speak Japanese or were familiar with Japanese culture. This made me reflect on myself. I realized how little I knew about their languages and cultures. I can't read either Hangul or Chinese characters, and I struggled to remember the names of the new friends I had just made.

During my interview for the Campus Asia Program, Professor Koyama told me that one of the best ways to reconcile is to make an effort to learn about one another. At the time, I didn't fully grasp the importance of that idea, but I came to understand it through the forum. When I realized they were familiar with Japanese culture, I was really touched. I felt that having an attitude of wanting to understand others could help reduce feelings of distrust.

I also realized that discussions don't go well unless you understand the other person and the values they hold. This became especially clear to me during the group discussion, rather than in casual conversation. While the issues we discussed were common to all countries, each country had different values and therefore focused on different aspects. In our group, we discussed the issue of unequal access to education. Even though we all addressed the same problem, our differing perspectives made it challenging to create a consistent presentation.



Just before our departure, Professor Koyama told us that this forum was more than just an excursion. Now I understand what she meant. I hope to carry the lessons I've learned here into my upcoming study abroad experience and continue to grow through new challenges and connections.