

## CAMPUS Asia Study Abroad Experience at Korea University

2025.02.20–2025.12.20

I would like to express my sincere gratitude for the opportunity to study abroad at Korea University through the CAMPUS Asia Program. This one-year experience was extremely fulfilling, and I was able to gain many valuable experiences. Everything I learned and experienced during my time abroad will remain an important asset in my life.

I studied as an exchange student at Korea University in South Korea for one year during my third year of university. During my first and second years, my university life was largely passive, as I merely attended lectures, and I could not say that my time at university was fulfilling. Wanting to change this situation, I decided to study abroad. Prior to my exchange program, I also participated in a language study program in South Korea in August 2024. During that time, I experienced Korea's Independence Day and listened to various public speeches held throughout the city. This experience sparked my strong interest in coexistence within Asian societies and issues of historical awareness, which ultimately led me to apply for the CAMPUS Asia Program.

During the selection interview for the program, I was asked how I viewed issues such as forced labor and the “comfort women” problem. At that time, I was unable to respond adequately, which made me acutely aware of my limited understanding and insufficient engagement with Asian social issues. This experience motivated me to deepen my academic study of Asian history.

While studying at Korea University, I took courses such as *Economic History of East Asia* and *Korean Economic History* in the College of Political Science and Economics. Through these courses, I learned about the relationships among East Asian countries from the opening-port period to the postwar era. In addition, I conducted research on the issue of urban overconcentration, a challenge commonly faced by Japan, China, and South Korea, which allowed me to think deeply about the structural problems confronting Asian societies.

Under Japan's wartime system, many people were mobilized from the Korean Peninsula and China and were forced to work under harsh conditions in mines, factories, and construction sites. In many cases, this labor was imposed against their will and involved unpaid wages, poor working conditions, and serious threats to life. Furthermore, under the system of military comfort women, women—mainly from colonized and occupied regions—were forced into sexual servitude under military control, resulting in severe violations of their

human rights. Through my experience of traveling among Japan, China, and South Korea in the CAMPUS Asia Program, I strongly realized that current academic and human exchanges are built upon these historically unequal relationships. I felt both the weight of East Asia's history and the potential for its future, as a region once bound by conflict and domination is now being reconnected through dialogue and mutual understanding. This experience reaffirmed the importance of correctly understanding history and continuing to share a commitment to peace.

In addition, I engaged in a research project that sought solutions to the issue of youth outmigration in Busan. By visiting Busan and conducting interviews and surveys, I found that the lack of stable employment opportunities was a major factor driving young people to move to larger cities. In response, my team proposed several measures aimed at job creation, including startup support for university students, attracting offices to Busan, forming a marine industry cluster, and promoting workcation initiatives.

The problem of urban overconcentration is not unique to South Korea but is also shared by Japan and China. I hope to apply the experience of researching social issues and their solutions to my future endeavors. Ultimately, I aspire not only to propose solutions but also to contribute to their implementation.

I also conducted research on marketing and consumer behavior, proposing measures to improve customer experiences in facilities such as libraries and health centers. At Korea University, unlike at Waseda University, a learning style that emphasizes proactive, team-based research is strongly encouraged. I was deeply inspired by the seriousness and dedication with which each student approached their research. I intend to embody this proactive learning attitude in my future academic life.

Through my research on youth outmigration in Busan, I proposed measures such as office attraction and industrial cluster formation, which I felt closely aligned with the field of real estate development from a city-planning perspective. Although our research concluded at the proposal stage and was not implemented, this experience led me to aspire to pursue a career in urban development in the future. I am confident that the experience gained through this research will be invaluable in my future career.

Finally, I believe that the historical understanding and cultural tolerance I gained through this one-year exchange program can contribute to building a better future for Asian society. I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to have had such a meaningful experience. In closing, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to everyone who supported me throughout this program.

