



## GSIS Gazette

The office of Graduate School of International Studies functions within the Ajou University as a center for international education and cross-cultural activities.

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GSIS has four departments, offering master's degrees in International Business (MBA), International Trade, NGO Studies and Korean Studies. All the classes of the GSIS are offered in English. It currently has 64 enrolled students from 22 different countries. GSIS has extra-curricular programs and events such as field trips, special seminars, cultural activities and etc.

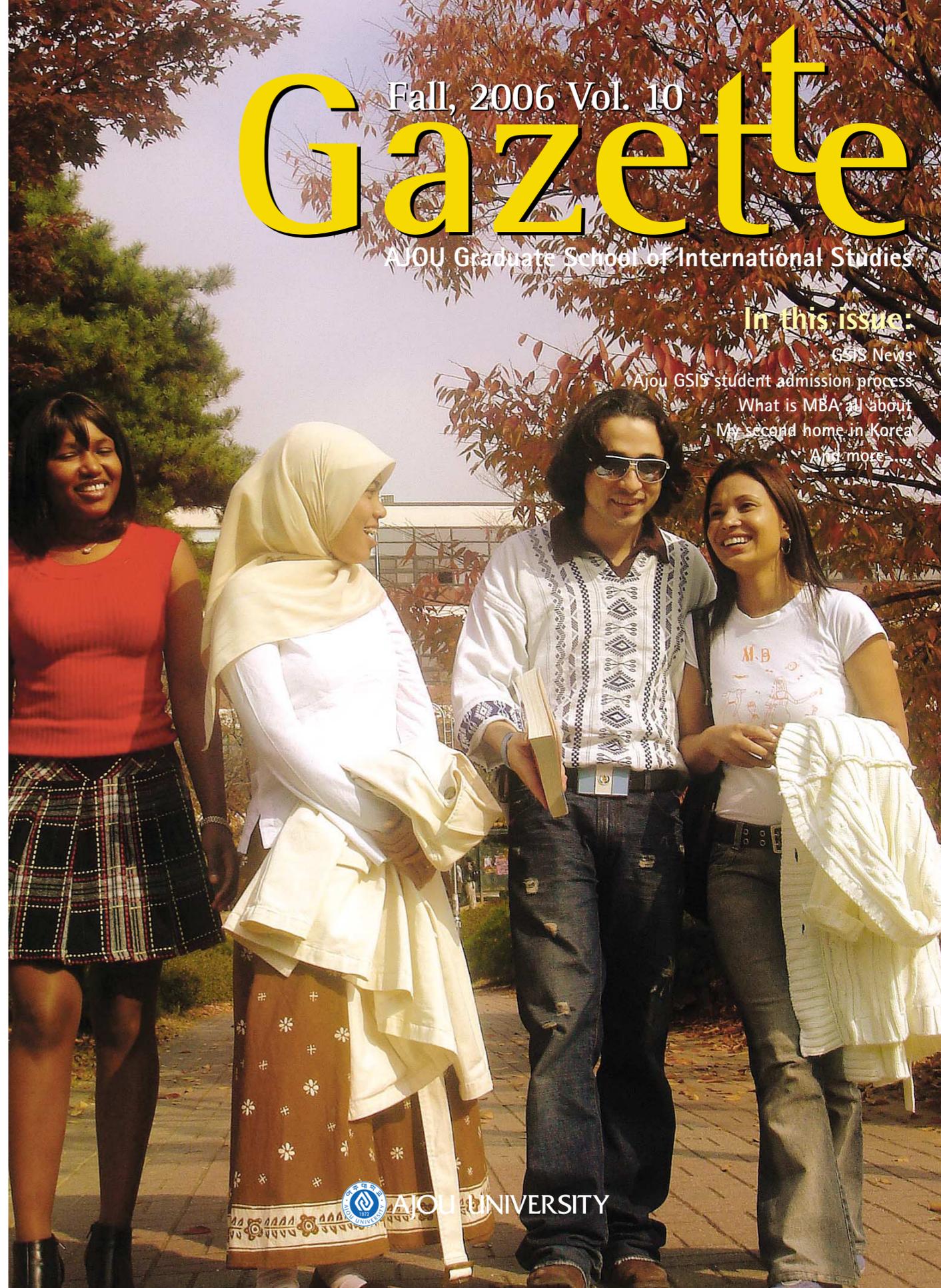
# Gazette

Fall, 2006 Vol. 10

AJOU Graduate School of International Studies

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- What is MBA all about
- My second home in Korea
- And more...



# “Ajou GSIS”, The Choice of Students with Great Ambitions



Welcome to the Graduate School of International Studies, Ajou University (Ajou GSIS)!

Ajou GSIS has one of the top graduate school academic records in Asia. If you are planning to pursue advanced studies in the areas of Business, Trade, Korean Studies or NGO matters, don't forget to consider Ajou GSIS. Ajou GSIS offers a variety of well-organized study programs with curriculums of intellectual depth, while extra curricula activities augment mainstream programs by enhancing essential skills in students, based on their area of specialization.

Our main goal of nurturing professionals is designed to be in line with each individual student's objective of seeking academic excellence and practical experience in their studies. This common goal bonds a close working relationship among faculty, staff and students. Ajou GSIS guarantees a collaborative and supportive environment for the students.

Our faculty members have extensive knowledge and experiences in their respective fields. Besides dissemination of knowledge and building up expertise in students, they provide a large pool of resources for your research, further studies and even for your future career.

Our student body is composed of ambitious students with many different professional goals. They represent countries in Subcontinent and Peninsular Asia, Africa, South and Central America, Europe, Middle East and the Far East. Students enjoy challenging and rewarding experiences in this school of international culture. This diverse but compact student community reflects our commitment to individual attention. Our students enjoy many volunteer and paid intern experiences that enrich their education. Moreover, they benefits from chances to be exposed to the best networking opportunities with famous business communities in East Asia.

Therefore, on behalf of the students, staff, and faculty, I would like to invite you to come, explore, and take the best opportunities that we offer you at Ajou GSIS.

Dr. Jin Ho Choi, Ph.D.

Dean of Graduate School of International Studies,  
Ajou University

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# Inviting Students from Across the Globe

The Graduate School of International Studies is the most diverse place in Ajou University. We have students from across the globe. You name the region, we have at least one. This is quite a surprising mix of international students considering its size relative to other GSIS programs in Korea.

We have seen that every effort has been made to upgrade its excellence in academics and a pleasant atmosphere for students. For instance, the accreditation from Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) for its MBA program can be seen as one example of the seriousness of GSIS. It has also earned the trust of several institutions including KOICA (Korea's aid agency where most of its ODA are channeled.)

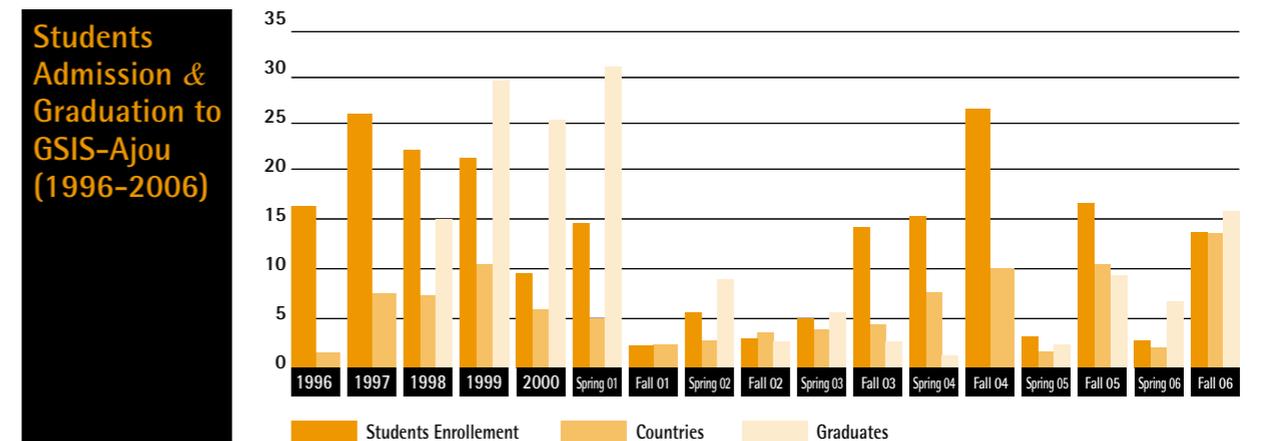
GSIS is now accommodating students who are beneficiaries of KOICA, Korean Foundation and other various institutions. GSIS itself has offered a number of scholarships to students. In GSIS, we are never short of opportunities especially seminars, field trips, special lectures, internships, festivals & etc.

It is our belief that quality and quantity are negatively related. Nonetheless, they are of the same importance. While the quality of education delivered in GSIS is crucial in maintaining its benchmark, it needs to invite more students. Currently it has 64 students from 22 countries. It is peculiar that GSIS does not have any Korean students. If we look at the trend of student admission during the past 10 years, we could see that a significant number of students enrolled during the Fall Semester and the number of countries represented as at an increasing trend. Nevertheless, the enrollment was in lackluster after 2004. In order to invite more students, it was imperative that awareness of GSIS be promoted. This Gazette is one of the sources. We hope that it would also reach prospective students all over the world.

Last but not least, we would like to urge our fellow colleagues to put all your efforts and interest into studying. The success of GSIS very much depends on our performance. Let's show our diligence and competence in academic as well as in extra-curricular activities. Finally, it is our hope that Ajou GSIS be ranked as a top five GSIS in Korea, in the near future.



▲ "We Love GSIS : Study, Friendship and Diversity in Harmony"





▲ GSIS Graduation



▲ Orientation Trip



▲ GSIS Welcoming Party



▲ Suwon-Ajou International Food Festival

**August 2006**

\* GSIS held the 13th Conferment where 17 students from 13 countries graduated. Prior to commencement, they went for a graduation trip to the Everland, the most famous Theme Park in Korea.

**September 2006**

\* The Fall Semester began with 19 new students from 10 countries. Among them, 10 students are government officials from developing countries whose scholarships are provided by Korea Overseas International Cooperation Agency (KOICA). GSIS has also awarded 2 Type-A Scholarship (100% tuition waiver), 8 Type-B Scholarship (50% tuition waiver) and 3 Teaching Assistant allowances to self-financing students.

\* The freshman had an orientation trip to Korean Folk Village, Suwon Fortress and City tour and they were welcomed with a reception by the Dean of the GSIS.

\* GSIS made a two-day field trip to Mt. Soelak in Kangwon Province.

**October 2006**

\* GSIS students celebrated Chu-seok (Korean Thanksgiving Day) by preparing rice cake and learning how to bow in Korean tradition and was aired on KBS TV during Chu-seok holidays.

\* GSIS, in collaboration with Suwon City Mayor's Office, participated in the Suwon - Ajou Int'l Food Festival. Students from 15 countries ran their country booths and offered traditional food to the citizens of Suwon.

\* GSIS had a special lecture from the Bank of Korea on "Current Economic Trends and Outlook for Korean Economy".

\* In cooperation with KOICA, GSIS organized a Korean language programme for 16 participants from 9 countries. The 10-week long program was to enhance awareness and understanding of Korean culture.

\* The exciting month was concluded with mid-term exams.



▲ Visit to the King's Tomb at Cheonmachong

**November 2006**

\* During the second week of the month, GSIS students were geared up for the Ajou International Day 2006. In cooperation with other international exchange students, Ajou International Day 2006 had drawn attention of the diplomatic corps, Gyeonggi Provincial Government, City of Suwon and, of course, Ajouists. 34 countries opened their booths offering their traditional food. The day was brightened up with a series of cultural performances.

\* Right before the end of Fall, GSIS made another field trip to Kyeongju to visit famous cultural sites, Bolguk-sa Buddhist temple. As part of the trip, a study tour was made to Hyundai automobile factory, SK oil refinery and Posco's steel plant in Pohang, the key drivers of Korea's economy.

\* Again, a month was concluded with challenging comprehensive exams for third & fourth semester students, a compulsory for graduation.

**December 2006**

\* At the invitation of Gyeonggi Provincial Government, GSIS students made a special field trip "Fam Tour" visiting MBC studio theme park learning how to cook "kalbi" (Korean barbeque) and how to sing Gyeonggi-do folk songs.

\* It will be a busy month for graduating students preparing for their final thesis defense. No students could escape from their final Christmas. *Good Luck friends!*



▲ Trip to Soeraksan



▲ Ajou International Day 2006



▲ Trip to Kyeongju

# Ajou GSIS Student Admission Process

Prof. Soo Bock Lee, Head of Department of International Trade and NGO Studies, Graduate School of International Studies (GSIS), Ajou University gave an interview to Gazette despite his colossal duties as the heads of IT and NGO Studies Departments



**Gazette** Professor, can you tell us about the student selection and admission policy of Ajou GSIS?

**Professor Lee** We try hard to recruit the most qualified students to our graduate program from around the world, including Korea. Any 4-year college graduates can apply for admission to International Business, International Trade, NGO

and Korean Studies majors regardless of their undergraduate academic disciplines. First, we evaluate applicant's undergraduate academic records, letters of recommendation and study plan prior to the interview. Second, we interview those applicants to examine English proficiency and academic ability at the graduate level. Finally, the student selection committee consisting of the Dean, all Heads of the departments and some other faculty members makes final admission decisions, very carefully considering the elements that I mentioned.

**Gazette** What are the standard requirements for prospective students who wish to apply for the courses offered by GSIS?

**Professor Lee** Well, my answer to your question is very clear. We try hard to get information regarding the applicant's academic potential as a graduate student from the data supplied by the applicants, as much as possible. We can emphasize the importance of undergraduate academic performance and the interview. The higher the GPA is in the transcript, the more likely the chance of getting admitted to our program is. In the interview, students are tested on their English proficiency,

communication skills, motivation, study plan and basic knowledge of economics or social sciences. Of course, a high standard of knowledge in these areas is required for the successful completion of the program.

**Gazette** What are the procedures for granting admission to GSIS?

**Professor Lee** Students' applications will be examined and their academic records will be evaluated at the first stage. Then evaluation reports will be submitted to head of departments based on individual student's specialization. The respective department head will give an interview to make further assessment on student's aptitude. After completing evaluation through their records and an interview, the selection committee headed by GSIS Dean, Heads of Department and other faculty members will I decide on finalists. Then GSIS will seek the endorsement of the finalists from the President of Ajou University. Finally, successful candidates will be notified.

**Gazette** What factors will be considered by the student selection board in making admission decision?

**Professor Lee** Student's record of "Academic Excellence" is the main factor that we consider before granting admission. Secondly, we evaluate student's willingness to pursue studies in their "Study Plan", which is required to be attached to the application. "English Proficiency" is also key factor that we consider, as all the classes are conducted in English. Finally, student's "financial Ability" to support himself/ herself throughout the whole study program.

**Gazette** We understand that GSIS offers different categories of scholarship awards to the students with great aptitude. Can you explain about those awards?

**Professor Lee** There are two main categories of scholarship for self-financing students who have enrolled in a minimum of 9 credits in the previous semester. Students who earn the "A" scholarship can enjoy 100%

tuition waiver, and those who won the "B" scholarship can enjoy a 50% tuition waiver. Students with minimum Grade Point Average (GPA) of 4.0 are eligible to apply for "A" Scholarship, where as those with 3.5 GPA can apply for "B" Scholarship. Self-financing students are also eligible for TA scholarships. Students who are selected from Korea International Cooperation Agency(KOICA), National Institute of Educational Development(NIED) and Korean Foundation(KF), enjoy full tuition waiver, entrance fee waiver and a stipend. **"As a special arrangement for global students, GSIS will provide 50% tuition waiver Scholarship or equivalent financial support to all GSIS students including newcomers starting from next intake."** This arrangement is intended to make our study programs affordable to many international students.

**Gazette** What would be your message for all the applicants in general and prospective students of GSIS in particular?

**Professor Lee** As I said earlier, GSIS programs are open to all prospective applicants with various academic disciplines. However, those applicants are recommended to have good knowledge or experiences relevant to the major. For

example, understanding basic principles of economics helps students with International Trade and business majors and basic knowledge of social sciences helps NGO students. I like to say that one and a half years course work at the graduate level may not be sufficient for successful completion of the graduate program. New students without a sound background in economics or social sciences are encouraged to put in more effort during the course work. Since English is a second language to most students, it is very important to have proficiency in English.



*Gazette also had an interview with Mr. Kyle J. Park, the Director of Academic Office Graduate School of International Studies(GSIS).*

*Every admission application has to pass through GSIS Academic office for document evaluation before they are submitted to different Heads of Department for further evaluation. Therefore, Gazette also had an interview with Director of GSIS office.*

**Gazette** Director Park, Did you experience any difficulties in processing the application forms before they were forwarded to student selection board?

**Director Park** A student's application arriving with



incomplete materials is the most common problem that we usually face. This could delay our admission process, as it takes time to contact the student again and get the complete set within a deadline. At this stage, we can afford to be flexible with the

deadlines and procedures. But, as time goes on, we might need to be strict with requirements and deadlines. Another issue is the differences in academic evaluation systems of different applicants. We have to standardize individual's academic records to be able to evaluate them properly. We have to spare some time to be able to standardize individual's records based on available data.

**Gazette** What message do you want to give to future applicants so that GSIS can run admission process smoothly?

**Director Park** My main message to prospective students is to provide the required materials including "specific study plan" together with their application and to adhere to deadlines. As GSIS plans to be a "Global Institute", international students with broad and open minds will always be welcome!

# What is MBA all about?

by Arief Wibisono (Indonesia)

*In the history of education development, MBA degree has been one of the preferred degrees for most of the students who want to seek excellence in their business career. At the initial period of early 20th century, MBA degree has been introduced in the field of social science.*

*If you are thinking of enrolling for an MBA program, here are several questions and answers, which thousands of people have found useful to support their assertion that MBA is the right choice for them. Obviously, MBA holds strong appeal to both recent college graduates and experienced professionals as a stepping-stone to a more lucrative and challenging carrier path.*



## What is an MBA?

The MBA (Master of Business Administration) is a post-graduate, post-experience, academic course in a number of subjects that together can be said to constitute the science of management. The MBA appeared in the US at the start

of the 20th century, developing from the accounting and book-keeping courses introduced as the country lost its frontier image and began to industrialize. It was modeled on the standard American two-year postgraduate academic program and most students enrolled straight after taking a first degree.

## What do you think about the MBA in the 20th century?

Over the period of almost 30 years, from the beginning of the 1960s to the end of the 1980s, MBA was transformed from being the Cinderella of professional qualifications into being the sine qua non for every aspiring manager. By the 1990s, MBA has arguably become the most sought-after qualification on the planet, and traditional managers thought that early MBA graduates were arrogant, difficult to fit into established career paths and bloated with high expectations about their worth. Those reasons had made several changes to such MBA programs.

The early 1990s saw further changes to MBA curricula and program design, particularly in North America. These were a reaction to criticism of the degree from business and industry. This time the criticism focused on a supposed lack of relevance to modern business. The MBA was said to be too academic, too theoretical and divorced from real-life business practice. MBA graduates were criticized for adopting an analytical and quantitative approach to business issues when companies needed managers with

more diffuse skills, such as leadership. Faculty members were said to lack business experience and be more interested in research rather than in providing business solutions.

By the way ..... There are 44 meanings of the acronym of MBA apart from Master of Business Administration. Among others are: Main Battle Area, Make Busy Arrangements, Married But Available, Married By Accident, Medical Bill Advisor, Message Board Announcements, Military Bases Agreement, Monthly Benefit Amount.

## How about MBA in the 21st century?

The role of MBA in the future is likely to be very different from what it was in the 20th century. In the 1990s it was the acknowledged route to the upper echelons of finance and consulting, the two fields that high-flyers most aspired to. Then, like all fads, it faded out of fashion. Two things in particular brought about the change. First, there was a competing fad that appeared suddenly and without much notice. The second influence on the MBA students was the gradual realization that when they got the job of their dreams with a firm of high-powered strategy consultants, they ended up being little more than the number crunchers. The ethos of the new economy even made some students

think again about the fundamental value of an MBA. The new economy emphasized the value to be gained from the softer side of management, from vision and teamwork.

In the 21st century, an MBA holder should have the skills that can be transported. The enduring growth of globalization has put a premium on people who can work in a variety of cultural and commercial environments. In this century, a master of business administration has both practical and theoretical knowledge to solve problems in familiar and unfamiliar business settings. Thus, the MBA can innovate, coping with unforeseen business challenges and adapting to global business changes. Today, an MBA degree holder demonstrates the high-level management skills needed in unpredictable business environments. As a result, the MBA can significantly enhance the degree-holder's reputation and career prospects.

For the future MBA program, it will likely continue to reflect the two basic choices seen today: the one-year degree, which often dispenses with core programs in favor of specialized courses tailored to specific paths; and the more traditional two-year and extended MBA programs, which have been the basis of graduate business degrees for decades.

## The Myth and the Reality about MBA

There are some persistent stereotypes of MBAs - some of them perpetuated by TV commercials and "reality" TV shows - but what we know from years of experience is that there really is no "typical" MBA. Take a look at some of these "myths" below, and see if any of them are keeping you from taking the next step towards MBA program.

**Myth** You have to be really strong in mathematics to do well in an MBA program.

**Reality** The MBA curriculum offers a balance of different kinds of courses.

**Myth** I won't get into MBA program if I have a non-business background.

**Reality** MBA graduates are from every kind of background, including liberal arts, science, law, social sciences and education.

**Myth** MBA is really best suited for those who want to work for a big company.

**Reality** MBA can help you to be successful almost in any organization.

# NGO Studies in Korea and Understanding Korean Civil Society Organizations

by Jeevan Baniya (Nepal)

Why do you want to be an NGO activist? Why do you like to demonstrate, campaign and protest against something? These are the questions that an NGO student may encounter in his studies

It is natural for people to presume that an NGO Studies course deals with the areas that the NGOs are supposed to cast their eyes on. Even so-called educated and intellectuals ask those kinds of questions to me. Students generally have some misunderstandings about the scope and the meaning of this course and its usefulness in their future career; hence they are pre-occupied with the conception that their career development opportunities will be limited within NGO sectors. Consequently, students are not so eager to pursue their higher education in that area. The crystal clear example can be seen if you compare the number of students in IB or IT to that of NGO Studies. But, considering the courses the NGO Studies students take in GSIS, I can conclude and affirm that NGO Studies is the study of an open, dynamic, global, socio-political, cultural and economical world. In a sentence, it is the study of everything that is related to human affairs. The NGO studies courses empower their students with the profound

knowledge of social development strategies and theories, diplomacy and international relations, international co-operation, governance and government, and so on.

Besides, students can have the great opportunities to experience different activities that Korean Civil Society Organizations may undertake. There is no doubt that civil society is not a mechanism that can be turned off and on at will. Neither is it a convenient delivery mechanism for donor agencies or governments. It is generally viewed as a body which evolves out of genuine local needs and actions. Civil society in one sense is the complex networks of autonomous institutions sustained by a civil code of conduct that is distinct from, yet maintains effective ties with, the State. What constitutes effective ties with the State is a dilemma. Because of the diversity of NGO constituencies, sizes, strategies, structure, ideologies, specialization, sources of funding, agenda and power, it is not possible to describe an average civil society organization in Korea as in any other countries. Some of them are religious, some are secular or affiliated with political and social groups, and some are funded by businesses, foundations, private citizens and governments, and so on. In Korea it is generally understood that civil society is a kind of ideal state where every individual strives to achieve a free, just and developed society through democratic actions.

*"In Korea it is generally understood that civil society is a kind of ideal state where every individual strives to achieve free, just and developed society through democratic actions."*

*"I had a chance to present on Child Labor in Nepal as a special guest at the Asian Centre for Human Rights (ACHR) in Chongno-gu, Seoul."*



▲ Presentation at ACHR by Jeevan Baniya

Transparency, accountability, and independence of NGOs and their influences in relations with government and donors are generally the bases that help people to judge any organization. Nevertheless, there are some people who have negative attitudes towards NGOs and their activities. There are also many people in Korea who are unhappy with the rapid growth of NGOs around the country; that has really undermined the role and attitudes of NGOs in the societies. However, there is a lot that we can learn from Korean Civil Society Organizations and NGOs if you make a deep and critical study. Most of the Korean CSOs and NGOs have written their glorious history as they struggled against the dictatorship regimes and paved the way to democratize their country. They were actually born out of continuous suffering, torture, fears, regret and political persecution. Since their establishment, they have been passing through constant tensions and contradictions. To my knowledge, they have been always on the side of the people's solidarity. Even though the issues of human rights, poverty, socio-political gap, and cultural and economic inequalities remain as the great challenges ahead of them, most intellectuals and experts are found to have accepted the outstanding role of CSOs and NGOs in democratization, human rights, peace, justice and rule of law in the country, which has overwhelmed the Korean people.

As foreigners, people will be fascinated by the key roles played by some organizations to the consolidation of the democracy by checking the abuses of state power, preventing the role of undemocratic forces from resuming the state power and encouraging wider citizen participation. By challenging the autonomy of the state at both national and local levels, the organizations are found to have been able to pressure the government for change



▲ Chu-seok Celebration in Ajou

and development of alternative sets of policies. It is remarkable that the organizations have succeeded to great extent in influencing political parties of Korea to make reform on party structure, democratization, decentralization, elimination of gender discrimination within party, formulation of democratic ideology and policies, and so on. There are some NGOs that have received great public support for playing a critical role to reform the corporate governance, peace and environment. There are many success stories of the organizations, which we can help to transform our social, economical, cultural and political structure so as to create a relatively democratic and equal society. Furthermore, as GSIS has been encompassing the students from different parts of the world in the NGO Studies program, students can extend their understanding of the global social problems and different strategies and policies to tackle them.

International students also can have first hand experiences of different NGO activities in Korea through participation, though the proficiency in Korean language may pose some limit. However, there are many international students doing some internship in some NGOs, through which they have succeeded to develop their networks. I have realized that GSIS should create that kind of internship opportunity by officially approaching the organizations so that it can attract students taking NGO studies. I hope that GSIS will consider this suggestion of seeking internship opportunities for NGO students.

**Wishing all my fellow NGO students for better future after their studies!**



▲ Memories at Bulguksa, Seokgulum

## IT-Education Opportunities for Foreign Students in Korea

by By Shoaib Mukhtar (Pakistan)

PhD Candidate, Graduate School of Information & Communication

The Korean IT sector is one of the most dynamic business sectors in Korea. It is the major contributor in Korean industry, academia, and so on. The recent development shows the strength that Koreans have in the field of IT, especially in the telecommunication sector. The telecommunications revolution has led to a paradigm shift in the way people live, work, communicate and entertain. This revolution from analog to digital, and ultimately to the information society, is possible due to the deployment of Korean broadband networks. Korea has been at the forefront of this revolution; the country's broadband Internet penetration ratio surpassed 70% last year. The involvement of IT in the Korean economy's growth is tremendous. In fact, the IT sector has emerged as the single most important engine of economic growth, representing more than 30% of the nation's total exports in 2005. Such growth was achieved despite the recent slowdown in the world telecommunications markets.

In the past few years, the Korean government has actively implemented a wide variety of policies specially adapted to promote the IT industry and has initiated a significant series of measures for promoting IT studies. To that extent, the Korean government provides numerous scholarships for foreign students to study in top Korean universities in all disciplines

related to IT science and engineering, including computer science, computer engineering, electronics, electrical engineering, telecommunications, etc. Korean governmental research organizations like Institute of Information Technology Assessment (IITA), and Korea Research Foundation (KRF) took considerable steps to encourage foreign IT graduates to study in Korean Universities through awarding scholarships at Masters and PHD level. Since the inception of the IITA program in 2003, 399 international students from 30 countries around the world were given grants for their Masters or Doctoral degrees. By Aug. 2006, 74 of them had achieved their Master's degrees successfully and entered leading companies like Samsung, LG, Google, and Microsoft.

Korea, as a developed country with open cultural environment, reasonable living expenses and safe social communities with well established social infrastructure, provides a comfortable life for foreign students who wish to pursue a research career in Korea. In recent years, the demand for a competent labor force in Korea dramatically increased in the IT sector. Therefore, there exist unlimited future career opportunities for foreigners in companies like Samsung and LG after the completion of their degrees.

### For Your Information: Scholarship Opportunities

#### Institute of Information Technology Assessment (IITA)

For Master's program (Two years; award of 10 million KRW a year per student.)

For Doctorate program (Four years; award of 14 million KRW a year per student.)

Homepage: <http://www.iita.re.kr>

#### Korea Research Foundation (KRF)

For Master's program (Two years; award of 8.4 million KRW a year per student.)

For Doctorate program (Three years; award of 10.8 million KRW a year per student.)

Homepage : <http://www.krf.or.kr>

## My Second Home in Korea

by Khin Thidar Aye (Myanmar)

"Home" gives special meaning to everyone. Some may find it as the place where one can feel safe and secure; others may call it the place where one can find comforts and happiness. Though individual's interpretation of home may differ, no one argues that home takes central part in our life emotionally and physically.

As an international student studying abroad and being away from home for quite a while, one realization struck me, i.e. home can bring more meaning to a person than anyone would imagine. While I was longing for the time with my family back home, a Korean family came into my life thanks to the Host Family Program jointly organized by Ajou University Graduate School of International Studies and Gyeonggi Provincial Office. However, my homesickness still lingered on me as I had doubt on the warmth that I might get from my host family. But the day has come to clear my doubt and proved that I have got a home in Korea.

It was during Chusok'06 that I found my second home in Korea, a foreign country 2,363 miles away from my home country and my folks. Chusok, the Korean thanksgiving, is a three-day harvest celebration that brings together families throughout Korea. It is a festive occasion where families get together to honor ancestors and cherish relatives both living and deceased.

When I got the invitation from my host family, I was excited with a notion that I was considered as part of their family. It was just the beginning of my joyful time that my host family had rendered to me. On that day my host mum and sister came and fetched me to their home. When we arrived home my host grandma, dad and brother were waiting for me at the entrance of the house as if they were waiting for the homecoming of their long lost family member. I was really touched by the special care and attention given to me. It was a short but invaluable period of my time with my Korean host family on Chusok day. I had a chance to observe Korean



▲ Enjoying Chusok Day with the Host Family

celebration of a famous traditional festival, as my host father is the eldest son of the family. The house of the eldest son is usually the site of the gathering for Chusok, and he presided over the ceremony. Family members arrived early in the morning to participate in the ceremony. There were many rounds of bowing to the floor from a kneeling position, and ancestors are offered wine and food. "Chusok" demonstrates how Korean people attach great importance to the family, to the elder generation and to their ancestors.

After the ritual of paying respect to the ancestors, all the family members gathered together at traditional dining tables for meals specially prepared for the occasion. "Chusok" had been meaningful to me as I had the opportunity to be with three generations of my host family and each and every one of them made me feel so special. "Chusok" meals prepared by my host mom were the most delicious meals that I had ever tasted. Especially my time with host grandmother was unforgettable. She found it fascinating to listen to my imperfect Korean. She showed her sympathy when she learnt that I was not as fortunate as my host sisters and brothers to have a grandma around. She assured me that I could count on their family as my own. Host father took time to show me around his house, the treasures he had collected during his visit to 37 countries around the world. He took me on a tour around a medium size garden with lovely flowers and persimmon trees and grandma's small vegetable plot. I have also learnt that my host father has earned Korean President's award on best civil service personnel. My host mum is also a great housewife whose house is bright, clean and impressive. My host sister and brother who are pursuing their studies are also brilliant and helpful to parents. I am proud to have such a great people as my host family in Korea.

➔ Continued on P.17

# Greetings from Mesopotamia

by Al-Kaisy Haider (Iraq)

Hi! My name is Haider from Mesopotamia (Iraq), the land of civilizations. I am a KOICA beneficiary and employee at the Ministry of Planning in Iraq as translator and now I am studying MBA at Ajou University. I want to be a successful businessman, and to achieve this I will try as much as I can to seize any opportunity to fulfill my dream.

**Why am I in Korea?** To answer this question, I want to shed light on fact that Korea is one of the best friends of Iraq. Our relation has been cordial for more than one score. Korea has helped Iraq in different aspects, especially construction and information technology. Frankly, Korean products are the top brands in Iraq. After the Third Gulf War and the collapse of ex-Iraqi regime, many countries started to help Iraq in different fields and Korea is one of them that started to offer a training programme to Iraqi employees in

different fields, especially business management and economic studies. Fortunately, I was one of the lucky ones who benefited from such programmes.

**Life in Ajou** With its high level international standard of education, Ajou University attracted me for my MBA. The environment and nature of study in Ajou University motivated me to get familiar with academic life in a foreign country. The chance to study at Ajou University is something special for me. It enriched me with rare and useful experiences that I might not get in my home country. I have developed a new perception to see life from different angles.

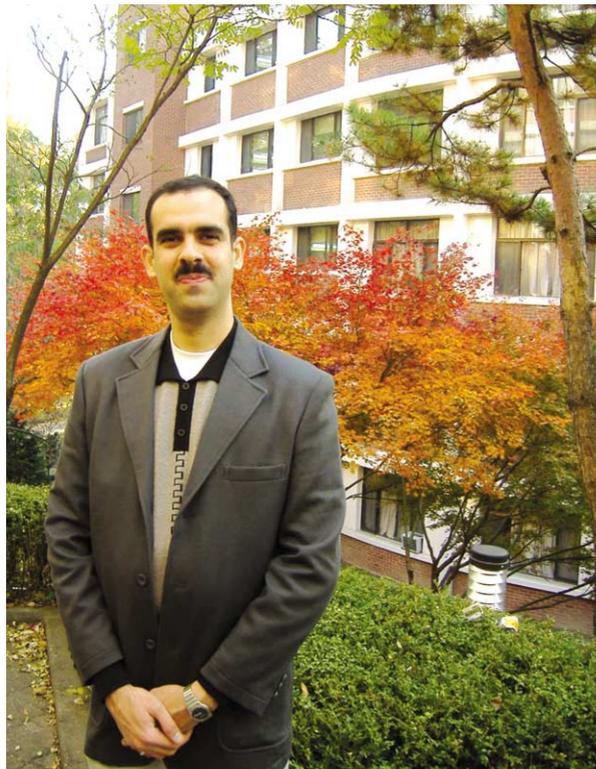
I feel that I am enjoying the best moments of my life in Ajou and have a promising future after graduation. In fact, studying was tough and challenging especially in the first

semester, but now I feel more relaxed. I got other experiences such as bargaining while shopping and cooking. Somebody even told me that I will be getting two Master degrees, one of them in MBA and other one in cooking.

**Multinational Friendship** In my opinion, the best achievement for any person in this life is to love and be loved by others. Having good friends is a very impressive feeling, as friends will help you during hardships and you can rely on their support; that's when life will become more interesting and beautiful. With the diversity of foreign students in Ajou, I have learned a lot of fruitful lessons from my friends I have obtained while in Korea. From Korean guys, I learned to be hard working and invest every minute in doing something important. The Vietnamese guys were smart and helped me on how I can benefit by using the potential power of brain in doing things in an excellent way. Indian guys were philosophers. I learned from them to seize any single opportunity I can get while in a foreign country. I also benefit from their optimistic way of carrying life forward as they could persuade me to believe everything that happens in this life has a reason, so I should have fun, never give up, and lastly nothing is impossible as you can do everything as long as you reason well, you can also plan your future in a brilliant way. The African guys were so passionate. Many times when I was in frustration, to a large

extent they supported and pushed me to defeat my frustration. Furthermore, from European guys, I learned how to value time and meet the deadlines. Finally, from Pakistani guys I learned how to be faithful to my work, friends and to all the people. For this case I realized that in humanity we are all brothers regardless of color, religion or race.

**Adaptation in Korea** Being far away from your home, family and friends is something hard. You can be homesick, but it's a natural thing, especially when you travel to a foreign country. The most important aspect is to take it easy and try greatly to adapt to the environment. It takes some time to overcome the impact of culture shock, especially when you come across, a completely new culture apart from the one you are used to like traditions, social values, and the standard of living. I suffered a little of homesickness at the very beginning as I felt missing my home, family and friends; also, I found it difficult to adapt to Korean life. In one month I started to understand and get familiar with Korean society. The nature of this society, its structure, the simplicity of people and their social beliefs reminds me of Iraqi society so that I could not find any differences between Korean and Iraqi society. Frankly speaking, after spending almost 15 months, I now feel that I am part of this lovely country and I can not survive outside Korea.



▲ In GSIS, we call each other "Brothers"

*"From Koreans, I learned to be hard working and invest every minute in doing something important."*



▲ GSIS courses are interactive in nature



▲ GSIS students are always competitive



▲ When it comes to study....



▲ GSIS Students participated in Ajou English Camp as Teaching Assistants

# KOREA AND ME

by Xing Haining (China)



*"My life in Korea has been full of surprises, laughter and joys. And of course there were times I need to struggle with my tears, too."*

It was by chance that I came to Korea. I used to be one of the average university students in China. I had been studying for my Master's in Advanced Biology in Chinese University before I came to Korea. The only thing I knew about Korea before I came was a Korean pop group H.O.T. I have been a great fan of H.O.T since my days in high school. Little did I know that being an H.O.T fan would forever change my course of life?

One day, I found myself tired of my routine peaceful life and suddenly decided to come to Korea, the home of H.O.T

where I can learn beautiful Korean lyrics in H.O.T.'s song. This is how I landed in the Land of the Morning Calm and beautiful Ajou. My life in Korea has been full of surprises, laughter and joys. And of course there were times I need to struggle with my tears, too. But I never regret my decision of coming to Korea.

Though I began my Korean language study from zero, I have gained confidence in myself as all my Korean friends ensure me that my Korean has been so fluent even at the time I can only speak a few sentences.

I found Korean people are emotional by nature. This seems lovely to me, though there are some disappointing moments. All my Korean friends are friendly and helpful. So I don't feel a bit of loneliness in Korea. To be frank, 70% of Korean words have similar pronunciation with the Chinese words. Therefore, it is rather easy for me to learn Korean. Now my Korean language skills have improved a lot and I should thank all the Koreans who helped me in many ways.

In terms of culture, Chinese and Korean are greatly influenced by Confucianism. Therefore, we have a lot in common, such as giving great value to filial duties and respecting seniority. Besides, we have more or less the same customs and traditions such as celebrating Lunar New Year,



▲ Ajou International Festival 2005



▲ Trip to Pyonchang

Chuseok, etc. Nevertheless, the influence of western culture is more obvious in Korea. I find it more interesting to the Korean culture with slight traits of western culture.

While I am in Korea, I have a lot of chances to do so many things that I had never imagined in China. Thanks to GSIS, I could participate in all the interesting activities such as International Day, food festival, Suwon festival, etc. And on some occasions I had a chance to shake hands and take pictures with Suwon City Mayor. When I bragged about my chance to shake hands with the mayor to my Korean friends, they didn't seem too excited as they took it as the normal duty of a Mayor serving the citizens. It made me realize the maturity of democracy in Korean society.

## ➔ Continued on P.17

### My Second Home in Korea .....

After having meals, we had a conversation with members of the family. Everyone got interested when I explained about a famous Myanmar festival that usually falls around October which coincided with this year's Chusok holiday. The festival is "Th' Din- Gyt" or "end of lent" or "light festival". Buddhist lent is the three month period of monsoon during which Buddhist monks shall not make travel of one night or longer. The festival marks the return of the Lord Buddha from the abode of god where he had been preaching the Buddhist Doctrine (Dhama) to the celestials beings during a lent some 2500 years ago. As Lord Buddha arrived back from the abode of god at dusk, people light up his way with candles, oil lamps and torches. "Th'din Gyt" festival is also an occasion when the younger generations pay respect to the elder generations, elder relatives as well as teachers. "Th'din Gyt" is also a time of reunion as young people who live away from their parents make a point of returning home to pay homage to parents and elders at that time. Despite respective uniqueness of



▲ Prof. Nam with his students at Bulgoksa Temple

I also had a chance to work as an intern in the Gyeonggi provincial government office during my vacation. It was really my pleasure to work with all the officers there. I got a chance to take part in Gyeonggi-do investment meeting where I met the Governor. I also had interesting classes from our professors. Currently, I am doing a part time job in a Korean company where I can apply my theoretical knowledge to practice.

Last but not least, the most exciting thing for me has been having the opportunity to meet with so many friends from all over the world during my stay in Korea, They all love me and I love them, too. After a one-year stay in Korea, I realized that I had made the right decision to come and study in Ajou, Korea.

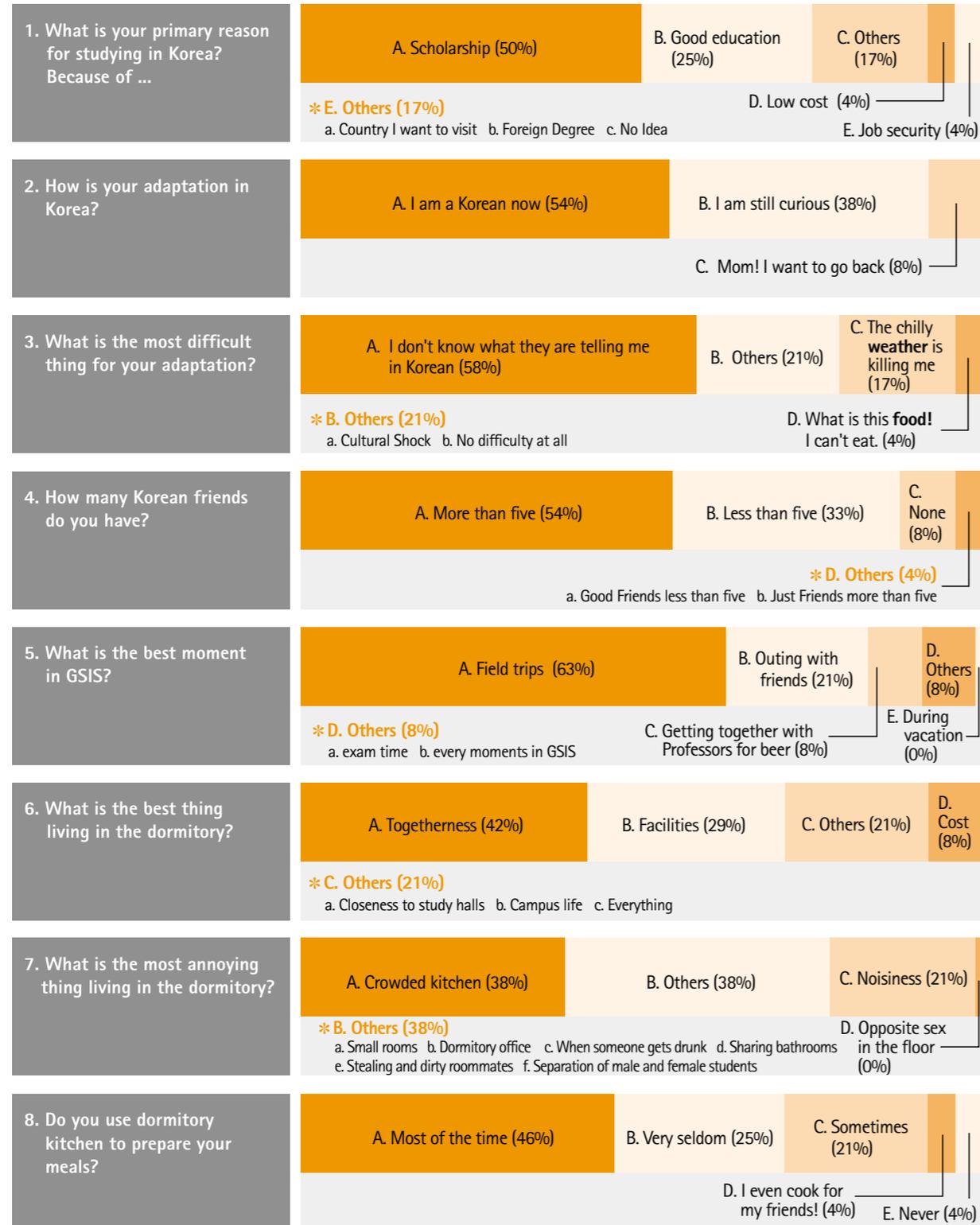
All of these have been true feelings of a Chinese girl about her life in Korea!

"Th'din Gyt" and "Chusok", similar aspects in paying great respect to seniors during both festivals made my host family and me aware of similar values that we are attached to.

After having a great time with great people in Chusok, time had come for me to leave them. Before taking leave, my host Dad brought me heavy bags full of gifts item such as Ginseng and Korean souvenirs. Freshly picked persimmons topped the pile of gifts for me. But they might not realized that they had given me a gift that will last for eternity and that have great value to me, that is the care, warmth and affections of my host family. Saying goodbye has not been easy for all of us as we had got tied with strong attachment during a brief period of time.

*On my way back to my place, I am sure that my face would be shining with joy realizing that I am not alone in Korea; I have a caring family and a warm home to whom and to where I can turn.*

## Let's find out about ourselves!



## Change of Guard in GSIS

by Khan Shamsur Rahman (Bangladesh)



*“Best of luck and our best wishes to Lee Hyun-jung (Mari)”*

During our field trip in September 2006 in Kangwon Province, we were having a small gathering to give farewell to our outgoing student intern Jin Sung Kim. All of a sudden, we came to know that our beloved coordinator Mari is leaving GSIS office to take her new challenging career. We were stunned to hear it.

I would like to say a few words to Mari with my personal feelings. First of all, when we came here to GSIS, Ajou University for Fall Semester 2006, Mari extended all sorts of cooperation and support to all of us as a coordinator. Gradually, she became well-known to new students while discharging her duties with a personal touch. Whenever we had any problems and queries, we rushed to GSIS office and she helped us immediately.

Frankly, I was really grateful to Mari from the day I received the admission letter till my arrival in Ajou University. When I was nominated to study in Korea, I did not receive any application form. I informed Mari about that and she managed to send me an application form on the same day, but I could not download it to my computer. Finally, I requested her to fax me. Immediately, she faxed all the documents. From that moment onwards, I have noticed her promptness. This is Mari!

I was also late for 20 days to join the program, because there were some important meetings in my Ministry and I was not allowed to depart. It was only because of her message that made me released from my engagement in the Ministry and come to Korea.

While in Bangladesh, I telephoned Mari regarding the course registration and other formalities and she was very cooperative and supportive.

In Ajou, I was told that Mari was really prompt, committed, interactive and communicative with an ever-smiling face. I think she is one of the successful coordinators in GSIS.

With this, I would like to say farewell and wish Mari all the best for her brighter career.

I would also like to express our continued support to our new coordinator Ms. Min Jung Lee who has proved her efficiency especially during the field trip to Ulsan. I wish her a success in bridging the students with the faculty of GSIS.



▲ Ajour International Day 2006 ▲