TIEC Provides Strong English Base for Korean College Graduates Seeking U.S. Internships

TIEC teamed up with Alliance Abroad Group in Austin for a program that combines English study with work experience for recent graduates from Korean universities as part of Korea WEST (Work English Study Travel), a cultural exchange program established by the governments of Korea and the U.S. and sponsored by Korea’s Ministry of Education.

Forty-five participants prepared for 6-10 months of professional internships in the U.S. through a customized training program conducted by TIEC, January 16 – March 10, 2017, where they completed a specialized English for Business Communications course covering a wide range of subjects, including résumé writing, preparation for job interviews, business etiquette, discussion of current and cultural events, and simulations of common workplace communications.

"I had experience submitting my résumé to Korean companies, but it was a totally different style from America," remarked Hyunjeen Jung, who majored in law at Kookmin University. "In Korea, we don't have cover letters, so I was not familiar with the concept. Now, I know how to organize paragraphs and what kind of elements I should put in to get attention from my potential host company."

The Korean graduates also took English for Academic Purposes classes alongside other international students at TIEP, and attended field trips and completed assignments that required interacting with local businesses, colleges and universities, and the community outside of the classroom.

Following the training at TIEC, the Alliance Abroad Group will place participants in professional internships, with a priority on Austin organizations, to receive hands-on experience in U.S. business practices in their chosen occupational field or academic major.

"All kinds of non-profits are getting involved," said Kenny Freeman, Program Manager at Alliance Abroad Group who provides support to the Korean participants throughout the WEST program. He added that interest in the program is also coming from startups, tech companies, the City of Austin, and chambers of commerce.

Freeman emphasized the importance of choosing organizations that support the educational aspects of the internship and are dedicated to the professional growth of the individual. "The main thing we look for is cultural exchange," Freeman continued, "for the participants to have the opportunity to work with an American organization and understand how American organizations function, so when they go back home to their organizations, they have that information."

Representatives from TIEC’s Texas Intensive English Program (TIEP), Korea’s Ministry of Education, Alliance Abroad Group, and the Korean Consulate General in New York met at TIEC on February 24, 2017.
Texas Educators Share Their Classrooms and Best Practices with Uruguayan Counterparts

IEC conducted a professional development and exchange program for 26 Uruguayan educators from elementary and secondary public schools, including secondary school principals, a music teacher, high school math and science teachers, and K-12 language teachers, February 1 – 18, 2017.

The Uruguayan participants spent two weeks in Austin Independent School District (AISD) classrooms observing U.S. instructional methods and comparing best education practices, as well as co-teaching with their U.S. peers. The visiting Uruguayan educators lived either with their AISD host teacher or with a local family during their stay in Austin, in addition to attending local cross-cultural programs and conferences related to their field. These activities included a state music educator conference, a multi-state English language learners workshop, working with an Austin high school robotics team, observing mathematics education classes at The University of Texas at Austin, and a visit to NASA in the Houston area.

Megan Cormack, first-grade AISD Spanish teacher, participated as a home stay and classroom host for Uruguayan educators in similar programs designed and coordinated by TIEC in 2014 and 2015. “It was such a positive experience. I wanted to keep the program in Austin,” Cormack said. In addition to hosting again this year, Cormack asked to serve as the liaison between TIEC and AISD, helping to recruit Austin hosts and matching them with their Uruguayan guests.

The program, funded by the U.S. State Department, Uruguay Fulbright Commission, Uruguay’s Plan Ceibal, and the Uruguay Education Ministry, also included two days of cross-cultural activities plus a day-long academic workshop at George Washington University in Washington, D.C.

Nihon University Students Immerse in Texas Culture

Nihon University’s College of International Relations in Mishima, Japan sent its eleventh group of students to TIEC for a customized academic and cultural immersion program, February 4 – March 4, 2017.

The 15 students dedicated their spring break to four weeks of intensive English-language training at TIEC’s Texas Intensive English Program (TIEP) in Austin in addition to participating in cultural excursions around Austin and a field trip to San Antonio.

Local Austin hosts also got involved in the program by opening their homes to students for four weeks, providing opportunities for students to experience American hobbies, pastimes, food, and everyday life, as well as enhance their English speaking through extensive practice.

Home stay host Matt Rogers was eager to “show some American hospitality” and share the “awesome city” of Austin with his guests. "The students want to understand Austin culture, Texas culture, and American culture,” Rogers commented. “Why not be the first person to show them how to eat a taco? Why not be the first person to show them one of our amazing parks? You are doing much more than hosting; you are building strong cultural bridges and lasting memories.”
Korean Fulbright Training Enhanced by Texas School Visits

Fourteen elementary, middle, and high school teachers from Korea completed seven weeks of training at TIEC, January 2 – February 18, 2017, in a program that focused on instruction in American culture, applied ESL teaching methodologies, public speaking skills, and the U.S. educational system.

The participants had the opportunity to gain deeper insight into American society and culture first-hand through a two-week site-residency in public schools across Texas, arranged through local volunteers and participating universities. During this time, the Korean teachers were able to observe public school classes and work with a mentor teacher, live with a local host family, and participate in local community events.

“I had a coworker who already went through the program, and he highly recommended that I should join,” said Yunho Cho, the team leader of this year’s cohort of teachers. “Honestly, it was the seven weeks of a whole different cultural experience that was the most attractive to me.”

Heekyung Shin, an elementary school teacher, said that while she had participated in training abroad before, she had never been to a site visit or observation for longer than one week. “It was a good chance to observe what is really happening in class, what is a student’s life,” she reflected.

Shin also noted how the program connected her not only with American classrooms, but with other teachers from her country as well. “I tend to participate in a lot of programs, most in the Daegu area where I’m living now,” she explained. “I wanted to do an upgraded version, with teachers from other areas, at different levels, all training together.”

This was the sixteenth annual group sponsored by the Korean-American Educational Commission (Fulbright) to train at TIEC since 2002. Nearly 500 teachers have participated in the program.

Spotlight on Other Activities

Twenty-five students from Yucatán completed a month-long American culture and English study program at TIEP at Lamar in October 2016 as part of the Mexican government’s Proyecta 100,000 initiative. The students completed 96 hours of intensive English instruction and traveled to local points of cultural interest, including the Houston Museum District and Beaumont’s Texas Energy Museum (pictured above) with TIEP at Lamar students and instructors.

TIEC hosted a meeting with a delegation of university officials from Morocco on January 27, 2017, who came to the U.S. under the auspices of the Department of State’s International Visitor Leadership Program to explore university partnerships.