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2008 Spring Korea Post-Fair Report

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Pre-Fair Orientation: Korean Student Market Status

AIEF's pre-fair orientation took place at the Oakwood Premier Hotel in Seoul on the morning of Saturday, March 29th. During the orientation, U.S. Embassy Consular Officer Mr. John Hartman mentioned that many Korean students go through study abroad agents and travel agents to apply to U.S. educational institutions. These agents try to give the impression that it is necessary to use their services to be successful. Hartman noted that in an outreach effort, U.S. Embassy consular officers have been visiting Korean schools to explain the student visa application process.

Mr. Stephen Smith, from AIEF's Washington, D.C., office, presented statistics from IIE's 2007 "Open Doors" report showing that the total number of Korean students studying in the USA increased by around 6 percent over the previous year to 62,392 in 2007. Korea is the third-leading source for international students studying in the USA. Smith pointed out that more than 45 percent of Korean students in the USA study at the undergraduate level, with 38.4 percent at the graduate level, 9.2 percent in optional practical training programs, and 7.2 percent in language and other programs. Other major overseas study destinations for Korean students are China, the UK, Australia, Japan, and Canada.

Smith also provided an update on recent developments in Korea's education sector. He explained that NURI (New University for Regional Innovation) is a new government-funded program aimed at promoting the strength of regional universities. In addition, he reported that declining enrollments in Korea's public institutions, due to lower birth rates, have resulted in government proposals for private universities to cut enrollments by 10%. Despite lower projected enrollments in Korean schools, Smith observed, there continues to be strong growth in the number of Korean students opting to study in the USA.

As part of a major initiative to promote English language proficiency, high schools across South Korea will be required to teach selected subjects in English from 2010, Smith said. According to Smith, English-language classes will first be introduced in model schools in rural areas this year. Plans are for English-based classes to be conducted in mathematics, science and other subjects. Furthermore, the English section of Korea's College Scholastic Aptitude Test is to be eliminated in 2013, replaced by a new TOEFL-style English proficiency test conducted four times a year. Korea plans to hire 23,000 "Teaching English in English" (TEE) teachers between 2009 and 2013, said Smith.

Stressing the importance of establishing a strong Internet presence in Korea, Smith urged the U.S. school representatives to visit AIEF's new Korean-language website, www.aief-usa.or.kr.



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Seoul Fair Statistics

The 2008 Spring American Education Fair in Seoul ran from March 29-30 in COEX as part of the biannual Korea Student Fair. Estimated attendance for this two-day event was 33,000, with more than 5,000 fairgoers visiting AIEF's American Pavilion.



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Seoul Fair Highlights

Prominently located near the main entrance to the Korea Student Fair exhibition venue in COEX, the American Pavilion was decorated with a red, white and blue motif. The American Pavilion, organized and coordinated by AIEF, was reserved exclusively for authorized U.S. school representatives. Representatives from the U.S. Embassy and the Fulbright offices in Korea were provided with booths so they could answer questions posed by fair attendees. At the entryway to the American Pavilion, our staff at the AIEF booth offered free counseling and directed student traffic.

As a complimentary service provided to American Education Fair exhibitors, AIEF arranged for interpreters from Korean colleges and universities to translate for the representatives in each booth of the American Pavilion. AIEF also provided Korean-language signs in each booth to introduce the essential facts about each institution in a format that was easily understood by the local fairgoers.



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Seoul Special Seminars

In a presentation room on the third floor of COEX, a series of seminars for students was offered on various topics, including "Study Philadelphia - One of the USA's Leading Destinations," "Graduate Opportunities in Public Policy," and "How to Find the Best ESL School for You." At the request of AIEF, U.S. Embassy consular officers Ms. Annie Lee and Mr. Jason Evans provided presentations to Korean students and parents on the student visa application process.



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AIEF's Student Tracking System

Pre-Fair online registration was offered to grant students complimentary entrance to the Korea Student Fair. Visitors to the American Pavilion were encouraged to register their educational goals and contact details in AIEF's student tracking system. The registered student data was entered into an AIEF computer database and distributed to each school that participated in the American Pavilion.



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Seoul Social

To top off the first day of the Fair, American Education Fair participants enjoyed traditional Korean cuisine and beverages at "Si Gul Jip" restaurant in Seoul. This informal Saturday evening dinner gathering was co-hosted by KTF president Mr. Hongyu Lee and AIEF.



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2008 Fall Fairs in Asia

Registration will soon be open for AIEF's 2008 Fall American Education Fairs in Asia. The Fair schedule is as follows:

Fall Fairs:

Singapore - October 2, 2008

Seoul - October 4-5, 2008

Busan - October 7, 2008

Taipei - October 11-12, 2008

Kaohsiung - October 13, 2008

Taichung - October 14, 2008

Shanghai - October 18, 2008

Online registration is available at:

http://www.aief-usa.org/services/signup_fair.htm. For more information, please visit our Website or call the AIEF's California office at 714-985-1995.

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