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TIEC Marks the 5th Anniversary of Fulbright American Studies Institute for Korean Secondary School Teachers of English

As they bounded up the stairs of the Campus Club for their farewell luncheon on February 17th, 36 Korean secondary school teachers of English and their Texas International Education Consortium (TIEC) escorts chatted enthusiastically with one another. This was their last formal group gathering before the teachers headed back to Korea after a seven-week training program in Texas.

As they have in the past, the Korean teachers spent the first four weeks of their trip in the classrooms at TIEC, polishing their knowledge of English teaching methodology and deepening their understanding of American culture. They put their knowledge and teaching skills to the test over the next two weeks, when they dispersed for their homestay visits around Texas.

During the homestays, the visiting teachers lived with a host family while spending their days in a Texas school classroom. Their experiences varied, with some getting the opportunity to collaborate with their mentor-teachers to teach part of the lessons.

“Angela” Jung Qui Suh, one of the Korean teach-



36 Korean secondary school teachers of English visited the State Capitol in Austin, Texas during their 7-week training program conducted by TIEC's Texas Intensive English Program (TIEP).

ers, reflected on what she learned and what she will bring back to her students from her mentor-teacher in San Antonio.

“I will bring knowledge and translation. But here, from my host teacher, I learned interactive ways. She is... very good at motivating and interacting with students.”

Latin American Teachers Explore U.S. Culture

In February TIEC's Texas Intensive English Program (TIEP) hosted visitors from the southern hemisphere as well. Twenty-eight university faculty and administrators from Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, and Uruguay spent two weeks in Austin, Texas, polishing their English teaching and language skills and absorbing American culture.

Unlike the training program for Korean teachers of English, this South American version focused less on language teaching theory, and more on American culture and practical teaching techniques. English listening and speaking classes were modified to include learning in alternative environments such as museums and other public forums. The teachers visited the State Capitol and the historic Broken Spoke “honky-tonk” dance hall. The group also traveled south to San Antonio, where they visited the Institute of Texan Cultures and explored the city.

These instructors were able to spend one night with a host family during their stay. They were

also able to spend half a day at a public school, where they observed Texas teachers in action and noted the different techniques their American counterparts use in the classroom.

The participants' reviews of this new program were extremely positive, and there were many requests for any future visits to be longer. TIEP Director Dr. Terry Simon says extending the program would definitely have benefits. “A three-week stay would give the teachers more time for school visits and allow them to give presentations about their countries to U.S. students.”

One visitor expressed his hope for this fledgling course's future: “This program has to continue because it is an opportunity that a Latin American teacher has to improve his English...and get in touch with the real American culture.”

Funded by the respective U.S. embassies, the hope is that this program will help facilitate English language instruction and promote good relations between these countries and the U.S.

2006 marks the fifth year of the Fulbright American Studies Institute for Korean Secondary School Teachers of English, sponsored by the Korean-American Educational Commission and conducted by TIEC's Texas Intensive English Program (TIEP). This program has now hosted 167 teachers.

What makes this program a continued success? While some aspects have remained the same, like cultural orientation, others have been tweaked to enhance the teachers' experiences.

“Over the years, the coursework has become more practical,” says Dr. Terry Simon, Director of TIEP. “The language acquisition class was discontinued, but we've added a public speaking class. This helps the teachers develop their presentation skills and makes them more confident when they leave for their school visits.”

Experiences like homestays and school site visits — experiences outside of learning in a classroom environment — are what draw teachers to this program each year. Asked why he felt it was important to complete this seven-week course, “Paul” Yoon Shick Hwang commented that this program would give his English skills a deeper dimension — one he can't get any other way.

“English teachers in Korea have to have the experience of authentic American culture. We can learn from television or any other mass communication, but direct experience is much more important.”