

Between Control and Participation: Seoul Campus Festival Faces an Access Dilemma



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Students waiting in line for the festival

Courtesy of Bang, Ju-yeon

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To keep the Seoul Campus fall festival safer and more student-focused, the Seoul Campus General Student Association (GSA) tightened access to the festival. However, stricter checks at the entrance led to long waits and frustration. A balance between safety and convenience is needed to create a festival that students can truly enjoy.

New Access Policies Emerge After Removal of External Visitor Zone

Last fall, Seoul Campus officially ended its external visitor zone policy. According to the Office of Student Affairs (OSA) of the Seoul Campus, the zone had originally been created to welcome local residents to the

Daedong Festival. However, the OSA noted that it gradually became dominated by celebrity fandom, who arrived early, claimed space, and sometimes informally controlled entire sections.

The OSA added, “The external visitor zone ultimately strayed from its original purpose, turning into a reserved area for celebrity fandom and limiting access for members of the University community.” As a result, all external visitor zones were entirely replaced with Kyung Hee Zone, designated exclusively for KHU students.

The first year without the external visitor zone was largely considered a success. The OSA stated, “The festival was able to proceed without disruptions caused by overheated fandom activity, such as those seen during last spring’s Daedong Festival. The University members were able to enjoy the event without interference.” They added, “More campus

members were able to participate this year. This included student reserves who had previously missed the festival due to overlapping military training schedules. The change made the festival more inclusive and meaningful.”

However, as this year’s fall festival approached, demand to see celebrities up close found new channels. On the anonymous campus community, Everytime, posts offering “line-standing” services for 10,000 to 20,000 won per hour appeared. On X, users advertised student ID rental for 100,000 to 150,000 won. These attempts to bypass the student-only system became a significant challenge for festival organizers.

ID Checks and Long Lines

In response, the Seoul Campus GSA, KnockH, strengthened its access control to the Kyung Hee Zone. KnockH explained, “Entry to the Kyung Hee Zone was managed by checking both student IDs and official identification, along with asking a few brief questions.” They added, “In cases where we suspected ID transfers, we strengthened verification measures. We also checked mobile phones or documents to confirm identities.”

To screen out non-students, the GSA prepared short on-site questionnaires. “We designed questions around campus-specific details that outsiders would find difficult to answer,” they said, “Ensuring that Kyung Hee members would not be disadvantaged by external visitors.”

But for many students, these measures translated into hours of waiting. “I lined up at 4:30 p.m. and did not get my wristband until 8:30 p.m. I could not enter the venue until the performance was already halfway through,” said Yoo Ye-jin, a student in the Dept. of English Language and Literature.

Kim Tae-hee, a student in the Dept. of Physical Education, also shared a similar experience. “On the first day of the festival, I started waiting in line around 1:30 p.m. and received my wristband sometime between 5 and 6 p.m.,” she recalled. “The line moved quickly up to the Grand Peace Hall, but then it barely moved for another two to three hours. It was an extremely boring wait, and everyone was exhausted.”

Even during the third performance on the first day, more than half of the seats at the Amphitheater were still empty. It was around 8:30 p.m., when the program was already more than halfway through.

The GSA later explained, “On the first day, the proportion of external visitors was exceptionally high during the initial entry period, and ongoing complaints from non-students appeared to have caused delays in admitting enrolled students,” adding, “We sincerely apologize to Kyung Hee community members who experienced inconvenience due to the delay.”

Small Fixes Helped—But Not Enough

Conditions improved somewhat on the second day. By 8 p.m., the number of students who had entered the Amphitheater increased roughly by one-third compared to the first day. This indicates that the entry was moving more quickly.

In response, the GSA explained, “On the second day, we strengthened the screening process for external visitors during the waiting period, and thanks to the active reports from our students, we were able to reduce the proportion of non-students.” They added, “By starting admissions earlier and improving on-site communication—such as personally visiting those waiting in line to provide information—we were able to alleviate the entry delays to some extent.”

However, despite of these measures, the problems arise from physical limits, not just policy choices. Seoul Campus holds its festival at the Amphitheater, where fences separate the stage area from the outside. To watch the main performances, students must enter the Kyung Hee Zone, making access control and line man-

agement unavoidable.

In contrast, the Global Campus holds its festival at the Grand Stadium, a much larger, more open venue that allows people to watch performances even without entering the designated Kyung Hee Zone. This difference highlights a clear convenience gap between the two campuses. No matter how carefully the Seoul Campus develops its entry rules, the physical layout of the Amphitheater may continue to make crowd control difficult and long waits more likely.

Moreover, the effectiveness of punishment also remains questionable. According to the GSA, confiscated ID and student cards were handed over to the Student Disciplinary Committee for review. Under *KHU Student regulations*, Article 17, students who violate the student code of conduct may face sanctions such as probation, restrictions on student activities, suspension, expulsion, or even loss of student status.

These are serious penalties that can significantly impact a student’s academic life. However, since student ID trading posts are created not only by enrolled students but also by external buyers, penalizing only enrolled students is unlikely to fully address the root cause: demand from outsiders who want access to the celebrity performances.

The GSA stated, “We plan to pass down the experiences and lessons learned from this festival to the next organizing committee. While we aim to preserve the strengths, we also intend to share the shortcomings openly to help future teams improve.”

To achieve this, it is necessary to look beyond merely refining the entry procedures and consider structural adjustments to the overall framework of festival operations. To do that meaningfully, student leaders and the University may need to look beyond entry procedures alone and consider structural changes, including venue choice, festival schedule and how celebrity performances are integrated into what is supposed to be a student-centered event.

Tighter entry controls did reduce problems caused by external visitors, but it also created new inconveniences for students. Although the relevant organizations have made various efforts to manage this dilemma, the immediate measures still fall short of fundamentally resolving the problem. A broader structural adjustment to the festival itself appears necessary to significantly reduce these issues in the long term.