

The University Life

KYUNG HEE UNIVERSITY

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March By-elections: A Turning Point for KHU

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In March, by-elections including those for the General Student Association (GSA) will be held on both campuses. The elections take place after both campus GSAs shifted to an Emergency Response Committee (ERC) system, following the absence of registered candidates and the invalidation of results due to fraudulent proxy voting. As such, the upcoming election will be a potential turning point for student self-governance at Kyung Hee University (KHU).

Global Campus Election Schedule Set

At the Global Campus, candidate nominations and registration will take place from March 10 to 11. The official campaign period is scheduled from March 13 to 23, followed by voting from March 24 to 26.

Seoul Campus Awaits Details

Although the election schedule for the Seoul Campus has yet to be finalized, the by-election is expected to take place within March. KHU's three campus media outlets—*The University Life*, *V.O.U.* and *Dae-hak Jubo*—will jointly host a public candidate hearing. The debate and vote-count will be livestreamed via V.O.U.'s YouTube channel. The 2025 Seoul Campus by-election drew limited attention, as only a single candidate ticket registered. At the time, the required 50% voter turnout for vote counting was not reached by the initial deadline, resulting in an extension of the voting period.

The 2026 by-elections will test whether student engagement and trust can be restored after months under the ERC system.



Overview of tuition increases by academic division within the University

KHU Increases Tuition by 2.95%, Marks Second Year of Hikes

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After breaking a 16-year tuition freeze since 2009 last year, KHU entered its second consecutive year of tuition hikes. Following a 5.1 percent increase in the 2025 academic year, the University raised tuition by an additional 2.95 percent for the 2026 academic year. The decision was finalized on January 20 at a Tuition Deliberation Committee meeting. University officials said the increases are linked to inflation and intended to shift campus finances from a maintenance-focused structure to an investment-oriented one.

Where Will the Increased Tuition Go?

After years of financial restraint under a prolonged tuition freeze, the University said the newly secured revenue will strengthen its educational and research foundations. Kim Young-jin from the budget team of the Office of Planning & Coordination stated that the additional funds will improve aging infrastructure, expand faculty and staff recruitment, and en-

After two consecutive years of tuition increases, the University announced plans to shift from maintenance to investment.

hance student and research support programs. "The goal is not expansion for its own sake, but restoring essential educational conditions constrained for years," Kim said.

The University is recruiting professors across nine colleges on both campuses, aiming to secure approximately 1,450 full-time faculty. In addition, it plans to hire administrative staff in areas such as fundraising strategy, educational program planning, and specialized administration to reinforce institutional capacity. Kim emphasized that improving educational quality requires not only academic personnel but also professional administrative support.

Infrastructure improvement is another focus. Renovations will prioritize safety-related

upgrades to aging facilities. The Central Library is scheduled for remodeling to create spaces that support career exploration and small-group study. Other projects include restroom renovations in the Central Library and Students Center on both campuses, replacement of heating and cooling systems, rooftop waterproofing, structural reinforcements following safety inspections, and electrical capacity expansion.

KHU also plans to introduce an AI competency enhancement platform and a digital open badge system to promote student engagement and skills development. Research funding for faculty members will be expanded. According to Kim, the investment is aimed less at expansion and more at restoring and modernizing facilities that have deteriorated during the long tuition freeze.

Budget Transparency and Future Tuition Plans

As tuition increases continue for a second consecutive year, student concerns over financial transparency and long-term affordability have grown. In response, Kim stated that budgeting and spending are conducted

in accordance with relevant laws. The budget is reviewed by KHU Council and the Tuition Deliberation Committee, and annual financial reports are publicly disclosed on the University's website. KHU's finances are also subject to external audits.

However, University officials acknowledged that the volume and complexity of budget data make it difficult to present information easily to students. "We recognize the need to communicate financial information more clearly," Kim said. "The University will continue financial briefings to enhance transparency."

The University indicated that future tuition hikes may be unavoidable. It noted that annual increases would likely remain within the legally permitted range, generally tied to inflation. Kim explained that after 16 years of frozen or reduced tuition, shifting from a maintenance-focused model to an investment-driven structure will take time. KHU also plans to diversify revenue by expanding donations and securing government-funded projects to reduce reliance on tuition.

After two consecutive years of tuition increases, the University announced plans to shift from maintenance to investment. It aims to strengthen infrastructure, faculty recruitment, and student support. Whether the transition succeeds will depend on how effectively the University translates financial adjustments into meaningful academic improvement.

Before March's By-election, Kyung Hee Faces Two Threats to Student Democracy: Apathy and Misconduct



Proxy voting

Photo: The Korea Economic Daily (hankyung.com)

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Indifference—or at least a lack of basic conscience—comes to mind when reviewing recent student elections at Kyung Hee University (KHU). KHU enters the March by-election season with a familiar problem: student governance is struggling to find legitimacy. On the Seoul Campus, the General Student Association (GSA) election was invalidated due to irregularities, while on the Global Campus, the vote never took place because no candidates registered, leaving both campuses without elected student representatives. Notably, similar problems have happened repeatedly in the past, underscoring the need for restoring a fair election process and rebuilding student participation ahead of the March by-election.

Lack of Participation, a Persistent Problem in Student Elections

The most notable outcome of the 2026 Global Campus GSA was that it never took place due to the absence of candidates. Under the Global Campus *Election Rules* (ER), students intending to run must complete registration within the period designated by the Central Election Management Committee (CEMC). However, no one registered during the registration period, leaving the election invalid. As a result, the GSA is operating under an Emergency Response Committee (ERC) system until March.

The same pattern appeared in the college-level student associations. According to data from the Global Campus

“Low participation is not the only risk. Electoral misconduct remains a persistent challenge for KHU and should not be viewed as a problem limited to a single campus.”

CEMC, three colleges—the College of Electronics & Information, the College of Applied Science, and the College of International Studies—had no candidates and therefore failed to elect the student representatives, meaning roughly 30 percent of colleges did not hold elections.

This outcome is in contrast to last year's election outcome. In the 2025 Global Campus GSA election, both the Core and Linkhu campaign headquarters had a rare energetic race. Each side recruited more than 100 members and campaigned actively. In response to the heightened competition, the CEMC and KHU Media also held two public hearings, further intensifying the atmosphere.

Consistent with the GSA election, the same pattern appeared at the college level. In 2025, all 10 colleges fielded candidates in every electoral unit. Voting proceeded normally, and every constituency elected its representative, with no unit shifting to an ERC system. In this sense, that revival of student self-governance faded within a single year.

This lack of participation is not limited to the Global Campus. In the 2025 Seoul Campus election, the GSA also transitioned to an ERC after no candidates registered. It was the first time this had happened in seven years, and it placed

KHU among five of Seoul's 17 major universities—along with Hanyang University, the University of Seoul, Korea University, and Kookmin University—operating without an elected student representative.

Overall, this pattern suggests that apathy toward student self-governance is not a temporary issue on one campus but a broader structural problem that can emerge across university communities.

Even with Participation, Misconduct Can Break Legitimacy

Low participation is not the only risk. The 2026 Seoul Campus GSA election initially raised expectations. The KnowHow and KHU:EST campaign headquarters both entered the race, producing the first electoral competition election in three years. The candidate hearing was also conducted in a debate format, further intensifying the competitive atmosphere.

However, those expectations quickly turned into disappointment following allegations of fraud. On counting day, a student from the School of Dance reported that a vote had been cast under its name despite not voting. In response, KHU:EST conducted an investigation and confirmed that proxy voting had in fact occurred. CCTV footage from the polling station showed that, while election officials were absent, a CEMC campaign member completed identity verification using another student's ID number and cast a ballot. Records also revealed that the individual entered the polling booth eight times during the voting period.

As a result, the election was invalidated and the Seoul Campus GSA, like the Global Campus, transitioned to an ERC until the March by-election, demonstrating that even a revitalized student election can still fail due to the shadow of misconduct.

Global Campus Also Faced Misconduct Disputes

The controversy over election misconduct is not new. In last year's Global Campus GSA election, a “spy incident” emerged during the competition between Core and Linkhu. According to the CEMC meeting minutes, a Linkhu member recruited a student inside Core to obtain campaign information. KakaoTalk chat records showed that Linkhu's design team leader collected information through the student—including the campaign staff list, campaign name, logo,

and executive structure—and also attempted, unsuccessfully, to obtain details about campaign pledges. Messages such as “the seniors said they would buy you drinks after the election” also suggested offers of entertainment in return.

As a result, the CEMC investigated the case and issued disciplinary measures. The meeting minutes stated that the Linkhu campaign headquarters violated *Article 58 of the Global Campus ER* and received sanctions, including a public apology and suspension of campaign activities.

Similar misconduct also occurred in the College of Foreign Language & Literature election that same year. According to the election objection record from last year, Geumeum alleged that a member of the college election committee assisted Hear by managing duty schedules and encouraging students to vote for them. This claim was supported by KakaoTalk chat records exchanged between a Hear campaign member and the committee member.

Given that the margin of victory was only around 10 votes, Geumeum argued that the committee had not merely violated the rules governing fair elections in a procedural sense, but had directly influenced the election outcome. The dispute subsequently escalated into prolonged proceedings, including calls to impeach the elected Hear leadership and to invalidate the election results.

However, the way Geumeum raised its objections also became problematic, further intensifying the controversy. According to Hear's statement, a member of Geumeum photographed personal information during a public hearing without consent and allegedly accessed a KakaoTalk account on the same laptop after the user had left. Because the Global Campus *ER* did not contain an explicit clause allowing punishment for such conduct, Hear stated that it would consider pursuing separate legal action. No further updates have been publicly disclosed.

What March Needs to Prove

The upcoming March by-election will test two things: whether students are willing to run, and whether election systems can protect basic fairness. Because the issue is not confined to a single campus, it warrants closer attention from the University community. As both campuses approach the March by-election, this is a time for the community to take greater responsibility to ensure participation and fairness.



Public hearing for Core and Linkhu

Photo: Global Campus V.O.U. Instagram (@vou_khu)

A Wake-up Call for Student Democracy

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Kyung Hee University (KHU) has hit a painful turning point in student governance. An unprecedented election fraud case in the Seoul Campus General Student Association (GSA) has erased what looked like renewed student interest. On the Global Campus, student associations have increasingly shifted into Emergency Response Committees (ERCs) because of low participation and a lack of candidates. Now, with both campuses' GSAs operating under ERCs, the question is not simply who will fill leadership roles this semester. It is whether students can trust the process again.

A Brief Moment of Momentum

2026 was supposed to be different. While the Global Campus was heading toward multiple ERCs due to lack of candidates—including for the

GSA—Seoul Campus looked promising. Just a year earlier, their election had been canceled for the same reason, and they had barely avoided an ERC through a March by-election. So having two candidate teams to run was a remarkable change.

That attention appeared to show up online, too. According to view counts on the University broadcast station V.O.U.'s YouTube livestreams, the previous year's public hearing and vote count drew about 600 and 200 views. This year, numbers rose to about 2,000 and 4,000.

Then the momentum disappeared. Vote counting was delayed because of suspected proxy voting by a campaign staff member. Through investigation, it was confirmed that the fraud was real, and the election results were invalidated. In principle, there should have been a revote, but it was

not a possible option because of practical constraints. Both campuses ended up with ERCs anyway, and it is still unclear whether a March by-election will fix things.

Chance to Rebuild Trust

This is South Korea—a country the world watches for its mature democratic culture. And this happened at a university which represents learning and intelligence. This scandal spread beyond KHU to various news outlets, which is deeply shameful.

This incident matters because student governance depends on trust. Once that's broken, it takes years to rebuild. The people who are responsible for this incident must realize how one act of fraud could damage confidence in the entire system.

However, it is also worth asking what systemic issues made

this possible. Real oversight, clear consequences, and actual prevention measures should be established. The Central Election Management Committee (CEMC) did not conduct a revote, mentioning lack of time and budget. Neither did they offer solid solutions. The new CEMC running the March by-election needs to study what went wrong and build a system that actually prevents fraudulent proxy voting.

What Students Can Do Next

The hardest truth is that indifference enables corruption. Fraud happened even with thousands of people watching online. Imagine what will happen when no one is paying attention. Student governance only works when everyone—not just a few candidates—stays engaged. Voting matters, but it is not enough. Students need to monitor the process and ask questions continuously.

This moment is disappointing, but it does not mean the end of student governance. It can be a chance for KHU to build a more mature and more democratic student community. We cannot let the renewed energy students showed fade away. The by-election is not just about filling the vacancy; it is a chance to rebuild trust.

The hardest truth is that indifference enables corruption.

From Confusion to Convenience: KHU's New Space Platform

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Kyung Hee University (KHU) is set to introduce a new campus Space Management System this March, developed by the Facility Management Team. Based on the information on campus facilities, the system is expected to make reserving and managing campus spaces much easier.

Introduction of the New Campus Space Management System

The new campus Space Management System is a web-based platform that allows users to view and manage campus spaces more efficiently by integrating space data from both campuses into a single database.

Discussions about the introduction of the system began in 2022, and practical design work started in late 2024.

Over the past six months, the Facility Management Team

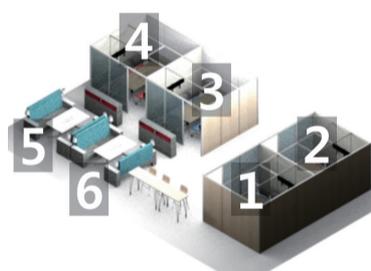
has collected detailed information on campus buildings and spaces, updated floor plans, and constructed the database infrastructure. The Facility Management Team explained, "The system is currently in its inspection phase, verifying whether actual space usage matches the data recorded in the system."

In addition, new regulations related to the Space Management System will be enacted. Under these regulations, each user will be granted different levels of access, ensuring convenient access to relevant spaces.

Space Management System Expected to Enhance Campus Convenience

Through the introduction of the new Space Management System, the most noticeable change will be in the space reservation process.

Because the previous reservation system covered only certain campus spaces, students often had to experience inconvenience of checking



Available facilities for reservation at the library, KHU Seoul Campus
Photo: khu-kr.libcal (lib.khu.ac.kr)

whether a desired facility was included in the system. In many cases, some spaces required separate reservation procedures through student associations or administrative offices, leading to confusion and inconvenience.

Park Hyun-soo, a student in the Dept. of English Language and Literature, shared his experience, "I wanted to reserve the World Seminar Room in the College of Humanities, but I could not find any information about it in the existing reservation system. Later, I found out that it wasn't managed through the system and had to be reserved separately through the

college student association."

The new Space Management System aims to resolve these issues by integrating all campus spaces into one unified platform. It will also provide real-time information on space availability. Students will be able to search for and reserve spaces in one place, as well as check available time slots in advance to plan their schedules more efficiently.

Park Se-eun, a student in the Dept. of English Language and Literature, expressed expectation for the new system: "It will be much more convenient not having to search for where to reserve a facility. Being able to check the real-time availability within the system will also help with planning."

Currently in its final preparation stage, the official implementation of the system is scheduled in March. By enabling integrated management of all campus spaces and offering real-time usage information, the University expects the system to enhance the overall quality of student life.

The University Life

Kyung Hee University
English Press

Founded in 1958, The University Life is a nonprofit English newspaper of Kyung Hee University. Dedicated to the globalization of the university, the newspaper aims to impartially review the achievements and the problems of the administration, the faculty and the student body of Kyung Hee University. As an English medium, the newspaper also aims to provide international students with information and insights into the culture of Korea.

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30% of Global Campus Student Constituencies Shifts to Emergency Response Committee



Indifference to student self-governance

Photo: Weekly Chosun (weekly.chosun.com)

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About one-third of Kyung Hee University's (KHU) Global Campus student representative units will begin the 2026 academic year without elected leaders after last November's general election produced no candidates in 13 of 46 constituencies. This was mainly caused by low student participation and insufficient institutional support from KHU. With the by-election scheduled for March, now is the time when efforts from both students and the school are needed.

One Month of Voting, but Many Races Never Started

The 2026 KHU Global Campus general election was held for about a month, from November 2 to November 28. According to the Global Campus *Election Rules (ER)*, students who wished to run for office had to register by November 12 and receive recommendations from at least one-tenth of the students in their constituency before they could campaign.

Voting began on November 24. Department-level units voted for two days, and larger units voted for three days. Ballots were counted only if turnout reached 50%. If that threshold was not met, the voting period could be extended up to November 28.

However, even after the election, no student representatives were chosen

in roughly 30% of the constituencies. According to the Global Campus Central Election Management Committee, by the registration deadline on the 12th, 4 of the 11 constituencies under its jurisdiction—including the General Student Association (GSA), the College of Electronics & Information, the College of Applied Sciences, and the College of International Studies—had no candidates. The non-candidacy rate reached 36.4%.

In addition, nine additional constituencies overseen by college-level election committees also had no candidates, including Sports Medicine, Chinese Language & Literature, Fashion Design, Postmodern Music, Smart Farm Science, Mechanical Engineering, Industrial & Management System Engineering, Nuclear Engineering, and Environmental Engineer-

“It is time to call for greater student participation and stronger long-term systemic support from the University.”

ing, resulting in a 25% non-candidacy rate in that category.

As a result, out of 46 total constituencies, 13 did not hold elections due to the absence of registered candidates. This means roughly one-third of the Global Campus will enter the 2026 academic year without student representatives.

Whether the Emergency Response Committee (ERC) continues will be decided this March. Under the *ER*, if a unit's representative position is vacant, an ERC fills that role until March. A by-election to select candidates will then be held in March; if no student representative is elected even then, the ERC will carry out the duties for the remainder of the original term. In the end, whether student-elected representatives are appointed depends on student voting in the upcoming by-election.

Campaign Costs, and Uneven Support Between Campuses

Student leaders and organizers pointed to the cost of campaigning as one barrier to running. To run, candidates must promote themselves through multiple channels. Campaign teams typically use banners, leaflets and design materials, and some units produce uniforms for staff. Considering that the Core and Linkhu campaign teams in last year's Global Campus GSA election each had more than 100 members, it is clear that the election process demands a significant investment of time and resources.

However, support systems to offset these costs differ markedly between the Seoul and Global campuses. For the

Seoul Campus GSA election, the candidates receive approximately 3,000,000 won in promotional funding. During the 2026 Seoul Campus election, the Know-How team spent 2,993,964 won, while the KHU:EST team spent 2,967,500 won on promotional activities, with funding provided through institutional support.

In contrast, the Global Campus offers no such financial assistance. Park Byung-jun, current chair of the Global Campus ERC and former GSA president, stated, “There is absolutely no financial support for running in elections on the Global Campus.” This places the entire financial burden of campaigning solely on candidates.

Weak Student Engagement

Along with limited institutional support, low voter participation also appeared to shape outcomes. Most constituencies under the college-level election committees were only able to count votes after the voting period was extended. Under this election's rules, department-level constituencies voted for two days—November 24 to 25, and if turnout did not exceed 50%, voting could be switched to online and extended until November 28. However, only 8 of 33 constituencies (30.77%) met the 50% threshold to count ballots.

The next day, the cumulative countable rate rose to 69.23%, and it was not until November that all department-level constituencies became eligible for counting. Even with the shift to online voting and an extended voting period to boost participation, roughly one-third of constituencies still failed to meet the turnout requirement.

A similar pattern appeared in college-level elections. These constituencies had a three-day voting period—November 24 to 26, with the same counting criteria and online-extension mechanism as department-level elections. Yet, as of the scheduled counting day, the College of Engineering and the College of Art & Design student association elections did not reach the 50% turnout threshold and were only counted on November 28 after two additional days of extended voting.

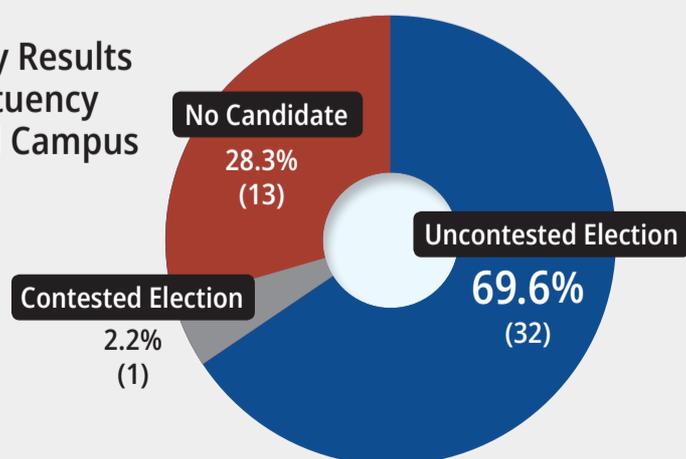
Overall, these low turnout suggests that student interest in representative elections has weakened. In this environment, it becomes harder to expect students to run for leadership positions or compete in elections.

Park said the ERC system should be treated as a warning sign. “ERC literally means our community is in an emergency. As the name suggests, students should recognize that the absence of a student representative is a problem we must overcome by showing greater interest and participation.”

What Happens Next

A by-election is scheduled for March, and continuation of ERCs will depend on whether candidates register and whether students vote in enough numbers to meet turnout requirements. Recent election results suggest low student engagement and insufficient institutional support. It is time to call for greater student participation and stronger long-term systemic support from the University.

Candidacy Results by Constituency for Global Campus Election



Candidacy Results by Constituency for Global Campus Election



The Woojungwon Dormitory, Global Campus

Winter Move-out Policy at Global Campus Dorm Leaves International Students Scrambling for Housing

International students say the central question remains whether cost-saving goals can be balanced with basic housing stability during academic breaks.

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Students living in dormitories on Kyung Hee University (KHU) Global Campus must leave campus housing for about a month each winter under the dorms' policy. The Woojungwon Dormitory, which mainly houses international undergraduate and graduate students, required year-round residents to move out by January 24 this year. Re-entry begins on March 1, with early move-in available from February 22, leaving students to find housing off campus or leave Korea for roughly 30 days. International students and local housing experts say that the policy creates sudden costs while leaving few realistic options to students. Despite the burdens, Woojungwon has stated that it does not plan to allow students to remain on campus during the winter break.

Majority International, Limited Winter Access

According to the dormitory, international students account for 550 to 600 of its approximately 1,000 residents. Despite this, winter residence is permitted only for participants in limited programs, including the KHU & Higher School of Economics double degree program and the Economic Development Cooperation Fund program, where academic activities continue during the break.

For international students in particular, the move-out period is more than a temporary inconvenience. Tarek Hamdan, a student at the Graduate School of Pan-Pacific International Studies, said he returned to Canada after failing to find short-term housing. "The flight cost around \$1,300, which is a huge burden for an international student," Hamdan said.

He also said leaving Korea temporarily created another challenge: what to do with belongings. Woojungwon offers luggage storage during the

closure, but Hamdan said the service is limited to one box per student, which he described as "far less than what many residents need."

Hamdan said he saw other students struggle in similar ways. "My roommate could not easily return to the U.S. due to circumstances there," he said. "He had to struggle to find a place to stay with a local family in Korea."

Woojungwon Cites Maintenance and Costs



Early check-ins available from February 22, 2026

A Woojungwon Dormitory official said the winter vacancy period is necessary for "comprehensive facility management," including cleaning and maintenance of rooms and shared spaces before the new semester.

The official also pointed to financial considerations. "Renting out vacant rooms during the break helps offset operating costs and reduce the financial burden on students," the official said, adding that dormitory fees for Woojungwon and the 2nd Dormitory were frozen for the 2026 academic year.

When asked about the possibility of offering the 2nd Dormitory as temporary housing, the dormitory stated that both facilities operate under the same maintenance schedule, making such an arrangement difficult.

Woojungwon has mentioned that demand for winter residence is limited, as many international students reside in the dormitory during the semester and return to their home countries during breaks. However, as of February 2026, the dormitory has not conducted a survey to gather student opinions on the move-out policy.

Seoul Campus Dormitory Allows Winter Stay

The winter move-out policy from Woojungwon differs from practices at the University's Seoul Campus.

At Sewha Hall, international undergraduate and exchange students accounted for 302 of the dormitory's 432 residents in fall 2025, along with 34 graduate students—bringing the proportion of international residents to approximately 78%.

Sewha Hall allows students confirmed for the following semester to apply for winter residence at the end of each term without requiring them to move out.

A Sewha Hall administrative official said that when students remain during the break, facility management and administrative operations continue within the existing operational framework, and no "significant

operational difficulties" have been reported.

For some Global Campus students, this distinction raises questions about whether alternatives could be considered.

Hamdan said he was disappointed by what he described as a "unilateral notification" from Woojungwon.

"I understand it may have been a necessary evil, but I wish it had been handled in a way that offered international students more support and better options," he said. "It honestly felt like we were just told to leave and figure it out on our own."

He added that short-term housing can raise living costs beyond rent. "It wasn't just the housing that was expensive—the entire cost of living would have gone up," Hamdan said. "If I stayed outside the dorm in an Airbnb, hotel, or short-term rental, my food costs would jump too, because I would lose access to the school cafeteria."

Short-term Rentals Are Rare, Expert Says

Experts also point to the limitations of short-term rentals. Yang Hee-hyun, a licensed real estate agent at Yeongtong Jeil Real Estate, said short-term leases are uncommon in nearby neighborhoods. "We do have foreign students who ask to rent for just one or two months, but nearby landlords generally do not accept short-term tenants," Yang said.

The expert added local governments are aware of the issue but options remain limited. "The Suwon City government has asked for cooperation to allow short-term residence for foreigners, but if landlords refuse, there is little we can do," he said.

Students echoed the need for the University to explore alternative measures. Hamdan suggested that if winter residence remains unavailable, the University should consider arranging agreements with local hotels or other accommodations to provide discounted housing during the closure.

University Cites Limits, Students Call for Options

Woojungwon has said coordinating winter housing in cooperation with the 2nd Dormitory would be difficult because both dormitories conduct renovation and maintenance during academic breaks. As the Global Campus dorms continue the winter closure policy, international students say the central question remains whether cost-saving goals can be balanced with basic housing stability during academic breaks.

Convergence in Social Science Hits Roadblocks: Limited Courses, Administrative Gaps

Hong, Jeong-min

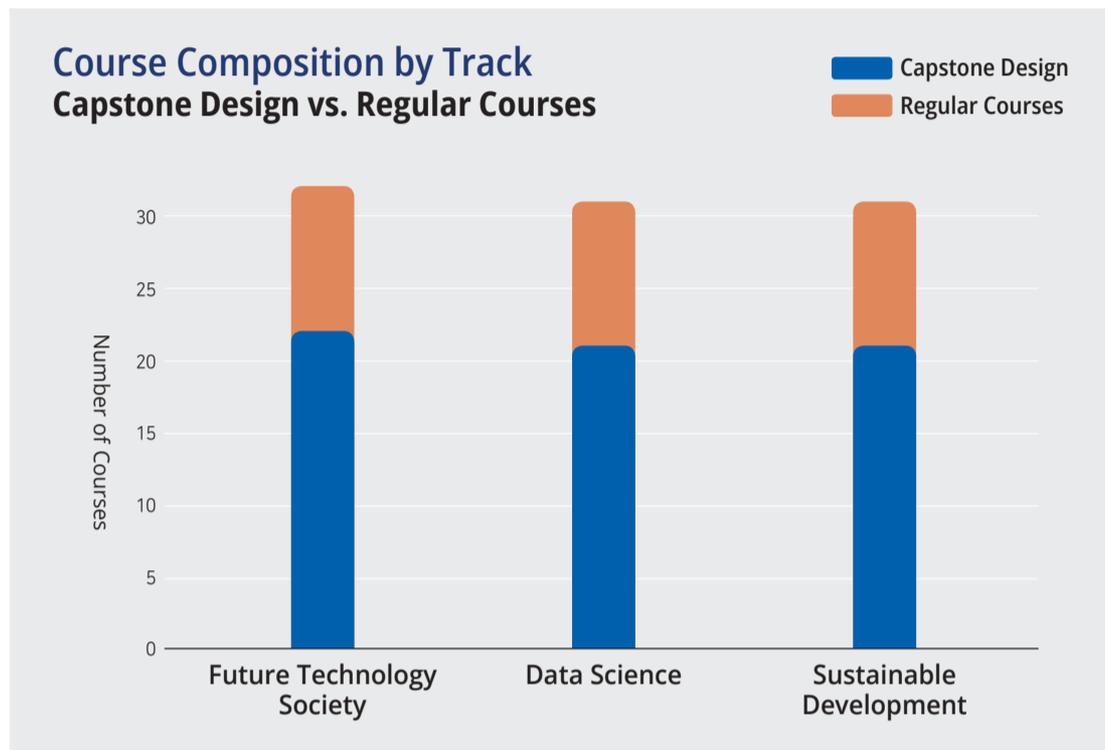
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Kyung Hee University Convergence in Social Science aims to help students build interdisciplinary skills through cross-department courses. Four years after its launch, however, limited course offerings and schedule conflicts remain. Students often prioritize graduation requirements over genuine exploration.

Project-oriented Courses Dominate and Limit Learning

The Convergence in Social Science program consists of three tracks: Future Technology Society, Data Science, and Sustainable Development. According to the curriculum implementation guidelines, each track requires 39 credits for a double major. The goal is for students to gain interdisciplinary skills by choosing courses across the College of Politics & Economics. In practice, however, structural limitations restrict their learning experience.

According to the program's website, 22 of 32 courses in the Future Technology Society track and 21 of 31 courses in the Data Science and Sustainable Development tracks are "Capstone Design or Independent Study courses." These project-oriented courses are not mandatory, but their high proportion limits the number of regular courses available. The result is that students can choose roughly 10 elective courses per year, less than half a



Course composition by track

Yet, limited courses, frequent cancellations, and dependence on departmental schedules continue to constrain students' learning.



College of Politics & Economics Building

Photo: College of Politics & Economics (khsma.khu.ac.kr)

semester's worth. This restricts opportunities for genuine interdisciplinary exploration.

Students Cite Repetition and Cancellations

Na Ho-yeol, a student from the Dept. of Sociology double-majoring in the Data Science track, explained that the curriculum felt more like

"checking boxes" than learning new skills. "I can complete the minimum courses needed for graduation, but the classes I can truly learn from are extremely limited." He said students often have to fill many elective credits with project courses that do not always provide enough practice in data analysis or machine learning. "Team projects often do not provide sufficient experience in data analysis or machine learning. The track is called Data Science, but the actual learning content is not significantly different," he added.

Na also criticized repetition and uneven levels across courses. "Many classes cover basic Python coding or introductory machine learning concepts. Even taking multiple courses, there is little variation in what we learn. Opportunities for advanced, skill-level-appropriate practice are scarce," he said. Beyond repetition, Na said course availability is unpredictable. "The number of available courses each semester keeps shrinking.

Of the courses listed on curriculum, only three or four are actually offered, and last-minute cancellations are common."

These constraints force students to focus on fulfilling graduation requirements rather than pursuing interdisciplinary exploration. High project-course ratios, limited regular courses, and repetitive content significantly restrict the original goal of the program: broad, flexible learning across the social science disciplines.

Administrators Say They Are Reviewing Options

The College of Politics & Economics administration said they are aware of the problem and considering changes. "We are reviewing courses in each department that can be included in the convergence program and adding new courses where needed." Creating additional tracks is also being considered to expand learning opportunities.

Yet fundamental structural limitations remain. The convergence program relies on existing courses from individual departments. It cannot independently create a timetable or adjust course offerings. The administration explained, "Each student's major plan and required credits differ. It is not feasible to manage all cases or adjust timetables systematically." As a result, cancellations and schedule conflicts remain difficult to resolve.

These issues affect student choice. Upon reviewing the course catalog, it was found that for 2025, many recommended courses were offered only in specific semesters, and last-minute cancellations due to low enrollment or departmental issues were frequent. Students had to check course availability each semester and revise their plans. Guidelines for alternatives or make-up options were unclear, creating additional uncertainty.

The administration continues to seek improvements. Expanding course offerings, creating additional tracks, strengthening student guidance, and supporting course planning are all under consideration. However, because the program depends on departmental timetables, faculty assignments, and internal policies, students may experience limited tangible improvement.

The program was created to encourage flexible learning across disciplines. Yet, limited courses, frequent cancellations, and dependence on departmental schedules continue to constrain students' learning. To provide meaningful academic opportunities, structural improvements are needed.

Convergence in Social Science

사회과학 융합전공





“The Seolguk Exchange Festival has the potential to strengthen KHU’s identity and highlight its dual-campus system as a single academic community.”

A banner for the 3rd Seolguk Exchange Festival

Photo: Seoul Campus V.O.U.

Seolguk Exchange Festival Aims for “One Kyung Hee,” but Low Turnout Limits Its Reach

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When thinking of representative university festivals, events such as the Yonsei-Korea University Match or Akaraka, the annual cheerleading festival hosted by Yonsei University, often come to mind. These events go beyond mere entertainment; they serve as symbolic occasions that reinforce campus identity and shared memories. The Seolguk Exchange Festival was designed to fulfill a similar role. However, it has yet to demonstrate the same level of impact, hindered by limited participation stemming from budget constraints and the physical distance between campuses. With these challenges in mind, now is a timely moment to consider how the festival’s potential can be realized by addressing these practical obstacles.

A Festival Designed for Students to Participate, Not Just Watch

The Seolguk Exchange Festival is a joint event that brings together student clubs from both campuses. To foster both

competition and cultural exchange, the festival features a wide range of activities, including sports matches, dance and singing performances, and interactive booths. First launched in 2023, the event reached its third edition in 2025.

The Global General Student Club Association (GSCA) explained the festival’s purpose: “Unlike the annual Kyung Hee University (KHU) festival, which treats students primarily as an audience, the Seolguk Exchange Festival is designed to be a participatory event where students can compete and create performances themselves.” In contrast to the University’s festivals that often feature celebrity performances, limiting student involvement, the GSCA said that Seolguk spotlights student-led performances and competitions.

Organizers also describe Seolguk as an identity-building event. The Seoul GSCA said it most clearly embodies KHU’s slogan, “One Kyung Hee,” as it is the only exchange event within the University, rather than a rivalry between institutions, distinguishing it from events such as the Yonsei-Korea University Match.

The festival is also able to contribute to the long-standing task of addressing perceptions of campus dualization. The Global GSCA explained, “Through participation by club members, the festival aims to promote active interaction not only among clubs from both campuses but also among the broader student population.” It added that sustained exchange of this kind could play a positive role in overcoming perceptions of separation between the campuses.

A Festival for Clubs Only? Limited Participation from General Students

Despite the festival’s goals, many students do not participate. The Global GSCA acknowledged this challenge, noting that promotion is the biggest challenge in turning Seolguk into a representative annual festival. “This year, we put considerable effort into promotion, including inviting a well-known MC to raise visibility,” it said. “Even so, it felt like only students involved in clubs recognized the event.”

Former Global Campus cheerleading captain Cho Sung-joo echoed this view. “Aside from the cheerleading team, I was not very aware of other club activities,” he said. “If I were a non-club student, I think I would not have been particularly interested in the Seolguk Exchange Festival.”

Cho Min-gyu, head of the Seolguk Exchange Festival Task Force, shared that interest often depends on personal connections. Many matches feel like “my friend’s game,” meaning students are more likely to attend when they know a participant. While acknowledging the significance of events such as the Lion Match hosted by the College of Physical Education, he expressed regret that participation in inter-campus exchange events like Seolguk remains limited.

The Seoul GSCA also reflected on past experiences, stating, “At many events, such as the Seolguk Exchange Festival or club fairs, audiences tend to consist mainly of club members or their acquaintances.” It added, “Cases in which students who are not involved in

any clubs voluntarily attend club performances are rare.”

Budget Limits What Organizers Can Promote

Organizers also pointed to funding as a structural constraint. The Seoul GSCA explained that the festival is not fully funded by the Student Support Center. “A portion of the budget comes from university funds, but the majority is covered by the student association fees from both the Seoul and Global campuses.”

The Global GSCA said that “promotion and budget are inseparable.” It noted that the promotion and design team had to abandon plans to create promotional goods due to financial constraints. While acknowledging the difficulties posed by budget limitation, the GSCA did not believe that financial restrictions decisively undermined the overall planning of the festival.

By contrast, student organizers cited “Lion Matches” as an event with stronger institutional backing. Lee Han-na, former vice president of the College of Physical Education student association, said that the event received extensive support from the college, alumni associations, and the Office of External Development. “Because the event was seen as one that could foster student unity, faculty members, administrative staff, and alumni all provided generous support,” she said, adding that such backing enabled relatively stable operations and high participation.

Physical Distance as a Barrier to Exchange

To fully realize the original purpose of the Seolguk Ex-

change Festival, overcoming the physical distance between the two campuses has also emerged as a key challenge. The Global GSCA explained that “executive members from the GSCAs repeatedly traveled between campuses under tight schedules, relying on transportation such as the Seolguk shuttle buses to manage the event.” It also said staffing was difficult during Global Campus sports matches because venues were spread out and staff must track match results in real time.

Cho Min-gyu also described the same problem from an operations standpoint: Sports competitions are held at the Global Campus, while performance-related events take place at the Seoul Campus. He added that the team is reviewing ways to reduce the burden, including issuing attendance cooperation notices and chartering Seolguk shuttle buses to support inter-campus transportation.

These problems have affected sustainability. The Seolguk Joint Cheer Festival, first held in 2023, did not continue after its second year. Cho Sung-joo explained that while training during vacations was manageable, traveling between campuses during the semester created physical strain and fatigue.

What Would Make Seolguk Feel Like a “University-wide” Festival?

The Seolguk Exchange Festival has the potential to strengthen KHU’s identity and highlight its dual-campus system as a single academic community. Yet that potential remains largely unrealized. Financial limitations and the physical distance between campuses continue to restrict participation. Expanding the festival’s reach will require stronger promotion beyond club members, consistent institutional backing, and a practical transportation plan to ease the cost and burden of travel between the campuses.

If supported with strategic planning and sustained resources, Seolguk could become a step toward the vision of “One Kyung Hee.”

When AI Crosses the Line: Cheating in the Digital Age

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In October last year, collective AI-assisted cheating occurred at several universities including Yonsei University (YU), Korea University (KU), and Seoul National University. These incidents highlight not only individual student misconduct, but also the limitations of university response systems and educational structures that have struggled to adapt to rapid technological change. The urgent need for the new education system based on AI ethics as well as the clear guidelines for AI use has become increasingly evident.

The Reality of AI-assisted Cheating in Academia

AI-assisted cheating is rapidly emerging as a growing concern across universities.

On October 25, 2025, suspicions of collective cheating arose during the midterm exam of the online lecture “Interdisciplinary Understanding of an Aging Society” at KU. It was later revealed that some students had shared screenshots of exam questions through KakaoTalk open chat and used AI tools to search answers. In response, on November 27, KU announced through its Learning Management System (LMS) that the situation is too severe to overlook.

This was not the first such incident at KU. On October 20, a similar collective cheating was uncovered in a major course of the College of Engineering. During an online exam conducted through LMS, some students exploited a system loophole that let students re-



Students' public statement posters about the group cheating at Korea University Photo: Yonhap News (yna.co.kr)

The AI-assisted cheating problem reveals not only the misuse of technology by students, but also the limitations of the current educational system that has failed to adapt to a rapidly changing society.

peatedly resubmit the answer after checking the answers. The professor in charge announced that some students had taken advantage of this flaw. To ensure fairness, the entire class was required to retake the exam in an offline, paper-based format.

Soon after, a similar case occurred during the midterm exam of the course “Natural Language Processing and ChatGPT” at YU. Although prior preventive measures had been implemented, including requiring students to submit video showing their computer screens, hands, and faces simultaneously, some students repeatedly looked away toward blind spots out of the camera's view and used multiple overlapping programs on their screens. These actions were later revealed through video review.

Afterward, the professor stated that students who voluntarily confessed would receive a zero score for the midterm exam, while those who denied cheating despite clear evidence would face disciplinary action such as suspension.

Ongoing Controversies Over AI Usage, Yet No Clear Identification of Causes

The repeated emergence of AI-assisted cheating is not limited to a single university, but

reflects a broader structural issue across whole university field. Many universities lack clear guidelines or regulations regarding AI use, leaving students confused about boundary between permissible assistance and cheating. *A Comparative Analysis of Generative AI Guidelines in Domestic and International Universities* published in August 2025 noted that domestic universities frequently emphasize ethical responsibility without offering sufficient practical action plan or educational materials.

Also the online exam's feature appears to reduce students' sense of tension and moral awareness, leading them to fail to recognize their actions as cheating. Kang Su-hyeon, student in the Dept. of Mongolian at Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, recalled, “Taking exams at home was convenient, but it made me harder to perceive it as a real exam. It felt more like taking a practice exam, so I barely felt any tension.” She added that “Being in a private space without any supervision may have influenced students to act immorally,” emphasizing how online exams can blur ethical judgment.

Some argue that AI-related cheating incidents reveal fundamental limitations of existing assessment systems.

Professor Park Han-woo of Yeungnam University Dept. of Media and Communication stated, “The controversy over AI-assisted cheating ultimately reveals structural flaws of universities' assessment systems. Current assessment system fails to reflect the reality that students' knowledge is already extended through AI and other digital tools.”

Current Education System Faces Its Limits: Urgent Need for Structural Transformation

These incidents reveal that universities' existing response systems about AI usage have reached a structural limit. In this situation, the Ministry of Education and the Korean Council for University Education announced on November 27 that they had begun discussions on developing *AI Ethics Guidelines for University Students*. The guidelines are expected to include versions for both students and faculty, and are scheduled for release as early as March.

However, some warn that ethical guidelines may not be sufficient to fundamentally prevent AI-assisted cheating problem. Prof. Park noted, “Ethical guidelines can be helpful, but they are ultimately only guidelines. Practical solutions will come when evaluation systems integrate students' reasoning abilities with their use of AI tools,” emphasizing the need for a structural transformation in assessment practices.

Meanwhile, needs for AI literacy education are also growing stronger. Prof. Lee Jae-yeon, director of the UNIST Center for Digital Humanities, emphasized, “Completely forbidding students' AI use is no longer realistic. We must teach students how to use AI properly.” He added that “Since AI-generated information constitutes an intellectual copyright, it is essential to educate students how to mark source and citation when using AI derived content.”

The AI-assisted cheating problem reveals not only the misuse of technology by students, but also the limitations of the current educational system that has failed to adapt to a rapidly changing society. Despite AI's deep integration into everyday life, universities still rely on traditional responses such as surveillance reinforcement and outright bans. It suggests the need of fundamental transition toward an educational model that fosters creativity, responsible AI use, critical thinking, and ethical judgement.



ChatGPT on a phone screen

Photo: Yonhap News (yna.co.kr)

Chef Ok Dong-sik: Respect, Simplicity, and a Bowl of Gomtang



Chef Ok Dong-sik

Courtesy of Ok Dong-sik

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Chef Ok Dong-sik, a proud alumnus of Kyung Hee University (KHU), has drawn international attention after appearing on Netflix's hit cooking competition show "Culinary Class Wars Season 2." Known for introducing Korean cuisine to global audiences through his restaurants around the world, Ok's journey has been guided by a distinct culinary philosophy centered on respect and simplicity.

"This bowl of *dweji gomtang* represents my entire life and my journey as a chef."

A Moment of Respect Over Competition

Chef Ok Dong-sik says he didn't join "Culinary Class Wars Season 2" to prove he was better than anyone else. Instead, he wanted to cook in a way that matched the principle he has followed for years: respect.

That idea became visible in a one-on-one round against Venerable Seonjae, a Buddhist monk known for temple cuisine. Ok could have used meat, but he chose to follow the same plant-based restrictions as his opponent. He won the round, but viewers remembered the choice more than the result.

Rather than a strategic choice in a competitive show, Ok described his choice as an act of respect. He recalled his first encounter with Venerable Seonjae's temple cuisine during his student years—an experience that left a lasting impression. Ok said he felt compelled to choose her, not as a rival but as someone to cook together. "For me, it was not about winning. Just being in the same space and cooking with the same ingredients with Venerable Seonjae felt meaningful and something to be grateful for," he stated.

This perspective reflects Ok's definition of good cook-

ing. He does not explain it as fancy techniques or perfect visuals. Instead, he focuses on the ability to bring out the natural flavors of ingredients—whether on television or in his restaurants.

One Bowl, One Idea

Ok's restaurant brand, Okdongsik, is closely tied to that philosophy. The name, Okdongsik, is derived from his own name, written with slightly altered Chinese characters to mean "a single-item restaurant" and "a restaurant where everyone dines together." True to its name, the restaurant embraces simplicity. The main dish is *dweji gomtang*—a traditional Korean pork soup—served with minimal side dishes.

Ok's *dweji gomtang* breaks expectations of Korean pork soup. Many people picture pork soup as thick and milky, but his broth is clear—made through slow simmering that highlights the natural taste of the ingredients. He chose the name *dweji gomtang* rather than the more common name *dweji gukbap* to signal that this was something different.

"I wanted people to understand that this was not the pork soup they are used to," Ok said.

Introducing Korean Food to the Global Stage

Ok's approach has traveled abroad. Okdongsik operates multiple locations in Korea and overseas—including New York, Honolulu, Los Angeles, Tokyo, and Paris. Ok tries to keep one rule consistent across these locations: Use local ingredients whenever possible.

Unlike many overseas Korean restaurants that rely on imported ingredients from Korea, Ok prioritizes local sources wherever possible. Ok said tastes change from place to place, even the pork and water. Instead of replicating identical flavors worldwide, he aims for consistency in philosophy and direction, adapting to the local environment while keeping the dish's essential character.

Ok compared this approach to the Korean concept of *shintobuli*, which means harmony between one's body and the land where one lives. "Just as Koreans believe in *shintobuli*—that what is ours is good for us—people in other countries must have their own *shintobuli* too," he explained.

Despite international attention for "Culinary Class Wars Season 2," the restaurant's menu remains simple. Still, Ok is open to expanding within the broader category of *gomtang*. To respect religious and cultural differences, he has introduced variations using beef, chicken, and mushrooms. In Paris, a vegan mushroom *gomtang* is offered as a regular menu item, and a vegan pop-up in New York in January received positive responses.

A Life in Every Bowl

Ok did not describe cooking as a career he chose simply because he loved it. He began adult life as a noncommissioned officer in the military and later prepared for medical school. After repeated rejections, he entered KHU on a full scholarship in culinary arts, finding his way into the culinary field through an unexpected path.

Over the years, Ok said cooking became a language for his life. "This bowl of *dweji gomtang* represents my entire life and my journey as a chef," he said.

To students who aspire to become chefs, he emphasized patience over quick recognition. He noted the 10,000-hour rule, underscoring the value of sustained effort. "Even if it feels difficult right now, I hope you endure and face it with courage," he said.

Ok's advice fits the tone of his food: Simple on the surface, demanding underneath. While his restaurants span continents, his philosophy of respect and simplicity remains unchanged. For him, the goal is not spectacle. Good things take time to mature, and fundamentals matter more. His bowl of *dweji gomtang* stands as proof.

Ok's *dweji gomtang*

Photo: Okdongsik (okdongsik.net)



Ok and Venerable Seonjae on "Culinary Class Wars Season 2"

Photo: Netflix Korea Youtube (youtube.com/@NetflixKorea)



Sober Curious and Zebra Striping: Inside Gen Z's Changing Drinking Culture

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The traditional drinking culture, once characterized by coercion and binge drinking on university campuses and in workplaces, is changing. Especially among the people in their 20s and 30s, alcohol is no longer solely a means to get drunk but has become something to be controlled and chosen. As a result, “Sober Curious”—consciously avoiding or moderating alcohol—and “Zebra Striping”—alternating between alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks—are gaining attention, particularly among “Generation Z (Gen Z).”

The Numbers Behind a Changing Drinking Culture

Alcohol consumption has been steadily declining. According to National Tax Service statistics, domestic alcohol shipments decreased by 22.6% from 4.074 million kiloliters in 2015 to 3.151 million kiloliters in 2024. Meanwhile, demand for non-alcoholic beverages is rapidly increasing. Market research firm Euromonitor International reported that the domestic non-alcoholic beer market grew approximately tenfold over ten years, from 8.1 billion won in 2014 to 70.4 billion won in 2024. It is projected to reach 94.6 billion won by 2027.

This trend is linked to changes in the drinking culture of people in their 20s and 30s. According to the 20s and 30s Drinking Culture Trends survey released by the survey service i-Answer-vay in March 2025, 81.5% of respondents reported drinking alcohol. However, regarding drinking frequency, 43% reported drinking zero to one time per month. For drinking venues, pubs/bars ranked first with 54.5%, followed by home at 47.1%.

When drinking regularly, beer was the most consumed beverage at 70.4%, while the preferred drinking style was low-alcoholic beverages at 54.1%. Drinking lifestyle of the young adults, characterized by low frequency and low-alcoholic beverage consumption, leans more toward enjoying the drinking culture than getting drunk.

Choi Ji-woo, a student from the Dept. of Sociology stated, “While drinking itself was the goal for freshmen, nowadays it feels like alcohol is used only as a supplementary tool to facilitate deeper conversations with friends.” This shift also laid the background for emerging trends such as Sober Curious and Zebra Striping.

New Drinking Trends: Sober Curious and Zebra Striping

Sober Curious is a compound word of sober and curious, referring to people who are curious about staying sober

and consciously regulate their drinking. This concept gained popularity through the book *Sober Curious* by British journalist Ruby Warrington, published in 2018. Since then, it has merged with broader wellness trends, expanding into cultural practices such as morning coffee gatherings and alcohol-free parties. The Sober Curious trend focuses not merely on abstinence, but on reflecting on the reasons for drinking and exploring ways to enjoy social activities without alcohol.

Changes in drinking behavior are also visible in Zebra Striping. Zebra Striping refers to alternating between alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages, much like the black-and-white stripes of a zebra. Global spirits company Diageo highlighted Zebra Striping as a key consumption trend in its *Distilled 2025 report*, describing it as “a result of the trend prioritizing self-care, well-being, and slower social interactions.” Rather than complete abstinence, it reflects a choice to reduce burden by controlling intake volume and pace.

Among Gen Z, the Dry January challenge, meaning alcohol-free January, is also spreading. Participants aim to abstain from alcohol throughout the month of January. Alongside this, binge drinking purely purposed for intoxication is fading. The new drinking culture reflects a shift in mindset among younger generations who seek to maintain social connections and pursue enjoyment while

“Beyond a simple health trend, Sober Curious and Zebra Striping represent shifting values among younger generations who prioritize personal agency and mental clarity.”

Sober Curious lifestyle

Photo: Dong-A Ilbo (donga.com)

avoiding unnecessary hangovers and excessive drinking.

This shift is reflected in Gen Z lifestyles, as young people increasingly seek alcohol-free alternatives for social interaction. The Seoul Morning Coffee Club (SMCC), which organizes morning coffee gatherings across Seoul and nationwide, holds alcohol-free wellness events such as early-morning SMCC Raves and the monthly Sunrise with LongBlack. These initiatives illustrate how Sober Curious culture is expanding into more structured and diverse forms of social engagement.

Why Young Adults Are Drinking Differently

The era when drinking-centered gatherings dominated social life has passed. Younger generations are redefining the role of alcohol in their lives. This shift can be interpreted as a cultural transformation that extends beyond individual preference.



SMCC Daily Morning Coffee Chat
Photo: Seoul Morning Coffee Club Instagram (@seoulmorningcoffeeclub)

Kim Joong-baeck, professor in the Dept. of Sociology, described the younger generation’s moderate drinking trend as “a form of cultural shift.” He explained that as individualism has grown and social gatherings have diversified with the rise of social media, drinking has become less central to socializing.

Prof. Kim explained that the suspension of company dinner culture during the COVID-19

pandemic provided an opportunity to reevaluate existing social norms. The importance of drinking and company dinners, once taken for granted, has diminished. At the same time, a decline in collectivist tendencies and the expansion of performance-based evaluations within organizations have contributed to the spread of the Sober Curious lifestyle. He added, “A large number of young people perceive excessive drinking as an outdated practice of the older generation.”

Chung So-won, an office worker in her 20s, said, “Even if you do not drink, it generally doesn’t affect the atmosphere, and most people respect that choice.” She entered the workforce during the COVID-19 pandemic, when social gatherings were largely restricted. Even after those restrictions were lifted, she felt that the culture of drinking less has continued.

Choi said, “I do not feel the pressure to drink that was portrayed in media in the past.” Even at official gatherings such as department events or club retreats, “alcohol is used to help people bond, but it is not forced, and drinking is not the main focus.”

Prof. Kim further explained, “There is an aspect where the desire to have others acknowledge one’s changed self and share this via social media leads to perceiving reduced drinking as a form of self-development.”

Choi explained that even those who struggle with alcohol may choose non-alcoholic or carbonated drinks to participate in the social atmosphere when others are drinking. This choice allows them to self-regulate without dampening the mood of the gathering. Moderation in drinking functions not merely as health management, but as a cultural symbol reflecting self-control and self-management.

Regarding the Sober Curious trend, Prof. Kim noted, “Sober Curious appears to be a result of changes that are already underway. While it may also influence society in the future, it is more meaningful to examine how broader social conditions shape this trend.”

Beyond a simple health trend, Sober Curious and Zebra Striping represent shifting values among younger generations who prioritize personal agency and mental clarity. Moving away from the past collectivist drinking culture, social occasions are increasingly being redefined as spaces where individual choice and diversity are respected. As attitudes toward alcohol continue to change, patterns of social interaction are evolving as well.

Kyungdong Market: From Old Tradition to Seoul's Newest Hip Playground

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Kyungdong Market near Jegi-dong Station, a place most students often pass by without much thought, is now under a dynamic transformation. As the largest traditional market in Seoul dealing in medicinal herbs and various agricultural and marine produce, it has long been crowded with the elderly, earning the nickname “Hongdae for seniors.” However, in recent years, this old traditional market has been transforming into a hip space by embracing the retro trend. Despite the psychological distance most students may feel, physically it is only a 15-minute bus ride from Kyung Hee University Seoul Campus. It may be time to pay attention to Kyungdong Market as an extended local commercial district for the campus.

The Aesthetics of the Old: Authenticity, Not Imitation

In the middle of a market bustling with old stores, a Starbucks sign can be seen that seemingly does not fit the atmosphere of a traditional market. This is Starbucks Kyungdong 1960, remodeled while preserving the original frame of the old Kyungdong Theater located within the main building of Kyungdong Market in the 1960s. What differentiates this place from other popular places in Seoul is its authenticity. Unlike the artificially created retro concepts in other places, the weight of over 60 years of history emanating from the old ceiling and raw



The entrance of Kyungdong Market

Kyungdong Market near Jegi-dong Station is now under a dynamic transformation. It may be time to pay attention to Kyungdong Market as an extended local commercial district for the campus.

concrete walls dominates the space here. This raw charm delivers a strong visual impact and is enough to attract young people tired of overly manufactured aesthetics. Because the theater's original frame is preserved, the seating inside the store is arranged in tiers, while a modern large-scale artwork displayed at the top highlights the harmony between vintage and contemporary elements.

A Creative Laboratory for University Students: Geumseong Jeonpasa Campus Art Center

Walking out of the iron gate of Starbucks Kyungdong 1960, Geumseong Jeonpasa Campus Art Center catches the eye. Although it bears the signboard of an electronics shop exuding retro sensibility, the interior is a high-tech AI laboratory filled with the imagination of uni-

versity students. Students from various universities including Konkuk University, Hongik University, and Ewha Womans University have participated in a relay format to project their artistic visions onto the Electronics on display.



The exhibition, “Objects with Nunchi,” runs at Geumseong Jeonpasa until the end of March
Photo: VISITKOREA (korean.visitkorea.or.kr)

At the time of writing, an exhibition named “Objects with Nunchi” was being held. Twenty-nine students from the Dept. of Design at the Korea National University of Arts participated to interpret AI's capacity for empathy through *Nunchi*, the intuitive art of gauging the atmosphere and reading others' unspoken needs. The exhibition can be seen at Geumseong Jeonpasa in the main building of Kyungdong Market until the end of March. Encountering the most futuristic AI technology implemented by university students in the middle of an old traditional market creates a very unique experience. In this way, Kyungdong Market is evolving beyond a place for

buying and selling goods into a venue for mutual growth, where corporate technology meets student creativity to experiment with and experience new culture.

A Space for Young People Within a Traditional Market: Cheongnyeong Mall

The changes in Kyungdong Market do not end here. Cheongnyeong Mall offers a completely different charm from the noisy landscape of the first floor. Using the Korean word *Cheongnyeong*, meaning youth, this space is a hybrid food culture venue that preserves the vitality of the traditional market while embracing a youthful vibe. The mall is a startup space for young entrepreneurs under the age of 39, featuring clean interiors and trendy sensibilities that young people would appreciate.

Currently, the mall houses eight general restaurants, six dessert and bakery shops, six workshops and one-day classes. The meal for sale at Cheongnyeong Recipe—a plate-filling pork cutlet served with what appeared to be at least three scoops of rice—cost just 9,000 won. It was a meal that showed both the sophisticated sense of the young chefs and the generous heart of the traditional market. In addition to this, the place is full of menus reflecting the ideas and efforts of young people, such as thoughtfully prepared rice bowls and handmade desserts.

Kyungdong Market holds the possibility of becoming an extended campus for university students in the Dongdaemun-gu area. Going beyond a market, it can serve as a cultural intersection where the youthful energy of students and the wisdom of merchants converge. If you need a refresher from the repetitive daily life of the Hoegi university district, why not take a walk to Kyungdong Market?



Cheongnyeong Mall



Pork cutlet for sale at Cheongnyeong Mall



Two contrasting signboards standing out amidst the old (Starbucks & Geumseong Jeonpasa)



Starbucks Kyungdong 1960

Beyond GDP, What Should We Be Growing For?

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For decades, societies have been obsessed with growth, which has mostly been measured by GDP. However, UN Secretary-General António Guterres warned that GDP does not fully reflect human well-being or the Earth's sustainability. Despite its authority, GDP has a fatal flaw: It counts environmental destruction and widening inequality as economic progress. Now, the university community should stop focusing only on the GDP growth formula and ask a fundamental question: What new values should our generation prepare for beyond GDP?

GDP Measures Activity, Not Wellbeing

Current GDP-centered growth measures success only by how much societies produce

and consume. People replacing usable smartphones and wasting clothes for the next fashion fad counts as economic growth. This is why many people argue that the current measure is broken.

Degrowth theorist Jason Hickel, professor at the Autonomous University of Barcelona, finds the cause of this problem in artificial scarcity. This happens when public goods like housing and healthcare are privatized, forcing people to work harder just to survive. This process increases material throughput—the extraction and consumption of natural resources. Hickel argues that this is the main cause of the climate crisis. Making products from these resources requires massive energy, releasing more carbon than our planet can safely handle.

According to Hickel, society needs a move toward degrowth to fix this. He maintains that degrowth does not mean “be-

coming poor.” Instead, it means reducing wasteful production while strengthening public goods so people can live well without endless pressure to earn more. Ultimately Hickel argues for a transition to the Beyond GDP era. In this new era, success will be measured by the quality of lives, not just by numbers.

From Growth Pressure to Reorganizing Values

In the same way that GDP fosters an obsession with increasing numbers, Korean universities are similarly fixated on rankings, scores, and grades. It is time for them to move beyond this numbers-driven mindset. Professor Ko Bong-jun of the Humanitas College says changing how people think about scarcity is essential. He mentions the philosopher Spinoza: Truly noble things are rare, but capitalism makes people believe that anything rare is noble. On campus, this problem is visible in relative evaluation. Even if everyone in a class does their best, only a few are allowed to get an A. This system forces students to see their friends as rivals. To move beyond mere numeric fixation, Prof. Ko encourages students to stop

fighting for rankings. Instead, students should look for values that actually matter.

Professor John R. Eperjesi of the Dept. of English Language and Literature also says “elite education is used to create scarcity.” He notes that university rankings make students feel like a good life is only for a few. To him, the most important goal of degrowth is winning back “free time” from the constant pressure of student debt and job competition. Reclaiming this time is what allows students to escape the artificial scarcity of the résumé race and pursue true self-discovery.

Real Growth vs. Résumé Growth

Universities should be places where students can explore quality of life and social values. However, there is a huge gap between these ideals and the daily life of students. In a system driven by numbers, education is often reduced to a job-training tool. From Hickel's view, employment rates are just tools to keep students trapped in this growth-focused ideology.

Kang Da-hyeon, a student in the Dept. of Architectural Engineering, described this contradiction clearly. “Pursuing activities I enjoy feels like real

growth,” she said, “but I feel forced into irrelevant activities, like getting TOEIC scores, instead.” Students are not competing for knowledge; they are competing to avoid being left behind. Lim Geon-i, a student in the Dept. of English Language and Literature, feels this tension too. “In the job market, I often hear comments like, ‘You won't be able to use your major,’” Lim said. She expressed frustration on having to focus on practical certificates instead of deep academic exploration. Lim hopes that university remains a space for true learning where students can think and ask questions for themselves.

Imagine if universities measured graduates' happiness or social contribution instead of employment rates. Campus life would look very different: more time for reading and discussion, and more support for meaningful study, rather than padding résumés.

Degrowth and Beyond GDP are not just economic theories. They are ethical choices about what people truly value. If endless growth is no longer the answer, then university students should ask a practical campus version of the same question: What kind of “growth” should universities protect?

2026 K-Content: Inside and Outside Perspectives on Hallyu, Redefining K-Culture from Noun to Verb

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On December 30, 2025, *2026 K-Content: Inside and Outside Perspectives on Hallyu* was published by Kyung Hee University (KHU) Communication & Press. Co-authored by the KHU K-Culture · Story Contents Research Institute and international writers, the book analyzes the message Hallyu left on the global cultural scene amid the explosive interest in Korean culture in 2025. It covers six major genres: drama, film, K-Pop, variety shows, games, and webtoons.

The Current Status of Hallyu Through Inside and Outside Eyes

Now that Hallyu has established itself as a mainstream culture enjoyed globally in the 2020s, attempts to systematically record this massive flow

are continuing. In this context, the institute has published this series annually since 2024. Ahn Soong-beum, a director of the institute, explained, “While having pride as producers of Hallyu is positive, excessive nationalism, often called ‘*gukppong*,’ can hinder sustainable expansion.” He added, “The main actors of Hallyu are also the individuals outside our borders who creatively consume it. Therefore, we must include both inside and outside perspectives to grasp the stereoscopic reality of Hallyu.”

Ahn particularly highlighted the changing meaning of “K”. He explained, “In the past, we thought K-Content had to be made by Koreans with Korean capital. However, “K” has now become an “empty canvas” where people participate together and interpret it in their own ways.” This suggests Hallyu has entered a stage of expanding meaning through



2026 K-Content: Inside and Outside Perspectives on Hallyu

Photo: KHU Communication & Press (khu.press.com)

global interaction, rather than functioning as a unilateral export.

Two Perspectives on “K-Pop Demon Hunters”

The book cross-analyzes hit works like “K-Pop Demon

Hunters,” “Squid Game,” and “Culinary Class Wars.” A highlight is the contrasting perspectives regarding “K-Pop Demon Hunters,” which recorded the highest viewership in Netflix animation history.

Baek Tae-hyun, a researcher of the institute, offers the inside view, focusing on the shadow behind the flashy success. He reads this work as a structural paradox where Hallyu is subordinated to global platform capital. His critique argues that companies like Netflix merely utilize K-Pop's fandom culture and emotional labor mechanisms as tools for their own profit generation.

Conversely, Alfred Lo, an Oxford researcher, offers the outside view, focusing on transboundary characteristics. He interprets the blending of Korean and English languages, the landscape of Seoul, and global narratives as a process expanding Korean culture's vitality. He argues that as foreign audiences engage with this work, new symbols for global communication are created rather than reinforcing a fixed “Koreanness.”

“K”: From Identity-noun to Co-evolution-verb

Ultimately, the book reaches a clear conclusion: co-evolution. The preface declares that “K” is no longer limited to a label denoting origin. It argues that

“K” must move beyond being an identity-noun and instead become a co-evolution-verb, where global citizens communicate and change together.

Ahn emphasized, “Co-evolution refers to elements that previously existed independently influencing each other. We must abandon the unilateral view that we produce and sell. Hallyu's potential becomes much greater when we understand the process of outsiders creatively recontextualizing it.”

However, the path to co-evolution does not mean simply reproducing glory. The book suggests “examining the coldness nearby,” implying we must learn from losing the hearts of neighboring countries like China and Japan due to an excessive focus on revenue generation. Ahn advised, “If you approach others only to generate profit, you will inevitably clash.” He urged KHU students to “treat Hallyu as an open space for negotiation, collision, and dialogue with the world.”

2026 K-Content: Inside and Outside Perspectives on Hallyu proposes a direction for Korean culture. It calls for a rational perception that contemplates global expansion while confronting the shadows behind visible success, serving as a practical guide for students aiming to understand Hallyu objectively.