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Broadening Network Through IISMA

I've aimed to go and experience studying abroad since a long time, and so the moment the end of my third term came, I began my preparation, starting with renewing my passport and taking an IELTS test.

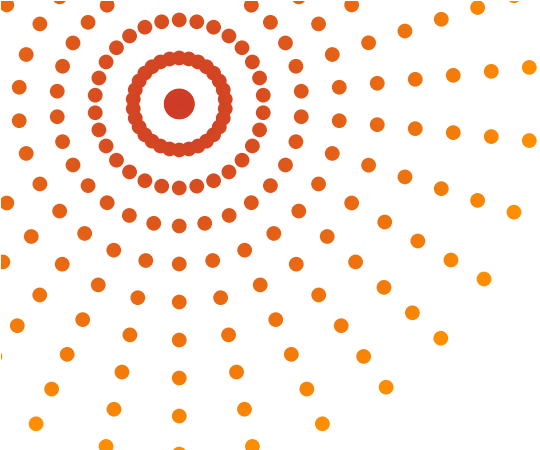
IISMA wasn't my first choice. When the new term started, I applied to another scholarship program abroad right away, and **failed right off the bat**. At the time, I felt miserable and ashamed as I know I have troubled a lot of people on the way to help me, so I told myself that I'll do better next time. That's when I found IISMA would open for applicants in a couple of months, and I started **preparing for my next battle**. I researched deeper into every university I wanted to apply to, applied for a mentorship program, and practiced mock interview sessions with friends.

I think it was the **first time in my life that I've put so much effort into something**, and it made me realize how pursuing a dream really is such a wonderful thing. What's even more wonderful, though, is when you were actually able to realize that dream after such tough times. **I was one of those fortunate souls**. It felt like I have found a piece of myself that I've searched for a long, long time.



Meeting the other awardees would be the second surprise after receiving the acceptance message. Turns out there was quite a high jump in the number of Hanyang University awardees compared to the previous batch, from 13 to 50. I would say this is **my first, and one of the biggest challenges as an awardee**. As an introvert, I only found comfort in a small group of people, so trying to fit in a group of as many as 50 people with 50 different characteristics was quite tough for me. However, as it was a once in a lifetime opportunity, I tried hard to join in conversations and befriending a lot of people.

Of course, it was not easy, especially when we've actually arrived at South Korea. While the first 3 days were loads of fun, adapting while pushing myself to get along with everyone was energy-draining. **I can't find anyone with the same interests nor travel plans**. I never expected my hurdle to fit in with my awardees friends and not some culture shock. **I felt a bit down for a week, until I came to realize that I do not have to push myself too hard**. It was not like I can't get along with the others, and there's also no need for me to push aside my interests during my time in South Korea. From then on, I would sometimes hang out with my friends, but often times, **I'd travel alone or with my new friends that I encounter there**.



While I expected to befriend a lot of Korean local people, I also happened to **connect with a lot of international friends too**. I was grateful that I took the chances to meet more people and stay connected with them. Oftentimes I would join gatherings, or ask to hang out with my friends. We would visit museums, hang out in Hongdae, and even visit a friend's house. It was fun hearing stories of other cultures and otherwise, sharing stories about Indonesian cultures. One thing I regret, however, was not being able to let my friends have a taste of Indonesian food. **But aside from that, we had tons of fun and I'm still staying in contact with them in the present.**

Of course, as a student, we also have to study. **Studying was never an easy thing to do**, but Hanyang University was very accommodating and the professors are very open to consult, so there was not much difficulty that I faced. **My favorite course is called Modern Stress and You**. It was a course about the variety of stress we encounter in life and how we can manage them. The professor is super nice, even telling us to feel free to contact her if we're facing difficulty, and even in provide games and souvenirs we often brought home during class. Her class has taught me a lot on how to face life and changed a lot of my perspectives. **I respect her a lot.**

After coming back home, of course the **next step is to contribute back to my surroundings**. I have already planned some ways that I can contribute in when I first wrote my essays, and I'm determined to realize them.

First, I promised myself that I'd invite one of my professors as a guest lecturer in my department events. After a lot of discussion and going back and forth, I was able to invite my entrepreneurship professor in Hanyang University as a Postgraduate Research Talk speaker. Through that event, I hoped I was able to build a connection bridge between my department and Hanyang University. **That was my way of contributing to my home university, ITS, and my department in particular**. I also planned to help future applicants, so when IISMA 2023 was approaching, **I applied as a mentor in a mentorship program**, while also accepting some people as mentees informally. Just how I was helped before, I helped them review their essays, practice their interviews and gave them some tips. It filled me with joy and pride every time a mentee of mine informed me that they get accepted as an awardee.

IISMA has changed my life more than ever, making my seemingly small world bigger, and broadening my perspectives of life.