

## George Mason University Korea is Being Born Anew



The new wall decoration in the Global Lounge (photo by : Sumin Lee)

George Mason University Korea is busy saying farewell to autumn with an overall building renovation. Walls, tables, and chairs in the global lounge are being renovated, and now the “Marvel Lounge,” once on the first floor, is nowhere to be seen. There are also changes on the floors and department facilities which are busy moving to new places within the building.

Mason Korea is currently under renovation after a few complaints and suggestions about the building usage surfaced throughout the semester. There have been proposals to change some places in a more efficient and effective way for the betterment of student and faculty life.

In regard to this, there has been controversy around the ongoing renovation. On one hand, the idea is well-supported for the betterment of the building usage. Having a renovation means looking and preparing for a new start.

Some people take such changes in the Global Lounge in a positive light because the school is looking back the past and refreshing itself to take a big step toward the future.

On the other hand, it is not fully supported due to some shortcomings during the remodeling process. One issue is that the idea of George Mason University Korea having a renovation is not well-known around the school and there were not many opportunities to hear how people want the school to be changed.

One student, who wished to stay anonymous, said, “I personally did not know the school is changing [the facilities]. It seems like not many people in the university know about this. Since I did not know, I was quite surprised when all the Marvel chairs disappeared and suddenly there was nowhere to sit!” Another student, who also wanted to remain anonymous, said “I believe there was not any

time the school asked about or discussed the idea of renovating the school to the students. So, I wonder what the purpose of the renovation is in the first place.” A professor at George Mason University Korea, who wished to stay anonymous, welcomes the ongoing renovation process, but expressed some worries at the same time. “It feels like many students or even faculty members are not aware of such changes yet. So, I am little bit worried that it is going to cause confusion for a while.”

George Mason University Korea has yet to give an official statement about the ongoing controversy over the renovation. Dr. Roland Wilson, a professor of Conflict Analysis and Resolution said, “I welcome the new start of the school. But, I wish there were more places to talk about the ideas of how to change the school for the better!”

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## CSPS Korea and KAAAY Engage in Security Dialogue

The Center for Security Policy Studies at George Mason University (CSPS Korea) made a visit to the Korea Army Academy at Yeong-cheon (KAAAY) from November 9 to November 10 for an informative and educational trip on security studies.

The field trip con-

sisted of lectures, seminars and dialogue on “leadership in conflict” and “the importance of the Republic of Korea (ROK) - United States (US) alliance.” The voluntary student fellows, acquired different perspectives on international security and obtained fresh input about security from a

military standpoint.

Commonly known as “Choongsungdae,” KAAAY is a military academy of the Republic of Korea Army that trains officer cadets and produces the largest number of junior officers in the Korean Army.

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## Su-neung: The Day South Korea Falls Silent

On a special Thursday in November, South Korea stops. Airplanes do not depart, most of the workforce’s call times are delayed, and traffic is non-existent in busy cities. The only ones who are moving around are Korean high school seniors, waiting to take arguably one of the biggest exams in their life: *Su-neung*. This year’s College Scholastic Ability Test (CSAT), better known as “Su-neung,” was held on November 15.

The rate of Koreans going to college, which is nearly 70 percent, is the highest among OECD countries. Therefore, university admissions have become a natural social practice and tremendous meaning in South Korea. This tendency has also led to the so-called “Su-neung culture.” This culture is evident in the families, schools and society of South Korea.

Families treat the test takers with the absolute utmost care for one year before the big day, and sometimes all the life patterns and styles of an entire family revolve around that of examinees. The high schools offer different curriculum, learning places and hours for the seniors, or “Go-sam.” The juniors prepare food and materials, such as sticky rice cakes and taffy, and paper towels. The sticky snacks symbolize the hopes to “stick” to the exam and pass it. As paper towel rolls come loose smoothly, it carries the hopes that the exam will flow easily. Also, the junior students prepare numerous events, such as

cheering for the seniors by offering warm tea and canies at the test sites.

On the day of the test, about 800 emergency vehicles are provided for students in traffic, and the morning rush hour is delayed. Police motorcycles are there for test takers who are worried about being late and parking is not allowed in the radius of 200 meter around the test site. Especially, Korean airplanes cannot take off or land during the English listening test. Finally, after the exam, various companies and social organizations prepare events for the seniors. All kinds of items such as movie tickets, cell phones, and restaurants are vastly discounted only for them.

It seems that the warm culture of caring the test takers is beautiful and heartwarming, but the reality of Korea, which had to develop such a culture, seems tragic on the other hand. It is said that the reason why the CSAT is on Thursday, not Friday, is to check their survival of the students on Friday. Due to the result of CSAT, many students become frustrated and in extreme cases, they commit suicide. In this regard, it seems that this year’s “handwriting confirmation letter of CSAT,” which is done to make sure there are no substitutes in the test, was designed to commemorate and praise their twelve-year efforts preparing for a single exam: “I’ve never seen anyone so lovely as you.”

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The phrase ‘success of CSAT’, which is called ‘Su-neung Dae Bak’ (Credit: Joongbhu University Press Corps)

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To get a glimpse of what it is like at KAAAY, the CSPS Korea team began their packed schedule by meeting the KAAAY superintendent Major General Jeongyeol Seo, who proudly exclaimed their anthem, “Never, Never, Never Give up!” Later in the afternoon, the team attended the 7th Leadership Seminar at KAAAY, which covered the topics “organizational leadership” and “battlefield leadership.” After the seminar, the team toured the military academy, which is also home to the largest military training field in East Asia. Along the journey, they had the opportunity to interact with several military officials and KAAAY cadets.

On the following day, the student fellows participated in a special lecture on military security and the importance of the ROK - US alliance along with ten cadets. Captain Jimin Kwon, professor of North Korean Studies at KAAAY, offered

unique, but factual insight on security concerns from the military standpoint. He lectured on the Mutual Defense Treaty, the necessity of the ROK-US alliance, the status quo of North Korea and South Korea relations, and the security concerns on the Korean peninsula. Afterwards, the fellows and the cadets engaged in an active discourse on the lecture materials and exchanged viewpoints on the ROK- US alliance and what security means to them.

In reflection of the field trip, student fellow Huyong Kim (Global Affairs, '18) said, “As someone who has completed the mandatory military service, this field trip served as a reminder that the war between North and South Korea is still potential. It was interesting to see the contrast of how the Korean public sees the relationship between the two Koreas and how the military view security threats on the peninsula. It was also interesting to see the cadet life-

style and how they are educated in the academy.”

In reflection of the field trip, Dr. Soyoung Kwon, professor of Global Affairs, stated, “I believe that university is where you broaden your perspective and acquire deep knowledge. Students should explore different places and learning environments, and I think that this experience gave students the opportunity to do just that. In the future, I hope that CSPS can explore more chances in the future, and strengthen the bond among the fellows along the way.”

Meanwhile, CSPS Korea, a branch of CSPS at George Mason University Fairfax under the Schar School of Policy and Government, plans to enact further activities and events in Spring 2019. Further information regarding the center is provided at <http://cspsgmu.edu/cspks-korea/>

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Fairfax

## Former Mason Student Found Dead

It was a chilly day in New York City when the bodies of sisters Tala Farea, 16, and Rotana Farea, 23, were found on the shore of the Hudson River. The bodies were loosely bound by duct tape and showed no external signs of trauma. Water in their lungs indicated that they were alive when they entered the water.

The Farea sisters disappeared from Fairfax, Virginia, on Aug. 23. According to The Washington Post, police discovered receipts indicating “various forms of transportation, arriving in New York City around Sept. 1.” Mason officials confirmed that Rotana was enrolled in the university until last spring, when she dropped out according to The Washington Post. Tala was a student at Fairfax High School. Not much else is known about the sisters.

However, this disappearance was not their first. The Washington Post reported that Chief of Detectives, Dermot Shea, began

his file on the sisters back in 2017. In December of that year, the Farea sisters ran away, but were found a day later and transferred to a shelter after allegations of domestic abuse. Further details on these allegations have not been released.

The sisters’ mother remains here in Fairfax. A Saudi embassy official said that they had communicated with her about her expired immigration status, according to The Washington Post. Unnamed police sources reported to the New York Times that it was not known whether or not the sisters applied for asylum.

The Saudi government allocated about \$6 billion to fund education through the King Abdullah Scholarship Program. This program began in 2005 with an agreement between Abdullah and President George W. Bush to increase the number of Saudi students in the U.S. It is still the largest scholarship program in Saudi Arabia, according

to the Saudi Arabian Cultural Mission. This scholarship program funds 90 percent of study-abroad programs for Saudi students, according to Forbes.

Back in 2015, tighter restrictions on the program led to a decrease in funding. Applications dipped by 27 percent, according to The Wall Street Journal. “Now, for [Saudi] students who want to study outside the country with government aid, they need be enrolled in one of the top 50 academic programs for their field or at one of the top 100 universities in the world,” explained an article published by Forbes. A woman in their hometown of Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, spoke to The Washington Post. “They were very much looking forward to going to the U.S., and had always encouraged my niece to do the same,” she said. “... ‘Study hard and get out to the U.S.’”

**Marnia Toney**  
| Staff Writer

## Sexual Violence against Women is Rampant in North Korea



Kenneth Roth, executive director of Human Rights Watch (Credit: Primanews.org)

Human Rights Watch (HRW), a US-based international NGO that investigates human rights issues worldwide, released a report titled “You Cry at Night but Don’t Know Why” to divulge the rampant practices of sexual violence in North Korea (DPRK) on October 31.

In the report, HRW conducted interviews with 54 North Korean defectors and eight former North Korean officials who fled the country after Kim Jong Un came into power in 2011.

The report stated that North Korean officials, including high-ranking party officials, police officers, and soldiers, abuse their position of power to constrain women to have unwanted sexual contact with them. “Interviewees told us that when a guard or police officer “picks” a woman, she has no choice but to comply with any demands he makes, whether for sex, money, or other favors,” says the report.

During the interview with HRW, Oh Jung Hee, a former trader from Ryanggang province in North Korea, said “On the days they felt like it, market guards or police officials would ask me to follow them to an empty room outside the market, or some other place they’d pick. What can we do? They consider us [sex] toys.”

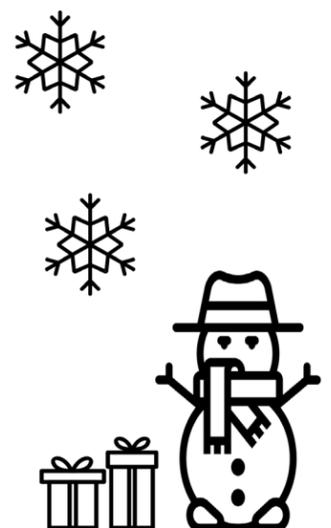
This is not the first time North Korea has been accused of the prevalence of human rights abuses happening within its border. The report mentions a 2014 United Nations Commis-

sion of Inquiry on human rights in DPRK concluded that, “systematic, widespread, and gross human rights violations committed by the North Korean government constituted crimes against humanity. These included forced abortion, rape, and other sexual violence, as well as murder, imprisonment, enslavement, and torture on North Koreans in prison or detention.”

The Korean Central News Agency, the state news agency of North Korea, denied the accusation of its government, and claimed that the HRW’s report was part of a political scheme to tarnish the image of DPRK, and further branded the interviewees as “human scums.”

During a news conference held in Seoul, South Korea, on November 1, Kenneth Roth, executive director of HRW, said “North Korean women would probably say ‘MeToo’ if they thought there was any way to obtain justice, but their voices are silenced in Kim Jong Un’s dictatorship.”

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# Reflecting from Sookmyung Girls' High School : Is the Korean 'Susi' system trustworthy for high school seniors?



Investigators from the Suseo police station walking out of Sookmyung Girls' High School on September 5th. (Credit: BBC Korea)

On November 6th, the Seoul Central District Court arrested a teacher, surnamed Hyeon, who is a senior school administrator at Sookmyung Girls' High School, for suspicion of allegedly leaking exam questions to his 11th grade twin daughters. The police suspected the twins' father since evidence was found that he had stayed alone late

at school several times. After the final exam results for the Spring 2018 semester were revealed, both of the twins ranked first in each of the liberal arts and science divisions in their junior year, which was a great leap from previous semesters.

On their very first semester of high school in Spring 2017, they reanked 59th and 121th, but suddenly shot up

to 2nd and 5th in the following semester. The rapid rise made one teacher from the high school to feel suspicious. To relieve his skepticism, he tried to investigate the situation when he was in charge of creating the chemistry exam in Fall 2018. He purposely input the wrong answer to only one question, which was later corrected after the midterm exam. As a

result, Hyeon's daughter was the only one throughout the entire 11th grade to write the exact wrong answer on the chemistry test.

The Suseo district police in Seoul has forwarded the evidence to the prosecutors of the Seoul Central District court, which announced in a press briefing that Hyeon had leaked the test information to his daughters over five times, from June 2017 to July 2018. During a probe investigation in their house and high school, additional evidence such as exact answers for English tests on their phones and a set of multiple choice answers written on the actual calculus test paper were found.

Following this case, the controversy circling *Susi*, or "early college application method" in Korean, has surfaced. As *susi* is mainly based on grades and extra-curricular activities within the school, it has been under

fire for biased evaluation methods from certain teachers. Ultimately, this incident from Sookmyung Girls' high school instigated parents to urge for the college application process to be based on 100% *Su-neung*, or college scholastic Ability Test, scores.

After the arrest, the high school has decided to change the twins' test scores to zero and to fire Hyeon. Despite efforts to persuade the twins and their father to admit their allegations at the warrant's validity investigation, they are completely denying charges and even making contradictory statements through their lawyer.

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## The Washington Post and Schar School Partner to Conduct Polls

*The Post and Mason's Schar School create polling data for midterms*

So far, the Washington Post-Schar School polls have proven to be highly accurate, successfully predicting the results of the 2016 presidential campaign in Virginia, the 2017 Alabama senatorial race and the 2018 Virginia governor's election.

The partnership first formed between the Washington Post and Mason's Schar School of Policy and Government in 2016, with hopes of combining the expertise of Mason faculty with the Washington Post's resources. "The initial idea was that [the] intellectual capacity of a faculty of government and public-policy [researchers] provides some real substance and could be beneficial in the design and also the evaluation of public opinion polls," said Dean Mark J. Rozell of the Schar School.

The polls first focused on Virginian elections, views of political leaders and key political policy related to Virginia. One of the first polls conducted predicted that Clinton would win the state by over 5 percent in the 2016 presidential race, which she did. Since 2016, the Washington Post-Schar School polls have expanded to focus on national issues. It was one of two polls that predicted the victory of Democrat Doug Jones in the 2017 Alabama senatorial race. However, the Washington Post-Schar School poll came closer to the actual election results than the other poll did, which was conducted by Fox News, did. Jones won by 2 points, while the Washington Post-Schar School and Fox News polls anticipated he would win by 3 and

10 points respectively.

Most recently, the partnership has focused on the 2018 midterm elections, which will take place on Nov. 6. "We came up with 69 districts where we thought there was a chance that seat could go one way or another," said Rozell. "Then we have [created] in this election cycle a series of surveys of voters in those 69 districts, so that [we are] tracking public opinion only in the districts where people's votes are actually going to matter toward the outcome."

Trends for the polls in the 2018 midterm election suggests that this will be a good year for Democrats in the House of Representatives. Of the 69 competitive House races that were focused on, only six of those are currently held by

an incumbent Democrat, giving the party plenty of opportunities to gain seats.

After the midterm elections, Rozell is looking towards the future of The Washington Post and Schar School partnership. "Personally I'd like to see it grow into something even more over time, where we are polling on specific public policy issues," said Rozell. "Once we get out of the election cycles ... in off-election years, I think it would be really wonderful to use that time to do some polling on key public policy issues confronting the country and develop some data [that] would be usable to not only the public but to scholars."

**Abigail Adcox**  
| Assistant News Editor

### [Housing Notice]

2018 Fall Check Out Application Period  
12/3 ~ 12/21

2019 Winter Staying Application Period  
12/3 ~ 12/16

2019 Spring Staying Application Period  
2019/1/1 ~ 1/15

**Don't forget to apply on time!**



Fairfax

# Thanksgiving at Mason

While Thanksgiving is a national family holiday in the U.S., not all students are able to travel back to see their family during the five-day break, and have to find ways to celebrate on campus. Americans tend to travel to spend time with their loved ones, especially around this time of year. According to the AAA, one of the oldest automobile organizations in America, about 50.9 million Americans were projected to travel for Thanksgiving in 2017. However, for some Mason students, travelling home for the holiday is not always an option due to many reasons.

The lack of financial resources is a common one. During Thanksgiving, the prices of air fare and tickets for other sources of transportation skyrocket. Out-of-state and international students generally prefer to save money and stay at school, either in dorms or their off-campus residences. Freshman English major Rehan said, "Buying tickets during Thanksgiving break

is pretty expensive and it's not worth it to spend a lot for [a] short period of time." Dash, a freshman civil engineering major, expressed a similar feeling. "We miss our friends and family, but with all the expenses here in Mason, it becomes hard to visit family during Thanksgiving," said Dash.

Another reason why students might not go home during Thanksgiving break is because of school. Some students prefer to catch up with their studies, as working on assignments or exams during this break could benefit those students who lag behind their courses. June, a graduate student in the Volgenau School of Engineering, said, "Though I cannot visit my family, I am planning to utilize this break by finishing my homework. Studies are not easy here and this break is a good chance for me to work on my final exams and assignments." Enlu, another student, stated, "I miss my parents during Thanksgiving especially." She further

mentioned, "One of my American friend's family has invited me for Thanksgiving dinner, but [the] rest of the days I will be working on my assignments and paper."

Hundreds of international students reside in Mason's dorms, or live near the school. Generally, Thanksgiving is not a part of their culture or norms. Despite the break they prefer to stay back and take advantage of Thanksgiving by enjoying deep discounts in Black Friday and Cyber Monday sales. Radihka, a Sophomore Computer Science major, said, "Although we do not celebrate Thanksgiving and make special arrangements for the occasion, shopping on Black Friday is the most fun part for me on Thanksgiving."

Understanding that Thanksgiving can be an emotional time for students who are away from their families, "Mason gives a chance for students who live in dorms by arranging Thanksgiving dinner for the students who do not get to visit their families," according to Elim, a graduate student studying Statistical Science. "I have already signed up for that dinner and it would be lot of fun, you no longer feel sad and lonely," Elim said.

Sara Anwar | Staff Writer



# A Cup of Coffee, Please?

## Unique Coffee Culture in South Korea



A cup of Americano (Credit: Mayo Clinic)

In South Korea, a cup of coffee is more than a drink, it is a part of people's life culture. Despite the bitter taste of coffee, each cup of it carries different meanings to different people. "A cup of coffee a day, lets the energy stay" can be applied to some of South Koreans of their coffee drinking habit, especially for college students. According to a result of a survey targeting students at George Mason University Korea, the percentage of students who drink coffee as a source of energy is 67.2%, which is over half the participants. When asked about how often students drink coffee, 52.4% of them replied that they drink coffee every day.

To tend to these coffee-lovers, coffee shops are everywhere in South Korea, and each of them has unique themes and styles that attracts people's attention. For example, there are pool-themed cafés and Coca-cola-themed cafés. Not only have coffee shops in South Korea contributed to coffee culture unique, but "instant coffee" is also something that sets South Korean coffee culture apart from the rest. Instant coffee is tasty and quick, which is convenient to busy workers. Coffee shops and instant coffee both fit into the ongoing

ing trend of South Koreans' coffee drinking habit.

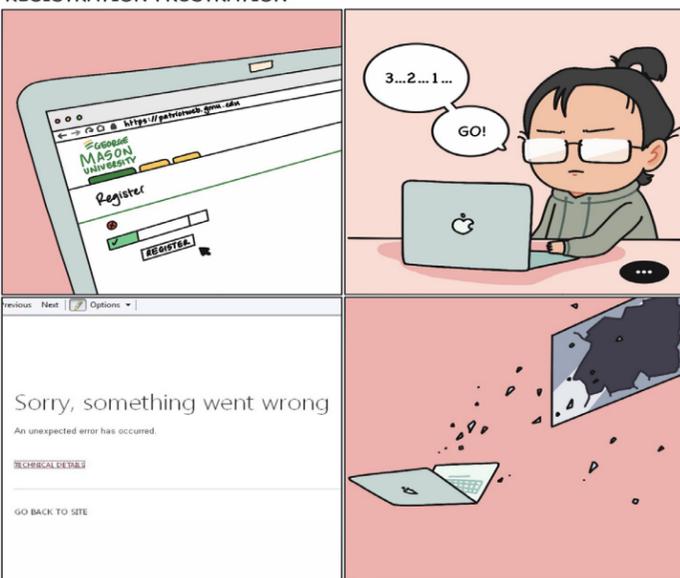
Another aspect is Koreans' love of "Americano," which has the highest ordering rate among all drinks in South Korean cafés. People drink Americano mainly because it does not contain any milk and it is cheap. For everyday employees, they drink it to gain more energy to work, while for students, they drink it to stay up late to study. Furthermore, to the young generation nowadays, purchasing a cup of coffee does not only mean consuming the coffee, but pursuit of new trends. Such trends can be drinking coffee at large coffee companies for show-n-tell or following the ritual of going to cafés after a meal.

To South Koreans, coffee has become an indispensable element in their daily lives. Because of how popular coffee is in South Korea, there is even a coffee show held in Seoul called "Seoul International Café Show" every year to share about people's passion in coffee culture. With people pursuing in coffee, whether for their needs or wants, South Korea's coffee culture has become one of the most unique cultures in the world.

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