

The cover features a central white shield with a gold cross, set against a background of two large, curved, overlapping bands in shades of orange and yellow. The shield is framed by a thin black border.

ACUCA NEWSLETTER

January to June 2023, Volume XXIII No. 1

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ACUCA MEMBER INSTITUTIONS

HONG KONG

Chung Chi College, Chinese University of Hong Kong
Lingnan University
Hong Kong Baptist University

INDIA

Christ University
Lady Doak College

INDONESIA

Parahyangan Catholic University
Petra Christian University
Satya Wacana Christian University
Maranatha Christian University
Duta Wacana Christian University
Soegijapranata Catholic University
University of Pelita Harapan
Krida Wacana Christian University
Atma Jaya Catholic University of Indonesia
Atma Jaya University, Yogyakarta
Sanata Dharma University
Dhyana Pura University
Universitas Katolik Widya Mandira
Universitas Kristen Indonesia
Jakarta International University

JAPAN

Momoyama Gakuin University
International Christian University
Kwansei Gakuin University
Meiji Gakuin University
Seinan Gakuin University
Nanzan University
Doshisha University
Aoyama Gakuin University
JF Oberlin University
Sophia University
Osaka Jogakuin
Hiroshima Jogakuin University
Kobe College
Hokusei Gakuen University
Tokyo Woman's Christian University

KOREA

Ewha Womans University
Sogang University
Soongsil University
Keimyung University
Hannam University
Handong Global University

MYANMAR

Myanmar Institute of Theology

PHILIPPINES

Assumption College
Ateneo de Manila University
De La Salle University
Silliman University
Trinity University of Asia
Filamer Christian University
Miriam College
St. Paul University Philippines
De La Salle University-Dasmariñas
Wesleyan University - Philippines

THAILAND

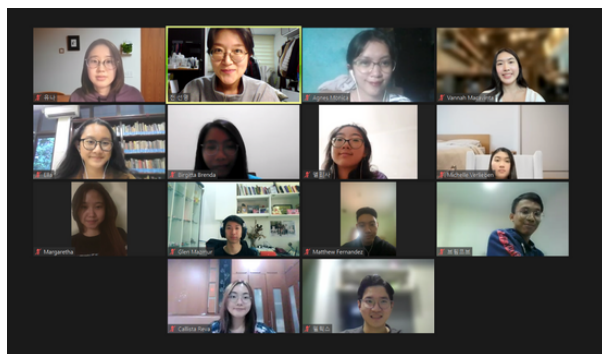
Asia-Pacific International University (former Mission College)
Payap University
Assumption University
Christian University of Thailand

TAIWAN

Fu Jen Catholic University
Soochow University
Tunghai University
Chung Yuan Christian University
Providence University
Chang Jung Christian University
Wenzao Ursuline University of Languages
Aletheia University

SECRETARIAT NEWS

113 Students Earned Micro Degree/Certificates Over the Winter Term Through ACUCA's Expanded Program



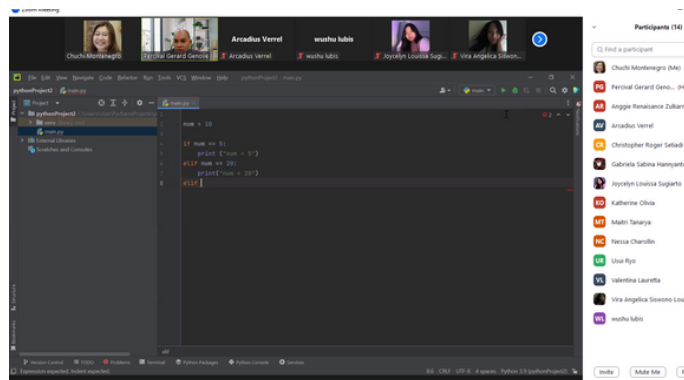
As the world slowly moves forward and recovers from the damage caused by the pandemic-induced global halt, the Association of Christian Universities and Colleges in Asia (ACUCA), through the support of the United Board of Christian Higher Education in Asia (UBCHEA), has continued to take advantage of the established flexible learning set up to live by its goal of capacitating students with

skills that will give them a head start in and outside the academe.

The ACUCA's Micro Degree/Certificate Program launched its pilot courses over the summer of 2022. Upon completion, it was proven to be a great success; evidenced by high course completion rates and more students expressing their interest to enroll in future courses.

With such great feedback, ACUCA launched its 15-day Micro Degree/Certificate Program Winter courses from January 9 to February 18, 2023, with varying class periods. In addition to the language courses which were focal to the program's pilot, the program has added three more courses namely Basic Python Programming, Social Entrepreneurship, and Strategic Family Business Management, the latter two being course pre-requisites to earn the Next Generation Strategic Family Business Management and Social Impact micro degree. The language courses have also been expanded with the addition of Korean Language 2 along with Korean Language 1 and Mandarin Chinese 1 in the roster of available language courses.

Python is a computer programming language that can be utilized in creating websites, software, data analysis etc. The Basic Python Programming course introduces the fundamentals of such programming language, serving as a gateway towards this complex yet a highly relevant career.



The Social Entrepreneurship courses offer students assistance and guidance in crafting startup businesses with goals to alleviate social issues and not just for profits alone. Meanwhile, Strategic Family Business Management as the name suggests focuses on modifying standard business management strategies used to address challenges and applying them to a family business enterprise setting.

Korean Language 1 and Mandarin Chinese 1 both offer beginners an introduction to the alphabet used in each respective language, basic vocabulary, grammar, and common phrases. On the other hand, Korean Language 2 is a more advanced class catered to students that have established fundamental knowledge of Hangul.

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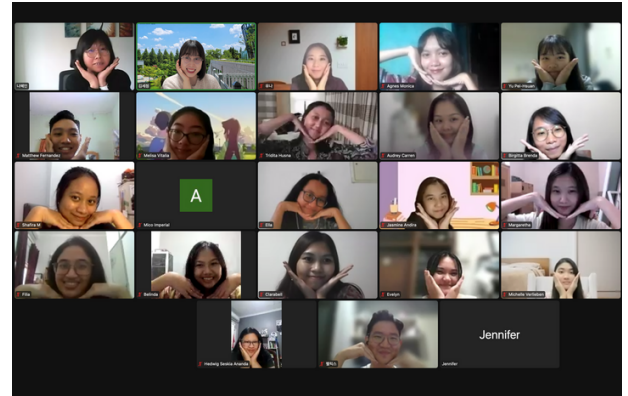
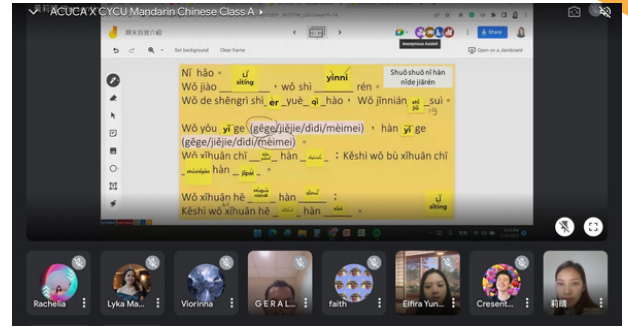
SECRETARIAT NEWS

(cont.) Among the Winter courses offered, Korean Language 2 had the greatest number of completers with 29 students. This is followed by the Korean Language 1 with 27, Mandarin Chinese 1 with 24, Basic Python Programming with 15, Strategic Family Business Management with eight, and Social Entrepreneurship with seven.

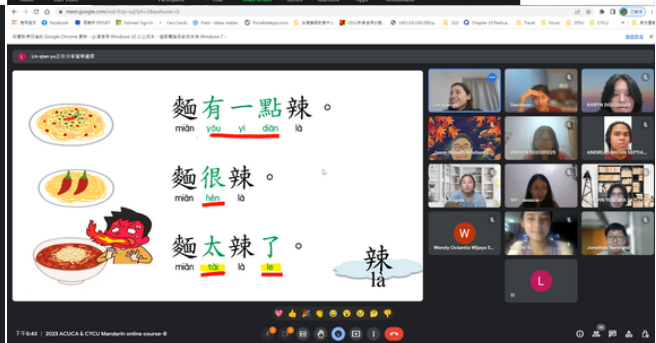
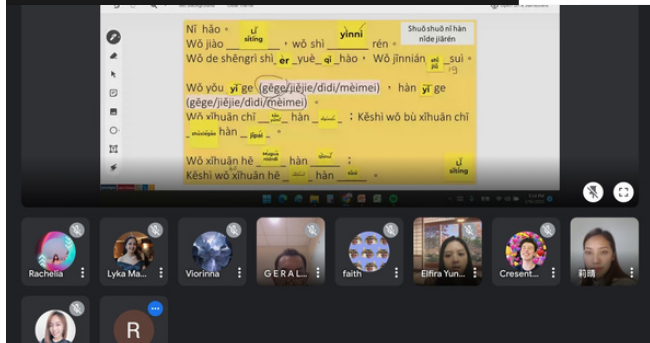
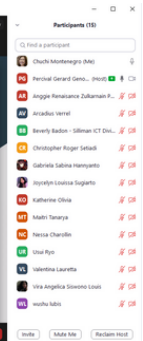
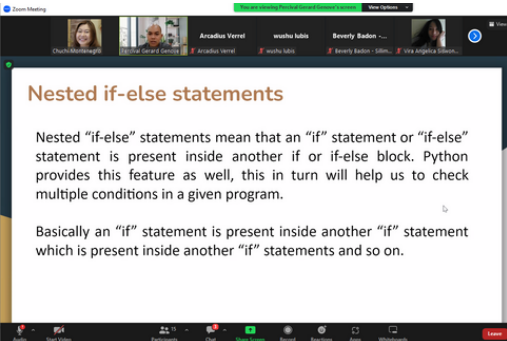
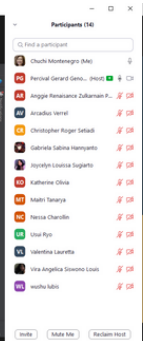
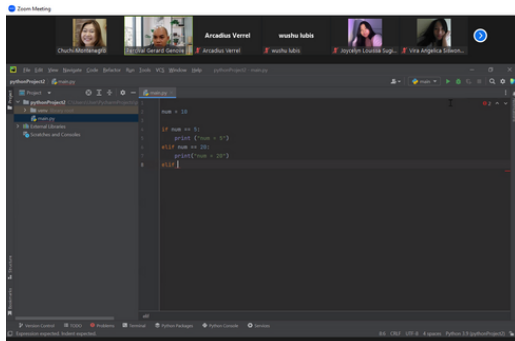
However, only three students earned a micro degree in Next Generation Strategic Family Business Management and Social Impact as only three completed the degree prerequisites. Those who did not meet the micro degree requirements but completed courses still received certificates for passing the relevant courses. In total, the Micro Degree/Certificate Program Winter courses had a whopping 113 student completers.

Students who enrolled in the program came from diverse backgrounds. There were Indonesian enrollees from Atma Jaya Catholic University, Universitas Kristen Krida Wacana, Universitas Kristen Indonesia, Sanata Dharma University, Soegijapranata Catholic University, and Universitas Dhyana Pura. There were also Filipinos hailing from Silliman University and De La Salle University. Lady Doak College in India was also well represented. The same goes for Doshisha University in Japan and Chung Yuan Christian University in Taiwan. This not only gives the students an opportunity to learn in-demand skills but also an avenue to socialize, bond, and learn from people from different cultures.

Challenges are inevitable but if there's one thing to learn from the pandemic, it is that humanity has the capacity to overcome challenges and adapt through mutual collaboration.



A GLIMPSE OF MDP CLASSES



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FMS BLOGS

Forging New Connections and Strengthening Relations: The Unique FMS Experience of a University Administrator

PROF. JANE ANNETTE L. BELARMINO
*Vice President for Development, Enterprise, and External Affairs
Silliman University, Philippines*

For the first time, we witnessed how a hustling and bustling university suddenly became a ghost town when we had an unexpected pause in all of our lives: operations trimmed down to a minimum, students sent back to their hometowns, a mass exodus toward an entirely virtual world, and for the first time, even getting a ride to the next town became very much a privilege—this last part meant that whatever was planned ahead pre-pandemic had to either be canceled or postponed, including participating in ACUCA's Faculty Mobility Scheme which had been in the pipeline for quite some time.

So now as the world enters a post-pandemic new normal, I took on the challenge to finally embark on a learning journey to Taiwan.

Under the FMS, I have finally been able to organize a 10-day full learning visit to Taiwan's top universities which included Providence University, my host institution, Tunghai University, Fu Jen Catholic University, Chang Jung Christian University, Chung Yuan Christian University, and Ming Chi University of Technology. The trip was an avenue for the exchange of ideas and best practices, exploration of new partnerships and collaborations, as well as strengthening of existing relations, while at the same time, immersing myself in the local university culture—things that can be shared for the greater Silliman University community.

From the very first day of my visit, I was already greeted with fruitful discussions on diverse topics including student exchange, international internships, and collaborations on research and development. This was followed by a very productive tour of Providence University's Luking Library. I had the opportunity to catch new ideas on the utilization and innovative implementation and use of floor space. These would generate ideas, as Silliman is currently embarking on a massive Library Modernization project. Day-1 is capped with a tour of PU's Department of Applied Science laboratories and discussed research on semiconductors, Taiwan's biggest technological industry, and cell technology, as well as the possibility of international internships for Engineering and Physics students. The following day went on with another set of meetings on more collaborations in specific areas of concern and culminated with the honor to be able to sit with the university president for a discussion on strengthening the ties between Providence University and Silliman University. I have extended my heartfelt gratitude to Dr. Lucia Lin, PU's President, for their hospitality and continued active support for ACUCA which has enabled programs like the FMS to bridge universities from all over Asia.



What made this trip extra productive was the fact that I was able to visit not only the host university but other institutions as well. I proceeded to Tunghai University on my third day in Taiwan. Besides the expected discussion on inter-university collaboration in areas such as student exchange, internships, and research, I also enjoyed a tour of their library which features a state-of-the-art recording studio for online classes and presentations, which also utilizes computer-generated imagery (CGI) technology. I also took notes on their best practices in managing student dormitories, useful as Silliman University operates several on-campus dormitories catering to hundreds of students, including international students.

On the same day, from Tunghai, I departed for New Taipei, ahead of my visit to Ming Chi University of Technology, the only non-ACUCA institution in the itinerary. Two full-time faculty members of Silliman, Professors Manaay and Montecillo, are pursuing their PhD in Physics at MCUT and purposely included this visit as my way of reciprocating their visit to Silliman University last March 2023.

On the 4th day of my stay in Taiwan, I met with the President of MCUT and personally received the signed Memorandum of Understanding between our institutions, formalizing our relations. I am glad to learn that SU faculty members at MCUT are performing very well and in fact, we were asked to encourage more learners to study at MCUT via internships or their graduate programs. It was a full day at MCUT as we toured their campus, highlighting their facilities and laboratories with cutting-edge technology for use in various disciplines but with particular emphasis on the field of engineering, for which they are widely known.

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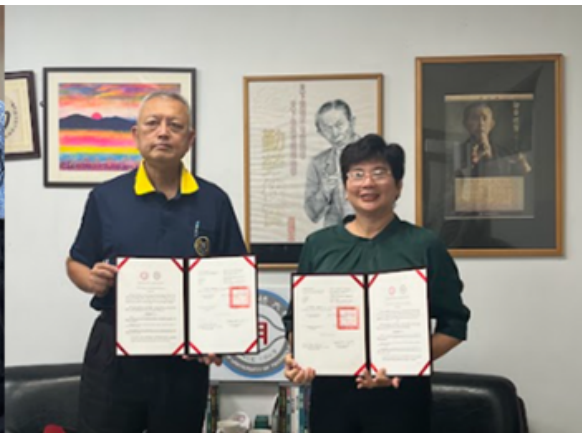
FMS BLOGS

(cont.) Of interest was the new and modern 5-story gymnasium. The building maximized the use of natural light and ventilation, safety features, and equipment. I also learned so much about the history of the university itself, as well as the many best practices of MCUT when it comes to

research collaborations, especially with industry and government, and how Taiwan universities in general are grappling with the effects of a declining population which has left many schools closed and college enrollment at record lows.

I bid farewell to our friends at MCUT and proceeded to Fu Jen Catholic University along with Professors Manaay and Montecillo who have done nothing but impress the professors at both MCUT. We were accompanied by no less than the distinguished professor from Fu Jen's Department of Physics and Institute of Applied Science and Engineering, Chi-Shun Tiu. Following the ultra-hectic schedule from April 11 to 14, I was blessed with a day for rest and reflection. On the 15th, a Saturday, Professors Manaay, Montecillo and I were invited to go on a bike tour of Taiwan and got to enjoy and appreciate the beauty of what the Portuguese had called Ilha Formosa, or "beautiful island". We took this opportunity to see modern infrastructure amidst the natural flora of Taiwan. On the 16th, a Sunday, I took the time to attend the worship service at Fu Jen Catholic University where I met with Filipino students, faculty, and their families. Manic Monday very soon came and this time I was off to Chang Jung Christian University. Much like Silliman University, CJCUC is also doing its part in reducing its carbon footprint in an attempt to lessen the impact of university operations on the environment, and from this discussion we are now looking at pursuing research collaborations in green initiatives- this is the highlight from this part of the itinerary. CJCUC has also extended its invitation to Silliman University to join them in celebrating its 30th year as a university, as well as an invitation for student exchange and internship. I also got the opportunity to visit their newly renovated cafeteria which features modern furnishings including those from the well-known Swedish brand, IKEA. I took some notes on this particular part of the visit to CJCUC as SU also operates a cafeteria that caters not only to the university but the greater Dumaguete City community as well.

From CJCUC, I went to the last stop in my Taiwan itinerary, Chung Yuan Christian University, the biggest among the universities I have visited, boasting some 16,000 students enrolled at the tertiary level. We shared our notes on our best practices in alumni relations and discussed student exchange and internships, and scholarships. I appreciate CYCU's approach to nurturing its graduates and former students, especially after leaving the halls of the university. It was a privileged to be given a campus tour wherein they showcased many of their modern facilities including their library, their integration of PWD-friendly rooms and large common study areas in their dormitories, their gymnasium, and a new rubberized oval track. Our takeaway from this campus tour is the fact that the buildings at CYCU have been designed to take advantage of natural light and efficient ventilation.



I finally said goodbye to the beautiful island of Taiwan, its beautiful people, and the very warm hospitality of our partners including my host, Providence University. I arrived safely back home in Dumaguete on the 19th of April.

Let me end with this:

Benjamin Franklin once said, "Tell me and I forget. Teach me and I remember. Involve me and I learn." This quote, as straightforward as it is, is able to encapsulate the experience I had during my brief 10-day visit to Taiwan under the Faculty Mobility Scheme of the Association of Christian Universities and Colleges in Asia (ACUCA). As a university with the core mission of instilling competence, character, and faith among the Silliman community, it is our duty to constantly pursue progress and seek ways to better uphold our goals; one of which is benchmarking.

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(cont.) To summarize, my 10-day trip to Taiwan allowed me to explore, indulge, and learn from the best practices of six high-performing and prestigious schools in the country— Providence University, Tunghai University, Ming Chi University of Technology, Fu Jen Catholic University, Chang Jung Christian University, and Chang Yuan Christian University. There, I was able to meet inspiring individuals, gain new friends, create meaningful connections, and take away effective systems in fostering development in various university sectors.

The most notable example of the latter would be the various methods to upscale a library through the addition of unique features such as exhibition areas, collaborative open spaces, and a music appreciation room as seen in the Luking Library at Providence University. On the other hand, Tunghai University boasts itself with the latest addition to its library, a studio for recording online classes and presentations; complete with a green background, state-of-the-art audio, and lighting equipment. The Silliman Library can also adopt the way MCUT displays and showcases its history and founders and reinvent the Sillimaniana collection. Its new and modern gymnasium that adopts green architecture and safety features for students engaging in various sports is something to emulate.

Furthermore, I also noted diverse ways in which we can improve not only the quality of living but also the opportunities available to the Silliman studentry. One common strength I noticed by the aforementioned universities is their focus on providing exchange student and internship programs to universities and entities capable of imparting unique learning experiences to the students. This not only allows the students to gain insightful experience but also allows the university to cement its relationship with partner universities and other entities. Additionally, the said universities were also particular in improving the dormitory life of the students by equipping them with avenues where they can attend to their personal needs such as food and laundry among others, in a more self-sufficient and cost-effective manner. It can further be noted that strong Alumni relations play a significant role in improving the facilities of a university thus such should be placed in greater importance.

I have gained a fruitful amount of insights but it does not come without a cost. Packed schedules, navigating Taiwan's public transport system that was actually efficient but being new to the place, I had to figure it out. The whole ten-day visit involved a lot of traveling from one place to another, doing as many as 5 bus and train transfers while lugging a 25k bag. The strong Wi-Fi in public spaces really helped me a lot in getting to the right locations.

However, due to the assistance and prompt action of supportive individuals and offices, problems turned into solutions. I would like to thank the following individuals who made my trip to Taiwan a success. Ms. Lilia Samson Huang, whom I met at PU, and his Taiwanese husband. They were kind enough to orient me on the culture of Taiwan and teach me how to navigate its bus transport system. Having Lilia accompany me at PU made me feel at ease. I would also like to thank Prof. Manaay and Montecillo for a very insightful visit to MCUT. Both ladies impressed their MCUT professors with their work, and MCUT is very interested to have more Filipino scholars and interns working with them. Frances, Riza, and Glynnis, staff of the VPD Office worked hard to make my travel arrangements and coordinated my complex visit with all the schools in Taiwan. I wish to thank Silliman President McCann for endorsing my participation in the ACUCA Faculty Mobility Scheme which opened my eyes to many exciting possibilities for Silliman. And to all officers and staff of universities I visited in Taiwan, my heartfelt appreciation for your generosity in sharing your best practices and for welcoming me to their campuses.

It is not every day that we are provided with opportunities to learn and grow thus, when such a door opens, it is no longer an option, but rather an obligation to open that very door. In 10 days, I was involved and thus, I learned. It is my earnest hope that I will be able to apply all of the significant information that was passed on to me for the benefit of the studentry, the faculty, and the entire Silliman community.



FMS BLOGS

Cross-Cultural Learning and Professional Growth: My Experience with ACUCA's Faculty Mobility Scheme

DR. KHONTEENEUNG SAENGHIRUNA
Full-Time Lecturer
Assumption University, Thailand



Exploring South Korea through ACUCA's Faculty Mobility Scheme program is truly one for the books. As someone who specializes in the field of Graphic Design, UX/UI Design, and Design Management, knowing that the program would be at Daejeon, South Korea, which is known as the Silicon Valley of Asia, I had highly anticipated the journey ahead, as I knew I would be able to forge connections with faculty and students at the host institution and immerse myself in the vibrant city.



From the moment of my arrival in Daejeon, every experience became a chapter in my exploration of South Korea. I visited the bustling Jungang Market, the largest traditional market in the central region, and the National Science Museum. These experiences gave me insights into the country's technological advancements and its dynamic progress in science, technology, and innovation.

I was invited to give a lecture on "The Matters of Cultural Influences" in an Entrepreneurship class at Hannam University. I shared my insights on the significance of cultural influences in the context of the creative economy and engaged in meaningful discussions with students interested in entrepreneurship. I also visited the Hannam Design Factory, where I learned about the process of being a startup and gained valuable insights into fostering innovation and creativity.

Although my short stay in Daejeon wasn't without its obstacles, particularly noting the language barrier—communicating with the locals and doing tasks like ordering food was especially challenging at first. But I got around it by preparing photos of food which I wanted to try and I also learned basic Korean phrases. I also share the experience of every other person who has been to countries outside of their own, that is, navigating through the streets and familiarizing myself with the transportation system worked. I overcame this challenge with the help of the Kakao Map and Naver Map. These were life hacks that made my time in South Korea even more memorable.

This study program gave me fresh insights, leading to a new idea that starts with the basics. I plan to develop a program centered around cultivating cultural sensitivity and fostering creative thinking from a foundational level. This idea aims to nurture individuals' ability to generate innovative solutions by emphasizing the understanding and appreciation of cultural diversity. Furthermore, I can confidently say that I am now more appreciative of the diversity of Asian cultures. Exploring the unique aspects of living, eating, and belief systems in these cultures fosters understanding, empathy, and respect, to embracing all the differences among peoples and cultures.

Overall, my experience at Daejeon was a memorable one. It provided a remarkable opportunity to explore the city's unique blend of modernity and tradition. Navigating its bustling streets, immersing myself in the local culture, and engaging with faculty and students at the host institution deepened my appreciation for South Korea's rich heritage. The connections established during the exchange fostered cross-cultural understanding and left a lasting impact on my professional and personal growth. My study abroad experience taught me the values of adaptability, cultural diversity, and independence. I learned to navigate unfamiliar environments, appreciate different perspectives, and become more self-reliant.



Of course, none of the things above would have been possible if not for the invaluable support of Dr. Marissa Chantamas, Mr. Glen Chatelier, Prof. Kitai Kim, Prof. Dr. Chul Kim, Prof. Dr. Najin Jun, and Miss Yourim Jeong for their guidance and hospitality during my participation in ACUCA's Faculty Exchange program in Daejeon City, South Korea. Their recommendations, acceptance, engaging conversations, wonderful lunch, thought-provoking exchange class, warm welcome, and exceptional arrangements made my experience truly remarkable and transformative. I am immensely grateful for their contributions, which have impacted my personal and professional growth.

SMS BLOGS

Witnessing Korean Culture Firsthand

FRANKIE PANDAPOTAN PURBA
Maranatha Christian University
Indonesia

Host: Keimyung University, South Korea

I am immensely grateful for the chance to take part in a student exchange program provided by the ACUCA Student Mobility Scheme program. It helped me to participate in a student exchange program abroad particularly at Keimyung University, South Korea. I have never imagined that I could go to South Korea to study as an exchange student. The fighting spirit and grace led everyone to achieve beautiful dreams.

When abroad, everything was different ranging from culture, customs, and regulations. I got a lot of learning through different experiences. I took courses in Korean Language Practice 1, Korean Business Culture, and Project Development in Business. I learned many things that I hope I can bring and apply in my home country Indonesia, one of which is me and other friends in our Project Development in Business course developing interesting technology projects to solve parking problems assisted by technology to make it easier for motorists. I also participated in a festival held by the campus with Korean friends and friends from other countries such as Germany and others, then we also enjoyed a get-together at one of the places to eat. I experienced participating in Korean traditional games and preparing traditional food – things I got to witness firsthand that I had only seen in movies and on television.

Learning different cultures and learning how to adapt environment new to me made me become even better. For instance, I had the opportunity to have roommates coming from different countries with different cultural habits. It allows me to contribute to finding solutions whenever problems or difficulties come along our way while staying in a dormitory with them. That experience taught me how to live and share positive things with others.

I have great respect for other Asian Cultures, especially the habit of appreciating others. In my one semester stay at Keimyung University, I learned that Korean people really appreciate discipline and punctuality in an event, including during lectures.

My piece of advice to my fellow students is to have courage. Do not be afraid to try new things, because these new things will give color to your life. The ACUCA Student Mobility Scheme program will take us, students, to achieve that color, the ACUCA university program supports students to be able to study abroad and we can learn all the positive things from the countries we visit to study ranging from interesting cultures, and countries habits, foreign language, advanced technology, and many others. We can also take it and apply it in our home country and develop the ideas that we get after studying abroad. It may be hard to learn something that has never been learned, but it can be learned, and it just takes time.



I was able to step outside of my comfort zone by studying overseas. Without the ACUCA SMS program, I'm not sure whether I ever would have had an exchange student because I couldn't afford to travel; but, the ACUCA SMS program gave me the opportunity to travel abroad for the first time and learn a lot, particularly about South Korea. Finally, I would want to express my gratitude to Keimyung University for the wonderful experience and the valuable lessons I will carry with me as I make my way back to Indonesia.

SMS BLOGS

Approaching Challenges With A Positive Mindset

NANAHA UEDA
Sophia University
Japan

Host: Soongsil University, South Korea

During my time in South Korea, particularly at Soongsil University in Seoul, I had a truly unforgettable experience. I attended classes in English and one of my favorite classes was Understanding Korea, China, and Japan. In this class, we learned about Korean and Asian culture, politics and history from a Korean perspective. Aside from academics, I also had the opportunity to meet many international students through the program. We became friends and often explored the city together. It was amazing to see how people from different backgrounds and cultures could come together and form such strong bonds.

However, living in a foreign country alone was also challenging. As a beginner in Korean, there were some language barriers. I often found myself struggling to communicate with the locals. Additionally, I experienced homesickness and even fell ill due to mental stress, leading to gastritis. However, I managed to overcome these challenges with the support of my friends and program coordinators.

This study abroad provided me with valuable insights into the importance of embracing cultural differences. During the classes, we had a lot of discussions. Ex-

changing opinions with friends from different backgrounds was a valuable experience. It allowed me to see the different Asian cultures, including the differences between Korean and Japanese cultures. Through this experience, I gained a deeper understanding and respect for these differences, and it allowed me to appreciate our own Japanese culture as well.

Furthermore, studying abroad also taught me adaptability, cultural awareness, and open-mindedness as I lived in a foreign country alone. These values helped me grow as a person and approach challenges with a positive mindset. Additionally, I developed a greater sense of independence and self-reliance, which has been invaluable in my life. I feel much more equipped to take on new challenges and navigate unfamiliar situations. These experiences have broadened my horizons and challenged my assumptions.

Another highlight of my experience in Korea was the cultural immersion. I had the chance to try new foods, visit historical sites, and attend traditional performances. I also had opportunities to meet Korean friends through language exchange. They are kind and helpful, and I had fun with them. It was fascinating to learn about the history and culture of Korea.

I am grateful to the people who made this experience valuable and unforgettable. I am thankful to our program coordinators at my home university, Sophia University Japan, as well as the Professors at Soongsil University, and the international friends I made in Korea for the great experience. I am grateful for this precious time as a university student at Soongsil University, Korea.

I strongly recommend the ACUCA's Student Mobility Scheme program to any students considering seizing this study abroad opportunity, as it will undoubtedly be a life-changing experience. You can gain more than you expected from this exchange.



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Growing and Learning Amidst Challenges of a Patriarchal Society

SHIBANI AR
Lady Doak College
India

Host: JF Oberlin University, Japan

Months ago, if someone told me that I would be going to Japan as an exchange student, I would have rejected even the mere thought of it. However, now that I am looking back on the events that took place prior to this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity that I am experiencing, I am in awe at how a piece of simple information about the exchange program from my college club can lead me to open such great doors.

In my university of choice JF Oberlin University, I took 3 elective courses and one language course. I chose this university because it's one of the best universities in Japan and it offers various elective courses that I am highly interested in. My elective courses were on Japanese cinematic art, Japanese art history and Experimental activity on Japanese culture and tradition whereas my language course was about learning Basic Japanese. All the courses were really fascinating and enhancing as I was able to learn a lot about Japan and Japanese culture. I was a complete beginner in the Japanese language when I arrived but now, after months of studying and language exposure, I have moved to the intermediate level; and I think I have got a wholesome experience in life.

However, studying abroad was not a walk in the park. It was a little bit difficult for me to adjust in the first few days but, I adjusted to the environment eventually. The Language barrier also proved to be a challenge as most of the people can only speak in their native language so having conversations was difficult. Culture and customs-wise, Japan has a unique culture and customs and I felt odd following it but after a few days, I understood them and followed them respectfully. Feeling homesick was also a major difficulty for me while studying abroad. I really missed my parents and my friends in the initial days, but I made a lot of international friends and they helped me overcome homesickness for this, I am always grateful to them. Other problems that I encountered were managing and spending my money wisely and understanding local laws and regulations as it creates a lot of confusion among foreigners, so I advise people to do some research or ask before taking part in anything. I encountered many problems, and I am proud of myself for being able to overcome each of them and emerge as a better person.

All of the challenges that I mentioned do not compare to the experiences that I had. I learned a lot of life lessons through my study abroad program like showing the reality of the real world, learning a new culture, improving new language skills, making new friends, and personal development. Because of this, I am really amazed by fellow Asian cultures, and being an Indian, I can see a lot of similar customs and traditions in other Asian cultures, particularly in Japanese, Korean, Chinese, Taiwanese, and Vietnamese cultures, all of which I respect greatly. Japan and India have a lot of similar cultural aspects like the prominence of patriarchy in society, women being restricted as homemakers, and similarities in the education system as well. I was amazed to see these similarities and differences. This exposure in Japan also helped me expand my thoughts on homogenous societies and how they can be an asset to boost culture, economic, and technological development. Furthermore, through this, I learned how to be independent and how to accept failures which are key to succeeding in life. Self-realization helped me shape skills that can aid both in our personal and professional lives, allowing us to make lifelong friends as globally socialized people.

But I wouldn't be able to do and experience all these without the support and help of my coordinators in India who helped me grasp the cruciality and importance of this experience, the international office in JFOU helped me a lot to understand basic things in Japan, my ACUCA Family, and my immediate family; I owe all my success to them.

I strongly recommend ACUCA's Student Mobility Scheme Program as this is one of the best avenues that help students get into the best universities in Asia and allow them to develop their personality, thus giving them an experience of a lifetime.

I will always cherish my younger self for reaching this lifelong dream of ours. I am my own example of how women are braver than most believe, stronger than most think, and smarter than most assume; I celebrate me and I celebrate being a woman.



SMS BLOGS

Witnessing Korean Culture Firsthand

WU SSU YUN
Tunghai University
Taiwan

Host: Aoyama Gakuin University, Japan

The ACUCA Student Exchange Program has provided me with the opportunity to study at the school of international politics, economics and communication at Aoyama Gakuin University in Japan.

Since the exchange students must take a minimum of 16 credits, I had to be at school from Monday through Friday. I had a very different experience in the class as compared to what I am used to because the teacher would encourage each student to express his or her thoughts in Japanese, and as I am a non-native Japanese speaker, this has been relatively difficult for me. However, despite all the struggles I enjoyed my time in Japan and made the most of my time there. During weekends and holidays, I would often go to museums or art galleries, or go to cafes with friends. And at the end of December 2022, I spent the holiday on a long trip to Hiroshima, Kyoto, Nagoya, and Mt. Fuji.

There are certain difficulties in living abroad, but if you have sufficient language skills, it will be much easier. In addition, there are very few opportunities to use English in Japan, and it is difficult to talk to store staff or go to public offices for documents. At first, I was afraid of speaking Japanese, but after I gathered the courage to speak Japanese in order to solve the problem at hand, things went smoothly. The most important thing is not to be afraid of talking to people if they do not understand what you mean. You just have to say it again, and there is no need to be frustrated about it.

I took the Japanese language while I was still in Taiwan, and I had to memorize the vocabulary and grammar for exam purposes. But when I was in Japan, I was encouraged to use the Japanese language for daily survival. I learned the importance of being brave enough to ask for help when you encounter any problems and express your needs clearly to others so that they can address your needs.



In connection with this, I learned from Japanese culture is the importance of expressing your thoughts to others. In Taiwan university classrooms, the majority of teachers explain course content to students. In Japan, especially in Japanese language classes, whether right or wrong, teachers expect us to learn to express our opinions. I found out that sometimes you can learn more from mistakes that you make.

This exchange program also allowed me to reflect on how I exercise my critical thinking and problem-solving skills. I often think about the root of the differences between Japan and Taiwan and what are the strengths and weaknesses of the Japanese culture that Taiwan can learn from.

Furthermore, I came to realize that all regions in Asia have attractive features worth studying. In Japan, I came to appreciate the importance of abiding by the rules. Following rules has become a part of life in Japan and the people follow the rules religiously. For instance, before the start of the semester, I had to fill out some documents. I experienced some difficulties with the rules and there was this feeling that if I missed a step, the result would be troublesome. However, the longer that I have lived here, I have come to realize the convenience that comes with following the rules strictly. In fact, the rules can make one's life organized.

As to my social life, it was a little difficult to make friends with Japanese people on campus. They already have a fixed circle of friends, so it seems difficult for us as foreigners to become close to them. That was why I have chosen a Chinese class this semester. The Japanese students who were interested in Chinese became my friends. In fact, I made a Japanese friend from the same department. We went to Meiji Jingu Shrine and Asakusa Temple together. I participated in her graduation project. The project was to introduce Japan to foreign nationals.



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(cont.) I feel most grateful to meet many friendly people in Japan. First of all, the tutor system is specially set up by Aoyama Gakuin University Japan. My tutor helped me know about the campus, and how to choose classes and gave me practical advice when I had questions about living in Japan. In addition, she and I were enrolled in the same major courses at the university. We talked about a lot of common topics together happily.

Then some travel activities were organized by a Japanese friend whom I met in Chinese class. This event was held twice, the first time we visited Meiji Jingu Shrine and the second time we went to Asakusa Temple. Many students from different countries participated in this event, such as the United States, Australia, the United Kingdom, Germany, China, Korea and Russia. By interacting with people from different countries, I found it interesting to see the same thing from different perspectives. After visiting the sites, I have a deeper understanding of Japanese temples and shrines. Japanese religion is not just a belief, but also a cultural habit that provides foreigners with the opportunity to understand Japan.



In addition, I also visited ANDY WARHOL KYOTO in Kyoto City KYOCERA Museum of Art. I was touched by this exhibition, in which I can see the footsteps of my favorite artist in Japan and that some of his works are influenced by Japanese culture.

In particular, after visiting the Imperial Palace, I had a special idea about history. Since I can be curious and interested in Japanese history, shouldn't I pay more attention to the culture of this land in Taiwan? There was a time when the history of Taiwan and Japan overlapped. Because of colonization, Taiwan was deeply influenced by Japanese culture for 50 years. With the change of government, many Chinese elements have been added to Taiwanese culture. We should not think that Taiwan has not developed a culture. In fact, past colonial history is an important part of shaping Taiwan's culture. Perhaps cross-strait relations often blur the focus, making it difficult for the Taiwanese to identify with its own cultural history.

After this exchange program, I found that I love Taiwan even more and I know what specific ways I should use to let the world know about Taiwan. However, all of these experiences would not have been possible without the support of the following people and institutions.

I thank the international office of my home university, Tunghai University as I was able to collect the information for the exchange program of ACUCA and helped me to submit the documents smoothly. This provides strong support for me. I didn't have to send documents in person before the travel took place. I was provided with a lot of scholarship information. During the pandemic, meetings were held online to explain in detail some precautions to be considered during the exchange period.

To the students planning to join the exchange program of ACUCA, I want to emphasize the importance of language skills. You may have an A grade in language but if you do not know how to apply them during actual life situations then you will encounter some problems. The learning is to try not to be afraid of making mistakes while talking to the locals.

Talking to them no matter how difficult made me experience the joy of learning a foreign language.

I am sincerely thankful to Aoyama Gakuin University Japan for the many learnings which made me a better and braver person. I also thank the people behind the ACUCA Exchange Program for the opportunity to study abroad and the lifelong and unforgettable experience.

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Fleeting Footsteps: Discovering South Korea's Imperfect Beauty

MERL ANDREA G. DAAROL
Silliman University
Philippines

Host: Hannam University, South Korea

Since Lee Min Ho and the rest of the Boys Over Flowers cast took the Philippines television by storm in 2009, my admiration for Korean dramas and culture has grown steadily. Naturally, the desire to become the lead to my very own drama and experience Korea first hand was concretized in me. I went to Korea with all these myriad expectations and assumptions, but little did I know how different this country would be outside the screen.

I arrived on a chilly morning on the 26th of February 2023 when the remnant coldness of the recent winter still lingered in the air. Despite this, I was burning up with excitement and joy as I began my 115-day journey in the land of the morning calm. Everywhere I looked, I saw establishments, posters, food, and items that excited me; everything was fascinating and unique.

This enthrallment allowed me to muster the courage to explore Korea alone and see what it has to offer. It allowed me to not fear but instead, look forward to learning the Korean Language wherein I was enrolled for the semester.



It allowed me to learn how to communicate without even talking; trust in the goodness of strangers; travel to places; try new food; ask questions; to be curious. It allowed me to make friends, try new experiences, and leave my comfort bubble; know sides of myself that I was unaware of before. It allowed me to grow.

However, the longer I stayed here, the more I realized that Korea is not the picture-perfect country I made myself believe in. I realized that as much as I admired Korea, I was blinded by fascination which made me fail to see the bad, the ugly, and the undesirable parts of this country; I failed to see the struggles that the average Korean had to deal with every single day while I was busy frolicking and hovering over the foreigner privilege cloud. Korea, just like any other country there is, has its flaws. It has problems and is facing challenges that affect the lives of its people. Korea is more than just the picturesque drama filming locations, more than just the delectable food, more than just the Korean Hallyu, more than the pretty K-pop faces, more than the praised cosmetics, more than the fashion, and more than the hype. Korea is a country with a rich and deep history that underwent dynamic changes throughout the course of time and has now emerged as a developed country that continues to be better for its people, despite its imperfections.

Nevertheless, this imperfect country has led me to experience a little bit of everything it had to offer, the good, the bad, and everything in between and I am nothing short of grateful.

I am thankful to the International Office of Hannam University for providing us with programs, activities, and trips that were proven important during our stay. I am grateful to my Korean buddy, Kim Jimin, who not only stuck with me through thick and thin but also went above and beyond to ensure my comfort and well-being. I am grateful to my professors for their patience and unwavering dedica-



tion to help me learn not just the language, but the way of life in Korea. To Professor Un-Young Shin who sat with me during breaks when I was lagging behind in the Korean language lessons, I appreciate you a lot. I am thankful to Professor Kitai Kim who made learning about Korean culture and history like a walk in the park. To Dr. Namson Kim who established the exchange program between Silliman and Hannam University, I couldn't be more thankful. I am also grateful for your hospitality, warm accommodation, and inspiring stories that made my stay even more exciting and unpredictable. I am grateful to the friends and relationships that I made which made my time in Korea worthwhile. Ate Souljah Faller, you're the best! I am grateful to Dr. Wilma Tejero for encouraging me to apply to the SMS Program and for vouching for my application. To the ACUCA coordinator in Silliman, Ms. Glynnis Casino for helping me address my concerns and reassuring me about my worries. I am grateful to ACUCA, Silliman University, and SUCN for giving me this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and supporting my endeavors. But most importantly, I am grateful to the Lord as everything that I am and everything that I will ever be is because of Him.

I arrived in Korea with innumerable expectations and assumptions, but I am leaving it having unlearned, re-learned, and learned concepts of what it means to truly live here. I have now seen Korea inside and outside the screen. This time and for the years in the near foreseeable future, I will be looking at Korea through the lens of my memory, etched with love, laughter, despair, and grief. My time in South Korea was short and fleeting but it was fascinating, exhilarating, enlightening, and beautiful; it was enough.

SMS BLOGS

Echoes of Exploration: Unveiling the Philippines' Mysteries and My Own

MAHIRO SUZUKI
Nanzan University
Japan

Host: Assumption College, Philippines

Studying in the Philippines as an exchange student was a whole new experience for me – the people, culture, language, food, and so forth. All of it was new and foreign. During my stay, I was a communications student and took related digital content and management class which was different from my area of study in Japan. However, this provided me with opportunities to expand my experience.

I lived what it is like to celebrate Valentine's Day and Holy Week in the Philippines. During Holy Week I stayed at my friend's house in Bacolod which takes one hour flight from Manila. The trip was unforgettable for me as we went to a beautiful mountain, the ruins, and the waterfall. My friend and I climbed the one-hour steep road in the forest to reach the waterfall. One hour later, the view was stunning. The fresh air and cold water were so refreshing, and I felt more accomplished because we had to endure a strenuous climb. There were no foreigners, and I was told by the restaurant owner that this mountain was used as a hiding place where Japanese armies were barricaded during the 2nd World War. I heard there are still remaining cannon and bullet holes. The owner also told me that I am the youngest Japanese that has visited the place since 1945. I felt honored and happy to come here from Manila. In Bacolod, the time I spent with my friend and her family was an unforgettable memory.



Another great memory was during College Week and College Night. During a week, I participated in lectures, sports activities, and College nights. Some performances and guest band live performances were so nice. My classmate and friends' performance were spectacular. During Girl's Night, the school was filled with good vibes. I've got a good influence on others because everyone has a positive mindset and natural self-confidence that I have adopted myself as well, unknowingly.

Other highlights of my stay were visiting historical places. I learned not only Philippine history but also Japanese history, my own history, but in the eyes and words of the Filipino people. I previously didn't have the opportunity to see art but since I came to the Philippines, I have become interested in art like paintings. Inside the Intramuros, I walked around, and I saw historical buildings that are tangible remains of the Philippines' complex and highly eventful past. I cannot describe it in words but there was a special atmosphere that I can feel during the visit. My interactions with people there were interesting as they were accommodating and encouraged me when I spoke some of the few Filipino words that my friends taught me during casual small talk.



I have been beyond blessed, but this isn't to say that I did not experience difficulties during my stay. The first challenge that I had to deal with is adjusting to the new environment as the only foreign exchange student during the semester. For the first few weeks, I felt loneliness and anxiety, however, my roommate became a good friend of mine and we got along not long after. My roommate and my classmates became my close friends, and they took great care of me so I did not feel lonely.

Together, we went out on the weekends around Manila. We enjoyed the local neighborhoods as well as the city area. I learned that if you don't move, nothing will happen.

Just walking around the city as soon as I arrived at the airport, I felt the Philippines' captivating energy and the atmosphere which was something I have not felt before. My future career view has changed substantially by meeting other Japanese working in the Philippines. Because of my encounters with them, I developed a passion to do work that helps people.

During my stay, I realized how much I didn't know about other Asian countries. Although sharing the same continent, countries in Asia have different cultures, social constructs, societal expectations, and characteristics that set them apart from each other. This led me to the desire to introduce the Japanese culture to more people. Thus, travel more. Through the ACUCA SMS program, I have developed an interest in other Asian countries, and it is my goal to visit all countries someday in the future.



However, all of these would not have been possible without the support and help of many people, offices, and organizations. I am most especially grateful to the highly supportive Nanzan University International exchange office. I appreciate each assistance that you have offered me. Despite me being the pioneer student involved in the exchange program from Nanzan University to Assumption College, you ensured smooth communication among the universities which allowed me to have a comfortable stay in the Philippines. With this, I am highly thankful to both university offices.

Many people I met during my stay influenced me a lot. I got insights that helped me see the world from a wider perspective, and I feel myself becoming more accustomed and understanding of cultural differences. This program allowed me to reflect deeply on why we stress about the answers to the question "What is normal?" and that we should not change ourselves to fit in as normal looks different for everyone. As a globalized society, we need not only to accept but also celebrate differences for a better future. As a Japanese youth, I have high hopes for a bright future for both Japan and the Philippines.

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Exploring Japan: A Melting Pot of Disparate Languages, Cultures, and People

LIAO CHIEH
Providence University
Taiwan

Host: Aoyama Gakuin University, Japan

Due to the impact of the pandemic and other force majeure, it took me some time to travel. However, I finally accomplished my dream to study at Aoyama Gakuin University with the help of ACUCA this Spring. I feel both extremely honored and excited about this hard-won opportunity.

The minimum number of units required for exchange students is 14. Considering that this may be the last time for me to take courses at a Japanese university, I challenged myself by taking both English and Japanese courses. Since I do not major in the Japanese department, I felt nervous to take courses with local Japanese students. However, I met several extremely friendly Japanese students who are willing to help me and acknowledged that I am an exchange student. There are a total of seven levels of Japanese courses for foreign students. Those students who belong to level four or below are forced to take all listening, reading, writing, and speaking, or drop all four. Those students who belong to level five can choose the most needed flexibly according to their personal class schedule. I took Japanese A to improve my listening, which would also benefit my other Japanese-taught classes' understanding.



Last May, I encountered one of the biggest Japanese holidays, The Golden Week. My friends and I visited multiple tourist spots in Tokyo. Such as Ghibli Park, and Asakusa. Being exchange students whom all came from different cultures and languages, we endeavored to speak Japanese and it was a very unique and cherishing experience. Not only did we improve our language skills together, but we also created various experiences that being a tourist may never accomplish.



Before arriving in Japan, a tutor application is received with all other papers. My tutor is a sweet 19 years old girl name Fuka. She first reached out to me via email introducing herself. She even attached her photograph to make me recognize her easier once we met in person. She was born and raised in Fukuoka, which is a city famous for beauty and Ramen. Her cheerfulness and kindness helped me get through many difficult times. We made an arrangement to visit her hometown once summer vacation begins.

Taking advantage of being a local university student, we also visited several National Museums freely. It is such a privileged to visit National Museums multiple times during a week. Sometimes, the school administration even distributes limited free tickets for sports events, exhibitions, and performances to students.

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