On Wednesday November 17, 2010 the East Asia Institute welcomed Dr. Jung Soo Park from the Houston Korean Education Center to introduce Teach and Learn in Korea (TaLK) and English Program In Korea (EPIK). Former TaLK scholar Kenny Vaughan was also present to share his experiences and answer questions. Approximately 30 people attended the presentation.

To begin the talk, Dr. Park spoke about Korea, a peninsula located between Japan and China. Some well know facts about Korea are as follows.

- Korea plays a large role in the technology and science industries
- Korea has the 13th largest world economy

Korea has a high demand for competent English speakers. The TaLK and the EPIK Program are two great opportunities to teach English there. These programs accept people from various English-speaking countries such as the United States, Canada, New Zealand, Australia, the United Kingdom, Ireland, and South Africa.
Unlike other programs, TaLK is considered a scholarship. Therefore, only two years of college is needed to be completed to be eligible. Participants of the TaLK program will be paired with a Korean instructor to teach English to elementary school children in rural areas. This is an after-school program, so the work days are Monday through Friday, approximately fifteen hours a week.

Applicants can apply for either a six-month contract or a one-year contract. The contract can be extended two times. The first step to applying is filling out the online application, which can be found at: http://www.talk.go.kr/. Following that, applicants will be interviewed and will need to submit various documents to be screened. Upon passing the screening they will be sent an email and an admission package. They can then accept the scholarship and prepare to leave by obtaining E2-2 or F4 Visa.

There are many differences between the TaLK Program and the EPIK Program. The most important is that applicants must have at least a Bachelor’s Degree to be eligible for EPIK. Participants of EPIK will be teaching in primary and secondary schools during school hours. They work Monday through Friday for eight hours per day. They will be asked to either assist a Korean teacher with their English class or to conduct the class together. They will also have to prepare materials for class and assist with activities related to English language.

Benefits:
- a monthly allowance of 1.5 million Korean Won (equivalent of $1,327) [TaLK]
- 1.8-2.7 KRW (equivalent of $1,600-2,400) [EPIK]
- a one-off settlement allowance of 300,000 KRW (equivalent of $265)
- round-trip air fair
- personal accommodations/home stay [Single Furnished House with EPIK]
- health insurance
- paid leave [18 days with EPIK]
- Government Scholar Certificate
- the experiences and joys of the Korean Culture
Applicants can apply through the Korean Consulate General in Houston or by emailing the EPIK office in Seoul, Korea at epic@korea.kr. Similar to the TaLK Program, the applicant will be interviewed and various documents must be submitted. The mandatory documents include the application and required essay, two signed recommendation letters, an FBI criminal background check, a diploma, a transcript, and a copy of the photo page of the passport. After Dr. Park explained the programs, the floor was opened for a question and answer session. In response to a question, Dr. Park stated that in terms of demand for English-speaking teachers “Elementary schools are the most important.” Mr. Vaughan shared his experiences with the TaLK Program with the audience. He explained how his school was so small that his first and second grade class actually had two kindergarteners in it because they were the only ones in the school. He also mentioned that his third and fourth-grade class was a challenge because they were the largest class and somewhat hard to control. However, he assured everyone that there was no need to worry. The month-long orientation will provide helpful tips on teaching and how to adapt to living in Korea. Vaughan stated that the most rewarding thing he took from the program was “learning how to teach” and he now knows that he wants to “teach English abroad for a very long period of time.” Both TaLK and EPIK programs offer amazing opportunities for those that would like to teach and learn abroad in Asia, particularly in Korea!