English Teaching Opportunities in Korea

On Thursday October 10, 2013 the East Asia Institute (EAI) welcomed Director Geunhye Kim from the Houston Korean Education Center to introduce the Teach and Learn in Korea (TaLK) Program and the English Program In Korea (EPIK). Director Kim is the new director, replacing Dr. Jung Soo Park, whose three-year term has ended. Over 60 people attended the event.

To begin the talk, Director Kim spoke about Korea, a country located on a peninsula between Japan and China. Korea has a high demand for competent English speakers. The TaLK and EPIK Programs are two great opportunities to teach English overseas. 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 minimum need to be completed to be eligible for the program. Participants of the TaLK Program will be paired with a Korean instructor to teach English to elementary school children in rural areas. The TaLK scholar will be teaching in an after-school program, so the work days are Monday through Friday, approximately fifteen hours a week.

Applicants can apply for a six-month or a one-year contract. The contracts can be extended twice. 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 either an E2-2 or F4 visa.

There are many differences between the TaLK and EPIK Program. The most important is that the 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, not after school as in the TaLK Program. They work Monday through Friday, eight
hours a day, and will be asked to either assist a Korean teacher with their English class, or to conduct the class together. The fellow will also have to prepare materials for class and assist with activities related to the English language.

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 Director Kim explained the programs, the floor was opened for a question-and-answer session. Former TaLK Scholars Denisse Perez, Ricardo Mireles, and Shannon Irby were available to answer any inquiries guests may have. A wide array of questions were asked from what people should bring with them to South Korea to questions regarding the scholars’ personal experiences. Over all, guests were well informed, many wanting to apply to the TaLK Program themselves. Some participants had some doubts whether or not they will be able to go overseas and teach, but they were reassured that the month-long orientation will provide helpful tips on teaching and adapting to living in Korea.

After the info forum concluded, a Korean food tasting event soon followed. However, this part of the event was only available for those who attended the info session. Many great tasting dishes were served. Participants enjoyed sampling Kimchi, a main staple dish of the Korean culture, with a side of rice. Additionally, cucumber Kimchi was also made available for guests to relish. Everyone raved about how delicious the food tasted despite it being more spicy than they anticipated.

Both TaLK and EPIK programs offer amazing opportunities for those that would like to teach and learn abroad in Asia, particularly in Korea. This is a great way to expand knowledge of the world. The EAI would strongly encourage others to participate in the program, especially those that would like to pursue teaching as a career or participate in international business and politics.