UTSA's East Asia Institute hosted the second annual East Asia Student Forum on March 1st, 2017 with the help of Yuka Ito, EAI's intern.

The forum's theme was "Current Events and Issues in East Asia." The goal of this forum was for students currently enrolled in Asian language classes and Asian related classes to apply and enhance their knowledge on current events in East Asian regions and then effectively create a presentation with points of discussion. Approximately 35 students were able to participate in this year's event with five professors and a student audience as observers.

Dr. Wan Xiang Yao, Director of the East Asia Institute, kicked off the event by welcoming the participants and audience members encouraging them to continue to further their studies on East Asia.

Within the event, there were three sessions in total, with each lasting for one hour. Each session had eight to nine presentations on different aspects of East Asian events and cultures. Prior to the forum, every student researched and planned their submissions on their chosen topics. Abstracts for their topics were used in the program.

With a total of 23 groups, each were allowed a time frame of five minutes to discuss their current East Asian issue. After each presentation, the audience was given the opportunity to ask questions. This process facilitated a conversation between the presenter and audience to examine the topic in more depth.

Presentations ranged from serious to lighthearted views of the state of East Asian countries. In relation to Japan, many compared...
Japan with the United States in their topics. One presentation highlighted the elementary school lunch in Japan, and compared it to the elementary school lunch we have here in America. There was also a presentation on the goals Japan has for education, such as adding more classes and activities in their curriculum. Another presentation discussed the snacks in the United States, and compared them to the snacks in Japan. There was also a presentation about the music in Japan, and an in depth discussion about the idol groups, and how the Japanese music culture compares to the music culture in the US. There was also a presentation on the art of Rakugo, which is a form of storytelling and has a rich history stemming from the Edo period.

Within economic presentations, students also discussed a more serious topic about the future of Japan’s economy and going in depth about their regional security issues and the doubts concerning the Trans-Pacific Partnership. Another student talked about the 2011 tsunami that took place in Tohoku, and the impact it had on their economy and how the United States can help Japan with its recovery. In relation to the tsunami and earthquake, another student went into further detail as to how this effected the individuals in Fukushima as well as the wildlife.

While the majority of the presentations focused on Japan related topics, there were also presentations related to South Korea. One presentation discussed the legal system of South Korea, and how it evolved throughout history while enduring many hardships. Students also compared and contrasted the Olympic events of Japan and South Korea, and discussed the effects of the Olympic events on tourism in

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these countries. Another student discussed a South Korean Government Scholarship program called TaLK (Teach and Learn English in Korea), in regard to the benefits and documentation needed for the application process. There was also a presentation about K-pop and Globalization, and how it has affected its neighboring countries such as Japan, Taiwan, and China in both negative and positive ways.

In relation to China, a student discussed the “One Belt, One Road” transcontinental infrastructure investment, and went in depth about the economic benefits and risks in regard to this policy. A student from the audience asked if China will become the number one economic leader and trader in the world, with the student presenter responding “Now that the TPP is no longer occurring, from a political and economic standpoint, yes.”

At the end, Yuka Ito, the intern at East Asia Institute and host, concluded the forum by giving thanks and gave a brief statement, “Even though I am Japanese, there was a lot I didn’t know about other parts of East Asia. You guys did a lot of work.” She also wished everyone to keep studying about East Asia and to share their findings with others.