On November 6, 2017, the East Asia Institute, with the generous support of the Consulate General of the Republic of Korea in Houston, hosted Team Kwanggaeto. The event was attended by approximately 200 people in the audience and was followed by a reception.

Kwanggaeto modernized the art of playing Korea’s traditional percussion instruments and has achieved international recognition through their performances. Incorporating the spirit of King Kwanggaeto the Great (374-413, r. 391-413), instructors of Honam Udo Nongak formed the professional percussion band, Kwanggaeto. They have merged both traditional and modern Korean percussion styles into their performances.

District 8 Councilman Manny Pelaez who represented the City of San Antonio extended a warm welcome to Kwanggaeto. “Because of our sister city relationship with Gwangju, South Korea, San Antonio has had great economic and cultural exchanges that have benefited the city and have allowed our community to grow internationally,” stated Councilman Pelaez.

Before the first percussion performance began, Consul Ggochnim Bak gave the audience members an introduction on the traditional Korean instruments and Samul-Nori (four objects play) performances including the types of dance, the names of the drums, and also the roles of each of the four drums.

Afterwards, the first part of the drum performance began, starting with the Lion Dance, a traditional Korean dance for the New Year celebration. Then, the team began their second performance in which they danced rhythmically, beating their hourglass-shaped drums and while chanting cheerfully.

During the intermission, Consul General Hyung Gil Kim was invited to the podium. He spoke about the growing relationship of South Korea and the United States, emphasizing the importance of good relations between the countries, and how the relationship is moving in the right direction. He gave special thanks to the American veterans and sacrifices made by American soldiers during the Korean War. "Without the sacrifice of American soldiers, the Republic of Korea would not be what it is today," said Kim. “The course of history would have been much different.”

In the second part of the performance, each member of Team Kwanggaeto – Tae Ho Kim, Ji Su Kim, Yun Man Kim, and
Young Hee Nam – took turns playing their bass drums methodically and moving towards center stage to dance on the floor, which included breakdancing and employing various artful dance moves across the stage.

In between drum performances, Ms. Hyun Suk Heo took the stage wearing the Hanbok (traditional Korean dress) and gave a small drum dance performance. She performed the Kim Myoseon style of Sogo Chum gracefully, grabbing the crowd's attention.

The guest soloist Master, Boo San Lee started the second part of the performance program. Master Boo San Lee led members of Kwanggaeto in the Janggu performance which was performed seated. The same hourglass-shaped drums as the first performance were used as the opening act. The performance alternated between slow and fast-paced drum patterns, with each member following Master Boo San Lee’s lead.

The last performance of the night was a faster and energetic standing drum ensemble with a unique hat dance. These performances consisted of bass drum plays, referred to as a mega drum performance. The group moved around doing a variety of standing drum performances. During the finale, some of the audience members were invited to the stage and participated in plate-spinning and juggling. The performers concluded with an acrobatic hat performance.

After the last performance, the members of Team Kwanggaeto invited audience members to the stage for a group photo. Then all guests were invited to the reception to enjoy Korean food sponsored by the Consulate General of the Republic of Korea in Houston. Consul General Kim and the Kwanggaeto team members were there to meet and greet the guests.

This event connected UTSA with Korean traditions and created fond memories for many audience members that they will love to look back on.