Growing up in a Culture of Hospitality

By Min Kyu Kim

The ECT Foundation is the independent charitable arm of AECT. One of our most rewarding endeavors is our support of the AECT Convention Interns. With Min Kyu Kim’s article we are continuing our series spotlighting the 2010 AECT International Convention Interns. Mr. Min Kyu Kim is a student at the University of Georgia and a Lee Cochran Intern for 2010. We trust that you find his comments interesting and informative.

The ECT Foundation exists to aid the organization in many ways particularly through awards and scholarships to our members. We know that this is a particularly difficult time for all of us. Any and all donations are fully tax deductible [501.(c)3] and deeply appreciated by our organization, the Foundation and ultimately the recipients of your gifts. We urge you all not to forget us. Foundation members accept no honorariums, stipends or support of any kind. Until next time…

–Don Descy, ed.

The ECT internship has proved that it is more than an opportunity to learn from and be acknowledged by a renowned group of professionals. Evidently, the medalion given to interns symbolized a new era of my life. As a central participant in the AECT community, I have become involved in that association’s activities and learned about the leadership of the educational technology research community. In addition to those benefits of internship experience, I would like to honestly talk about myself as an outsider who has grown up to be an enthusiastic member of the community through the culture of hospitality embraced by the AECT community.

As a Korean male student having my 37th birthday last January and growing up in South Korea where life is highly competitive, my sense of being meant that I should become successful in any competition. To some extent I had felt I was on the right track. To the point four years ago when I decided to pursue a doctoral degree in the United States, I was a promising practitioner at a company in Korea. However, studying in a doctoral program turned my sense of myself into turbulence. Many barriers such as language and cultural differences were much more difficult to overcome, which hindered me from being productive and building close relationships with advisors and other fellow students. I felt I was not competent any more. The resulting negative feelings caused by an educated, competitive mind were making me often feel like an alien farther and farther away from the main stream.

The ECT internship provided me with a great turning point. It was an invaluable moment by which, acknowledging that I am an international, I became a full-fledged, true member of this community. I realized that leadership is not just leading others but more like walking with others toward the shared goals serving all of us. I should add that the way for me to be competent is to become close to and more connected with others.

I met five other interns and spent shared moments with them. We talked about our interests, future plans and personal things, and participated in lots of professional activities such as the AECT leadership dinner meeting, the ECT foundation board meeting, committee meetings, and so on. Through these thrilling experiences I
found many of us sharing common interests and opening up to one another. Wherever we were invited or dropped by, everyone welcomed us and listened carefully to our still-developing opinions. I vividly remember how warm and curious the eyes of the leaders were when I talked about my idea of ways to get international groups to extend and become more involved in the leadership of the community. Through these scaffolding and encouraging environments from the whole community and friendly fellow interns, I realized that I had become courageous enough to take the lead and address the unknown.

At the conference, I also had an unforgettable experience: to support and work with the present and former presidents (Dr. Barbara Lockee and Dr. J. Michael Spector) as well as Dr. Miriam Larson, the conference planner. I had received an email from Dr. Lockee asking me to help her team to prepare for the Present@Distance sessions as early as one month before the conference. It was an honor to me to be one of the members planning the conference and I served as a facilitator at the sessions. In spite of my limited experience with this new type of session, they gave me a chance to be an insider in the community and to work as a member of one team. In addition, I had opportunities to meet many prominent professors and introduce my research interests and current agenda. All of them kindly took time out of their busy schedule and gave me insights into ways I could further develop my research ideas. Thankfully, many of the professors I met at the conference are now participating in a part of my research.

In summary, I have just begun my journey from outsider to insider, from receiver to contributor, and from follower to server. The ECT internship was definitely a cornerstone to help the journey I have set out on. I would like to say that the hospitality and leadership of the AECT community has helped me to become more than I could have without its support and inspiration.

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