

# Going Home: What Factors influence the Decision of South Korean Graduate Students at The George Washington University to Return Home to Work?

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# The George Washington University

- Created in 1821, located in the heart of Washington DC with over 20,000 students from every state in USA and more than 130 countries, we serve undergraduate as well as graduate and professional school students with ten schools and colleges and close to 100 research centers and institutes.
- The Elliott School of International Affairs is a highly regarded professional school at The George Washington University educating graduate students to be the next generation of international leaders.

## Hypothesis for this 2013 pilot study of South Korean graduate students:

- South Korean graduate students who come to America to study have a desire, whether expressed or unexpressed, to work in United States.

- A small sample of seven students were interviewed in early 2013. They were asked:
  - 1. Where do you want to work full-time?
  - 2. What considerations helped you make the decision where to work?
  - 3. Was your family involved in your decision?
  - 4. If you don't get the position, what is your back up plan?
  - 5. Which country, South Korea or USA offers you more career opportunities?

# Where do you want to work full-time?

- All students expressed interest in using their one year Optional Practical Training (OPT) in United States
- Enhance work skills before returning to South Korea
- 50/50 to ask for sponsorship for work in USA
- Only one student desired immigration to USA

# What considerations helped you make the decision where to work?

- All students responded improvement of employment skills and experience
- All honored their families but did not feel they needed to return to South Korea
- All had serious intentions about their careers

Was your family involved in the decision on where you worked after your degree?

- The family was involved in the consideration
- Student ultimately made the decision
- Mother wanted student to return to South Korea, father encouraged career betterment whether in USA or South Korea

If you don't get the full-time position you seek,  
what is your back up plan?

- Without reservation, student will happily return home to South Korea.
- They felt they would be able to find employment but perhaps not in their career field.



Which country, South Korea or United States offers you more career opportunities?

- Unanimous, United States
- South Korea remains the homeland, culture with which they identify. All but one plan to go home someday.

## Conclusion of Pilot Study

- The hypothesis was validated
- Desire to work in USA is not long term employment, rather 2-3 years
- Little desire to immigrate into USA culture
- High desire to gain work experience, skills