

# ISUS NEWSLETTER

INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF URBAN SCIENCES – UNIVERSITY OF SEOUL



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### ★ Welcome MGLEP 12!

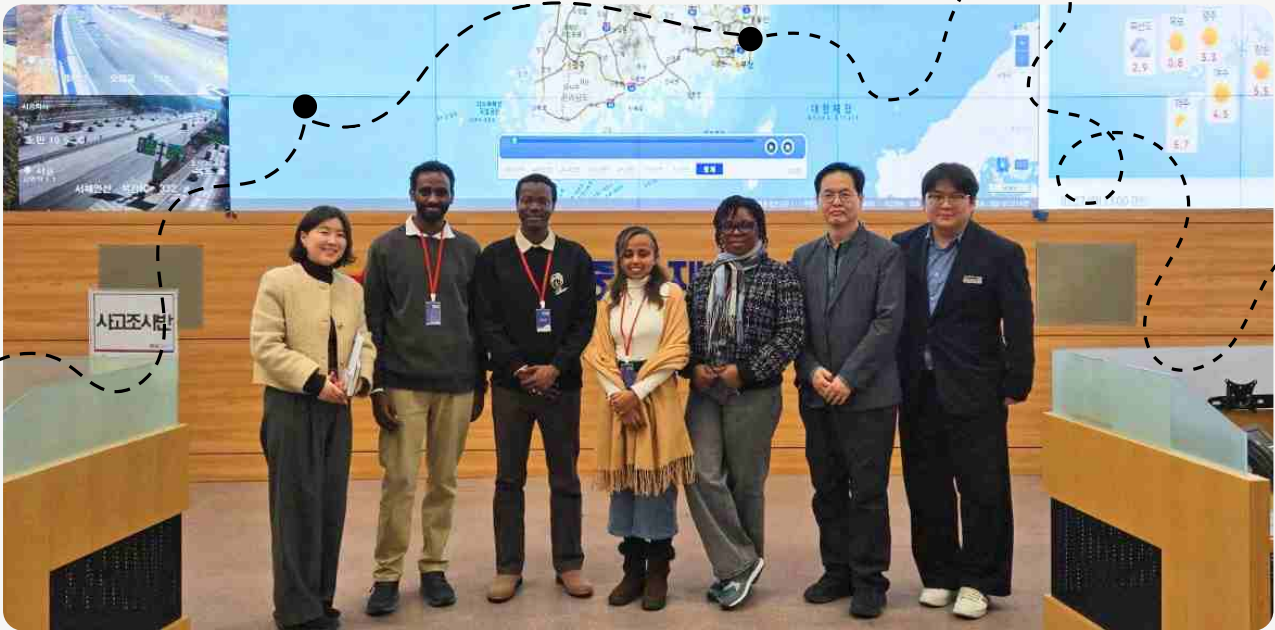
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# Winter Internship Journey

During the last winter break, ISUS students embarked on a diverse range of internship experiences, marking an important step in bridging academic learning with professional practice. Across various institutions in South Korea, including government agencies, research institutes, and international organizations, students were given the opportunity to engage directly with real-world challenges in urban development, environmental policy, infrastructure, and global cooperation. These internships provided a valuable platform for students to apply their knowledge, develop practical skills, and gain deeper insight into their respective fields.

What unites these journeys is not only the knowledge gained, but also the personal growth and connections formed along the way. Through mentorship, collaboration, and everyday workplace interactions, students discovered new perspectives, strengthened their confidence, and built networks that extend beyond borders. These internships became more than short-term experiences, they became transformative chapters that inspire future aspirations. As reflected in their stories, the lessons learned and relationships built will continue to shape their paths, empowering them to contribute meaningfully to their home countries and the global community.



*"I completed my internship at the CITYNET Secretariat in Seoul, Republic of Korea. It lasted for 2 weeks, starting from February 12, 2026. CityNet is an international network of cities in the Asia-Pacific region that works on sustainable urban development, city-to-city cooperation, and policy dialogue. During the internship, I supported communication and*

*outreach activities, translated official documents, and assisted in preparing city governance materials. As CityNet is planning to expand its engagement with Central Asia, my knowledge of Kazakhstan allowed me to contribute to outreach efforts in the region and support the organization's future cooperation with cities in Kazakhstan. One particularly meaningful experience was helping to arrange a courtesy visit to the Embassy of the Republic of Kazakhstan in the Republic of Korea, where our delegation met with H.E. Ambassador Nurgali Arystanov. Being able to contribute to diplomatic-level coordination between an international city network and my home country was both professionally and personally significant. This experience strengthened my understanding of international urban cooperation and increased my interest in working at the intersection of public policy and global partnerships." - **Sanuar Zakhenova (MUD 9)***

*"For eight days, I completed my internship with the Climate & Environment Policy Division under the Climate & Environment Headquarters of the Seoul Metropolitan Government. I focused on researching C40 cities that recently updated their Climate Action Plans using the Cities Climate Transition Framework (CCTF) and developed a comparative analysis of their approaches alongside Seoul's. Working with one of the contributors to Seoul's own Climate Action Plan was insightful. It was deepening my understanding of how cities confront climate challenges and how meaningful climate action requires shared responsibility government, private sector, communities, and citizens working toward the common goal of safeguarding our environment for future generations. Beyond the research and reports, it was the everyday moments that made the experience memorable. From collaborative discussions with the team to sharing iced Americanos even in the middle of winter and receiving the famous Dubai chocolate from our team leader, these small gestures reflected the warmth and camaraderie of the workplace. What may have lasted only eight days became a personally meaningful chapter, blending policy, people, and a few sweet (and caffeinated) memories along the way." - **Angelica Veloso (MUAP 18)***



*"I completed my internship from February 2 to 12, 2026 at the Seoul Global Center which was established by the Seoul Metropolitan Government (SMG), serves as a one-stop support hub for foreign residents, international students, and visitors in Seoul. During my internship, I participated in the Intellectual Property Basic Course under the*



*OASIS-1 Program. I learned about immigration law, intellectual property regulations, patent application procedures, and creative problem-solving skills. I also prepared a comprehensive report comparing foreign student support policies between Zambia and Korea. Through this internship, I strengthened my networking skills and gained valuable exposure to Korean work culture and innovative service delivery approaches, particularly how the center designs user-centered orientation and support programs for international residents. This experience deepened my understanding of how the SMG develops policies that promote inclusion, protection, and integration of foreign students and residents. One of my most memorable experiences was participating in the OASIS program, which introduced me to new ways of thinking and allowed me to connect with professionals from different fields." - **Leontina Bwalya Chikwanda (MUAP 18)***



*"I had the opportunity to undertake an internship at the Korea Water Resources Corporation, held at the Songsan Global Education Center in Hwaseong, Gyeonggi-do, from 5-6 and 9-11 February 2026. This experience provided valuable exposure to real-world practices in the water and environmental sector. I gained insights into*

*innovative approaches such as floating solar energy, tidal power generation, and global standards in water and environmental management. The opportunity to present my country report and engage with participants from diverse backgrounds further enhanced my understanding and communication skills. In addition to academic sessions, field visits to water and wastewater treatment facilities allowed me to observe the application of advanced technologies, including artificial intelligence, in managing water resources. The visit to the Songsan Green City project also deepened my understanding of sustainable urban development. This internship was a meaningful experience that connected theoretical knowledge with practical applications, strengthened my professional skills, and inspired me to explore how such approaches can be adapted to support sustainable development in my home country." - **Kadawatha Dinamithra Ajith (MGLEP 11)***



*"I had the opportunity to undertake my internship at the Korea Research Institute for Human Settlements (KRIHS) from 9 February to 31 March 2026. During this period, I was able to develop my research proposal and thesis. I presented my research topic to the research members, then I was assigned a mentor who guided me throughout the*

*process. My mentor helped me gain a clearer understanding of my research direction and shared valuable data sources that I could use to obtain information relevant to my home country. It enhanced my research skills and improved my ability to identify and utilize reliable data sources. I gained not only academic knowledge but also established a valuable professional connection with my mentor. I am sincerely grateful to KRIHS for providing me with such a meaningful opportunity to advance my thesis and work under the guidance of a highly supportive mentor. I am even able to contact her via email whenever I require further advice. This experience has been both highly beneficial and motivating. I sincerely hope that KRIHS will continue to offer similar opportunities to future students, as such programs enable students to enhance their research capabilities and build confidence in completing their thesis."* – **Phearun Din (MGLEP 11)**

*"Reflecting on my internship journey at the Korea Expressway Corporation (KEC) in Gimcheon, the week began with visits to Seoul's Traffic Control Center, smart toll collection systems, and disaster management facilities. Each stop revealed how Korea integrates advanced technology into infrastructure, ensuring safety, efficiency*



*and resilience. Arriving in Gimcheon, meetings with KEC managers and staff further deepened our understanding of ongoing projects, Public-Private Partnership (PPP) initiatives, disaster management system and future project collaborations. The experience was both enlightening and inspiring. From asset management discussions to maintenance site visits at the Gumi Branch office, every moment offered valuable lessons. On the final day, we presented our countries experiences in implementing and managing expressway projects and proposed areas of collaboration to the management team. Beyond technical knowledge, I was moved by the professionalism and generosity of the KEC family, who welcomed us warmly and treated us as part of their community. This mentorship and kindness left a lasting impression, strengthening my resolve to contribute to Ethiopia's expressway development with innovation and long-term efficiency."* – **Yared Tuji (MUDSIP 8)**



**Korea National Railway**



**Korea Water Resources Corporation**



**KDI School of Public Policy and Management**



**Korea Research Institute for Human Settlements (KRIHS)**



**CITYNET Secretariat**



**Korea Expressway Corporation**

# Welcome MGLEP 12!



*Do you remember the first time you arrived at the University of Seoul dormitory; how you felt stepping into a new place, surrounded by unfamiliar faces, yet filled with excitement and curiosity for what lies ahead?*

This spring semester, ISUS warmly welcomed Master's Program for future Global Leaders in Environmental Policy (MGLEP) Cohort 12, consisting of 15 students from 10 different countries. Their arrival marks the beginning of a new academic journey enriched by diverse perspectives, cultural exchange, and collaboration.

On March 13, 2026, the MGLEP Spring Semester Meeting was held with Dean Shin Lee and Prof. Seung Beom Seo, MGLEP Coordinator, bringing together both MGLEP Cohort 11 and Cohort 12. The program began with a presentation on crime prevention, offering essential information to help students navigate daily life safely in Seoul and raising awareness about practical precautions.



This was followed by a welcoming video prepared by MGLEP Cohort 11, which added a warm and friendly touch to the session, helping new students feel more comfortable and connected from the very beginning.

The Dean then officially welcomed MGLEP Cohort 12, expressing sincere encouragement and support as they embark on their academic journey at the University of Seoul. A self-introduction session followed, where students from both cohorts shared their backgrounds, interests, and goals, fostering an open and inclusive atmosphere. Senior students from MGLEP Cohort 11 also extended their welcome by offering thoughtful advice, not only on managing academic responsibilities, but also on making the most of their time in Korea. They encouraged the new cohort to explore the culture, build friendships, and create meaningful experiences alongside their studies, setting a positive and inspiring tone for the semester ahead. **Welcome to the ISUS family, MGLEP 12!** (R.R)





## MUAP Field Trip - Sejong & Gongju -

Deafani Perdana (MUAP 18) reflected on her participation in the two-day field trip to Sejong Special Self-Governing City and Gongju City (13–14 March 2026) as a meaningful and enriching experience that successfully combined learning, observation, and direct engagement across diverse



settings. She noted that visits to key sites including the Sejong Promotion Center for Administrative Capital Development, the Digital Government Exhibition & Experience Center, the National Sejong Arboretum, and several historical landmarks in Gongju enabled participants to gain a comprehensive understanding of Korea's urban development, digital governance, environmental values, and cultural heritage. This integration of multiple perspectives made the programme both engaging and intellectually rewarding.



The field trip began in Sejong, where students explored Korea's administrative city planning and advanced digital systems, while also observing how ecological infrastructure is incorporated into sustainable urban design at the National Sejong Arboretum. The journey then continued to Gongju, a historic city of the Baekje Kingdom, where visits to significant heritage sites such as Gongsanseong Fortress and the Tomb of King Muryeong provided insights into heritage preservation and traditional urban structures. Overall, the experience allowed students to meaningfully connect theoretical knowledge with real-world applications, deepening their understanding through practical exposure. (N.J. Nash)



# MUD 9 & MGLEP 12 Visit to Seoul Big Data Campus



On March 6, 2026, students from MUD Cohort 9 and MGLEP Cohort 12 visited the Seoul Big Data Campus to gain deeper insight into how data-driven approaches support urban planning and city management. The visit provided a valuable opportunity for students to move beyond theoretical learning and observe how one of the world's leading smart cities utilizes data to address complex urban challenges. Through a series of presentations, students were introduced to Seoul's data ecosystem, including how large-scale datasets are collected, managed, and integrated across various sectors.

The session continued with practical demonstrations that showcased how Seoul analyzes big data to improve transportation systems, public services, and policy decision-making. Students learned how data visualization and predictive analytics are used to enhance efficiency, respond to citizens' needs, and support evidence-based governance. The experience not only expanded their understanding of smart city development, but also inspired them to consider how similar approaches could be applied in their own countries, reinforcing the importance of data in shaping more sustainable and responsive urban futures. (R.R)



# Reflections in the Blessed Month of Ramadan

## Finding Family Away from Home



The month of Ramadan, also known as the fasting month, began on February 19, 2026. During this sacred period, Muslims around the world, including ISUS students, observe fasting for approximately 30 days. Fasting is not only about abstaining from food and drink from dawn until sunset; it is also a time to practice patience, self-control, and empathy especially

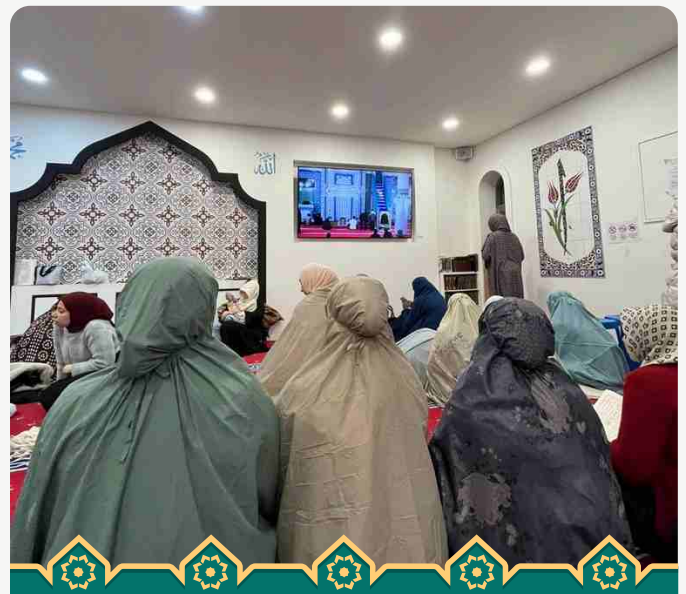
toward those who are less fortunate and may struggle to meet their basic needs. It encourages individuals to avoid negative behaviors such as anger, impatience, and wastefulness, while nurturing better habits and strengthening spiritual awareness.

Beyond its spiritual significance, Ramadan is also a time that strengthens human connections. It brings people closer, often turning friendships into a sense of family. For students at the University of Seoul, Ramadan is experienced in a different environment, far from home. On campus, some friends may not fully understand the meaning of fasting. However, their curiosity such as asking how Muslims fast from dawn until sunset without food or drink creates meaningful opportunities for cultural exchange. These simple conversations carry a unique beauty. The respect and willingness to learn from others reflect the richness of cultural and religious diversity, especially when living abroad. Unlike in Muslim-majority countries, where Ramadan practices are widely understood, experiencing it in a different context makes these moments of empathy even more meaningful and deeply appreciated.



In addition to iftar gatherings and shared meals, one of the key spiritual practices during Ramadan is the night prayer known as *Taraweeh*. This voluntary prayer is highly valued and performed after the evening prayer throughout the month. The word *Taraweeh* originates from Arabic, meaning “to rest,” referring to the short breaks taken between sets of prayers. It is a time for reflection, seeking forgiveness, and strengthening one’s connection with God.

In South Korea, where Muslims form a small minority, Ramadan becomes both a personal and shared journey. Despite the size of the community, the spirit of togetherness remains strong especially during iftar gatherings, where people share stories, traditions, and cuisines from different cultures. This sense of unity is reflected in the experience of Ibrahim Boussada, MGLEP 11, who described his Ramadan in Korea as unexpectedly heartwarming. Although he initially worried about missing the familiar atmosphere of home, he found the same values of mercy, love, and togetherness within the diverse community around him. Sharing meals, prayers, and moments of gratitude with people from different backgrounds including Korean friends who joined in fasting and prayers created a sense of belonging that transcends distance. Ultimately, experiencing Ramadan abroad teaches us that home is not only a place, but also the people who walk the journey with us. (N.J. Nash)

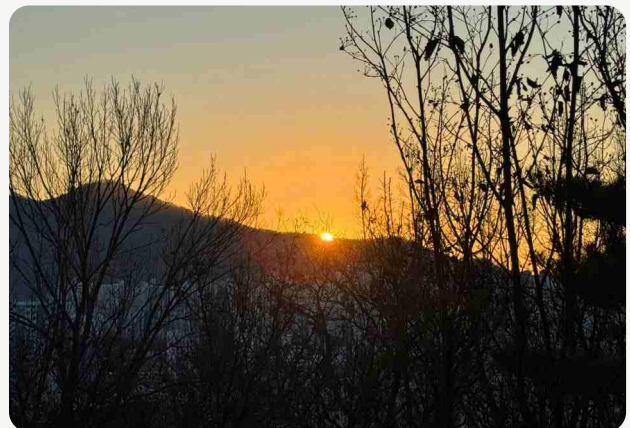




## Baebongsan “A Hidden Gem in UOS”

First and foremost, have you ever wondered whether the University of Seoul (UOS) holds hidden gems that quietly inspire those who love nature? Tucked within the city landscape lies one such treasure: Baebongsan Mountain, a peaceful summit located in Jeonong 2-dong, Dongdaemun-gu, Seoul. For many visitors, this mountain offers more than just a scenic trail; it provides a meaningful escape where nature, history, and personal reflection meet.

Beyond its natural beauty, Baebongsan Mountain also carries historical significance. Archaeological excavations conducted in 2016, in preparation for the development of Baebongsan Park, uncovered remains linked to military activities during the Three Kingdoms Period. Recognizing its cultural importance, the site was later designated as a municipal monument of Seoul on February 9, 2017. Today, the mountain stands not only as a recreational destination but also as a quiet witness to centuries of history.



Have you ever climbed it, even once? The journey to the summit may not be long, yet the experience often leaves a lasting impression. Each step along the trail can gently remind us that life itself is a climb. The feeling echoes the message of the song *The Climb* by Miley Cyrus, which encourages us to keep moving forward, keep believing, and continue climbing despite the challenges we face.



Much like ascending a mountain, the path toward success in life requires patience, perseverance, and faith. There will always be moments of doubt and negativity along the way, yet the key lies in continuing forward, step by step. In the end, success is not defined solely by reaching the destination, but by the journey itself, the quiet resilience we develop, the lessons we learn, and the hope we carry as we keep climbing.

For students, particularly those pursuing their graduate studies at the UOS, life can sometimes feel overwhelming. Academic responsibilities, personal challenges, and the distance from family can weigh heavily on the mind. In such moments, Baebongsan Mountain offers a gentle refuge. In every season whether surrounded by spring blossoms, summer greenery, autumn colors, or the calm stillness of winter the mountain provides a space to pause, breathe, and reconnect with oneself. The fresh air, the quiet trails, and the simple beauty of nature can soothe the mind and remind us that even during stressful times, peace and strength can be found just a short walk away. (N.J.Nash)

# Alumni of The Month:

## Hoe-dae Kim (SUD 2) & Sang-sik Jeon (GC 3)

**Hoe-dae Kim(SUD 2) and Sang-sik Jeon(GC 3)** are the founders of RAAP, a proptech company leveraging AI and spatial big data to transform decision-making in urban development. Drawing on their practical experience in the field, they developed “do raap,” an innovative platform that automates complex urban planning and feasibility analysis processes. Through their recent collaboration with the University of Seoul, they continue to bridge academia and industry while exploring the future of data-driven and AI-powered urban development.

**Could you briefly introduce yourselves? What are you currently working on, and could you also share about your recent startup and what led you to start it?**

Hello, we are Hoe-dae Kim (SUD 2), CEO of RAAP, and Sang-sik Jeon (GC 3), Co-founder. Based on our extensive hands-on experience in urban planning and development, we are currently leading a proptech company that integrates artificial intelligence and big data to transform decision-making processes in urban



development. The motivation behind our startup came from a shared desire to solve inefficiencies we observed in real-world practice through technology. Traditional methods of site analysis and cost estimation, which relied heavily on manual work, had clear limitations in responding to rapidly changing urban environments. With this in mind, we set out with the goal of creating an environment where anyone can easily and accurately analyze cities by combining expert knowledge with IT technology.

**Could you briefly introduce the “do raap” platform you developed? Who are its main users, and in what situations is it particularly useful?**

“do raap” is an AI-powered platform designed to support urban design and planning using spatial big data. It automates the entire process, from site analysis and regulatory review to generating building layout alternatives and calculating project feasibility, which previously required several days of manual work by experts, and delivers the results in the form of a comprehensive report within minutes.

The platform provides an innovative working environment especially for developers and construction companies that require fast and objective decision-making. It also serves as a powerful tool for design and consulting firms seeking to strengthen the persuasiveness of their proposals with solid quantitative evidence. Furthermore, it is optimized for financial institutions and public agencies that require data-driven project evaluations, making it applicable across the entire urban development process. Ultimately, “do raap” acts as a reliable AI partner that allows urban professionals to move beyond repetitive calculations and focus on more creative and value-driven aspects of urban design.



**We understand that you have recently signed an MOU with the University of Seoul. Could you share the background of this collaboration and what you expect from it going forward?**

This collaboration began with our desire to give back to our alma mater by sharing the knowledge and experience we gained during our time at ISUS, as well as our belief that our platform could serve as an innovative tool in education and research.

With the kind support of President Won Yong-gul, we were able to move forward with this initiative and signed an industry-academia cooperation MOU on March 9, along with a donation of software licenses worth approximately KRW 300 million.



Moving forward, we aim to support students in developing data-driven and creative urban design capabilities by providing a practical learning environment. We also plan to collaborate with the university's outstanding researchers to further advance technologies for solving urban challenges by combining academic expertise with our AI capabilities.

Since "do raap" has been developed based on Korea's legal system, institutional framework, and spatial data environment, its direct application to other countries may require additional adaptation. While this may limit its immediate use for some ISUS alumni abroad, we believe that the global trend toward AI-driven cities presents new opportunities for international

collaboration. If ISUS continues to foster education and exchange in this field, we hope our company can also contribute to such industry-academia partnerships. Ultimately, we aspire to expand “do raap” into a global service that enables ISUS alumni around the world to implement smart urban planning solutions.

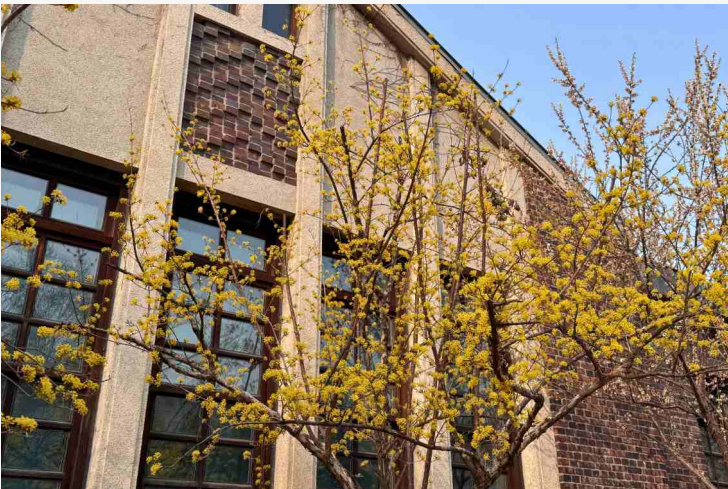
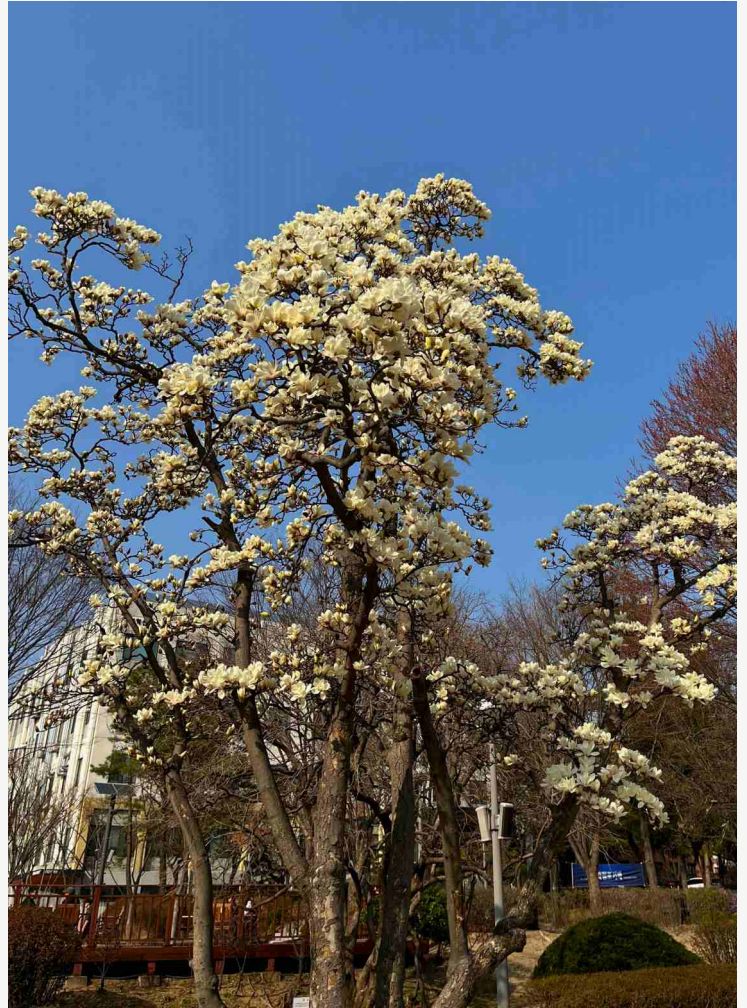
**Lastly, how did your experience at ISUS influence your current work and startup journey? Do you have any message for current ISUS students?**

Our time at ISUS was a crucial foundation that helped us develop an integrated way of thinking about cities. Cities are not driven solely by physical planning; they are complex systems shaped by spatial characteristics, legal and institutional frameworks, financial mechanisms, and data. ISUS enabled us to understand how these elements interact to create value from multiple perspectives.

This interdisciplinary perspective became a key driving force behind our decision to establish a startup that combines urban planning with IT technology.

To all ISUS students, the challenges we face in cities today are becoming increasingly complex. We encourage you to use the integrated thinking framework you gained at ISUS as a tool to turn real-world limitations into opportunities for innovation. We also hope that the ISUS network will continue to be a strong and supportive community that fosters collective growth.





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