

ISSF 2017 Reflection
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When I was accepted to present at the International Student Science Fair, I was honored to represent the United States and the Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy at such a prestigious competition. However, I never truly grasped how unique and transformative this experience would be until I arrived.

At the competition, there was a sense of comradery even though we were from different corners of the globe and we all had diverse cultures. None of this mattered, we were here to learn and explore together. Not only did we get to present our research projects in multimedia, oral, and poster formats, but we also got to hear what projects our peers were pursuing in other countries. In listening to these presentations, I was able to appreciate the different conditions and cultures that exist all around the world. The girls from Kenya were researching what would be the most sustainable and drought-resistant corn type after they experienced three years of drought and failed harvests. The Australian team was researching how to improve wind turbine designs, which provides around 30% of Australia's renewable energy and has the potential to contribute more. These projects and others like it gave insights into the different environments in each country.

To supplement the presentations, we had nightly cultural shows where each school would proudly showcase a part of their culture. I got to experience a traditional Philippine dance called a Tinikling, karate from Taiwan, K-Pop from Korea, and much more. Each night not only opened my eyes to the different cultures of the world, but also allowed me to further appreciate the diversity. These cultural shows helped form deeper connections with others that I still keep to this day.

In addition, I also got to experience Korean Culture and visit the awe inspiring Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology (KAIST). KAIST is one of the leading universities in STEM including robot design, chemical engineering, and technology. I got to see HUBO, the KAIST robot which won the 2015 DARPA Challenge, and listen to the leading professors in Robotics and Chemical Engineering discuss their experiences and expertise. It was amazing to learn from these leading professionals in their field.

Overall, this ISSF experience was not only enlightening, but provided me with the opportunity to make friends from all over the world. Through this amazing experience, I was able to not only learn about other projects and share my own, but also create friendships that will last a lifetime. I cannot wait to be a part of and see what amazing experience Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy's International Student Science Fair in 2018 will be.