

Stemming from a mix of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Christianity, traditions in Korea are not only just part of our culture but also part of our lifestyle. They shape and form what and how we think. In a homogenized nation like Korea, where 97.5% of the demographics are Koreans, traditions act as unspoken rules and/or insider jokes. For instance, one of the very first things that define a relationship would be age calculated by the year of birth (the month and day are more or less disregarded as Korean age starts from 1 since the year you're born). From this comes a strict hierarchical dynamic that makes the younger person obey and respect the older person. Likewise, we have countless traditions that shape our lives, such as eating rice cake soup in the new year to age, taking shoes off at home, and having a sense of nationalism.

Then, as an RSO serving Korean international students, how do we exactly see tradition?

Tradition, for the Korean Student Union (KSU), is a way to unite, connect, and celebrate our heritage and background. We have embodied this belief by hosting events such as KSU at UW reunion, Freshmen Orientation, UW Ilac Social Day, and SNL. During the UW Reunion, we would bring together UW alumni in Korea and undergraduate students to build connections throughout multiple generations. Then, later in the summer in Korea for the incoming freshmen, we host Freshmen Orientation to inform and help guide them through an exciting transition point of their lives. Before finally heading off to America, we host UW Ilac Social Day as a more informal way to bring incoming freshmen and current undergraduates closer together at a restaurant in Korea. With this amazing bond formed, we'd start the autumn quarter at UW with SNL, which is a talent show to further bring us together.

But beyond just unification within our community, tradition also serves as a tool to raise awareness and showcase our culture to the diverse communities around us at UW. This has been brought to life through our events such as Over Night and Culture Night, which are two of the biggest events hosted by KSU. Over the years, we have seen an increasing interest in Korean culture, ranging from K-Pop to K-Dramas. Recognizing this trend, we'd host Overnight and Culture Night in the winter and spring quarter, respectively, to further showcase and share our culture. This has helped us better ground our Korean identities in a foreign land but also have helped us to have something to be proud of and to love.

Overall, KSU finds tradition and culture to be the bond that helps unite the Korean International Students at UW. But at the same time, it has been also an amazing gateway to connect with the diverse groups of communities at UW. This idea and belief have been exemplified through our events ranging from KSU at UW Reunion in Korea to Culture Night that brings together everyone regardless of their age and background. We hope to continue to embody and spread these traditions and culture to leave an everlasting positive impact on campus.