

ROAD TO WORLD CLASS UNIVERSITY AS A SMALL AND YOUNG UNIVERSITY: POSTECH'S EXPERIENCE

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Being a world-class status university requires a university to possess competitive advantages such as tradition, resources, and a supportive environment. This circumstance may explain why world-class universities are concentrated in developed countries, which possess a relatively long modern university history, a nurturing environment of abundant resources, and entrenched academic freedom. It is not a surprise that every world-class university, with only a few exceptions, is a public institution. Korea is one of a few developing countries that have succeeded in developing world-renowned universities. Among others, Pohang University of Science and Technology (POSTECH), deserves special attention. POSTECH's uniqueness derives from its position as a private university that was able to achieve, over just a quarter century, world-class status. Significantly, it was able to overcome the serious geographical disadvantage, expressed in the typical "all roads lead to Seoul" preference for living in the capital that normally limits a Korean university's capability of attracting the best scholars and students.

The success story of POSTECH would be an excellent benchmark for small and young universities such as South Eastern University of Sri Lanka. The experience would give a strong encouragement to the new comers in the world higher learning market. Our experiences include, are not limited to, the strategies in establishing an admirable reputation, recruiting top students and faculty, attracting financial resources nationwide, and globalizing the campus.

POSTECH was established in 1986 by a private entity, POSCO, currently the world's second-largest steel enterprise. POSTECH is a 1.08-square kilometer campus located in Pohang, a midsize coastal city of more than 500,000 inhabitants. Geographically, Pohang is situated in the southeast of the Korean peninsula, about 360 kilometers from Seoul, the capital. It is interesting that such a small, remote city would become the home of POSTECH. In Korea, where social, educational, and cultural infrastructures have long been centralized in the capital, the geographical proximity to Seoul has been considered critical for attracting high-quality academic staff members and students. No single university with any hope of becoming a prestigious research institution could be found outside Seoul. Nevertheless, POSTECH successfully settled in the local city, owing to the founder's visionary leadership, the unprecedented large-scale financial support from his company, and creative managerial strategies to attract talented scientists and students.

In world university rankings, POSTECH was a surprising whippersnapper compared with the other institutions in the top 30 of the Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2010-11 in which POSTECH was ranked 28. POSTECH, as the first research-oriented university in Korea, and has quickly become a sound player in science and engineering in Korea, Asia, and, to a greater extent, the World. POSTECH's foundation falls deep with POSCO, the steel company intertwined with Korea's history of industrial development. Funded well by this steel giant, POSTECH has been seeking excellence by pursuing its founding tenets in remarkable fashion, which are to produce well-educated future global leaders and perform high impact research, thereby serving mankind by empowering contemporary science.

POSTECH offers customized education to a small group of top students, and selects them through a strict admission process. In total, POSTECH houses 11 departments and 22 graduate schools or programs for the 3,000 brightest minds. POSTECH emphasizes research as well with a larger graduate body and 64 research institutes with state-of-the-art facilities, such as Korea's one and only synchrotron radiation facility.

Though young, POSTECH has a sophisticated reputation because its links with major domestic industries gives it great financial advantage to attract some of the best scholars and students worldwide. Also, joint research is active with many world-scale institutions and enterprises such as the Max Planck Research Institute and ExxonMobil, and around 100 top universities worldwide are in alliance for various forms of exchange. To match this trend, POSTECH declared a bilingual campus in 2010, and English is used officially throughout the campus.

As POSTECH extends its reach across the globe, developing relationships and partnerships with other countries and other cultures, it has an ultimate goal in mind: to be a significant contributor to the world science and engineering. Based on its progress so far, this ambitious young university looks set to grow into a serious contender.