

The city of Chicago welcomes the year of the rooster

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This past Saturday saw the start of the new year in accordance to the Chinese lunar calendar. Across the city of Chicago, celebrations of culture and heritage blossomed as people began to ring in the new year. From Chinatown to the Magnificent Mile, festivities were in full swing throughout the day. Even on campus, celebrations were obvious. Many students here from China had helped to organize a cultural festival in the MTCC to introduce Chinese food, language, and culture to their fellow students on this joyous occasion.

In the heart of the Windy City, several locations and popular tourist attractions also welcomed the Chinese New Year by offering

discounted admission to patrons. One such attraction is Chicago 360, located atop the John Hancock Center on the Magnificent Mile. From this perch, high in the sky, visitors looked in awe at the beautiful views of Lake Michigan and the City of Big Shoulders. Those who dared tried out the Tilt! ride, which tilted guests on a special platform over the side of the building for a spine-tingling look straight down a 90-story drop. As part of the festivities, the attraction itself was illuminated with special rainbow lighting, which was visible on the outside of the building for miles around. From the observation deck, many people noticed that many of the famed landmarks of Chicago, including the Willis Tower and Navy Pier Ferris Wheel, were illuminated with red lights. The staff at the tower then explained that this was in recognition of the holiday, as

red is a color synonymous with the new year celebrations.

In accordance to the Chinese calendar, this year is the year of the rooster, the tenth sign in the Chinese zodiac. The rooster in Chinese culture is a symbol that exemplifies honesty, energy, intellect, flexibility, diversity, and confidence. It is said that people born in the year of the rooster exemplify these traits in their behavior and actions. This claim may not be as far-fetched as one would think, what with famed and historic icons such as Ronald Reagan, Benjamin Franklin, Beyoncé, Dolly Parton, and Serena Williams all being born under the rooster sign. The starting date of a new year is determined by the second new moon following the winter solstice, which takes place annually in mid-December. Because of this dependency on the new moon and winter

solstice, the date of the Chinese New Year changes every year, and can be anywhere from late January to mid-February.

Though the date of the holiday has passed, the celebrations have yet to come to an end. Tradition holds that festivities continue past the first day of the new year and go on till around the time of the Lantern Festival, which takes place on the 15th day of the new year. In the coming days, numerous celebrations will take place in Chinatown here in Chicago, with cultural fairs, parades, and performances dotting the vast neighborhood for the next two weeks. It is sure to be a party to remember, as many family members and friends of people who live in the area come to the city to be a part of the celebration.



Photos by Steven Milan Moreno

International Students Feature: South Korea

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This week, two students from South Korea (Bori Kim, studying computer science, and Yonggyu Baek, an undecided student studying humanities) shared their opinions about how their home country differed from America.

The main topic discussed was not food, as usual, but culture. Kim noted that in the United States, it's commonplace to talk to strangers, which was not the case in South Korea. "Here," she explained, "even if you don't know someone, you say hi. In the elevator, you can talk about the weather. In Korea, some people do it, but people think it's weird, [thinking] 'I don't know you, why are you talking to me?'" Kim thought it was especially odd when two people would get off the train and say something like, "It was nice talking to you. What's your name again?" On a similar note, Baek explained that it was odd to him how it was natural for strangers to smile or nod at one another when they made eye contact. "When we have eye contact, we don't do anything. We don't smile, we don't

do anything. But here, we smile." When it had happened the first few times, Baek was confused, getting the wrong message. "I thought, maybe she likes me? Then I heard it's different." Kim agreed with this, also noting the difference. In fact, Kim said, "Now I have reverse culture shock when I visit my country. When I have eye contact with someone I smile, and they think it's really weird." An additional cultural difference, according to Kim, was the concept of personal space. She explained that in South Korea, while it was normal to apologize for running into somebody, nobody would ever apologize for being too close. "Here," she noted, "we have private zone. You say sorry when you get too close, even when you're not touching, when you're just invading someone's space." Another major cultural difference was the language itself. The concept of formal speech is much different in the two countries; while English has some special words like "sir" that denote respect, the Korean language has a whole different way of speaking, called jondaemal, that includes different verb endings and even different words for the same noun. Kim recognized this large difference, remarking that "We have [formal speech] too, but not the same way. Here, it's the way you

ask. In English, you can use 'can I' or 'may I,' or 'would you mind.' But we actually have two different words sometimes." Additionally, Kim said that she wasn't used to businesses leaving their lights on after they had closed. Because of this, many times she had mistaken closed places as open. "I saw the lights, and I run, [thinking] 'Oh, they're still open!' But then they're closed... what a waste of electricity." Manners, according to Kim, also differ. In a restaurant, for example, what is considered polite in America is sometimes the exact opposite of what is considered polite in Korea. "When you eat in Korea, you're not allowed to blow your nose. Here, you're allowed to blow your nose, but you're not allowed to burp. Here, it's the other way around. The first time I came here, I was in homestay ... The homestay father blew his nose during dinner, and I was like 'what is he doing?'"

Kim described the difference in tuition as, "super a lot more" in America, and there are a lot of other differences in terms of academics. Baek thought that in general, "The US is more open to discourse and question. At Korea, I had a professor that wants only a lecture and later she will get questions. But here, anytime you want you can ask a question.

It's not considered to be interrupting a lecture." In addition, Kim explained that in Korea, "We're not allowed to eat during lecture, and depending on professor, not allowed to drink." The concept of a curfew, while nonexistent at Illinois Tech, is common in Korea, according to Kim. When Kim went to university in Korea, she said, "my curfew was 11. Normally 11 to midnight is curfew time. There's one president of students on each floor, so at 11 o'clock they walk around and check each room and call the names to make sure everyone's here. If you're not there, you lose points. We had to do some volunteer work, like cleaning the restrooms or cleaning the dining area, to get rid of the points." The curfew was enforced every day, Kim said, including Saturday and Sunday. However, she added, "You could submit a form ... so you can stay out late, but you have to stay outside. You can't get in until 5 a.m. the next morning." All in all, differences are clearly abound.

This section of TechNews needs international student volunteers to be interviewed! Please contact adetweiler@hawk.iit.edu if interested.