SPRING 2026 – EAST ASIA TOUR REPORT

Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan, South Korea

April 12-30, 2026

OVERVIEW

The AEO Tour – Spring 2026 East Asia Tour visited 4 countries and 12 cities (Hong Kong / Taiwan –Taichung, Taipei, Hsinchu, Taoyuan / Japan – Tokyo, Yokohama / South Korea – Seoul, Daejeon, Busan, Daegu, Jeju). We had 42 USA University Fairs, met nearly 3,000 students, and collected almost 2,000 student leads for our participating universities and colleges. We celebrated our 40th year in business and this was one of the most rigorous and effective tours we have ever conducted. The selection of schools we visit for fairs changes each Fall and Spring and each tour is carefully crafted to give each participating university maximum exposure to a variety of schools with interested students that can afford to study in the USA. To further increase the ROI of the tour and to give back to students, we ran a drawing to give away an iPad Pro to one student that registered at the fairs and the results were incredible!

Below is a summary of each of the countries we visited this Spring.

HONG KONG: April 12-14

We had a wonderful group of universities and colleges on the East Asia Tour! The group progressively got bigger in each country and everyone worked so hard and represented their institutions so well!

The Hong Kong group arrived on Sunday night and had the night free to rest and relax before the busy week ahead. Some of us went out to have dinner in the city and enjoyed the beautiful skyline of Hong Kong Harbor. We started the tour off with a very busy first day as we had 4 fairs, including one school which we had never visited before and the turnout was amazing! After the visit, we had a fun counselor dinner and 7 counselors attended.

On Tuesday, we had 3 fairs and were able to include another school for the first time and it was our best fair! The support of all the schools and counselors in Hong Kong is always incredible. AEO Tour is one of the few groups that brings US Universities to Hong Kong and I have fostered and built so many great relationships with the school counselors and administrators. The market is still great in Hong Kong and I will continue to lead tours there.

After the third fair, we flew to Taipei and arrived late in the evening to our hotel.

Statistics: Hong Kong

Participating institutions	6: 4 states represented
Number of 4-year colleges	5
Number of 2-year colleges	1

Number of school fairs	8
Total students that participated	364
Total student leads generated	183

TAIWAN (Taichung, Taipei, Hsinchu, Taoyuan): April 14-18

We arrived at our hotel in Taipei on Tuesday evening around 9:15pm and the group had to rest up before departing early on Wednesday morning. The schedule in Taipei was very busy and we made every minute count! The group nearly tripled in size in Taipei and we had a great time!

On the first day, we took the 7:25am train to Taichung and had 4 great university fairs. The schools were very diverse and the turnouts were great at each fair. We returned to the hotel at 6:45pm and everyone enjoyed a free night. The hotel that we stay at in Taiwan is very convenient as it sits above the Taiwan High Speed Rail and it is in the middle of a nice mall.

We spent our second day in Taipei and had 4 fairs. Again, the schools were very diverse and were packed with interested students. We nearly put in another 12 hours workday and everyone enjoyed the night off.

On Friday, we had headed to Hsinchu for the first 3 fairs and finished off the Taiwan tour in Taoyuan. A few of the group members gave presentations and did a wonderful job. We held a multi-school fair after and were able to have students from a nearby local school join us! We returned to the hotel at 5:25pm and had a large counselor dinner in the hotel with 8 counselors.

AEO Tour is the only group that regularly visits Taiwan, so we have many schools that are willing to host us. I try to split up the visits in the Spring and Fall and it is always a challenge to squeeze everyone in the schedule that wants to host us. We had a fantastic lineup of schools and nearly every visit had great turnouts with interested students and parents. It was a busy schedule, but the group did a wonderful job and everyone worked so hard!

We were able to sleep in on Saturday and flew to Tokyo in the afternoon.

Statistics: Taiwan (Taichung, Taipei, Hsinchu, Taoyuan)

Participating institutions	17: 12 states represented
Number of 4-year colleges	15
Number of 2-year colleges	2
Number of school fairs	12
Total students that participated	947
Total student leads generated	505

JAPAN (Tokyo, Yokohama): April 18-21

The group arrived from Taipei around 7:30pm on Saturday evening and we enjoyed a free night in Tokyo.

On Sunday, everyone had a much-needed day off. Tokyo is an amazing city and the group took advantage of all the sites, parks, exhibitions, and food that we could! The days off are essential for resting, exploring the culture, and for team-bonding! I normally don't like organizing anything on Sundays, but due to our busy schedule on Monday, I decided to host the group dinner on Sunday night. I invited counselors to attend and 3 counselors were able to join us. It was still fun to get together with everyone for a "family dinner".

We had a few additional universities join the group in Tokyo and they were great! On Monday morning, we left at 7:15am and had 3 fantastic school fairs in Tokyo and Yokohama. We were the first group of US universities to ever visit 2 of the schools and that is always a great honor! At the first fair, we gave 3 presentations to a small auditorium full of interested students and parents. Halfway through the fair, another school joined and their students were exceptional! The second school fair was at a school we have visited the past few years and it is fun to see their school grow in numbers and interest in studying in the USA. We were the first group to ever visit that school and the fairs are getting better each year! In the afternoon, we drove down to Yokohama (which is my new favorite city in Japan) for a school fair that we have never been to before. It was another great turnout and fun to expand our list of schools.

On Tuesday, we had 2 school fairs at very different schools. The second school was much better than the first, but we were still grateful for the opportunity to visit. We enjoyed some free time for lunch in the neighborhood and then headed to the airport to fly to Seoul.

Statistics: Japan (Tokyo, Yokohama)

Participating institutions	20: 14 states represented
Number of 4-year colleges	18
Number of 2-year colleges	2
Number of school fairs	5
Total students that participated	433
Total student leads generated	218

SOUTH KOREA (Seoul, Daejeon): April 21-25

As always, Seoul is our most demanding stop due to the popularity of the tour and the strength of the schedule. Each semester, I receive numerous requests from schools to host our group and I try to change up the rotation to accommodate everyone and plan an effective tour as possible. I am happy to have included 2 new schools into our schedule that we have never visited before.

We arrived in Seoul late on Tuesday night and checked in at the hotel just before 10:00pm. The group had a short rest and departed the next day at 6:30am to visit a school further south. I know everyone was tired, but the group worked so hard and did so well! We had 3 more school fairs on the first day and they were all busy with interested students! After the 4 fairs, I arranged an optional visit with the EducationUSA Office for interested reps and the rest of the group enjoyed the night off in Seoul.

We had 3 university fairs on Thursday and they were all busy! It was our first time visiting 2 of the fairs and the students were eager to learn more and the schools were so grateful and supportive. We returned to the hotel around 4:00pm and held our biggest counselor dinner yet with 13 counselors attending! It was a fun night of networking and delicious food!

Friday was our last day in Seoul and we visited a school in Seoul and traveled to Daejeon for the last visit of the day. Both were well attended and the group handled the 2 1/2-hour road trip like champs! We all enjoyed a free night in Seoul when we returned and most of the group spent the night having fun together!

Everyone that finished in Seoul had individual departures on Saturday morning and those that continued to Busan enjoyed a rare free day!

Statistics: South Korea (Seoul, Daejeon)

Participating institutions	25: 16 states represented, 1 international
Number of 4-year colleges	22
Number of 2-year colleges	3
Number of school fairs	9
Total students that participated	694
Total student leads generated	386

SOUTH KOREA ADD-ON (Busan, Daegu, Jeju): April 26-30

The South Korea Add-On is always a fun and effective way to end the tour season! We had a large group attend this portion and everyone was so great and fun! We all arrived in beautiful Busan on Sunday night and enjoyed the free night.

On Monday, we visited 3 schools for university fairs and each school brought out all their grade 10 and 11 students. The schools were all different and were all fantastic! The schools on this tour are always grateful for our visits as they don't have as much traffic as the schools in Seoul! We finished the day in the late afternoon and enjoyed the free night in the city.

We checked out on Tuesday morning and drove 2 hours north to Daegu. The first of our two fairs was at the high school on the US military base in Daegu. This was our second year visiting this school and everyone is very grateful for our visit! I know the numbers don't count the same, but I feel it is important to visit these schools as the students often get overlooked and left out. The group had wonderful attitudes and did a wonderful job as usual! The second fair was at the international school in Daegu and it was our best turnout yet! After the fairs, we flew to our last stop – Jeju Island!

We arrived in Jeju Island late at night on Tuesday and many of us went out to get the famous black pork BBQ! It was so delicious! Our final working day of the tour, we had 3 school fairs and each one was the busiest we have had! We had time to visit the famous Osulloc Tea Museum and a local pizza restaurant that I used to go to when I lived on Jeju Island over 15 years ago. We finished off the tour with a final group dinner and at the hotel and we had 2 counselors attend. It was an incredible buffet and it was fun to spend time with everyone one last time!

On Thursday morning, everyone checked out and went their separate ways.

Statistics: South Korea Add-On (Busan, Daegu, Jeju)

Participating institutions	20: 17 states represented, 1 international

Number of 4-year colleges	18
Number of 2-year colleges	2
Number of school fairs	8
Total students that participated	473
Total student leads generated	405

FINAL THOUGHTS

As I mentioned above, the 2026 East Asia Tour was the most demanding tour I have ever planned and carried out. My entire purpose of creating and building tours is to provide value. I want to provide value to each university and college that participates. I want to provide value for the schools that we visit. Finally, I want to provide value to the students and parents that participate in our fairs. I am proud of the work I and my team have put together in building and carrying out the most effective tours in Asia. I am proud and grateful for everyone that participated in the tour and gave it their all. We had late nights, early mornings, and packed schedules. The group of reps were world-class, kind, supportive, hard-working and some of the best people I have ever had the privilege of working with. Participating on an AEO Tour is fun, but it is also hard work!

I understand that the climate in our field is a bit heavy now. I know we all hear about budgets being cut, foreign policy and politics limiting access for international students and a myriad of threats, dangers, wars, and violent acts being carried out across the world. Although there is a lot going on in the world that we cannot control, there are many things that we can still control and that are in our power. For these reasons, I wanted to build a highly effective and busy tour for everyone that could produce the highest results possible. I know everyone's jobs are under a microscope and I am confident and proud of the past few weeks and all that we accomplished on this tour! I will continue to be everyone's biggest advocate, so please reach out if you need a letter of recommendation, an email to a boss, or any other form of encouragement or support on your behalf. The AEO Family is real and the growth of this family is one of the great joys of my career and life. I love and appreciate everyone so much that joins the AEO Tour and I hope you know that!

Thank you to everyone that joined the tour this Spring! Thank you for representing your institutions so well. I said this a few times, but you are all incredible recruiters, but even better people! Keep up the wonderful work you are doing and I hope to see you sooner than later. I will be at NAFSA, IACAC, and AIRC this year as well – so please stop by and say hi!

Safe travels and see you soon!

Much love,

Ben Wilkey
Tour Helper Man
AEO Tour