

## ***GGC's SLA Grads Find Working Overseas is Rewarding One Graduate's Story from Korea: Casey Watkins***

Although the exact numbers remain difficult to discern, an increasing number of SLA graduates find benefit, opportunity, and adventure in taking jobs overseas. Casey Watkins is one of these graduates, and Watkins' story is illuminating.

Watkins graduated in May 2020 with a major in English and a minor in history. Jobs remained scarce because of the Coronavirus crisis raging through the world. Few companies were hiring in the USA. Watkins discovered that many Asian countries still wanted native English speakers but were finding it difficult to entice them due to travel restrictions and



*At the Gyeongbokgung Palace in Seoul during New Years celebrations.*

worries about the pandemic. This represented the perfect opportunity for Watkins. "I was feeling especially stuck in one place, and I figured that the best way to break out of the rut was to make a huge change," Watkins observed.

A search led to a position in Seoul at a full-English immersion academy. Watkins explained, "The major rule of our school was that the kids get as much exposure to English as possible on a daily basis, and that all lessons were conducted in English." Watkins taught seven-year-old students.

The time spent in Korea led Watkins to undergo many positive experiences. Self-discovery ranked high. "One thing I learned about myself is that I'm surprisingly resilient and adaptable," Watkins observed. Another surprise related to friendships. "You tend to form a really strong sense of community with those who are also immigrants." Seeing the sites of Seoul and Korea constituted another thrill. As the largest city in Korea, Seoul offers many attractions.



*Casey Watkins with a class on a parade of Halloween costumes through the streets of Seoul*

Although Watkins worked for a reputable school, the experience taught the need for caution. "I met people there who were working at shady establishments, and because their housing and visa were tied to their jobs, they had a very hard time leaving their school for better working conditions," Watkins said. "The biggest piece of advice I'd give to GGC students looking into teaching overseas, is to do your research before accepting a job offer."

Watkins found the most difficult aspect not to be cultural adjustment or living in a foreign context: "prior experience didn't prepare me for how tiring teaching is."

With these observations, Watkins encourages people to consider the possibilities: "working overseas is an amazing opportunity that will color the rest of your life."

*By Richard Rawls*