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## 'Korea needs to expand admissions officer system'

Lee Stetson  
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A growing number of Korean universities have introduced the admissions officer system in which college hopefuls are assessed beyond their test scores.

This is because the education authorities believe the system better enables colleges to recruit creative and talented students and, at the same time, relieves the burden of private education costs on parents.

The new system, which originated in U.S. schools, is still confusing many Korean colleges as well as parents and students. Earlier this year, some of Korea's top universities were criticized as they selected students by considering only their grade point average (GPA).

However, an American admissions expert said academic scores are necessary and the base before looking at other elements in recruiting students.

In an interview with The Korea Times, Lee Stetson, chairman of the Admissions Advisory Board for Global Education Opportunities, a private admissions counseling firm, explained that the process reviews data beyond GPA and SAT scores, but that doesn't mean those scores are not important. He served as dean of admissions at the University of Pennsylvania (UPenn) for 30 years.

"Holistic admissions can be discussed based on academic scores. When I worked at UPenn, I had to narrow down 40 percent of the applicants and most of them had top grades. It's very hard to choose, so we look at what other characteristics they have," Stetson said. He was in Seoul to participate in a college admission seminar organized by the Korean Council for University Education (KCUE).

The seminar titled "Symposium on Holistic Admissions Best Practices in the U.S." was held at the Millennium Seoul Hilton Hotel from Wednesday through Friday. During the session, Stetson presented how admissions officers can improve their professionalism.

He also pointed out that the process doesn't seem to be fair at times, although many Korean colleges are seeking to secure fairness in holistic admissions. "Some students think the admissions process is not fair for them. There is no one right way and we don't bring all the answers on how to choose students," Stetson said.

"The holistic admission is still challenging for us even though U.S. colleges introduced the system 100 years ago. They are still striving to find ways to choose students who can make schools more exciting," he added.

He stressed the importance of universities' roles in managing students to prepare them for their future careers, not only focusing on just looking for the best students.

"We (universities) are not vocational schools, students have to learn at universities how to think, how to use their ability both theoretically and practically," he said.

"Universities have to help students to find what they are interested in and what they want to do in the future."