

Case study: Korea University (KU)

Building international collaboration and recognition with Pure



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Prof. Kwan-Young Lee

Executive Vice President for Research at
Korea University, Korea

“Pure was a natural choice – it is a solution that helps the curation, analysis and publicity of researchers’ achievements. In addition, it manages research networks in an integrated way.”

Professor Kwan-Young Lee explains how his institution leverages Elsevier’s solution to position KU as a world-class research university

Prof. Kwan-Young Lee holds several senior roles at Korea University, including Executive Vice President for Research, Dean of the Graduate School, and Director of the Institute of Convergence Science. One thing all these various positions share is a drive to enhance the university’s research capability. As Prof. Lee explains: “Our goal is to make Korea University a world-class research-focused university.” Early on, Prof. Lee realized that having the right digital solutions in place was going to be a crucial step towards achieving that ambition. In this case study, he explains why KU selected Elsevier’s Pure and the benefits they have since reaped.

“In my opinion, using both SciVal and Pure concurrently has helped us a lot at KU, and has created a kind of synergy effect.”

– Prof. Kwan-Young Lee

The challenge

When Prof. Lee took on his role as Executive Vice President for Research in 2017, Korea University (KU) was already considered a high-performing university, with a strong reputation for research. However, the Research Office saw the opportunity to build on that reputation. According to Prof. Lee: “We realized that KU had the potential to become a globally-outstanding university.”

However, if KU was going to be recognized for its research excellence worldwide, the team knew that showcasing the accomplishments of researchers would be key. And that meant finding a way to promote their outcomes and activities at both a local and an international level.

Prof. Lee was also keen to find a way to support collaboration at the university, as he believes group research creates its own “virtuous cycle”. He explains: “In my experience, it results in high-quality papers, which lead to the generation of novel research subjects, as well as opportunities to secure research funding and new partnerships. So, one of our goals was to further encourage professors to collaborate with internal and external researchers.”

Another key focus was to introduce more innovation at KU, not only in terms of research, but in education and administration.

Korea University already had a home-grown solution for managing research – KURMS (Korea University Research Management System) – but what Prof. Lee and his team missed was a solution to help them disseminate their research achievements, increase the visibility of researchers, and grow their international networks, while improving KU’s global research reputation.

The solution

One of Prof. Lee’s first initiatives was to set up a Research Information Analysis Center at KU. Working in collaboration with the Research Office, they soon identified Pure as the best solution for their needs. Prof. Lee explains: “Pure was a natural choice – it is a solution that helps the curation, analysis and publicity of researchers’ achievements. In addition, it manages

“Pure has improved the visibility and research reputation of Korea University globally by promoting our excellent researchers and their research achievements. Ultimately, I believe that this improves our overall research capability and international recognition.”

– Prof. Kwan-Young Lee

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They also selected Elsevier’s [SciVal](#), a web-based research analytics solution with access to the research performance of over 20,000 research institutions and their associated researchers worldwide. Together, the two teams then drew up an action plan for the roll out of the solutions, building consensus across campus through a process of information sharing. Prof. Lee says: “This helped us gain the support of departments such as Academic Affairs, the Research Planning Division, the Office of Planning and Budget, and the Industry-Academic Corporation Foundation.”

To help them prioritize faculties for the population of Pure profiles, Prof. Lee and his team drew on [SciVal’s](#) analysis tools to understand quantitative and qualitative research achievement and international collaboration.

Today, more than 550 researchers at Korea University have profiles on Pure, many of them from the fields of Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics and Medicine. Prof. Lee says: “We found that these are the groups that benefit most from international collaboration. For the same reason, we have also profiled Economics researchers in the Arts and Humanities.”

He adds: “We have also found that investing time to advertise, encourage, monitor and manage our university’s Pure profiles maximizes their effectiveness.”

The results

Since the launch of Pure, the Research Office has seen improvements across the board, from greater discoverability of their researchers to improved performance in the various university rankings.

For example, Pure’s search engine optimization (SEO) has seen Korea University move to a higher spot in Google’s search results, bringing in a raft of new and international visitors.

Another benefit for Prof. Lee and his team is that the research achievements of KU’s faculty are now profiled in way that

they can measure. He says: “We’ve also found that Pure not only helps to showcase KU’s group research; for example, via regular updates of researchers’ collaboration networks, it also boosts international collaboration by enabling individual faculty members to discover researchers in the same field globally.”

Prof. Lee adds: “With Pure, we’ve also seen international access to our research grow from 66% to 80%. When we look at the data by country, we can see that those who actively collaborate with us, such as the US, India, Japan and China, now have steady access to our research information.”

Importantly, Prof. Lee also believes that Pure has impacted KU’s recognition globally. He explains: “Greater exposure of our research has contributed to an increase in our university’s academic reputation and international collaboration indicators, resulting in KU rising from 86th to 74th place in the QS World University Rankings in recent years. We were also recognized as the top university in Korea in the 2021 and 2022 QS Asia University Rankings.”

About Professor Kwan-Young Lee

Prof. Lee was trained in Chemical Engineering at Seoul National University (Bd.S. and M.S), Korea. He was awarded his PhD in Synthetic Chemistry at The University of Tokyo, Japan, before taking on a professorship at Korea University in 1994. Prof. Lee was the president of the Korean Institute of Chemical Engineers in 2020. He is a member of NAEK (the National Academy of Engineering of Korea) and KAST (the Korean Academy of Science and Technology). He was awarded the Doyak Medal of Order of Science and Technological Merit by the Korean Government and is a Korean Delegate for IACS (The International Association of Catalysis Societies) and APACS (Asia-Pacific Association of Catalysis Societies). He has published more than 300 major journal papers and registered 100 patents.



Interested in finding out how Pure helps researchers raise their profile and build new connections globally? In our case study, [“Why Pure has become the go-to solution for one of Korea’s most influential researchers”](#), Korea University’s Professor Yong Sik Ok explains how he has used Pure to build an international network that now spans almost 50 countries and nearly 400 universities, institutes and industries.

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