

Statement

Joon-ho KANG

Candidate for the 29th Presidency of Seoul National University

Seoul National University has been central to much of my life. I studied here, taught students, and served in administrative roles that brought me face to face with the university's challenges, large and small. I know its potential intimately. I have also seen how institutional barriers and established practices can prevent that potential from being realized. I am now standing for president to begin the next chapter of change at SNU.

The world is once again turning to universities for intellectual guidance. Artificial intelligence is transforming how we learn, conduct research, and produce knowledge. The climate crisis, a changing international order, and social polarization are unsettling structures we once took for granted. At a time when the way forward is far from clear, SNU must be among the first to answer the questions the world poses. As universities compete intensely for talent and research, we cannot rest on past achievements. We, too, must change. A few new initiatives or fashionable policies will not suffice. To advance, SNU must transform its institutional foundations and the way it operates.

That change begins with our people. Faculty must have the time to pursue fundamental questions. Students must be able to shape their own learning. Staff must be able to apply their expertise to solving the university's problems. Colleges need the freedom to act according to their distinct strengths, and faculty across disciplines need the freedom to work together across boundaries. I believe autonomy and connection make this possible. When people can exercise their abilities freely and combine their strengths, SNU can take the lead in tackling unanswered questions and opening new possibilities. I envision a university that sets new standards for its time instead of relying on past achievements or relative standing: a network of people and knowledge that turns outstanding work into greater value for society and the world. Taking the initiative through autonomy and connection is what I mean by 'Pioneering, the SNU Way.'

Change comes through action.

My experience in university administration has taught me that change begins when ideas are put into action. As vice president for planning and coordination, I addressed one of the most difficult issues created by SNU's incorporation by pursuing a change in tax law. To transform the Main Gate area into an open, pedestrian-centered plaza, I met directly with those who opposed the proposal and worked persistently to reconcile differing views. As dean of the College of Education, I anticipated the educational changes brought by AI and a shrinking school-age population and established Korea's first research and education framework in learning sciences. As a professor of sport management, I proposed a new national program directly to the government to strengthen Korea's sports diplomacy. Over 13 years, the program trained the next generation of sport administrators from 59 countries.

The circumstances varied, but my approach remained consistent: break through barriers, open what is closed, and create what is missing. When SNU needed something, I took the initiative, even where there was no precedent and interests conflicted. I connected people and resources, listened to different views, and worked to reconcile them until ideas became institutions and tangible results. Progress came step by step, eventually clearing the way for further change. I learned that someone must begin the changes that are needed, and that whoever takes the initiative must see the work through.

My approach is to listen carefully, seek answers together, and then make decisions and act. This is the leadership I learned at SNU and the principle I will uphold as president. I will ask whether long-established practices still serve the university's needs. I will remove unnecessary barriers and improve institutions and working conditions so that people can put their abilities and commitment to work. SNU's excellence must translate into tangible results rather than remain unrealized potential.

The changes I propose look to SNU's longer-term future. In twenty years, the university will celebrate its centennial. I hope it will then be a place where outstanding minds from around the world come together to explore freely, connect, and create knowledge that sets new standards. I envision a diverse and sustainable intellectual ecosystem that brings together foundational inquiry and frontier research, tradition and the future. As Korea continues to grow, I want SNU to advance with it, becoming a globally leading university that represents Asia and contributes to the world.

We cannot accomplish everything in one presidential term. But the changes that will shape the next twenty years must begin now. However difficult or time-consuming the work, I will not turn away from what SNU needs. I will seek answers with the university community and follow through on the decisions we make.

I will take responsibility for setting these changes in motion so that SNU can realize more of its potential and set new standards for our time.

August 19, 2026

Applicant: Joon-ho KANG (signed in the Korean original)

To: Chair, Seoul National University Presidential Search Committee

Joon-ho KANG | Profile

Education

- University of Michigan: Ph.D. in Sport Management.
- The Wharton School: MBA.
- University of Michigan: M.A. in Sport Management.
- Seoul National University: B.A. in Physical Education.

Experience at SNU

- Dean, College of Education: February 2022-February 2026.
- Founding CEO, SNU Holdings: February-July 2021.
- Vice President for Planning and Coordination: February 2019-January 2021.
- Deputy Vice President for External Affairs: July 2010-July 2014.
- Director, Dream Together Master Program: 2013-present.
- Professor, Department of Physical Education: 2001-present.

International organizations and foreign government advisory work

- First Korean professor in a sport-related field at a U.S. R1 research university, serving in sport management at the University of Connecticut.
- Member, International Olympic Committee (IOC) Olympism365 Commission.
- International adviser on sports policy to the Government of Singapore.

Academic service

- First Asian to serve on the editorial board of the Journal of Sport Management, the leading journal in the field.
- Editorial board service for the International Journal of Sport Finance, International Journal of Sport and Health Science, and other journals.
- Vice president, Korean Society for Sport Management and Korean Society of Sport Policy.

Government and public institution advisory work

- Current member, Fiscal Policy Advisory Committee, Ministry of Planning and Budget (formerly Ministry of Economy and Finance); former member of a public institution evaluation committee.
- Former member of policy advisory, policy evaluation, and regulatory reform committees, Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism.
- Former member, Fund Deliberation Committee, Korea Sports Promotion Foundation.

Business and sports organizations

- Current outside director, GC Corp.; former outside director, FILA and Korean Basketball League (KBL).
- Expert and adviser, PyeongChang 2018 Olympic Winter Games Organizing Committee.
- Former member, Planning and Finance Committee, Korean Sport and Olympic Committee; former adviser to the KBO commissioner; former member, Marketing Committee, World Taekwondo.

Community contribution

- As chair of the Chan Ho Park Foundation, mentors leading Korean athletes including Chan Ho Park and Young-pyo Lee and extends sports leadership into broader social service.

Honors

- Inaugural SNU Award for Advancing Research Excellence (2007), predecessor of the current SNU Research Award.
- Commendation from the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Education and Human Resources Development (2007).

University service

- Director, Arts and Culture Program for Creative Leaders, SNU Museum of Art.
- Steering committee service for the Institute of Culture and Arts, Hoam Faculty House, Global Public Administration Development Institute, and Happiness Research Center; faculty lead for SNU in Creative CA (SWP).

Key Achievements

In my administrative roles, I have sought to create what the university lacked and find new solutions to long-standing problems. I have opened new avenues for funding, established research and education systems for the future, and tackled unresolved questions of space and organization.

Breaking new ground inevitably means confronting practical constraints and competing interests. I have met those challenges by bringing people and resources together, building consensus, and turning proposals into concrete changes in policy, budgets, and the campus itself. This has been my approach at SNU: identify the problem, develop a workable solution, and prove it through action.

1 Strengthening SNU's financial foundation

As vice president for planning and coordination, I tackled financial challenges that required new approaches. By pursuing tax-law reform, establishing a structure for revenue-generating businesses, and increasing government contributions, I helped build a more sustainable financial base for SNU.

1-1 A lasting solution to SNU's tax challenge

- Pushed for tax-law reform to resolve the biggest problem since SNU's incorporation.
- As head of the tax-reform task force, coordinated and executed legal, media, and political strategy.
- Secured permanent tax-exempt status, generating at least KRW 300 billion in tax savings every ten years.

1-2 Designed and established SNU Holdings (founding CEO)

- Proposed, designed, and established corporate-subsidary governance for SNU's revenue-generating businesses, including SNU Holdings and SNU Ventures, to secure SNU's own revenue actively and systematically.
- Persuaded Kwon Oh-hyun, former vice chairman of Samsung Electronics, to chair the SNU Holdings board, and appointed Seo Dong-gyu, former head of M&A at Samil Accounting Corporation, as CEO.

1-3 Secured record government funding

- As SNU's chief government negotiator, secured funding above the average growth rate of the higher-education budget for two consecutive years while serving as vice president for planning and coordination.
- Secured annual government contributions of at least KRW 500 billion for the first time in SNU's history.

1-4 Pursued research funding from the UAE

- Planned a large-scale, long-term research project to secure overseas funding and pursued funding from the UAE government; the effort was halted by COVID-19.

2 Administrative innovation

As vice president for planning and coordination, I anticipated the changes AI would bring and the university's evolving role. I established the AI Committee, University Innovation Center, and National Strategy Committee, among other new structures. These systems created new capacity for data-informed management, long-term strategy, and strategic communication.

2-1 Established the SNU AI Committee

- Three years before ChatGPT appeared, in 2019, designed, established, and operated the AI Committee with three divisions: AI education, AI research, and the Gwanak AI Valley.

2-2 Created the University Innovation Center

- Established the University Innovation Center to serve as SNU's think tank for data- and evidence-based university management, serving concurrently as its first director.

2-3 Launched the National Strategy Committee and Corporation Reestablishment Committee

- Launched and operated the National Strategy Committee and the Corporation Reestablishment Committee to deliver former President Oh Se-jung's pledge of presenting SNU's national strategy and reflecting on its direction after incorporation.

2-4 Established the communications team and recruited a specialist from SK Telecom

- Created SNU's first dedicated strategic communications team and personally recruited a strategic-communications expert from SK Telecom.
- Conceived and launched the SNU Bird Letter, which achieved the highest open and readership rates on campus, and strengthened communication through social media.

3 Education and research innovation

As dean of the College of Education, I broadened its role to prepare education professionals for the future. I established Korea's first research and education framework in learning sciences and introduced new academic programs, taking on changes without precedent.

3-1 Established Korea's first learning-sciences system and education-innovation think tank

- Built Korea's first research and education system in learning sciences in response to the declining school-age population and the shift in the AI era from knowledge transmission to active learning.
- Established Korea's first Learning Sciences Institute to serve as a think tank for new education, securing KRW 700 million a year in stable research funding from the Ministry of Education.
- Appointed on- and off-campus experts from education, psychology, neuroscience, and computer science as researchers.

3 Education and research innovation

Continued.

3-2 Created the first non-teacher-training major in the 80-year history of Korea's colleges of education

- Established Korea's first undergraduate major in integrative learning sciences to respond to growing demand for education beyond formal schooling and prepare students for a range of careers in education, including teaching.
- Recruited a professor of brain engineering from Korea University as faculty for the major.
- To overcome the limits of department-based majors, established the major within a college rather than a department, the first of its kind in Korea.

3-3 Reformed teacher education and earned a record evaluation

- To reorganize and integrate the scattered teacher-training system around students, established the Center for Innovation in Teacher Education and secured KRW 1 billion in annual funding from the Ministry of Education.
- Three years after its founding, earned an A grade with the top score among 45 universities in the government's sixth-cycle teacher-training evaluation, the college's best ever.

3-4 Secured new faculty positions and nearly doubled the college budget

- Secured three new faculty positions in departments with shortages.
- Secured annual operating funds for the Center for Innovation in Teacher Education and the Learning Sciences Institute from the Ministry of Education, nearly doubling the college budget.

3-5 Founded the SNU IB Education Research Center

- Built a partnership with the Gyeonggi Provincial Office of Education to adapt the International Baccalaureate (IB) curriculum, which emphasizes active, thinking-centered learning and whole-person education, to Korea.
- Established the SNU IB Education Research Center with a KRW 1 billion gift from a private donor.

3-6 Designed courses without lectures, classrooms, or textbooks

- Developed and taught two courses for first-year students without lectures, classrooms, or textbooks to strengthen experiential learning, active participation, and collaboration.
- Course I: Experience and Growth. An experience-based course in which students choose their own team activities and carry them out for a semester, becoming aware of changes in body and mind.
- Course II: Cooperation and Growth. A project-based course in which students discover real educational problems and work together to propose solutions.

3-7 Created a scholarship for students who pass the teacher employment examination

- Created a KRW 100 million scholarship to encourage College of Education students who pass the teacher employment examination before graduation.

3-8 Expanded teaching-practicum partnerships

- Expanded teaching-practicum partner schools from 3 to 25 to raise the quality of the practicum.

4 Transforming the campus

I have tackled long-standing problems without hesitation, working persistently to reconcile differing interests and opinions. To secure the support and resources needed, I approached people directly, both within and beyond the university.

4-1 Turned the Main Gate area into a pedestrian plaza

- As the first project to shift the campus from cars to pedestrians, converted the area around the Main Gate, which had functioned like a traffic structure, into an open plaza.
- Resolved safety problems and made the area a landmark.

4-2 Launched the Culture Center reconstruction and secured early funding

- Planned the reconstruction of the outdated, underused Culture Center as a hub for members and a landmark connected to the local community.
- Pushed SNU's first international design competition.
- Of the total KRW 91.6 billion reconstruction cost, secured KRW 29 billion in government funding at an early stage.

4-3 Opened the Administration Building lawn to the university community

- Opened the closed lawn in front of the Administration Building, the so-called President's Lawn, to members at all times and converted it into a shared lawn plaza.
- Connected the rebuilt Culture Center and the lawn plaza into a new central space and landmark for SNU.

4-4 Resolved the College of Social Sciences renovation and Korea Economic Innovation Center site together

- After years of delay, solved the Korea Economic Innovation Center site and College of Social Sciences remodeling together through an integrated building-construction alternative and reached agreement.

4 Transforming the campus

Continued.

4-5 Brought the College of Nursing relocation to final agreement

- After a seven-month impasse over the College of Nursing's long-awaited move to Gwanak, reached a final agreement among SNU, SNU Hospital, the College of Nursing, and the College of Engineering through close communication.

4-6 Led recovery from record flooding

- Swiftly restored the campus from the worst flooding on record, including landslides, inundation, and building damage.

4-7 Renewed the College of Education's central garden

- Remodeled the College of Education's central garden after 50 years, creating a modern space.

4-8 Launched the Gwanak AI Valley initiative

- Planned a strategy to create a Silicon Valley-style AI innovation and startup ecosystem around SNU and launched the project, forming a consultative body with the Seoul Metropolitan Government and Gwanak-gu and commissioning Seoul's master-plan study.

4-9 Advanced a light-rail extension into campus

- To fundamentally solve SNU's transportation problem, planned an infrastructure-improvement project linking university-community development and pushed to extend the Seobu light rail into campus.
- The light-rail project was halted after Mayor Park Won-soon's term ended unexpectedly.

Reference | Concept plan for university-community infrastructure linking the economy, culture, and transport through a light-rail extension into campus

S-Valley

Build an AI innovation ecosystem and a culture-venture campus town from Nakseongdae through SNU's rear gate to Goshichon to strengthen national competitiveness, improve the domestic economy, and create jobs.

S-Culture Belt

Build everyday cultural infrastructure for regional coexistence and activate the social value of sharing SNU's cultural resources.

S-Rail

Extend the light rail into campus to improve access to economic and cultural infrastructure for regional coexistence.

5 External engagement

As SNU's first Deputy Vice President for External Affairs, I worked closely with a wide range of people within and beyond the university, responding swiftly to crises and developing practical solutions. Through active engagement with the National Assembly and government, I gained the experience needed to translate SNU's challenges into institutional and policy changes.

5-1 Managed high-stakes media issues

- Handled media responses to negative campus events, including the student occupation of the Administration Building against incorporation and faculty disciplinary cases.

5-2 Led SNU's external relations

- Oversaw SNU's external-cooperation affairs with the media, the National Assembly, the government, and businesses.

6 Contributions to sport management and Korean sport

As a professor of sport management, I have worked beyond my own research to advance my department and field and strengthen the competitiveness and international standing of Korean sport.

6-1 Helped propel SNU to seventh in sport in the 2017 QS World University Rankings

- Secured KRW 18.9 billion in government funding for the new Sports Culture Research Building (Building 71-1).
- Established the Global Sport Management (GSM) graduate major, secured 40 new GSM graduate places (30 master's and 10 doctoral; the only graduate enrollment expansion nationwide that year), and secured two new faculty positions, the department's first since 1975.

6-2 Built a 13-year national program for sport administrators from developing countries

- Proposed and won the national project to train sport administrators from developing countries to strengthen Korea's sports diplomacy, ran it for 13 years, and grew it into a flagship K-sports program.
- The program was designated as SNU's only government-supported research center in a non-science field at the time, securing cumulative funding of KRW 25.4 billion.
- Trained approximately 290 next-generation sport administrators from 59 countries, building a global network of sports leaders with strong ties to and a deep understanding of Korea.

6-3 Established the SNU-KBO Baseball Coaching Program

- Established a partnership with the Korea Baseball Organization (KBO) to launch Korea's first integrated baseball coaching program covering youth through professional baseball, and recruited former LG manager Lee Kwang-hwan as its director.

6-4 Appointed to the IOC Olympism365 Commission

- Appointed as the only Korean member of the IOC Olympism365 Commission and contributed to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through sport and Olympism.

6-5 First Korean professor in a sport-related field at a U.S. R1 university

- Served as the first Korean professor in a sport-related field at the University of Connecticut, a U.S. R1 university, as a professor of sport management.

6-6 First Asian to serve on the Journal of Sport Management editorial board

- Served for 17 years as the first Asian on the editorial board of the Journal of Sport Management, the leading journal in sport management.

Picturing SNU at its centennial

Twenty years from now, SNU will celebrate its centennial. No one can know how profoundly AI, science, and technology will have changed the world, or whether universities will resemble those we know today. Universities themselves may look different, as may the ways they teach and conduct research. That uncertainty is part of the future for which we must prepare.

We cannot prescribe one fixed vision of SNU's future and follow only that path. We need the capacity to find our own answers and adapt as new questions and circumstances arise. We must stay true to the university's foundations, its people and knowledge, while continually renewing the institutions and structures that support them.

Twenty years may seem a long time, but it is not long when it comes to transforming a university. Changes in education and research, finance and administration, organization and culture do not happen overnight. Each change enables the next, and their cumulative effect shapes the university's future. The SNU of twenty years from now will emerge from changes we begin today.

I will therefore begin clearing the way for change now. By removing obstacles, we can allow one change to lead to another and build momentum. I will work to ensure that the changes we begin today grow into greater achievements over the next twenty years. Whatever the world looks like at SNU's centennial, the university must be able to find its own path and lead.

I will take responsibility for getting this work started.

I will lay the groundwork for SNU's next twenty years.