

Biography of Sang-Mook Lee

Sang-Mook Lee is an Associate Professor at the School of Earth and Environmental Sciences, Seoul National University, Korea where he specializes in Marine Geology and Geophysics. He also heads the Undergraduate Interdisciplinary Program in Computational Sciences and the graduate program in Computational Science and Technology.

Sang-Mook received BS from Seoul National University in 1985 and PhD from Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution in 1995. He is also an Associate Member to the Korean Academy of Science and Technology and the President of International Union of Geodesy and Geophysics Korea Committee.

On July 2, 2006, during a geologic field trip in California desert, Sang-Mook was critically injured in a van rollover accident which made him quadriplegic. The accident made him completely paralyzed neck down. Nobody thought he would return. However, in less than six months, he returned back to the university on electric wheelchair. His incredible comeback was reported nationwide, which made him a celebrity overnight.

Sang-Mook has been a key person in Korea advocating the use of information and communication technology as a means to address personal and social problems. Since 2010, he has spearheaded the Quality of Life Technology Program in Korea, a multimillion-dollar initiative to develop assistive technology and provide high-level education for people with disability. He has served on several top-level government committees including the Presidential Council for Information Society (2009-2013) and currently serves in the Disability Policy Coordination Council under the Prime Minister, Sustainable Development Committee for Metropolitan Seoul, and the advisory board of Seoul Metropolitan Office of Education. In 2015, he received the Best Teacher Award from the Seoul National University, and in 2017, Order of Service Merit from the Republic of Korea. On October 2015, his testimony under oath at the National Assembly against the monopoly of the research vessel by the government led to a radical change within Korean marine scientific community, resulting in a new decree (no. 252, Ministry of Oceans and Fishery) and shared use of research vessel with the academic community for the first time in Korean history. In addition to devoting his time in teaching and scientific research, Sang-Mook makes many public talks on diverse topics from earth history and human existence to disability and technology. His story was also featured in the New York Times, NOVA and PBS and is frequently cited by Nature as a leading voice within Korean scientific community.

Recently, he was appointed as the Chair of Organizing Committee of so-called 'PyeongChang Forum on Earth Environment' by the Province of Gangwon as part of a legacy of the 2018 Winter Olympic in Korea.

New York Times

http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/19/world/asia/19lee.html?_r=1&ref=world

Nova ScienceNOW

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/sciencenow/0408/03.html>

Nature news

<http://www.nature.com/news/south-korean-survey-ships-open-up-to-science-1.16663>