

ICAM 2026 Conference Report

I am Yongjoon Choi, and I became D2 in October 2026. In this report, I would like to share my experience at ICAM 2026, held from September 28 to October 2 in Orlando, Florida, US, as well as some memorable moments from the trip in chronological order.

I first traveled from Itami to Haneda, and then continued through New York and Miami before finally arriving in Orlando. It had been a long time since I had taken such a long-haul flight, but I tried to make good use of the travel time by continuing to prepare for my presentation. Prof. Hayashi and I traveled separately and met at Orlando International Airport. From there, we took an Uber to our hotel.



On Monday, September 28, I went to the conference venue and completed my registration. My presentation was scheduled for that afternoon, so I continued practicing until shortly before the session. Once I felt confident that I could deliver the presentation as planned, I finally stopped rehearsing and joined the Student Oral Presentation Competition session, which began at 3:00 p.m.

Before my turn, I watched the presentations of the other student finalists. All of them were native English speakers, and despite the short 15-minute presentation time, they managed to communicate a remarkable amount of information in fluent and rapid English. I was honestly somewhat overwhelmed by the atmosphere. As a result, I do not think I was able to reproduce the same level of performance that I had achieved during practice.

Nevertheless, I did my best to present my research, entitled "In-process defect detection system for laser-based powder bed fusion of

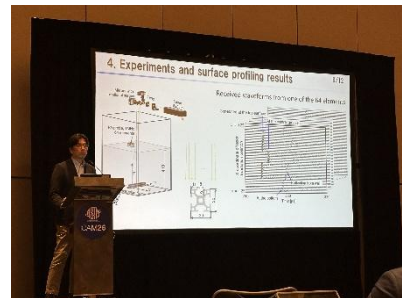


metals using laser-generated ultrasound.” My strategy was simple: even if I spoke more slowly and used fewer words, I wanted every sentence to be clear enough for the audience to fully understand the purpose, methodology, and significance of my research. In that sense, I was satisfied with how I completed the presentation.



After my talk, I continued listening to the other finalists. They presented with impressive confidence, clarity, and, in many cases, a sense of humor. When the session ended, both Prof. Hayashi and Prof. Simonetti told me that my presentation had been professional and well delivered. After hearing those comments, much of the tension I had been carrying throughout the day finally disappeared. To be honest, I do not remember much of what happened immediately afterward.

On Tuesday, September 29, it was Prof. Hayashi's turn to give his presentation. As expected, his talk, entitled “Underwater 3-D object recognition using laser-generated ultrasound,” was composed, well organized, and extremely easy to follow. Watching the presentation reminded me of what a truly professional scientific presentation looks like. It was another moment that made me appreciate why he is a professor whom I greatly respect. かっこいい！



That evening, Prof. Simonetti kindly invited us to dinner. We enjoyed good food and drinks together and had many interesting and enjoyable conversations. Beyond the formal conference sessions, opportunities like this to talk with researchers in a relaxed environment were also an important part of the conference experience.

On Wednesday, September 30, I attended several presentations related to additive manufacturing. Many of the topics were closely connected to my own interests, including in-situ process control, process monitoring, digital twins, and defect healing through techniques such as re-melting. These presentations gave me many ideas about how future manufacturing systems may not only detect defects but also respond to them during the manufacturing process.

However, there was another reason why September 30 was particularly important to me: the awards ceremony was scheduled for that evening. Although there were many interesting presentations throughout the day, I have to admit that it was sometimes difficult to concentrate fully because the award announcement remained in the back of my mind. Perhaps for that very reason, I tried even harder to focus on the technical

content of each session.

Eventually, the time for the awards ceremony arrived.

Interestingly, I was not particularly nervous because I did not expect to win. I was simply sitting with Prof. Hayashi, drinking a beer and waiting for the announcement.

The Student Oral Presentation Competition had originally involved approximately 100 doctoral students in its first round. From them, 18 students were selected as competition finalists, while the remaining participants gave regular oral presentations. The 18 finalists were divided into three categories: four in AM Mechanical Behavior, six in AM Materials, and eight in AM Process. One student from each category was selected for the **Best in Category** award.

I competed in the AM Process category.

Then my name was called.

I had been selected as **Best in Category**, placing first among the eight finalists in the AM Process category.



I was genuinely shocked. For a moment, I could hardly believe what I had heard. I shouted in excitement and walked toward the stage without even having time to look around me. Even after reaching the front, I was so excited—or perhaps so nervous—that I could barely see or hear what was happening around me. I received the award, took photographs, and stepped down from the stage.

Then another announcement began.

Among the three Best in Category winners, one student would be selected for the highest award, **Best Overall**. (Badge only for Best Overall)

And once again, I heard my name:

Yongjoon Choi.



This time, the result felt even less real. I went back onto the stage and took another photograph before I had fully understood what had just happened.

What I remember most clearly, however, is Prof. Hayashi's reaction. He looked genuinely proud of me and seemed even happier than I was. Seeing him celebrate my achievement so sincerely made the moment even more meaningful to me. I was happy

not only because I had won, but also because someone who had given me so many opportunities was able to share that moment with me.

I also felt proud of myself. Winning the highest award in a competition at such a large international conference was something I had never expected, and it became one of the most memorable moments of my doctoral studies.



On Thursday, October 1, Prof. Hayashi and I visited the Kennedy Space Center in Orlando. I had not expected anything particularly unusual that day, but by coincidence, a SpaceX Falcon 9 launch was scheduled to take place.



Shortly after arriving at the space center, we were able to watch the rocket launch. Seeing a real rocket lift off directly in front of us was an extraordinary experience. Unfortunately, I cannot include the excitement of the launch itself in this report as a video, so I will leave one photograph as a memory of the moment.



We also explored exhibitions related to the Apollo missions, spacecraft, and the history of space exploration. Through the exhibits, interactive experiences, and detailed explanations, I became much more interested in aerospace technology than I had been before. That evening, Prof. Hayashi treated me to another excellent dinner and drinks, which made for a relaxing end to the day.



On Friday, October 2, I went to an outlet mall by myself. I decided to walk there and back, which took approximately three hours in total. It turned out to be considerably more exhausting than I had expected.

On Saturday, October 3, it was finally time to return to Japan. During the journey home, I had a 12-hour layover at Los Angeles International Airport. Rather than spending the entire time inside the airport, I walked for about 30 minutes to a nearby In-N-Out Burger and had a hamburger.



Across from the restaurant was a well-known picnic area where airplanes fly directly overhead as they approach the airport. I lay down there, read a book, watched the planes pass above me, and observed families and children enjoying their time together.

It made me realize how long it had been since I had experienced that kind of peacefulness.

For much of my doctoral life, I have been constantly thinking about the next experiment, the next paper, the next presentation, and the next goal. That afternoon reminded me that it is also important, from time to time, not to push myself forward continuously. Taking time to rest, look around, and simply enjoy the moment can be just as important.



This conference and trip gave me more unforgettable experiences than I had expected. Many fortunate things happened, and I certainly believe that luck played a role. At the same time, I also believe that these experiences were possible because I had continued preparing myself so that I could take advantage of an opportunity when it appeared.

Whenever I received an award or experienced something positive in the past, I tended to respond modestly by saying that I had simply been lucky. I still believe luck matters. However, after this experience, I think I can finally say something more: it was not only luck. I had also spent years developing the skills necessary to make use of that luck when the opportunity came.

That realization may be one of the most important things I gained from ICAM 2026.

I believe many people can experience this same sense of fulfillment when they devote themselves seriously and passionately to something they care about. I hope more people have the opportunity to experience moments like this in their own lives.

Finally, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to **Prof. Takahiro Hayashi**, who has given me these opportunities, supported my research, and allowed me to experience so many things that I would otherwise never have encountered.

