

Closure of University of California, Davis during my stay

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Since October 2019, I have been a visiting researcher at the University of California, Davis in the United States. In 2020, the effect of the spread of COVID-19 reached the United States, and the university was closed beginning in March. As the status of the pandemic has still not improved throughout the entire state of California, in effect the university still has not reopened. My impression was that the response of the American university was swift and clear. Beginning in March, the university switched to online instruction, and students were advised to return to their home towns or home countries. Online instruction has not been limited to universities; essentially, it is being continued for elementary, intermediate and high schools as well. I think this is related to the fact that so many different types of people come to the United States, so the standards need to be indicated clearly. Moreover, the university president and other university officials frequently issued forceful messages to students about the need to combat racial discrimination.

At present, it is possible to get tested for COVID-19 on campus. If you need to enter a university building to conduct research or the like, you can do so if you have tested negative for the virus. Classes are still being conducted online, and there are very few people on campus as compared to before the pandemic.

I still have around ten students in my university laboratory in Japan, and I conduct research meetings with them online. Initially I made short trips back to Japan to provide guidance to them, but it has become difficult to make short return trips and so now I provide guidance online only. To provide instruction online, it is more important than in face-to-face instruction to make your points clearly and to have concrete discussions. For this reason, I think the online instruction is more effective than when I provide direct guidance in Japan, and I feel that the research is making more progress. Online meetings via the Internet have become more common and it is becoming possible to conduct joint research smoothly with researchers in locations around the world. For this reason, I predict that it will become more and more important to establish international networks.

