

Introducing Department of Occupational Therapy ~It's the beginning of a new international friendship~

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The year of 2012 was the beginning of the new era for our department: the international exchange with foreign universities has begun! I would like to introduce you about this issue and will introduce our plan on the international exchange program in the near future.

1. Visiting Mid-Western University, Phoenix, Arizona

To make a long story short, the author had happened to meet with Prof. Evelyn Anderson, PhD, OTR, at the international congress held in Portugal, on June of 2011. She is a chair of the occupational therapy (OT) department of Mid-Western University, Arizona. She and I both had a strong relationship with late Lorna J. King, an outstanding occupational therapist who had contributed to the habilitation of autistic population. Because Evelyn's research project had been related to the work of King, we exchanged some historical data. While we were communicating, an idea of a visiting of our student to Mid-Western University came out.

The actual visiting plan had been prepared through a frequent e-mail, and the outline of the visiting schedule was fixed around the November of 2011 as the table 1 below. Seven students, all female sophomore, came forward to this program and Prof. Suzuki decided to come with those students.

Before the tour, the author provided the English preparation program with the students. This program continued from the end of January to the middle of March once a week. We had departed from Niigata on the March 17th, and returned on the March 25th.

As you may see, the visiting schedule was fairly busy, because the author wanted the students observe as much American OT as possible. On the reflection meeting held every evening after dinner, the students were really excited to

Table 1. The Visiting Schedule for Japanese Students

	3/19 (Mon)	3/20 (Tue)	3/21 (Wed)	3/22 (Thu)
AM	Class (OT528 & 535)	Class (OT535)	Class (OT528 & 581)	School OT visit
PM	Clinic Visit	Clinic Visit (2)	Clinic Visit (3)	Class (OT585)
Evening	Hiking & dinner	MLB	Stack-house	Friendship Party

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talk on their experiences at the classroom and at the clinics. As they got accustomed to the English, they began talking to the students at the university and the OTRs at the clinic.

Here are some examples of the students' impressions about their experiences: "Although my English ability was not so good, I realized that OT did their best to treat the patients at any hospital or clinic."

"I wish I could stay a month longer so that I could learn from the OT in the elderly area in the United States."

"The biggest difference of OT education between Japan and the US is that their program is all at the master's level."

"I had never seen that an OTR is working with the animal therapist. The collaboration between two professions seemed to bring a synergistic effect on the treatment of an autistic child."

"The class of research method was so difficult that I need to study statistics next semester."

Here are some photos of our visiting.



Photo 1. The class of "Research Method" on Monday morning at 8 a.m.



Photo 2. The class of Therapeutic use of groups (OT535)



Photo 3. Hiking to Thunderbird mountain



Photo 4. Taking a real quiz with the US students

The author believes that the students' experiences will help them pursuing their professional careers. Also, their perspectives on OT will be widened when they will begin working as occupational therapists.



Photo 5. Watching a real MLB game



Photo 6. Main hall of MWU and a big cactus



Photo 7. At the cultural exchange: teaching how to use chopsticks

Photo 8. Students of both universities



2. Inviting Canadian OT professor to our department

We invited Prof. Margo Paterson, OTR, PhD from Queens University, Kingston, Canada. She had been the chair of Inter-Professional Education (IPE) committee of that university, and guided us when the teachers from 5 Japanese universities jointly visited there to learn advanced level of IPE practice in 2011. We had asked her if it is possible to stop by at NUHW before she attended the international congress on IPE at Kobe, and she agreed to our proposal. On October 3rd, she gave us a 60 minutes lecture on the OT in Canada. Every students, except the juniors who were at that time on the practicum

outside the school, had attended the class and a couple of students asked good questions in English. All the students seemed to be impressed by her lecture. Especially, the fact that OT education has been shifted to the master's level in Canada and the US was a shock to them. At the evening, the faculty held a mini symposium with Prof. Paterson to explore the opportunity to have an international exchange between NUHW and Queens. Prof. Kirimoto and Prof. Suzuki and the author presented their research outcomes and Prof. Paterson gave them brief comments. Although the main area of the research differed between two universities, there seemed to be a chance to have a mutual visit of the students. On the next day, she enjoyed the nature and the tradition of Niigata guided by some of our faculty members.



Photo 9. Prof. Paterson's lecture

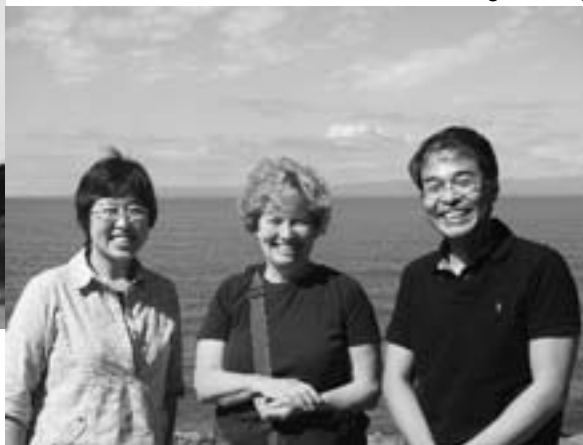


Photo 10. Sightseeing

3. Students' visit to Queens University, Kingston, Canada

This September, three sophomore students, again all females, will visit Queens University lead by Prof. Imanishi and the author. This visit had been planned just after Prof. Paterson's visit and modified through the communication between Prof. Paterson and the author, and was eagerly supported by the faculty members, especially by the department head, Prof. Oyama. The most prominent objective of this visit is to expose the students to the theory and the practice of Canadian OT, one of the highest level around the world. At the same time, we expect the students to improve their English communication abilities through this experience. Also, observing the actual practice and the education of OT in the foreign country will stimulate the students as they are climbing up the professional ladder.

The globalization proceeds not only in the business world but also in the OT world. In order to keep up with the world standard of the OT practice, we should not seclude ourselves from the wide perspectives of occupation. We are continuously seeking to make a chance of international exchange come true, and it will lead our department to the level of excellence in the near future.