

Combined (Both Campuses) Study Tour to Rochester, Washington, Buffalo for Tsukuba University of Technology Students

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Abstract: Our institution, National University Corporation Tsukuba University of Technology, has conducted many student study trips within Japan and abroad. In regards to trips to the eastern United States, before 2010, each campus organized their own trips, with only students from that campus. In this article we will give a brief history and outline of some of the trips to our exchange institutions, and then focus on aspects of the most recent Combined Study Tour.

Keywords: Eastern United States, Sister Institution International Exchange Agreement, Student Study Tour

Introduction

Our institution, National University Corporation Tsukuba University of Technology, has maintained close relations with 3 institutions in the eastern United States for several years. We have signed formal sister-institution exchange agreements with all 3; National Technical Institute for the Deaf/ Rochester Institute of Technology (October, 1992), State University of New York at Buffalo (March, 1999), Gallaudet University, Washington, D.C. (November, 2007). In this article we will tell about our September, 2010 Combined Study Tour to those institutions, focusing on the time spent in Buffalo, New York and at SUNY Buffalo.

Background

Our first major collaborative project with SUNY Buffalo was in July, 1994 when Drs. William Mann and Machiko Tomita visited our institution to give a presentation entitled Assistive Technology and the Elderly in the United States. This was the first of several projects and preparatory exchanges, culminating in the visit to Buffalo of Professors Kazusuke Okiyoshi (Vice President) and Masahiko Sutoh in March, 1999 for the signing of the official exchange agreement.

Student Study Tour—Division for the Visually Impaired (Kasuga Campus)

The first Student Study Tour was conducted in July, 1999, with 2 faculty members, one member of

Administration, and 4 students. Five more study tours to New York State institutions were conducted, the last one in 2005. In these study tours the faculty members and students were all from the Division for the Visually Impaired on the Kasuga Campus.

Combined Study Tour

After a hiatus of 5 years, a proposal for reviving the Study Tour for Kasuga Campus students was proposed. This time however, it would be a combined tour, i.e., faculty and students from both campuses (Kasuga and Amakubo) with visits to Rochester, Buffalo and Washington.

The 1st Combined Study Tour was successfully carried out in March, 2010, with one faculty member and one student from the Amakubo Campus and one faculty member and 2 students from the Kasuga Campus. A sign language interpreter also accompanied the group. Unfortunately, because of international security concerns, the Gallaudet University leg of the plan was cancelled.

2nd Combined Study Tour (September 5th ~September 18th, 2010)

Our group of 8 (Amakubo Team-one faculty member and 5 students; Kasuga Team-one faculty member and one student) flew from Narita Airport to Washington Dulles Airport. We then flew to Rochester Airport. The group spent 2 days in Rochester before the Amakubo Team flew to Washington and the Kasuga Team drove to Buffalo. In this article we will briefly describe the activities of both teams in Rochester and will detail some of the major activities of the Kasuga Team in Buffalo.

Rochester—Activities

Professor Yutaka Osugi requested arrangements for the Rochester leg of the Study Tour through the administration offices of the National Technical Institute for the Deaf/Rochester Institute of Technology. Besides our group being welcomed to a personal meeting with the President, Dr. James DeCaro, we had class observations of an Accounting Class, an English to ASL Translation Class, a Biology Class, and a guided tour of the RIT Campus, including the Library and Gymnasium.

Buffalo—Activities

Most of the arrangements for the Buffalo leg were made through Dr. John Stone and his team at the Center for International Rehabilitation Research & Exchange (CIRRIE) at SUNY Buffalo (UB). Following are some of the high points of the stay in Buffalo.

-School of Public Health and Health Professions (UB Campus)

It was very fortunate that our visit coincided with a study program visit of a group of health professionals from Brazil. The Brazilian group (Universidade Presidente Antonio Carlos/UNIPAC) was attending lectures and visiting medical sites in the Buffalo area. As our Kasuga Team student was Brazilian, and the program was conducted bilingually (i.e., English, Portuguese) this was a double bonus for us. The high point of this program was a lecture entitled Healthcare System in the U.S. This was followed by a lively discussion of the similarities and dissimilarities of the Brazilian, American and Japanese healthcare systems.

-The English Language Institute (ELI) (UB Campus)

The ELI has always been one of our most important places to visit. Not only because of the classes,

but because of the opportunities to meet and interact with students and faculty members from many parts of the world. This program is so popular that 3 students from TUT (then TCT/Tsukuba College of Technology) (one from the Dept of Acupuncture and Moxibustion, one from the Dept of Physical Therapy and one from the Dept of Computer Science) actually took leaves of absence from our institution to attend the ELI.

We were invited to join a High Intermediate Reading class and a Grammar and Writing class. All of the students were international students.

-Department of Linguistics (UB Campus)

Even though our student is blind, he (like I) is interested in sign language. We were invited to join an American Sign Language class. The majority of the students were American.

-Disability Services (UB Campus)

Our university has a long-term with this Service as the director, Mr. Randall Borst, was the keynote presenter at our 2002 International Symposium. His title was “Disability and Higher Education in the United States: A History of Values and Practices.”

As he is visually-impaired himself, Mr Borst could share with us updates on the latest technology and how he uses it. Interestingly, he does not have a positive opinion of tactile surfaces/Braille blocks and chirping signals. He told us that funds would be better directed to “rehabilitation and employment.” He said that there is, “no movement by blind people for Braille blocks” in the U.S.

-The Olmsted Center/National Statler Center for Careers in Hospitality Service

This Center is the new name for the Western New York Association for the Blind, which has been active in Buffalo for 102 years. Besides providing services for visually-impaired individuals, the Center conducts training programs for employment in hospitality service, e.g., switchboard operation in hotels, hospitals, or government agencies. Trainees from throughout North America are accepted.

-Western New York Independent Living Project (Center for Assistive Technology)

This program was originally established by disabled students from SUNY Buffalo and is connected to other Independent Living Projects nationwide. Clients with a range of disabilities are able to find assistance and training here. We specifically asked about services for the blind. Our student and a blind employee were able to share ideas of how to get the best use out of products like Mobile Speak, Touch Screen phones, Color Talk, Touch Ipad, etc.

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