

April 1st, 2020

Message from the Chancellor  
(The 2<sup>nd</sup> Novel Coronavirus Strategy Meeting)

Thank you for all gathering here today at short notice.

The members of this group have changed with the new academic year. Today, I would like to share my thoughts, as Chancellor of this university, with you on the situation pertaining to the novel coronavirus.

The number of patients is increasing, particularly in urban centers. These include some for whom the route of infection is unclear. The number of people infected in Kumamoto stood at 14 as of yesterday. The increase from last weekend is 5 patients. It is clearly an upward trend.

I'm sure that all of you, as well as our students, have some anxiety about the situation. Yesterday, President Hando explained the various views that many of you had expressed. I also heard the expert opinion of the director of the Health Center. I am also worried. I am also convinced that the situation is not going to resolve itself in a short time. I do not think that we have anything to gain by delaying the start of classes. What we need to do instead is create a new way of doing education.

We must all resolve to deal with the situation calmly, and, based on the appropriate amount of fear and understanding, take correct and appropriate action.

On March 26<sup>th</sup>, the university released its *Policy regarding the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)*. Based on the principle that the university's central mission of education must go on to the extent possible, we will begin the semester as planned while taking every possible care to avoid infection. Specifically, (1) Students, faculty, and staff must be informed of the situation and pay attention to their own physical

condition, taking care not to be infected or to infect others; (2) In cases where there is a possibility of infection, students, faculty, and staff must take a leave of absence; (3) We should avoid bringing outsiders onto the campus, so as to avoid bringing infection into the student body or sending it from the student body out into the wider society.

As I mentioned earlier, the number of people infected in Kumamoto Prefecture is increasing, and it is unlikely that the problem will disappear in a short time. We have a responsibility to make sure that this year's fourth-year students are able to graduate and that first-, second-, and third-year students are able to complete this year's educational program and move up to the next year. We need to make sure that their futures are not put on hold.

Therefore, orientation and classes are to go ahead as planned. But we must follow what is known as "the 3 mitsu": avoid confined spaces; avoid large gatherings of people; avoid sitting or standing too close to other people. While following these rules in the short term, we must also work to build a new educational approach.

Students must be informed of the policy. Where students gather, we will post notices. During the orientation and during classes, we should (1) ensure adequate ventilation and make gatherings shorter; (2) adjust classes to, for example, consist of a short lecture and an assignment, or consider, where possible, moving classes online.

Even when the crisis abates, the situation is unlikely to go back to what it was before. We need to work together to improve and change our education and develop a new system.

The vice president will now enter into discussions with our three faculties to decide in more detail how to do this. In particular, he will work with the Information Infrastructure Office and the Information Education Section to make sure the whole university is equipped with a system that enables remote learning whenever we need it.

In addition, for July's graduate school entrance exams, we need to consider whether it is feasible to conduct the exams remotely. I would like to ask the relevant committees to enter into consultations on this matter urgently. This is also an important aspect of our globalization initiative.

Nobody can say when the current situation will be resolved. I believe it will continue for at least a year. Even after a year, I think "normality" will be a very different thing than what it has been until now. We need to be aware that the situation is changing constantly. Remaining alert, let us be ready to face this crisis over a long period of time.

Although everyone will of course have his or her own opinion, I'd like to ask you all to get together behind the approach outlined here, in order to face this situation in a united way. By doing so, we can together build a stronger university, one at which future graduates can be proud to have studied, and one that meets the expectations of the people of Kumamoto Prefecture.