Provost’s Learning Innovations Grant for Faculty
Request for Full Proposal
2005-2006

Development of Self-Instructional
On-Line Modules for Improving Student Access

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Project Description

For the Provost’s Learning Innovations grant, we will adapt and implement a select subset of the Project Access materials for use in on-line instruction through RIT.

Project Access grew out of a collaborative effort between two RIT colleges, the National Technical Institute for the Deaf and the College of Science. Faculty, staff, and students from these two colleges initiated an enterprise focused on improving the access and inclusion of deaf and hard-of-hearing students in post-secondary classroom instruction and learning. To accomplish this goal, Project Access was designed to adapt the classroom teaching style of regular college faculty in order to foster better learning for deaf and hard-of-hearing students, as well as for other students. Our initial efforts resulted in two Department of Education grants that support workshops for faculty and the development of the Class Act website (www.rit.edu/classact). The website is a resource that delineates the challenges faced by faculty when working with deaf and hard-of-hearing students, and suggests specific strategies for addressing these challenges by modifying instruction to promote full access and inclusion.

With this grant, on-line modules that could be viewed and mastered in thirty minutes or less would be developed along with a self-assessment at the end of each module. Approximately three learning modules would be adapted for this format. Possible topics include: What to Know on the First Day of Class, Working with Interpreters, Working with Live Captionists, Handling Group Communication, Laboratory Instructional Challenges, and Pace of Instruction. While much of the written material has been developed for Project Access, the unique focus of this project will be to edit, package and present these materials for on-line instruction and assessment of participant learning.

The project will be evaluated using two separate surveys: one for instructors using one or more modules and the other for graduate Master of Science in Secondary Education, (MSSE) students utilizing these resources. The details of the access modules and the results of the evaluation will be presented and shared in an appropriate faculty forum at RIT.

Who are the Targeted Learners?

Three RIT groups are the target audiences for this project - two faculty (adjunct and new hires) and one student (Master of Science in Secondary Education, MSSE). Details regarding each group follow:
1. The adjunct faculty have been difficult to reach and include in professional development activities since they often have other employment responsibilities and are on the RIT campus only when teaching a course. This group is frequently called on to teach the introductory (service) courses that include large numbers of deaf and hard-of-hearing students. RIT employs approximately 400 adjunct faculty per quarter. Instructional modules that stand-alone are delivered in a short time span and that are delivered on-line will allow adjuncts to fit this kind of training into their schedules.

2. Newly hired faculty are very busy setting up their own courses and learning the ropes at RIT. However, in August, an overview of these modules would be included as part of their orientation program by members of the Project Access Team. The modules would allow faculty to extend this orientation at their own pace, in their offices, and when they most need the information.

3. The MSSE is a degree-granting program offered by NTID with over 70 graduate students enrolled. This teacher education program has not had an instructional emphasis on teaching deaf and hard-of-hearing students in the mainstream. While some graduates will continue to teach deaf students directly in separate schools, future trends in the field are towards mainstreaming and thus towards placement of graduates in mainstream schools. The Provost’s Learning Innovations materials can be utilized in existing MSSE courses to help these students better understand teaching strategies that are effective with deaf and hard-of-hearing students in mainstream settings.

Outcomes and Evaluation

The proposed Provost’s Learning Innovations grant will deliver Project Access information, tools, and materials via two main strategies: infusion into existing MSSE courses and inclusion in faculty development opportunities for adjunct and new RIT faculty. All materials will be presented via self-instructional on-line modules. The outcome should ensure that interested faculty have a better understanding of the needs of deaf and hard-of-hearing students in their classes.

The director of the MSSE program, Gerry Bateman, is aware of this proposal and is very supportive of our efforts to develop instructional modules that will help MSSE students better understand their instructional strategies for deaf and hard-of-hearing students in the mainstream. On the faculty side, Project Access faculty will share the newly developed modules with new hires during the faculty orientation program and through professional development activities within each college. All adjunct faculty will receive an email from the Assistant Provost for Teaching and Learning Services discussing the goals for the project and encouraging their participation in the training. The email will contain nine live links to the instructional modules.
All users of the instructional modules will receive an on-line survey using the clipboard system. One survey will be developed for faculty and a second for graduate students. Both surveys will consist of Likert-type items and open-ended questions with response boxes for the participants. Respondents will be asked to evaluate the instructional materials themselves, and also ask about what things in their own teaching they hope to modify based on the instruction.

Grant Timeline

**Summer 2005**
- Identify all materials to be used for on-line modules.
- Identify development staff and begin meetings to clarify project goals.
- Select delivery system and begin writing materials.
- Generate pilot of one unit and develop self-test

**Fall 2005**
- Complete all instructional units with the associated self-test.

**Winter 2005-2006**
- Pilot materials with a sample group of paid respondents (10 faculty and 10 students). This feedback will provide a formative evaluation of all units.

**Spring 2006**
- Revise materials based on formative evaluations.

**Summer 2006**
- Make on-line instruction available to all newly hired faculty.

**Fall 2006**
- Provide on-line instructional units for use by adjunct and other RIT faculty.

**Winter 2006**
- Incorporate instructional models into the existing Master of Science in Secondary Education courses.
Relevant Credentials

**Gary Long** is a research psychologist at the National Technical Institute for the Deaf at Rochester Institute of Technology. Gary has more than 25 years of experience teaching and conducting research on the teaching/learning process with deaf and hard-of-hearing students. He has received two national awards in recognition of his research on classroom communication, academic engagement, and concept mapping. He is currently co-investigator with Susan Foster on two Department of Education grants focused on helping deaf and hard-of-hearing students obtain equal access to information in college classes.

**Susan Foster** received her Ph.D. in Special Education and Rehabilitation from Syracuse University in 1983. She came to the National Technical Institute for the Deaf at Rochester Institute of Technology in 1984, where she is a Professor in the Department of Research and the Master of Science Program in Secondary Education of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students. She is currently Director of Project Access, which includes two US Department of Education grants to promote access for deaf and hard of hearing students in postsecondary education.

**Rosemary Saur** is the Project Coordinator for Project Access. She has been a faculty member at NTID/RIT for the past 25 years starting out as a Research Associate. Later she became chairperson of the Department of Science and Engineering Support and has continued to work in that department providing tutoring and advising to deaf/hh students. She has numerous publications and presentations related to mainstreaming and to mentoring.