Provost's Learning Innovations Grant Proposal

A Peek into the Deaf-World

by Jan Strine
NTID Faculty / Support to RIT's Center for Human Performance

February 12, 2001

This proposal is intended for track#1
Title
"A Peek into the Deaf-World"

Summary
The proposed project is the development of a 30 minute documentary. The goal is bridging the chasm of silence between the deaf and hearing worlds within our campus community. To paraphrase Charles Dickens: ‘We are all really fellow-passengers in this world, and not separate groups of people bound on other journeys’. Misconceptions about different cultures often occur as a result of one’s lack of knowledge or hearsay. A student’s initial exposure to deaf culture, on the RIT campus, should reflect the multi-faceted aspects within this culture, before misunderstandings occur. This documentary will educate the RIT community about deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals’ various personal philosophies, experiences, family and educational backgrounds, cultural heritages, interactions among peers and society. The content of this video will promote sensitivity and respect for cultural and individual differences, as well as the various communication approaches comprising the deaf community on our campus. We will look at the Deaf-World, the culture, traditions, values, and signed language literature of the Deaf Society. Examples of images and content to be filmed are:

- interviews with a variety of deaf students, faculty and staff sharing their personal backgrounds and experiences
- theatre productions including deaf and hearing students and faculty and staff working together toward achieving common goals
- intercollegiate athletic teams with deaf and hearing students competing together on the same team
- various support services
- the RIT-sign program demonstrating opportunities for hearing students to interact socially with deaf and hard-of-hearing students while learning their language
- deaf students embracing and preserving their own culture and identity
- ASL poetry and story telling
- portrayal and celebration of various accomplishments and success stories of many deaf people, some of whom have national recognition
The dialogue within the context of this film will include deaf and hearing students sharing strategies that have helped them to relate and learn from one another. However, it is the intent to preserve deaf pride and expose the viewer to the various aspects of the Deaf-World. Cinema is a powerful vehicle to engage students in the learning process and this video documentary will provide information that will help to bridge the gap between deaf and hearing communities within the RIT environment. Lessons in humanity will be with our student body long after they leave RIT. This project will include input from deaf faculty and staff throughout its progress.

Targeted Learners

This educational film will be used:
- within the Diversity unit of the First Year Enrichment course.
  Approximately 2,000 first year students will be exposed to this video annually.
- at new faculty and staff training/workshops or orientation programs.
- at professional conferences related to education and diverse populations (the number of learners impacted at a single conference is estimated at 50).
- over the next four years, during training sessions for upper-class student employees, employed by the Student Life Center, (approximately 150 students per year).
- for NTID Masters of Science in Secondary Education for deaf and hard-of-hearing students, MSSE (Teacher Education Program), (approximately 35 students annually).

Anticipated Impact on Teaching and/or Learning

In keeping with Institute initiatives to increase awareness of issues related to diversity, this proposed project will offer topics of concern related to the Deaf-World to nearly every student at RIT. The typical first year hearing student does not possess knowledge of deaf culture, nor has he or she experienced interacting or communicating with deaf people. This video will provide students with an understanding of Deaf Culture and will be designed to stimulate follow-up interactive learning experiences in the classroom or within workshop settings. It is anticipated that hearing students will be motivated to learn American Sign Language, gain an understanding of the Deaf-World, the various aspects that comprise the deaf
community here at RIT, and be less hesitant to establish relationships with their deaf and hard-of-hearing peers. Many deaf and hard-of-hearing students will also benefit from this project. Many deaf or hard-of-hearing students arrive on this campus having limited interaction with other deaf or hard-of-hearing people, knowledge of American Sign Language and exposure to Deaf Culture. It is often a difficult transition for deaf students who come to this campus not knowing American Sign Language, assimilating into a new culture and struggling with their own identity and this new environment.

**Measuring the Impact, Reporting Findings, Sharing Project**

The impact of this instructional video will be measured through utilizing an evaluation related to knowledge of deaf culture. Anecdotal evidence of learning will also be collected to measure the learning experience.

I will report and share this project with the NTID and RIT community through college-wide professional development forums. I will also share this final project externally from RIT at educational conferences. This educational resource may also be useful for special interest groups across the Rochester Community and beyond.

**Rational for this Project**

**a.** This project is beyond the scope of my normal job responsibilities.  
**b.** This video will be an excellent addition to the Diversity unit of the required First Year Enrichment course, which I teach. It also yields itself to the Communication unit of this course. (Refer to attached letters of recommendation from Dr. Linda Kuk, Vice President of Student Affairs and Robin Diana, Associate Director of Student Transition and Support and directly responsible for the First Year Enrichment course and New Student Orientation program. It will also be useful in the Masters of Science in Secondary Education program. (Refer to attached letter of recommendation from Dr. Gerald Bateman, Director of the MSSE program).  
**c.** Other faculty teaching the FYE course have asked me to present information related to Deaf Culture in their classes. Due to my workload, it is not possible for me to provide this kind of assistance to my colleagues and their classes. The need for this type of instructional media is how this proposed project originated. This will be an excellent resource for a variety
of purposes. With approximately 1,100 deaf and hard-of-hearing students and numerous deaf and hard-of-hearing faculty and staff on our campus, this instructional video would be a great asset to our Institute. There is a need, campus wide, to become more trans-culturally aware.

d. My credentials and experience have prepared me well for this type of project. My educational credentials include a background in deaf education, but more significant, is my 31 years of educating deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals and being involved in the Deaf community in a variety of ways. I taught 14 years at a residential School for the Deaf, which gives me a different perspective of the Deaf-World, as compared with my 18 years teaching at NTID. I have won a national award for a technical sign instructional video tape that I designed and implemented. I am executive producer of a documentary entitled “Mountain Towns”, which is presently being submitted to the Travel Channel for review.

e. I am responsible to offer sections of the First Year Enrichment course to deaf and hard-of-hearing students who are cross registered into the colleges of RIT, signing for myself. As an NTID faculty member who provides support to The Center for Human Performance, I also am responsible for providing educational programs/resources for the purpose of educating hearing students with regard to deaf culture, as well as promoting strategies that will enhance positive interactions between hearing and deaf people.

Timetable of the Development of the Project

**Summer 2001**
- Develop sequences and scripts to be filmed
- Contact and pre-interview individuals and groups that will be filmed
- Assess and determine the time availability of subjects/talent who will be filmed
- Assess and determine locations for filming schedule
- Begin filming some scenes of the documentary shooting schedule

**Fall 2001**
- Continuation of above and filming a major portion of documentary
- Share with deaf faculty, staff and deaf community for feedback.

**Winter 2002**
- Post production including editing, voiceovers, music, sound mix and captions

**Spring 2002**
- Share documentary with faculty and staff that will be Utilizing this educational documentary
  - Refine or make any adjustments of this project