

A new program and committed faculty:
Ensuring success
in music education

Bringing innovation to teaching

Since School of Education alumni Georgia Peach and James DeCaro earned graduate degrees in 1979 and 1977 respectively, the two have enjoyed long and productive careers in teaching. Recently both Peach, who teaches English at Skaneateles (N.Y.) High School, and DeCaro, a professor at the National Technical Institute for the Deaf at Rochester Institute of Technology, have found their chosen fields even more rewarding.

James DeCaro began working at the National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID) at Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) in 1971, where he has held a variety of positions including dean of NTID for 14 years. After spending part of the 1998-1999 academic year as a Senior Fulbright Scholar at Orebro University in Sweden, he returned and worked with fellow School of Education graduate Robert Davila ('72, Ph.D. instructional design, development and

NTID, to create the Postsecondary Education Network (PEN) International, a system improving higher education prospects for deaf students worldwide.

"Historically around the world, the postsecondary education opportunities for deaf people are significantly lower than they are in the U.S.," DeCaro said. "Many of the best and brightest [students] find ways to come to the United States to receive their education, but often they don't go back."

DeCaro and Davila pitched their idea to The Nippon Foundation of Japan. The foundation approved of the program, and has awarded PEN-International more than \$3 million in grants in the three years since it was developed.

Under the program, universities in five countries worked to create high technology multimedia labs to best support deaf students. There are currently more than 700 students enrolled in the program at universities in Japan, China, the Philippines, Thailand, and Russia. Each of these countries operates the program through one primary institution, which branches out to others within those nations. Ultimately, DeCaro said, it is expected that faculty from these universities will make the transition from being taught how to perform the program, to stabilizing their own learning, and finally to disseminating the program to other universities in their home countries.



"What we're trying to do is make an impact on faculty and their instructional skills with the long-by being able to receive a high quality education in their home country," DeCaro said.

This goal is one that will take several years to develop, he said. In the meantime, students and faculty are benefiting from more immediate paybacks the program offers, like cultural exchanges that send them to study in other countries affiliated with the program.

With the cultural exchange, DeCaro said, "students begin to see and understand that there are different ways of viewing the world."

Students across the participating countries have also met and collaborated virtually during haiku competitions and Web page competitions, where students competed within their own school, and then shared their results via video conferencing on the Internet.

"We're not only dealing with instructional and technological issues, but with cultural issues as well," DeCaro said.

Students enrolled in the programs come from a variety of academic majors, but most are rooted in technology because NTID and the Rochester Institute of Technology are technology-based universities. ■