
Dr. Denise Kavin on Expanding International Horizons

By Charmaine Hlibok From the suburbs of Chicago, Dr. Denise Kavin has expanded her horizons by relocating to Rochester, NY to serve as a Senior Project Associate with the Postsecondary Education Network-International program (PEN) at NTID/RIT. This five million dollar grant-funded program is a first-of-its kind international partnership of colleges and universities serving deaf and hard of hearing students. The program utilizes a variety of technologies (web based, telecommunications, and informational and instructional technologies) along with faculty training in an effort to improve teaching and learning, increase the use of technology, and expand career opportunities for deaf and hard of hearing students. PEN has partner institutions in China, Japan, Russia, and the Philippines, and does some work with other Pacific Rim countries as well. You can learn more about PEN at: www.pen.ntid.rit.edu.

In retrospect, Dr Kavin says, "This opportunity to work with PEN – a postsecondary outreach program with an international focus – was not to be passed up." This program was spearheaded and is directed by Dr. Jim DeCaro, who served as dean of NTID for fourteen years. It was because of her comprehensive background training and credentials in higher education administration and grants management, that Dr. Kavin was selected on merit to join the PEN team. Her main responsibilities include organizing and conducting faculty development training; reviewing literature and resources in the field of instructional technology, information technology, and deaf education; and adapting data for dissemination. In addition, she develops training modules, and conducts research and evaluation. Dr Kavin explains that, "A very exciting project that we're working on is a leadership conference to be held in the summer of 2006 at a castle in England. There, guest speakers and deaf students from each of our PEN partner institutions will convene to focus on advocacy and leadership-skills-development in postsecondary education, employment, and in the community".

Dr. Kavin received her bachelor's degree in Communication Arts and Psychology from Gallaudet University, her master's degree in Higher Education Administration from Northwestern University, and her doctoral degree in Educational Administration from Northern Illinois University. In addition, she holds certification from the Post-Employment Training Program on Administration of Programs serving Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and Late Deafened Adults at San Diego State University. Reflecting back on her experiences while an undergraduate student at Gallaudet, Dr. Kavin said "I had several paraprofessional work experiences while at Gallaudet. That was when I knew I wanted a career in postsecondary education. I am thrilled to be in this field of work."

Rochester was familiar territory for Denise as she had worked as an employment advisor at NTID/RIT from 1992-94 before she moving back to Chicago to complete her Ed.D. Prior to joining PEN, she served as coordinator of deaf/ hard of hearing services and outreach site-coordinator for the Midwest Center for Postsecondary Outreach at Harper College in Palatine, IL. She was also a Deafblind Consultant with the Illinois Department of Human Services, Training Coordinator at the Northern Illinois University Research and Training Center on Traditionally Underserved Persons who are Deaf, and an Employment Advisor at NTID/RIT. Last but not least, Dr. Kavin has presented a wide variety of career, education, disability, culture, and other deafness-related workshops at schools, conferences, and for community groups.

On a personal note, Denise grew up mainstreamed in the northern suburbs of Chicago. When she was a young child, she and her family were featured in a documentary film, "Its OK to be Deaf, Denise" where her parents talked about dealing with their daughter's deafness and overcoming the obstacles faced in raising a deaf child in a hearing world. Denise and her husband, Brian Doane, an NTID/RIT graduate, have three daughters, Dara (5), and twins Ella and Rachel (2). They reside in Pittsford, and are enjoying the new transition from Chicago to the Rochester suburbs.