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### James J. DeCaro

Dean, National Technical Institute for the Deaf  
Rochester Institute of Technology  
Rochester, NY

*Lecturing/Research:* Attitudes of Parents, Teachers, and Deaf Adults Regarding  
Careers for Deaf Youth: Potential Impact of the Swedish Parliamentary Decision of  
1981

Linköping University, Linköping, Sweden

*Grant dates:* March 1999 - July 1999

**Note: While James DeCaro's Fulbright grant was in Sweden, as this scholar story indicates, he has continued to be an advocate for the deaf around the world.**

*Fulbright Alum Aids Deaf Students in Asia*

By Kathleen Smith

Rochester, New York -- Former  
Fulbright Scholar Dr. James J. DeCaro  
is director of a new initiative dedicated  
to bringing education and technology to  
deaf college students worldwide.

DeCaro, a Fulbright Scholar at Orebro  
University in Sweden during the 1998-

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99 academic year and former dean of the National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID) in Rochester, New York, now leads the Postsecondary Education Network International (PEN-International). In little more than a year the program is opening the doors of technology for thousands of deaf students in countries in the Asian-Pacific Basin.

PEN-International is funded largely by The Nippon Foundation of Japan, which has provided more than \$2 million in grants to support the first two years of this multinational program.

PEN-International is headquartered at NTID, one of eight colleges of Rochester (New York) Institute of Technology (RIT). NTID offers educational programs and access and support services to 1,200 students from around the world who study, live, and socialize with 13,500 hearing students on the campus of RIT. DeCaro was dean of NTID from 1985-1998.

"Simply because of deafness, young people have been deprived of the social and economic benefits society has to offer," says DeCaro. "PEN-International is providing all of us who work on the project an opportunity to change those circumstances."



*Dean Ohnuma and President Nishijo of Tsukuba College of Technology sign the Memorandum of Understanding with PEN-International Director James J. DeCaro*



PEN-International's goal is to share instructional technology and expertise with colleges and universities worldwide so that university-age deaf students have access to quality educational opportunities in technological fields.

"Historically, the number of colleges that provide education for deaf students has been very limited," DeCaro says. "As a result, there is

*Dr. DeCaro and PEN-International Coordinator E. William Clymer enjoy a traditional Japanese Tea Ceremony.*

no network to share knowledge ranging from basic educational methods for teaching deaf students to preparing these students for

careers in a fast-paced technological world. PEN-International is working to bridge that gap and make sure that these students, regardless of the wealth or size of their countries, will have full access to myriad educational and career opportunities."

Having spent the vast majority of his career in deaf education, DeCaro is well suited to the job. He holds a B.S. and M.S. in Civil Engineering and a Ph.D. in Instructional Technology and has been a faculty member at NTID since 1971.

However, it is his personal family history that perhaps has motivated him the most. His spouse of 30 years, Pat, is hearing, but comes from a family where deafness spans three generations. Her mother, father, grandparents, aunt, and uncle all were deaf-most were teachers of deaf people. When asked why he is involved in deafness, DeCaro jokingly responds, "I married into the field."

PEN-International's two lead institutions are NTID and Tsukuba College of Technology (TCT) in Japan. While the NTID connection is obvious, PEN-International's partnership with TCT actually is an outgrowth of TCT's formal "sister institution" relationship with NTID, which began several years ago.

TCT, founded in 1987, is a unique national three-year college for students with visual and hearing disabilities. Its Division for Hearing Impaired provides state-of-the-art programs in design, mechanical engineering, architectural engineering, electronics, and information science.



*Visiting with faculty and students at Tianjin University of Technology in China.*

PEN-International has other partners, most notably Tianjin Technical College for the Deaf of Tianjin University of Technology (TUT) in China. DeCaro was named a visiting professor at TUT in 2001, in recognition of his contributions to deaf education.

Two other institutions joined PEN-International's efforts in 2002: Bauman Moscow State Technical University in Russia and De La Salle University-College of St. Benilde in the Philippines.

Although little more than a year old, PEN-International's accomplishments reflect the passion of those involved to make this program successful on many levels.



*Visiting the home of Confucius with Tianjin University of Technology administrators and project officers of The Nippon Foundation.*

PEN-International and the Fulbright program. We must choose to build and not tear asunder."

In October 2001, two high technology multimedia labs for deaf students were dedicated at TCT in Japan and TUT in China. Additionally, student and faculty cultural exchanges have taken place, with more planned in the coming year.

"The importance of such efforts at cross-cultural cooperation can't be underestimated," says DeCaro. "Today we are faced with some horrible events that are driving wedges between nations and peoples. Now, more than ever, there is a need for collaborative multilateral programs and efforts like

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For more information about PEN-International, contact James DeCaro at 585-475-2939 or Kathleen Smith at 585-442-0528.

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