

ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND DIRECTIONS

The DLS-College of Saint Benilde was accepted into the PEN-International Network in January 2002. Our first year as a partner saw the creation of the PEN-Multimedia Learning Center in a span of only 4-5 months. Extensive exposure to NTID and the Tsukuba College of Technology (TCT) work processes and teaching strategies has helped our School of Deaf Education and Applied Studies (SDEAS) gain greater ground on how our involvement in Deaf education may be further enhanced.

Now on our 2nd year as a partner, our institution has zeroed in on the three main goals of PEN-International, which are also greatly prized by SDEAS. These goals are (as taken from www.pen.ntid.rit.edu):

- Improve teaching and learning for students
- Increase the application of innovative technology to classroom instruction
- Expand career opportunities for deaf and hard-of-hearing people

Our second year kicked off with a series of faculty exchange projects with NTID. These focused on enhancing work processes for increasing students' competitiveness as they are placed in on-the-job or internship training opportunities. Part of this involvement meant tapping industry for them to learn about our initiatives and to eventually work with us as partners in implementing and improving our internship program, as well as offer their companies as actual placement sites for our Deaf students.

The exchange project, which was rich with shared insights, feedback and best practice, has brought us the opportunity to reflect and act on how else we may improve our own practices. Together with our passionate faculty core, we have improved and achieved the following:

1. Improved work procedures in the evaluation, preparation and placement of students due for internship.
2. Increased receptiveness of employers to accept, integrate and work with Deaf interns placed in their companies. This has led to:

- 2.1. Three (3) MOAs with major organizations
- 2.2. The hiring of a number of trainees as actual employees
- 2.3. The increasing role of employers serving as consultants and import that there is now a clear readiness of significant organizations to work with us in the creation of a work plan not only for the students assigned to them but also for the advancement of our advocates of our programs. It is of critical programs and the advocacy of our needs.
3. Increased visibility in local publications and radio networks regarding SDEAS programs, services and accomplishments. Each of these makes reference to the major support provided by PEN-International.
4. Improvements in our degree program and working towards having additional educational training programs in both the bachelor's and associate degrees. Significant to this effort is the tying in of the following: the need to have a consistency between classroom requirements/experiences and workplace scenarios and expectations; the idea that the formation of students can only be achieved through the collaborative work of both the academic and non-academic personnel; and the linking of the interventions set for each area.

Year 2 also led us to look into the role of the PEN-Multimedia Learning Center (MLC) in improving the learning experiences of our Deaf students. A preliminary study was conducted by the SDEAS team and was presented by our Executive Vice President in the last Instructional Technology Symposium. As a result of this, we have deliberately increased the placement of non-computer based subjects in the PEN-MLC and now use extensively the available tools for learning and teaching. Some of these subjects are in accounting, math, and English.

Furthermore, the PEN-MLC is an exciting facility that became a venue for various collaborative works between and among faculty members and their students enrolled in various subjects. Likewise, non-academic projects also made use of the venue.

Beyond the excitement of state-of-the art facilities, however, the core of our efforts to improve Deaf lives is in the area of teaching and learning. It is the desire of our institution to be learner-centered, and part of that direction is to understand the learner. It is up to us to gain the necessary competence to recognize and address the diverse learning

needs and styles of learners in order to bring them towards the achievement of expectations that we foster among our graduates.

Taking to heart the institution's earlier efforts to train learner-centered teachers, the Training Module on Learner-Centered Education (TM-LED) was developed. Experts in the field of Educational Psychology and Instructional Technology were tapped to develop the modules, two of which were recently implemented. Further strengthening our interest to understand Deaf learners and to gain the appropriate orientation for recognizing and addressing their needs, specialized workshops were developed and implemented by NTID experts on language and literacy in the recently concluded 1st International Conference on Learner-Centered Education sponsored by CSB.

It is important to mention that in the effort to improve learning and teaching, one of our most significant accomplishments is in the area of strengthening partnerships with local institutions for post-secondary programs for the Deaf.

Through the various opportunities that PEN-International has provided, our institution has consciously conducted outreach efforts to our local partners, such that what helps us to strengthen our internal resources also benefits our partners. Through our common exposure and discussions, we gain greater insights on how we may further improve our programs and interventions, learn from one another, and naturally build a greater sense of community and partnership towards achieving individual and common goals for improving Filipino Deaf lives.

This effort has also been extended to our PEN-International partners from the TCT who recently visited our institution and have established ties with our students, such that a special exchange program via the Internet is currently being implemented. Under the project KEYPALS, Filipino and Japanese Deaf students exchange emails using the English language in an effort not only to encourage improvement of the students' competency in reading and writing English, but also to cultivate friendships.

The second year, 2003-2004, has been a great year for our institution. We have learned much from our involvements with PEN-International, and we are further guided in our efforts to make a significant contribution to enhancing Filipino Deaf lives through improved education. For the coming year, our 3rd year in the network, we seek to continue improving and becoming better in strengthening our internal resources. In particular, we would like to accomplish the following major tasks:

1. In the area of learning and teaching, we would like to produce better teachers by:
 - 1.1. conducting more in-house training seminars, designed either locally or in collaboration with NTID experts. These training seminars shall be in the areas of learning strategies, usage of technology in learning, and other related areas; and
 - 1.2. exploring possible research undertakings that will help us establish a greater understanding of the Deaf students' learning needs, the effectiveness of interventions and other related concerns.
2. In the area of career education and placement, we would like to further formalize:
 - 2.1. our work processes in advocacy and placement by producing various references (e.g., handbooks/manuals, magazines, brochures) to serve as resources for our students, employers and our faculty team working for our students' placements; and
 - 2.2. our relationships with our team of consultants (employers or supervisors of current placement sites) and explore possible collaborative work that will bring in more linkage partners for our students' placement, advocacy of our programs, and creation of other short and long term educational training programs that are linked with identified needs of industry.

We shall of course continue strengthening our partnerships with other educational institutions and organizations. This is very important to us for we learn and achieve greater things if these are done in the spirit of community and in association with others. We hope to do this through our outreach efforts in the following areas:

1. Training seminars for faculty development (e.g., the TM-LED modules and other related opportunities shall be offered to other faculty members of our local partners.) These opportunities shall build the partnership that will help us do collaborative work in these possible areas:
 - 1.1. Career Exploration outreach project to Deaf HS students
 - 1.2. Sharing of training experiences and insights to the other faculty members of the partner-schools
 - 1.3. Active participation in the CSB-initiated Society of Educators for Active Learning (established during the 1st International Conference on Learner-Centered

Education) by offering workshops for the benefit of teachers and/or students of partner schools

We are confident that while we will be able to achieve the above targets, we shall be open to pursuing additional projects that will address the primary goals of the partnership: improving learning and teaching, increasing the application of technology in education, and expanding the career opportunities of the Deaf. We believe that through the continuous support of the Nippon Foundation of Japan and the guidance of PEN-International leaders, our efforts will further lead us to more collaborative work with our partners, thus improving the lives and the circumstances of Filipino Deaf learners.

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