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Employment and Post Employment Practices

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EMPLOYMENT AND POST EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES

Robert R. Lauritsen

The past decade has witnessed a catching up of post-secondary educational opportunity for Deaf Americans as compared to their hearing peers. In 1967 less than ten per cent of deaf school graduates (secondary) or school leavers had the opportunity for post-secondary education. This less than ten per cent, if qualified, could go to Gallaudet College; a select few based on geographical location could go to Riverside Community College, California, and a select few could venture into America's vast post-secondary system solo endeavors, as best they could.

Today, 1978, there has been almost a total reversal in educational opportunity for secondary school leavers, if not in reality, at least in the hopes and aspirations of administrators of secondary programs for Deaf Students. About one year ago, I asked Minnesota administrators of secondary Programs for Deaf Students to supply some predictive data about graduates and/or school leavers for the five years 1977-78 - 1981-82. The results of that survey are summarized as follows:

- a. 226 of the 249 projected graduates will seek post-secondary education, a 90.8 per cent figure.
- b. of the 226 projected graduates, 154 will seek education at less than the baccalaureate level, a 68 per cent figure.
- c. of the 226 projected graduates, 72 will seek education at the baccalaureate or beyond level, a 32 per cent figure.
- d. of the 226 projected graduates that will enter post-secondary education, 206 are predicted to need either the educational format of Gallaudet College and/or the National Technical Institute for the Deaf,

or one or more of the supportive services offered by St. Paul TVI and other similar programs, a 91 per cent figure.

To be sure, there still exists a segment of Deaf Americans for whom post-secondary education is still a dream. This segment of our population has been variously described as the under-achievers, the minimally language skilled, the multiple-handicapped, the deaf person with additional handicaps. This population with their multi-faceted needs have been the thrust of the Williams, the Stewarts, and Adlers, the Petersons, the Falbergs, the Motts, and yes, even former Congressman Wilbur Mills. There still exists the very real need to mount an attack on the pervasive needs of this population. We, in Minnesota, are most interested in this very special population. At one time we had hoped of buying a college. The Department of Labor beat us to it. Currently we are looking at other options.

But what of those 90% of secondary school leavers that today are seeking post-secondary education? The focus of this presentation is for these 90%.

The fact of post-secondary education for deaf persons is a significant change of this past decade. Ten years ago, I was a Rehabilitation Counselor for deaf people.

There was no NTID, TVI, CSUN, SCC, Delgado College, Lee College or any of the other fifty plus post-secondary programs we have in America today. I found myself wishfully referring deaf persons to "non-existent" resources. We experimented with the use of interpreters in selected situations. One favorite

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“trick” was to send 6 or 8 deaf students to a local business college. The 6 or 8 students were carefully selected to insure that there was at least one hard of hearing student who would be the “go between” and the “interpreter.” Not necessarily right, or fair, but the RCD of the 1960’s had few options. Some of you may recall the great “break-through” with the United States Post Office. For years only a select few deaf persons could work at the Post Office, these few being those persons who could pass the civil service test on their own. The case files in Minnesota will show that when the Civil Service relaxed their testing requirements, an Interpreter was hired to work with a group of deaf persons in studying for, and taking the required tests. This same Interpreter continued her work as deaf persons became established in the Post Office system in Minnesota.

Opportunities for deaf persons began to undergo significant changes in the late 1960’s. The St. Paul Technical Vocational Institute (St. Paul TVI) initiated a post-secondary Program for Deaf Students in 1969. For five years support was received jointly from the United States Office of Education, Bureau of Education for the Handicapped and the Rehabilitation Services Administration. Initial funding was a Research and Demonstration Grant. This source of funding ceased May 31, 1974. From June 1, 1974 to December 31, 1974, funding was provided by USOE/BEH with legal authority based in Federal Legislation, Section 625 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1974. The State of Minnesota continues to provide substantial financial support. The St. Paul TVI Program for Deaf Students is viewed as an “in perpetuity” Program.

St. Paul TVI is concerned about students “before, during and after” their matriculation. This is a mandate that is taken seriously. The funding base is directly related to successful job placement of graduates.

It was recognized early in the history of the Program for Deaf Students that deaf students, as hearing students, had a need to develop job

seeking skills. A very successful job seeking skills training package for hearing persons had been developed in the 1960’s by the Minneapolis Rehabilitation Center, now known as Multi-Resources Center, Inc. (MRC). Through contract with the Minnesota Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and in cooperation with MRC, St. Paul TVI adapted this training package for deaf persons. The core of the training package is a 16 mm color motion picture film. Training manuals accompany the film. The film is self-explanatory and we would like to share the film with you now.

— I GOT IT —

Job Seeking Skills 16 mm Color Motion Picture Film Utilizes Four-Way Simultaneous Communication. For information on the Job Seeking Skills Package, write to Multi-Resource Centers, Inc., 1900 Chicago Avenue, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55404.

At St. Paul TVI, job placement is everybody’s business. The administration, the Counseling Staff, and the Instructional Staff are all committed to Job Placement.

A critical part of any job placement effort is the contribution made by the Federal Department of Labor. The State Units of Government have varying names such as Department of Manpower Services, Employment Security, and so forth. In Minnesota, the State Unit of the Department of Labor is known as the Department of Economic Security. The Department of Economic Security has assigned two Employment Specialists to St. Paul TVI. Curt Groth is one of these Specialists. Curt became sufficiently interested in Deafness to request, and be granted, permission to attend a six week Interpreter Institute at St. Paul TVI. His investment of time has provided rich rewards for deaf people. This past Fall, Curt placed his 100th deaf person in employment. I am most pleased that Curt is with us to share his expertise as an Employment Specialist, and specifically his expertise in the placement of deaf persons.