Deafness-Related Careers-Present and Future A State-of-the-Scene

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DEAFNESS-RELATED CAREERS – PRESENT AND FUTURE
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Washington, D.C.

THE NATIONAL SCENE

A plethora of commissions and reports concerned with the apparent deterioration of education in America have appeared on the national scene. The National Commission on Excellence in Education report, A Nation At Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform (1981), is perhaps the most recognized of these reports. Similarly, the Education Commission of the State's, A Summary of Major Reports on Education (Nov. 1983), has drawn the media and the public's attention to what needs to be done about our educational system. Drawing national attention to educational problems can be referred to as a bright spot in education because, hopefully, the general public will become more involved in and understand the national and international implications of issues facing students and teachers, learning and teaching.

For more than a decade we have witnessed the decline of college students pursuing teaching careers. Since 1970 the percentage of new graduates entering teaching has dropped from 37 percent (1970) to 17 percent in 1980. As a result, the number of new teacher graduates has decreased from 284,000 to 159,000 over the same period (Graybeal, W.S. 1981).

In a 1981 study of teachers in North Carolina, Schlecty and Vance found that the better teachers leave their positions before seven years of service and the majority after about the seventh year.

The results of a 1981 survey of all graduate schools indicate that there has been a decline in enrollments over the last five years. Areas experiencing decreases in order of frequency were, education (32% decrease), humanities (31% decrease), library science (8% decrease), and business administration (2% decrease) (Turcotte, 1983).

The present state of the nation's economy could contribute to graduate student enrollment making some increases. Contrarily, the reduction of federal stipends, fellowships, and research assistantships, i.e., 80,000 stipends in 1969 compared to approximately 40,000 today (Brademus, 1983), will continue to plague graduate enrollments for a time to come.

A VIEW OF SPECIAL EDUCATION

Smith-Davis, Burke and Noel (1983) looked at the supply and demand of personnel in special education from a programmatic viewpoint. Though there has been an overall increase from 178,363 in 1976-77 to 235,521 in 1980-81 of special education teachers employed, the numbers in the category of hard of hearing and deaf decreased from 8,789 to 8,345 during the same period. This study anticipated 8,545 teachers of the deaf and hard of hearing needed in 1983-84 – an increase of 200. It projects significant shortages in the area of learning disabilities.

The "Executive Summary" of the sixth Annual Report to Congress (1984) on the status of education and related services to the Nation's handicapped children and youth shows that a downturn of the number of teachers of the deaf and hard of hearing continued through 1981-82, i.e., a drop from 8,392 in 1980-81 to 8,037 in '81-'82. This report also shows a marked increase in the number of teachers for learning disabled children: 44,033 (1976-77); 84,867 (1980-81); 83,673 (1981-82), an increase of nearly 50%.
DEAFNESS-RELATED CAREERS – PRESENT AND FUTURE
A STATE-OF-THE-SCENE

In light of general national trends in education, declining interest in teaching, decreasing enrollments in graduate education and special education, coupled with fewer numbers of applicants to the Graduate School at Gallaudet College, it was decided to study developments in deafness-related training programs on a national basis.

Method

A questionnaire (Appendix A) was sent to 81 colleges and universities listed in the 1981 directory issue of the American Annals of the Deaf. The institutions on the mailing list train teachers, school and vocational rehabilitation counselors, psychologists, audiologists*, and other professionals to work with deaf people in the United States and Canada. Seventy-two percent of those surveyed responded to the questionnaire.

The questionnaire solicited information on the degree offerings, areas of specializations, application/enrollments, recruitment strategies, hearing-impaired/hearing applicants, employment of graduates, and predictions for the future.

Results

Though twelve institutions showed increases in graduate school applications, the overall trend was generally downward, i.e., 2,643 applicants in 1980-81 to 1,814 in 1982-83, a loss of 829 applicants. A decrease in applications was reported in 52 percent of the surveyed institutions.

The questionnaires solicited information on the degree offerings, areas of specialization, application/enrollments, recruitment strategies, hearing-impaired/hearing applicants, employment of graduates, and predictions for the future.

General Trend | decreasing
Out of the seven regions, those reporting the highest percentage of decrease were: Mid-West (83%), Midwest (54%), South/Southwest (50%), and Southeast (40%). General population shifts to the “Sunbelt” areas and geographic distance may explain this tendency.

Employment data revealed more positive trends. In spite of the reported decrease in graduate school applications, 60% of the colleges and universities in all six regions and Canada filling out this part of the questionnaire reported between 91-100% employment of their graduates. Of this number, relatively all of those who graduated were employed in their areas of specialization.

Sixty-five percent of the colleges reported having a recruitment plan. Of those institutions with a recruitment plan there was little difference between the decrease, increase and constant group. The preferred strategy for recruitment was generally the use of printed materials or faculty recruiters.

FIGURE 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Number Of Programs</th>
<th>'80-'81</th>
<th>'81-'82</th>
<th>'82-'83</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>constant</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>714</td>
<td>711</td>
<td>610</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>decrease</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>1617</td>
<td>1457</td>
<td>613</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>increase</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>312</td>
<td>412</td>
<td>591</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTALS</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>2643</td>
<td>2580</td>
<td>1814</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

General Trend: decreasing

There is consistency in the findings of this study and the national graduate school survey conducted by Turcotte (1983), i.e., geographic location and reputation are the major reasons applicants choose certain institutions.

The five most responsive target groups for recruitment were (in rank order) high schools; schools of education; regional contact, e.g., workshops, meetings, etc.; sign language classes; junior and community colleges.

Groups seldom contacted included churches, clubs of the deaf, and minority groups (organizations).

Other data resulting from this study included the following:

- 87 percent of the total applicants to each

*Programs in audiology may be outside of the unit/units wherein teachers, counselors, and psychologists are trained. Thus, this study reflects only those in which admissions may encompass all areas related to deafness.
institution came from the three or four states contiguous to the training center.

- 32 programs were state accredited; 28 had Council on Education of the Deaf accreditation; others reported American Speech Hearing and Language Association, National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, Association of Canadian Teachers of The Hearing Impaired, and Council on Rehabilitation Education, (not all respondents answered this part of the questionnaire) accreditation. It is of interest to note that almost all the programs with state accreditation also had CED accreditation.

- The total number of hearing impaired applicants reported for the three academic years of 1980 to 1982 was 457 (6 percent). Hearing applicants for the same period were 6,691 (94 percent).

### FIGURE 3

Hearing Impaired and Hearing Applicants by Geographic Region 1980 - 1982

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Hearing Impaired</th>
<th>Hearing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Northeast</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>2034</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-Atlantic</td>
<td>277</td>
<td>1249</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southeast</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>730</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midwest</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>1187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South/Southwest</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>1106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>223</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Of the 12 institutions reporting increases in applicants and enrollments, 7 indicated they had modified their curriculum, whereas 25 of the 29 programs showing decreases in enrollments had made no modifications.

- On the question related to communication specializations offered, 5 programs were oral. Forty-one institutions checked both oral and total communication specializations. Some added Cued Speech, bimodal English, American Sign Language, Blissymbolics, and aural. Of interest is that 8 centers checked “bil-lingual” specializations: 4 Spanish, 2 French and 2 American Sign Language.

### DISCUSSION

The results of this study make it clear that employment in deafness-related careers is still available but that the number of persons interested in pursuing these positions is declining rapidly. Comments from the respondents did not emphasize the need for creative recruiting to compete for a diminishing number of applicants. To the contrary, there seemed to be a complacency from the programs accepting a constant number of students.

Reasons for the decrease in applications included high entrance standards, loss of stipends, taxpayer backlash, increased tuition costs, disenchantment due to public criticism of teachers, misconception that jobs are scarce, extension of master’s degree programs from one to two years, and bright women applicants being diverted to other fields.

Predictions by the respondents generally called for stable to increased numbers of applications, notwithstanding present reductions. Some prediction statements could be interpreted as recommendations for the future. Some respondents felt large programs would be affected, but quality, small programs would endure. Others felt that job availability would shift from urban to rural areas, from more affluent states to less affluent. Another prediction was that a 30 to 50 percent decrease in applications and enrollments would continue through 1984 and beyond; an upward trend would start in 1987 due to the 1980 “baby boomlet”, thus creating a need for more teachers and other professionals. Several respondents felt that increased enrollment would come from short term and inservice courses, etc. Regional consortia or networks were suggested as future formats. Dual certification, e.g., deaf/learning disabled, deaf/speech therapy, deaf/audiology, was mentioned as a direction some programs would have to follow for “survival”. In light of the shortages in special education suggested by Smith-Davis (1983), this suggestion/option deserves serious consideration. Likewise, specialty options such as curriculum development, educational planning and parent/infant education were recommended in this context.

### CONCLUSIONS

On the upside of the picture the national forecast calls for a shortage of 325,000 teachers six years from now. The Labor Department predicts we will need 38 percent more teachers by 1995 (USA Today, January 16, 1984). Thus, in the area of deafness we may revert to the numbers which existed in the early 1970s. In the...
DEAFNESS-RELATED CAREERS — PRESENT AND FUTURE
A STATE-OF-THE-SCENE

next five years the decreases will continue, or so it would seem.

This development might be very healthy. It may contribute to some consolidation of training programs, thereby strengthening programs of study. It may move existing training centers to innovation and development options heretofore only discussed. Delimiting the number of students on campuses may promote more and better quality in-service work with regular or mainstream teachers and other practitioners. Standards for on-campus students may become more rigorous and new degree options developed.

On the downside, some programs will find it difficult to justify their continuation. The national tenor, the image of the teacher, will take a temporary nosedive and, during this period, will discourage applicants. However, as pointed out in the earlier section of this article, with the likelihood of a stronger national commitment to education and with the necessary compensation improvement which should follow, the late 1980s and 1990s should be very exciting and attractive to persons interested in this profession.

REFERENCES

Education Commission of the States (Nov. 1983). A Summary of major reports on education. Denver, CO.
### DEAFNESS-RELATED CAREERS – PRESENT AND FUTURE
#### A STATE-OF-THE-SCENE

**SURVEY OF PROGRAMS TRAINING PROFESSIONALS IN THE FIELD OF HEARING IMPAIRMENT**

**PROGRAM INFORMATION**

1. **Name**
   
2. **Title**
   
3. **College/University**
   
4. **Address**
   
5. **Phone**
   
**Do you currently have a program to train professionals in the field of hearing impairment?**

- **Yes**
- **No**

**If no, did you ever have such a program?**

- **Yes**
- **No**

**If yes, when did it terminate**

**Please indicate the type of training programs you offer in the field of hearing impairment.**

*(Check all that apply.)*

- **Teachers of Hearing Impaired**
- **Teachers of Multihandicapped Hearing Impaired**
- **Voc. Rehab. Counselors**
- **Psychologists**
- **Speech Therapists**
- **Audiologists**
- **Other**

**Certification** *(Specify CED/State)*

- **BA/BS**
- **MA/MS**
- **Ph.D.**
- **Other**

**4. What areas of communication specialization do you offer?**

- **Bilingual** *(specify languages)*
- **Oral**
- **Total Communication**
- **Other** *(specify)*

**FACTORS AFFECTING PROGRAM AND ENROLLMENT**

1. **To what extent has legislation such as PL 94-152 and other laws targeted to help the handicapped population affected student enrollment and curriculum in your training program?**

   *(Circle your response)*

   - **Numbers of applicants**
   - **Curriculum modification**

2. **Do you have a program for recruitment of applicants?**

   - **Yes**
   - **No**

   **Targets**

   - **1) minority groups**
   - **2) high schools**
   - **3) regional or geographical contacts** *(specify)*
   - **4) community colleges**
   - **5) sign language classes**
   - **6) deaf clubs**
   - **7) churches**
   - **8) schools of education**
   - **9) graduate school**
   - **10) other** *(specify)*
DEAFNESS-RELATED CAREERS – PRESENT AND FUTURE
A STATE-OF-THE-SCENE

The three most responsive targets are # _____, _____, _____.

B. Strategies
   1) printed materials (brochures, posters, etc.)
   2) facility recruiters
   3) student recruiters
   4) advertisements
   5) exhibits at meetings & conventions
   6) non-print materials (media)
   7) other (specify)

The two most effective strategies are # _____, _____.

3. The poor economy in general, the limited availability of jobs in these fields, as well as the low starting salary have been cited as the reasons for the decline in applications and enrollment in professional training programs in the area of hearing impairment. (Please indicate your agreement by circling your response.)

   Reasons for decline in enrollment:
   a) poor economy – agree disagree don’t know
   b) limited job availability – agree disagree don’t know
   c) low starting salary – agree disagree don’t know
   d) other factors (specify) – agree disagree don’t know

4. What are your predictions regarding student enrollment for the next five years?

5. Other comments?

6. Would you like to have results of this study? Yes No

SURVEY

ENROLLMENT PATTERNS (Please provide as much of the following demographic information as possible.)

1. How many applicants do you have for the 1982-83 school year?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Number of Hearing Applicants</th>
<th>Number of Hearing Impaired Applicants</th>
<th>Expected # of Admissions</th>
<th>Expected Actual Enrollment</th>
<th>Number Expected to Complete Program</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

2. How many applicants did you have for the 1981-82 school year?

   Please provide as much of the following demographic information as possible.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Number of Hearing Applicants</th>
<th>Number of Hearing Impaired Applicants</th>
<th>Number of Graduated</th>
<th>Number Employed</th>
<th>Employed in Area of Specialization</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

   In terms of geographical area or region, where did the majority of the applicants come from?

3. How many applicants did you have for the 1980-81 school year?

   Please provide as much of the following demographic information as possible.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Number of Hearing Applicants</th>
<th>Number of Hearing Impaired Applicants</th>
<th>Number of Graduated</th>
<th>Number Employed</th>
<th>Employed in Area of Specialization</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

   In terms of geographical area or region, where did the majority of the applicants come from?
4. How many applicants did you have for the 1979-80 school year? ______
Please provide as much of the following demographic information as possible.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Number of Hearing Applicants</th>
<th>Number of Hearing Impaired Applicants</th>
<th>Number Graduated</th>
<th>Number Employed</th>
<th>Employed in Area of Specialization</th>
<th>If No, Specify Area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In terms of geographical area or region, where did the majority of the applicants come from?

5. How many applicants did you have for the 1978-79 school year? ______
Please provide as much of the following demographic information as possible.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Number of Hearing Applicants</th>
<th>Number of Hearing Impaired Applicants</th>
<th>Number Graduated</th>
<th>Number Employed</th>
<th>Employed in Area of Specialization</th>
<th>If No, Specify Area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In terms of geographical area or region, where did the majority of the applicants come from?

6. How many applicants did you have for the 1977-78 school year? ______
Please provide as much of the following demographic information as possible.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Number of Hearing Applicants</th>
<th>Number of Hearing Impaired Applicants</th>
<th>Number Graduated</th>
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<th>Employed in Area of Specialization</th>
<th>If No, Specify Area</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In terms of geographical area or region, where did the majority of the applicants come from?

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