NTID and Higher Education for Deaf Persons

D. Robert Frisina

D. Robert Frisina is Vice President, Rochester Institute of Technology, and Director, National Technical Institute For The Deaf.

Follow this and additional works at: https://repository.wcsu.edu/jadara

Part of the Social and Behavioral Sciences Commons

Recommended Citation

NTID AND HIGHER EDUCATION FOR DEAF PERSONS

D. ROBERT FRISINA

Higher Education is clearly one of the most active components in the U.S. societal system today. The turbulence and cross-fire characterizing many campuses is widespread knowledge and of widespread concern. Aside from the stylistic differences vis-a-vis students entering college twenty years ago and those entering today, we do find a greater percentage of young adults attending institutions of higher education than ever before. Estimates suggest that from 50-60% of high school graduates continue on in some form of post-secondary education and training programs.

Approximately 2300 colleges and universities are in existence in this country. Broad and diverse choices abound for the hearing students these attract. The aggregate annual investment in the operation of these is sizeable to say the least. For example, one finds that the per capita spending, by states alone, of tax funds to operate colleges and universities, based on current appropriations and the July 1968 population estimates of the U.S. Bureau of the Census, is $25.56. The estimated federal investment in higher education for the current year is on the order of $5 billion. Thus some $10 billion are being invested in higher education per annum from these two public sources alone. One manifestation of the relative importance of higher education in this country is this heavy commitment of public funds to this enterprise. The impor-
tance of higher education for deaf persons is no less than it is for hearing persons. Another manifestation is the intense controversy regarding the ways in which colleges and universities are organized and managed. This is but a glimpse of the arena of higher education, yet, this is the arena into which NTID has become a part by virtue of its establishment.

Together with the heavy investment in higher education, even the casual observer is aware of the heavy commitments made to sections of the educational world other than higher education, and to health, and to welfare. The notion and the realities of human exploitation are giving way to the concept of human resources. These concepts of human exploitation and human resources have been grist for the philosophic mills of economists for some time.

It is sometimes helpful to overemphasize the obvious, and say again that deaf persons, although fundamentally of similar potential, for a variety of reasons have not entered and succeeded in colleges at a rate comparable to that of their peers. As a result, underemployment, to be sure, has been and most certainly must continue to be, one of the major concerns for all who share a direct or indirect responsibility for the education, the training and the occupational status of deaf persons.

The factors mentioned thus far and others that I could mention bring us squarely to the purpose for my being invited here today—the National Technical Institute for the Deaf. A few highlights relating to NTID to date are:

***The various resolutions passed by professional organizations concerned with the education and general welfare of the deaf prior to 1965.

***The subcommittee deliberations related to the House and Senate resolutions concerning NTID and their passage, in 1965.

***The signing of Public Law 89-36 by President Johnson, in June of 1965.

***The Guidelines, Policies and Procedures recommended to and approved by the Secretary of HEW following their development by the National Advisory
Committee on the Establishment of an NTID, in 1966.

***The selection of Rochester Institute of Technology as the sponsor for NTID, in December 1966.

***The appointment and operation of a National Advisory Group for NTID, in 1967.

***The selection and appointment of NTID personnel, begun in 1967.

***The orientation and training of RIT personnel including administrators, faculty and staff, in 1967 and 1968.

***Fundamental agreements between RIT and HEW regarding construction, in July 1968.

***The enrollment of the charter group of seventy deaf students, in September 1968.

***The projection for some 200 more deaf students, in September 1969.

NTID has a responsibility for making a difference in the education and the occupational attainments of deaf persons. In its infancy NTID must provide a wider scope of occupational choices than heretofore available for graduates of schools and classes for the deaf. In the main, it must be complementary and broad, in contrast to becoming duplicative. More specifically, it should provide, for the most part, courses of study that add to the present range of occupational choices available to deaf students through Gallaudet College.

NTID, within this context is additive in another way; it will accept students who are not academically ready to participate in, nor perhaps desirous of entering, degree programs either at Gallaudet or NTID.

As it matures, NTID must open doors in business and industry as have not been open before; not open, more as a result of unlocked talents (due to lack of training opportunities), than talents locked out. Unlocking talents will require new ways of doing business, and will demand on the part of all of us doing something significant about bringing increased...
number of new talents into the education and rehabilitation of the deaf.

By this time you have received details of costs for tuition, room, board and fees that must be charged students entering NTID after July 1, 1969. In higher education tuition charges for students rarely cover as much as sixty-five percent of actual costs for operating the educational programs and more frequently much less than that. Without substantial support from the Federal Government NTID could not become fully established nor could it operate. Special federally supported institutions, such as NTID and Gallaudet, are in effect looked upon as land-grant colleges since they are designed to serve the needs of deaf students from all parts of the country. The validity for this pattern of financing has its origins in the success of the agricultural colleges and state college systems which have been in operation throughout the U.S. for more than 100 years.

NTID was established to serve those deaf students completing secondary programs who had attained an eighth grade level of achievement or higher. No admissions examinations are required at present. Admissions eligibility is determined from an interview when possible and a review of the individual’s medical, social and educational records. Some form of national examination might well be advised for future use. Such an examination could possibly be considered for use with all deaf students seeking support for post-secondary education and training at NTID, Gallaudet or other institutions of higher education.

The projected enrollment of some 275 students for the 1969-70 academic year marks the beginning of the second year of what has been termed NTID’s interim program. The interim program is that which is carried on prior to completion of NTID construction. Facilities for NTID are necessary in order to offer the full range of services and programs to the eventual fulltime enrollment of some 750 students. The present construction schedule calls for completion of architectural plans by the end of this year. Groundbreaking is anticipated during the early part of 1970 with 24-30 months the
expected building period. The interim period is expected to be phased out in 1972 at which time NTID should become fully operational.

The interim period serves as a research and development phase. It allows for faculty and staff orientation and development, it allows time for the definition of educational and cocurricular programs and services, it allows time for necessary adjustments required in new environments, and it provides the opportunity to test and evaluate new procedures with smaller, more manageable numbers of students. Hopefully these actions will result in a smooth and effective transition to the fully operational NTID.

The current group of students is enrolled in a broad range of programs in science, in graphic arts and photography, in fine and applied arts, in business, and in applied science; some are provided preparatory and remedial educational experiences on a full-time basis. Much is being learned about the bringing together of deaf and hearing students on the same college campus. A variety of approaches and services are needed in order that large numbers of deaf students compete successfully in today's college environment. Among the necessary services are special instruction, tutorial service, interpreting service, notetaking service, occupational guidance, personal counseling, remedial education and a wide array of curricular experiences.

The current group of deaf students is helping us learn about the relative strengths and weaknesses in the personal, social and academic preparation of students completing secondary programs. As the NTID program has developed it has become apparent that much that is being learned has implications and usefulness for those educating deaf students prior to the post-secondary period. As such data become available they will be shared with professional colleagues through meetings such as this and in the professional literature.

The special services provided deaf students are done so in order that the vocational technical education they receive places them in a relatively favorable position for employment. Obsolescence is very much on the minds of those preparing
students for direct employment. It is well recognized that an average adult is likely to change jobs from four-to-five times during his active working years. The development of broad job skills and the acquisition of independence for further self direction and learning are minimum requirements for averting premature job obsolescence; a formidable task indeed for large numbers of deaf students currently entering young adulthood. In approaching this task NTID is fortunate in having the long experience and present practices of RIT as a base from which to build. This new partnership holds great promise for deaf students and hearing students as well. For as long as serious work is pursued with regard to educating deaf students within the larger RIT educational community one can expect to learn much about the sociology of deafness, the education and the learning processes in deaf and hearing college students, and eventually gain from the feedback from the employment market, the data necessary for evaluation and modification of the training programs and their effectiveness.