The Delgado College Academic and Vocational Education Program for The Deaf

Douglas O. Wells

Douglas O. Wells is Assistant Administrator, Rehabilitation Service Division, Delgado College.

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DOUGLAS O. WELLS

It is indeed a pleasure and privilege to speak to you this afternoon and to share with you some of our experiences at Delgado. I am very excited over being asked to be a member of this panel, for this will be my first opportunity to make a formal presentation to this organization concerning the Delgado program.

I would like to begin by giving a brief history of Delgado Junior College. In 1903, Isaac Delgado, an immigrant Jamaican, who became a wealthy New Orleans sugar planter, willed to New Orleans the residue of his estate for the establishment of the institute. His bequest was accepted, and the current 57-acre city park campus was purchased.

In 1921, the Isaac Delgado Central Trade School opened and provided technical training for students from the surrounding area. In 1958, the Delgado Board of Managers and the New Orleans City Council changed the name to “Delgado Trade and Technical Institute” and implemented a technical junior college program.

By action of the Louisiana State Legislature and the New Orleans City Council in 1966, Delgado College was recognized and approved as a pilot community junior college for Louisiana.

DOUGLAS O. WELLS is Assistant Administrator, Rehabilitation Service Division, Delgado College.
Delgado College consists of the divisions of Business Administration, Engineering Technology, Arts and Sciences, Trades, Technical, and the Rehabilitation Services Division. The Rehabilitation Services Division consists of a comprehensive evaluation and work adjustments center for the multiply handicapped, the new Orthotics and Prosthetics Technology Training Program, and the Program for the Deaf.

The Delgado program for the deaf is funded jointly by the Office of Education of the Handicapped and the Social and Rehabilitation Services Administration. The program was funded June 1, 1968, and the nucleus of the present staff began July 1, 1968. The ensuing three months were spent in preparation, and the program accepted its first students on October 1, 1968. The program is a research and demonstration type of five years duration.

The purpose of the program is to demonstrate that academic and vocational education for the deaf can be effectively provided in an institution primarily designed for the hearing. The program is designed to serve graduates of secondary schools for the deaf, public and parochial schools for the deaf, and those students who have for some reason terminated their education prior to completion. The program requires a 5th grade achievement level or above, and prospective students must demonstrate that they will benefit from the program.

It is the intent and purpose of the Delgado program, along with the Seattle and St. Paul projects, to develop guidelines for the establishment of similar programs within other institutions primarily designed for the hearing, thereby, expanding educational opportunities for the deaf in other areas of the country.

The Delgado program has been in operation now since October 1, 1968. During this time, many of you have had the opportunity to visit and observe the program first-hand, and you are familiar with the philosophy of the program.

Our hypothesis for this research and demonstration program is that deaf students can succeed in obtaining an education in an institute primarily designed for the hearing if they are provided proper preparatory and supportive help.
The preparatory and supportive help includes a strong preparatory semester with emphasis on adjustment and exploratory activities, a supportive education program for continuing academic and vocational support throughout training, and interpreter services in the classrooms.

All deaf students who wish to attend Delgado must be Vocational Rehabilitation clients and must be referred through their respective state agencies. Although the program is regional in nature, students are considered from any area of the United States provided they meet the admissions criteria and provided the student will benefit from our services.

An Admissions Committee acts upon all referrals. When a referral is made, the referring counselor is asked to furnish the Admissions Committee with all supporting material including his basic information, medical workup, educational background, including a recent transcript of credits, and a recent psychological evaluation and family membership. The Admissions Committee is composed of the project director, the student counselor, social worker, psychologist, otologist, and the Louisiana supervisor of services to the deaf and hard of hearing. This supervisor, who acts as a consultant to us, represents the referring counselor at all staffings.

The program is divided into three phases: the Preparatory Phase, the Training and Supportive Education Phase, and the Job Preparation Phase.

Upon admission into the program, the student may or may not be required to enroll into the preparatory semester, depending on previous work experience and level of achievement. It is possible for the beginning student to register for college classes, or he may be required to take both classes in the Preparatory Phase as well as classes in the college.

The Preparatory Phase is somewhat analogous to a junior college division program found in most colleges and universities. The Preparatory Phase functions in an initial orientation and preparatory capacity to prepare the students for entry into the college program, while the Supportive Phase providing reinforcement and tutoring services concurrent with functions uniquely as a supportive laboratory program pro-
the academic and vocational training courses in the college.

The preparatory semester is composed of six courses, all of which carry three hours credit. The courses are:

1. Occupational Information—is a survey of the world of work, including a review of basic job families, job requirements, job applications, and job analysis.

2. Preparatory English—is remedial in nature and is designed to improve the functional reading and writing skills of the student.

3. Personal Management—consists of information on good study habits, budgeting, grooming, safety, first aid, health, and other subjects which help the student to adjust to his new environment.

4. Preparatory Math—is designed to improve the math skills of the individual to that level commensurate with the area of training desired.

5. Communication Skills—is designed to improve upon the communication skills of the student including finger-spelling, sign language, or oral communication. In addition, this course prepares the student for eventual use of our interpreters in the classes primarily designed for the hearing.

6. Survey of Vocational Interest—consists of exploratory information for the students in simulated work activities. This provides first-hand exposure to determine interest and indicators of potential areas of training.

In addition to the courses described, the student is helped to adjust to his new environment through regularly scheduled counseling and social work services.

At the conclusion of the preparatory semester, a progress staffing is held at which time all facets of the student's semester activities are discussed and suggestions for future planning are directed to the referring counselor for approval. If it is the consensus of the progress staffing committee that
the student’s objective is realistic and that he has the ability to succeed, he is permitted to schedule required college classes.

The student then enters the second phase of the program, the Training and Supportive Education Phase. Most students take all of the courses required by his area of specialization. Those students who wish to take selective courses and who do not plan to work toward an associate’s degree, or diploma, or certificate may do so.

The student enters his classes designed primarily for the hearing with the aid of an interpreter. These interpreters are skilled and are required to be members of the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf. In addition, volunteer notetakers help out in the lecture classes. The students are provided the use of a resource room where they can duplicate notes, type rough notes, or otherwise prepare their homework.

During the preparatory semester, the supportive education needs of the students are identified, and the student may be scheduled for supportive help in vocational or academic areas as indicated. In addition, counseling and social work services are continuous throughout training.

The student may enter the Trades Division, the Technical Division, or take courses at the Junior College level, depending upon ability. Upon satisfying the requirements of the college, he receives a certificate, a diploma, or an associate of science or arts degree.

Upon successful completion of training or of the realization of his vocational objectives, the student may have three options. The program counselor, in cooperation with the Louisiana Rehabilitation staff, will make an effort to place him in an on-the-job training program in New Orleans where supervision is given for a reasonable time. If he chooses permanent employment in the New Orleans area, the same professional services are made available to him. On the other hand, if he prefers, we will supply the referring counselor with a complete case summary which can be used for job placement in his home area.

Now I have come to that part of my report which I am sure all of you have been waiting for, and that is the report.
of the progress and activities of the students who are in both the Preparatory and Training Phases.

We have worked with a total of thirty-four students. Of the thirty-four, thirty-one are still in the program. Our students represent ten states including Texas, Maryland, Iowa, Missouri, Ohio, Illinois, Arkansas, Florida, Virginia, and, of course, Louisiana. All of the students are housed in the community. Some live in rooming houses where room and board is provided. Other students rent apartments and provide for their own needs. We find that the students have a great deal of difficulty adjusting from the structured dormitory life of schools for the deaf to the unstructured, relatively unsupervised community living.

On October 1, the program officially accepted its first pilot group of students. The Admissions Committee staffed twenty-one: one was rejected and referred to another program, two were placed in a pending status, and eighteen were accepted.

Of the eighteen, four were placed directly into training and bypassed the Preparatory Phase which left fourteen in the preparatory semester. We lost two students midterm which left twelve in the preparatory semester. Of the four who entered training, three chose the new Orthotics-Prosthetics Technology class, and one entered data processing.

The students in the preparatory semester were required to schedule all six of the courses previously described. As a part of the Survey of Vocational Interests course, they were allowed to explore activities in general business, secretarial administration, drafting, commercial art, graphic arts, mechanics, metal working, electricity, cabinet making, and carpentry. All of the twelve remaining students had preconceived ideas concerning their vocational objectives. Some of the students' objectives were based on previous work experience and on limited experiences at the schools for the deaf. More than one-half of the twelve changed their objectives as a result of the exploratory activities. The others retained their original objectives, but gained greater insight into the area of training desired.
As a result of the Preparatory English and Math classes, the students improved their reading skills seven-tenths of an academic year and math skills at one and eight-tenths of the academic year. It was also revealed that students who began the semester in the lower half of the class improved slightly more than those who started in the top half of the class.

Significantly, the pilot group of students were immature, frightened, and somewhat dependent at the beginning of the semester. As a result of their first semester's experiences, the greater majority have become self-sufficient and mature in their thinking and more realistic in their goals.

On January 27, the pilot group registered for classes in the college. Three of the students enrolled in drafting, two enrolled in electrical technology, one in diesel mechanics, six in general business, one in data processing, and three in Orthotics-Prosthetics Technology. The students enrolled in eighteen classes in all, and each was provided the services of an interpreter.

The second preparatory semester began on February 3, 1969. Twenty referrals were staffed, and seventeen were accepted. Three were rejected for various reasons and were referred to other programs. Of the seventeen accepted, two could not come because of financial difficulties. Therefore, the second semester began with fifteen students. These fifteen students are presently enrolled in the six preparatory classes as previously described.

In most cases the students in training are performing as expected. They did encounter problems in the business and English courses. However, through supportive help, most are being helped and doing acceptable work. Significantly, in the majority of the eighteen classes, the deaf students are performing as expected and are doing equally as well as their hearing peers. It seems that the greatest adjustment problem the student had at the beginning of the semester was the use of the interpreter. Because of this problem, we are now using interpreters in the Preparatory Phase in an effort to allow the students to become more familiar with the work of the
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interpreter. The staff and students of the Delgado program for the deaf are very grateful for the acceptance of our program by such a significant number of professional rehabilitation workers and educators. The energetic support and enthusiastic leadership has been most significant in the success of this program’s growth. To date, we have received an excess of eighty-five requests for applications from twenty-six states and four foreign countries. We look forward to your continued support so that we may provide this long overdue service to our deaf population.