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THE ROLE OF INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN PROVIDING SUPPORT SERVICES FOR MULTIPLY-HANDICAPPED DEAF PERSONS

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When publicity was sent to us announcing that the education of the multiply handicapped deaf was to be a featured topic at this convention, I was indeed encouraged. After all it isn't easy in the face of tight fiscal policy to espouse a project that people suspect may be costly. Nor is there much political gain in suggesting an investment in a group who represent a miniscule percentage of the voting public. Certainly businessmen have a long reputation of wincing at the idea of hiring people whose productivity and sales appeal seems unlikely to match the competition.

But here you are, professionals willing to *DARE* — people who are first and foremost convinced of the dignity and privilege of each human being to have his rightful chance at personal fulfillment, if not total economic independence. May I add my commendations to the others you surely will receive. For I recall another courageous group of people who championed the cause of the deaf in my community for no other reason than a sincere social commitment.

Early in 1970 when our Denver Center for the Hearing Impaired was in jeopardy because the College quarters were so crowded space had become critical, it was a group of daring students who rallied to save the cause. They were indignant at such lack of recognition and foresight. After appealing unsuccessfully to the governance council, on which they have equal voting rights with the President himself, they called a campus-wide meeting and spoke eloquently of their pride in having the deaf on the three campuses of CCD. The next day their executive board walked into my office and handed me two paper bags filled with cash — \$4,000. Their instructions were explicit: We want you to rent a trailer for your Center for the Hearing Impaired. And we want you to place the trailer right in the middle of the parking lot, so that every student and administrator coming and going will have to drive around it. We want it there, they said, so that citizens will come to realize that until the deaf and their handicapped peers are placed in the *middle* of society, instead of constantly at the fringe, the circle of mankind will never be complete. Humankind will never mature and grow to full flower until it is nourished and given depth by that vital contribution of those tempered by physical restraint.

In honesty, the college had no intention of allowing us to close. But the action of those wonderful students was a catalyst of extraordinary dimensions. We secured a large trailer and had it erected in the parking lot, where we stayed for three years. Our numbers grew and our impact spread. Last September we moved into the main building of the College. And do you know where we are today? Right in the *middle* of that building, in a most prized and prominent location. It took daring to achieve that

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end, just as you are demonstrating forthrightness today. I shall try my best to match that challenge.

First, in assessing the role of institutions of higher education in providing support services for multiply-handicapped deaf persons, we must recognize, accept, and assimilate within existing institutional policy the global concept that such candidates deserve equal options for training *with* their peers, handicapped *and* able-bodied.

Only a brief acquaintance with legislation at all levels of government during the past two years demonstrates clearly that parents of exceptional children, special educators, service agencies and handicapped organizations have had an observable impact in declaring their needs and rights and in seeing that legislation with teeth is implemented.

This was certainly not an unexpected development, though we seem to be no better prepared for it. Every other sub-group has had its day on American campuses in the past decade. For them, curriculum has been modified, specialized programs established to meet their preferences, staff has been expanded, and all kinds of unusual services provided. The fact that such accommodations have introduced problems, demanded philosophical change, affected standards, and increased educational costs does not negate the right of each citizen to hope and prepare for the Great American Dream.

So too, the multiply-handicapped, including the deaf, dare to seek admission and full accommodation in institutions of higher education. And as educators we dare not deny it. Business and industry, despite their concern about the profit implications of hiring less competitive employees, have adjusted their operations and policies. Public agencies have taken definitive steps to strengthen services to these people. Increased social and financial benefits are the order of the day. Shall we in education do less? Our first task, then, is one of self-orientation, in-service discussion and resolution. . . a healthy awareness that we have an obligation, and with it that we have the professional capacity to meet it.

Second, having agreed to accept our responsibility, where do we start? Within the objectives of our own respective institutions, we must decide what we are going to try to *do* for the multiply-handicapped deaf candidate — and that can range from simple training for entry-level job placement, through the gamut of professional careers, and into that twilight zone of knowledge for its own creative and soul-satisfying sake. If yours is a selective institution, a decision about the degrees and kinds of handicapping conditions you will admit and serve must be made. Will you be prepared to deal with the athetoid CP? The MR and emotionally disturbed? The spinal-cord injured, etc.? Or is yours an open-door institution, such as the Community College of Denver, that has determined to accept *all* physically handicapped students in a planned sequence, as resources become available? These are basic decisions that must be made within the scope of our own individual staff capabilities, our present and potential resources, and the priorities that govern administrative judgement. Whatever the goal, it must be viable, suited to immediate need, and certainly accountable.

Third, with an expressed set of educational objectives and a target candidate defined, we must set up the kinds of support services required to achieve a successful conclusion. Some of these are common services that simply need expansion or adaptation. Some are borrowed from other disciplines and I believe they will soon be incorporated as a part of the educational environment at most post-secondary institutions.

If I may be permitted to share our Center's very brief experience with you, we found that our assistance to students embracing ten different disability categories, including the multiply-handicapped deaf, falls into three clusters: physical support

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services; instructional support services; and evaluative, counseling, placement, and related services.

Here is one isolated illustration. New to our own school is the position of full-time vocational evaluator. This professional staff member has a rather unique combination of training in job definition, comprehension of the physical nature and limitations of each of our ten disability areas, and in-depth study of the 100-plus career programs offered on the three campuses which our Center serves. She has a professional background in physical and occupational medicine as well as experience in vocational and rehabilitative counseling. Hers is the first step in the student service process, because she must identify not only the client's combination of disabling conditions but, more importantly, (as Dr. Stewart reminds us) the manner and extent to which they handicap the candidate.

For example, if a client has sustained a spinal injury, to what extent does he have the use of his arms, hands, and feet? If he aspires to a trade objective, what is his degree of muscle involvement and what other bodily capacities might be substituted or used supportively? Having assessed the client's potential, which of the various occupational offerings are sensible and practicable objectives for this particular prospect?

This position is only one in the team of specialists that may be anticipated if an institution wishes to meet its commitment to the multi-handicapped deaf on a broad scale. But keep in mind that the staff can be limited if the objective and audience is also limited.

Assuming a major effort is made, such physical services and personnel as these might be warranted: a handicapped service technician proficient in sign, to handle emergency medical aid; recuperative rest and maintenance therapy; lunchroom, mobility, and bathroom assistance; attendant service; physical conditioning and personal health services; emergency repair service of prosthetic devices, hearing aids, and wheelchairs; planned accommodation to architectural barriers, etc.

In the area of counseling-related services, professionals with backgrounds in deafness as well as connected disabling conditions may already be a part of the institution's staff and their duties need not be repeated here.

Instructional services form the largest segment of our Center's task, covering such items as these: interpreting; organized tutorial assistance in the media required by each individual referral; a fully equipped resource laboratory with appropriate media to permit optimum student independence; notetaking; textbook outlining; reading for the visually impaired as well as others with reading problems and physical limitations; individualized communications and basic remedial skill development (a task requiring major attention); curriculum and classroom modification for crutch and wheelchair deaf; testing assistance; classroom aid; writing and transcription training; and any other instructional need that may arise.

Time permits no more than this overview of the support service role of institutions of higher education in serving the multiply-handicapped deaf. While it may not be feasible for each institution to provide total service, every citizen so handicapped should have the opportunity within his own state or region to pursue a program suited to his capacities and interests. It can be said with integrity that each of us has something unique to offer the college public in our own locality. Whatever that unique contribution is, let's make it available and accessible to the multiply-handicapped deaf person, along with his equal-but-different peers.

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In closing, may I apologize for the pedantic nature of this presentation. What I would really wish to do would be to move you to some productive action for the handicapped deaf. If I might depart from the customary tenor of professional addresses for a moment, permit me to read these verses from an unknown author:

A meeting was held quite far from Earth
"It's time again for another birth."
Said the Angels to The Lord above,
This special person needs much love.

His progress may seem very slow,
Accomplishment he wants to show.
But he'll require that extra care
From educators moved to *dare*.

He may not run, he does not speak,
He cannot hear, his outlook's bleak.
His teachers say, "He can't adapt."
You see, they call him handicapped.

Yet, 'neath these obstacles there lies
A brilliant mind that longs to rise
Above man's mundane quarrels and wars
Past all barriers and doors.

Let's not be hasty to ignore
His contribution. . . Oh, much more!
For those who will to work awhile
May glance at him, and see God's smile.

I could not wish you more than the privilege of working with the multiply-handicapped deaf. Thank you.