INSTITUTIONAL COMMITMENT AND FACULTY/STAFF DEVELOPMENT

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INTRODUCTION

Students may select a particular college or university for its location, tuition costs, selection of majors, reputation, and numerous other reasons. Students who are deaf or hard of hearing consider the same reasons as their hearing peers, but are likely to give major consideration also to the type and quality of support services available to them. Many of these services already have been discussed indepth in companion reports on topics that include interpreting, assistive listening devices, notetaking, tutoring, basic academic preparation, real-time speech-to-text, and campus life.

Without the availability of these and other appropriate support services from which to choose, relatively few deaf and severely hard of hearing students are likely to experience the level of success they hoped for when they first enrolled. Many would drop out of college or transfer to another college in anticipation of better services. While Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 have led to improved accessibility to public environments, including colleges and universities, there remains considerable variability regarding what services are provided, as well as the extent and quality of these services.[2]

What is institutional commitment? What are the attitudes and actions that demonstrate to deaf and hard of hearing students that they are valued? How can it be determined that one institution is more committed than another? Are there any generally accepted standards that an institution can use to assess and improve its commitment? How can it be determined that improvement in this area is necessary or desired? Since services are mandated by law, how is the commitment of the institution in meeting the needs of students who are deaf and hard of hearing balanced with following the letter of the law? These are only a few of the questions one can raise when considering this topic.

In discussions with professionals in disability support service (DSS) programs about institutional commitment, they are inclined to say, "I know it when I see it". Indeed, institutional commitment encompasses perceptions, feelings, attitudes, and beliefs that may be difficult to measure. Institutional commitment incorporates more than policies. It involves also the culture of the institution and the campus atmosphere. It is established from the top level of administration and extended throughout all programs and services.

The level of institutional commitment to deaf students and to those with other disabilities often is reflected in the level of service available to students; but it is more than that. Some institutions commit themselves to providing basic accessibility services to students who are deaf and hard of hearing and do so consistently. Other institutions declare their adherence to what is legally required, and from time to time may even exceed those requirements, but are inconsistent in providing services when needed, causing students to be uncertain about what to expect from class to class, term to term, and year to year. The consistency of the service, and how it is provided, help define the institution's level of institutional commitment to its students who are deaf or hard of hearing.

It is not the intent of this report to make judgments about institutions.

Obviously, a small rural two- or four-year college cannot be expected to offer the same scope of services or offer services in the same way as a large urban university. Certainly college-bound deaf and hard of hearing students themselves should take such matters into consideration in making their college choices.

Approaches to the delivery of services. There is no single best way of delivering needed services to deaf and hard of hearing students. In institutions with

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[2] See the closing sections of each of the preceding NTF reports for legal interpretations pertaining to each.

large numbers of deaf and hard of hearing students, services sometimes are structured within a program designed specifically for these students. Other institutions may provide support services through a general disability support service (DSS) office. This DSS office may or may not have staff members with specialized training to work with students who are deaf or hard of hearing. Still other institutions, and particularly those with small student enrollments, may provide support services through a variety of individual professionals and departments, which may or may not be administratively linked. Regardless of who provides the service and how it is provided, it is essential that there be an appropriate and reliable match between what the institution provides and what the student would like to receive.

Campus life and the social environment. While academic support services are critical to the success of the student, social factors and general campus life also are of great importance to deaf and hearing students alike, particularly among non-commuting students. Colleges that include deaf or hard of hearing students among their student body should strive to integrate them into the entire campus community.

They should be made to feel genuinely welcome and accepted on campus, encouraged to become involved in campus activities, and inspired to identify with a peer group. Parenthetically, it should be added that social factors are known to have an influence on perseverance among deaf students in college, just as they do among students who hear. Another report in this series focuses in more detail on campus life and the development of deaf and hard of hearing students (Porter, Camerlengo, DePuye & Sommer, 1999).

There needs to be a commitment from the administrative level down that encompasses instructional, organizational, and student life issues involving all students with disabilities, including those who are deaf or hard of hearing. Since students have contact with departments and service offices such as academic advising, career planning and placement, financial aid, health services, admissions and records, parking services and campus security, laboratories, and housing, the commitment must be clearly communicated across all levels. Inclusion in services at these levels requires support beyond what the DSS office can offer.

PHILOSOPHICAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL ISSUES

Strategic planning. In an effort to meet the challenges of changing demographics and funding concerns, colleges and universities throughout the country have recognized a need to develop a vision of the future and to plan strategically toward that vision (Shirley, 1988). This vision must balance the institution's values and capabilities with needs and opportunities.

Strategic planning efforts should result in clarity of purpose and direction, with the steps necessary to accomplish the mission. Strategic planning offers significant benefits to an institution and its community. A strategic vision is communicated to the constituents, the image is improved, and external support may increase as a result. There is increased certainty in the lives of members of the institution as well as a clear direction for the allocation and reallocation of campus resources.

Within the context of strategic planning, each academic and administrative unit on campus then has the opportunity to review the overall plan for the institution and devise its own plan that blends the overall mission and goals with the unique aspects of the unit. Whatever approach the institution chooses to use in providing support services to students who are deaf or hard of hearing, the service delivery system should develop a vision and a mission that are congruent with those of the institution itself.

In examining the issue of institutional support for deaf and hard of hearing students, and students with other disabilities, it is important to remember that there must first be internal support for the activities of the DSS providers. The faculty and staff in this area need to understand the overall mission of the institution and develop a plan that both meets the needs of the student and conforms to the values and beliefs of the institution.

However, strategic planning cannot, in and of itself, elevate poor quality or produce strength where the system is weak. It cannot remove obstacles such as inertia or fear of an ambiguous future. It is a method for dealing with, and making decisions about the basic nature of the institution (Cyert, 1988). Essentially, it is a blueprint that can be used for organizational development.

Organizational development. When a vision for an institution has been established, it is then necessary to consider the existing state of affairs and identify where changes need to occur. Organizational development is more than a way to solve the problems faced today; it focuses on developing an approach to problem solving that can deal with the rapidly changing environment – influenced greatly by technological advances, political forces, and cultural changes.

Organizational development is a series of events that continue over an extended period of time to assist in clarifying choices and courses of action, with personal, professional, and organizational growth as desired outcomes. An organization is more than the sum of individual parts; each member has the capacity to contribute significantly to the overall operation of the institution. If efficiency and effectiveness are to be improved, each member must improve his/her own skills, competencies, knowledge, and attitudes, and become more open to the concept of being a member of the team. If an intent of organizational development is to shape the beliefs, attitudes, and structure of a college or university, it is necessary to involve the institution as a whole, including its academic areas.

Institutions of higher education face a variety of internal and external influences (Tierney, 1988). Externally, demographic, economic, and political conditions can play major roles in the direction the institution takes. Equally powerful are the values and goals held by the campus community, and the history of the institution. The culture of the campus community incorporates what is done, how it is done, and who is involved in doing it. Decisions, actions, and communication on a useful and a symbolic level are significantly involved. According to Cummings (1980), organizational development integrates the political, technical, and cultural perspectives regarding change within an organization.

Organizational culture studies the significant pieces within an organizational setting (Tierney, 1988). Its basis is the shared beliefs and assumptions of individuals who participate in a given organization. Recognizing the significant role an organization's culture plays in the schema is critical; however, it is difficult to remove oneself from the environment and analyze the culture. Conflicts may occur when external forces with different organizational cultures

and expectations impact colleges and universities. Also, conflicting cultures may exist within the institution. It is critical in organizational development to work toward the development of shared goals. Adversarial relationships can be reduced by studying their dynamics, and developing a shared vision of how goals can best be implemented.

COMMITMENT TO DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING STUDENTS

Student development. As an organizational entity within colleges and universities, student development in recent years has tended to become more complex, adding linkages with other parts of the campus and community. When developing a plan for DSS, areas such as academics, finance, and planning should be addressed, and key personnel from these areas consulted. Support from these areas is not only critical to the success of the DSS organizational plan, but also to the day-to-day activities of providing support services to students who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Staffing. Qualified staff members are critical to the successful delivery of effective support services to students who are deaf or hard of hearing. Whether the institution is providing services simply to make the campus accessible for them, or developing a more extensive program, a primary contact person at a professional level needs to be clearly identified to students, faculty, and staff members. Depending on the scope of responsibilities assigned to this individual, he/she might be given any of a variety of titles: director, coordinator, counselor, or adviser.

The institution must define the role of this individual. He/she should possess content expertise, knowledge of campus and local resources, an understanding of deafness and deaf culture, and the special needs of students who are hard of hearing. Beyond these, like all professionals in helping roles, he/she should also possess strong interpersonal skills, perseverance, patience, flexibility, tolerance, and good decision-making skills.

In addition to this primary contact person, additional staff members are generally assigned to the coordination and provision of support services for students who are deaf or hard of hearing and in need of these services.

When providing *interpreting* services, finding qualified interpreters with or without certification may be difficult. This and many other considerations pertaining to interpreters are discussed in detail in another report in this series (Sanderson, Siple & Lyons, 1999).

In a program using the services of numerous interpreters, an interpreter coordinator or lead interpreter is generally appointed. His/her duties are likely to include evaluating the skills of applicants, appropriately scheduling staff interpreters, contracting with outside agencies for supplemental staff, and providing ongoing support and staff development activities.

While full-time interpreters on staff can contribute significantly to the program, funding concerns may dictate the use of part-time interpreters, particularly in situations where there is a low enrollment of deaf students. Classroom interpreting is the most visible use of interpreting services, but interpreters will be utilized in almost every aspect of campus life (Porter, Camerlengo, DePuye & Sommer, 1999). Effective use of interpreting services where needed is one indicator of institutional commitment.

Notetaking and *tutoring* services are widely used support services for students who are deaf or hard of hearing. Notetaking services are covered extensively in another task force report (Hastings, Brecklein, Cermak, Reynolds, Rosen & Wilson, 1997) as are tutoring services (Orlando, Gramley & Hoke, 1997).

Students who do not utilize sign language interpreters, such as non-signing deaf students and most hard of hearing students, may request alternate forms of conveying information such as *real-time captioning* or *computer-assisted notetaking* services (Stinson, Eisenberg, Horn, Larson, Levitt & Stuckless, 1999). Also, many hard of hearing students will require the use of *assistive listening devices* in the classroom (Warick, Clark, Dancer & Sinclair, 1997). Some students will need a combination of these services in a given course, e.g., interpreting, notetaking, and tutoring.

While these services may be delivered in a variety of ways, coordinating these services to ensure quality could be a part of the DSS program or a related campus service office. Since quality is an issue, the

development of guidelines, training sessions, and consultation with instructors are a critical part of the role of the service coordinator.

Student development specialists can offer a variety of support for students who are deaf or hard of hearing. Counseling, advising, and career planning and placement are services generally available to the entire student body. As the population of students who are deaf or hard of hearing grows, the institution may need to consider adding specialists in these areas.

Finally, special instruction and classes in basic *academic preparation* such as English and math-related areas may be a goal of postsecondary institutions serving larger numbers of deaf and hard of hearing students. While providing interpreters for classes designed essentially for hearing students may meet legal requirements. However, it may be necessary to examine the level of success of the deaf students in these classes, and offer courses in these areas that are designed specifically for these students (Andersen, Boyd, Brecklein, Dietz, Harman & Ishman, 1997).

As postsecondary institutions investigate the options for developing and filling positions for staff members who work primarily with students who are deaf and hard of hearing, several issues must be considered. Given the range of possible staff positions, priorities must be established regarding the type and number of positions initiated. As DSS programs have developed, they may initially have been staffed with individuals without experience or professional qualifications in working with students who are deaf or hard of hearing. As with any professional position, qualified individuals should be sought, with the additional consideration of potentially hiring individuals who themselves are deaf or hard of hearing.

Fiscal issues. In committing to providing the appropriate support to students who are deaf or hard of hearing, the administration needs to consider fiscal issues related to managing a program of support services for these students. Regardless of whether the institution is committed to going beyond the requirements of Section 504, there is a significant financial commitment involved. Providing the necessary staff members requires the largest obligation of funds for support services.

One issue to consider is the balance of full-time and part-time staff members. Do the number of students requesting support services justify the need for full-time staff members specifically designated to work in this area? Should full-time employees have responsibilities for other student groups or should their work be wholly directed to students who are deaf or hard of hearing? At what point in the development of a support service program should part-time staff be increased to full-time status?

When considering the staffing patterns, care should be taken to provide adequate student access to support services. While part-time employees may be more manageable from the fiscal perspective, maintaining this during times of growth may not be sufficient.

The administration must also decide whether to earmark institutional funds for professional and staff positions, thus establishing hard money budget lines. This affirms a strong institutional commitment on the part of the institution's administration.

As an alternative, some institutions seek outside funding from local, state, or federal sources. Some of these sources may make resources available for a short time to provide a seed for the development of additional permanent services. However, dependence on these sources for long-term funding is not advisable in light of shifting priorities and the potential for reduced funding.

Other commitments. Adequate resources are necessary to support the staff and to provide additional accessibility for the student population. Assistive technologies, computer access, and duplication services are only a few of the resources that complement personnel activities. Adequate funding should be made available to purchase and maintain these resources. Less visible costs such as postage, publicity, and public relations should be included in the resources supported by the institution.

Accessibility for deaf students means more than simply providing a sign language interpreter. Visual communications of different types provide access to information for students. This may include captioned television, TTY's, oral interpreting, notetaking, real-time captioning, and access to electronic mail. Beyond their use of the above and their personal hearing aids, hard of hearing students

may need to use assistive listening devices, especially in the classroom setting.

Given the potential for diversity among deaf and hard of hearing students, accessibility may involve different types of assistive technology. Individual or group listening systems and amplified phones may be provided for students who prefer to use their residual hearing, and tactile interpreting and large print text and notes may be requested by students who are deaf and blind or have low vision in addition to hearing loss. Students who experienced adult onset of deafness may need to experiment with several approaches to make the classroom accessible, including oral interpreting, real-time captioning, or computer-assisted notetaking. Assuredly, meeting the accessibility needs of such a diverse population, and providing adequate funding to meet these needs, may test the level of commitment the institution has toward meeting the needs of a diverse group of deaf and hard of hearing students.

Physical issues. While the postsecondary institution may have developed a comprehensive plan for providing support services for students who are deaf or hard of hearing, this may be difficult to communicate to these students. While deaf and hard of hearing students may not be directly aware of the institution's philosophical and fiscal commitments, they will see the program staff and facilities.

Consequently, a critical physical issue is having dedicated office space for staff members. This should be in an accessible, centrally located, well-marked area with adequate workspace for the employees. Hard money should be allocated to support and maintain this on the same level as other areas of the institution.

Space should also be made available for providing tutoring services, alternative testing formats, and the utilization of other types of assistive technology. It is expected that the DSS office be equipped with appropriate office equipment and supplies, including computers and word processors, access to copy machines, scanners, access to the central campus information system, and any specialized equipment necessary to meet the needs of the students being served.

At this point in time, campus accessibility *should not* be an issue. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of

1990 clearly outline the need for accessible public environments. While many institutions have developed ADA transition plans and are in the process of campus modifications, accessibility is likely to remain an issue for some time to come.

Accessibility for students who are deaf or hard of hearing encompasses modifications that may be overlooked. Adding TTY's and amplified phones in various places on campus, and the use of telephone relay services enhance communication among students and members of the faculty and staff. Incorporating captioned films and videos in the classroom provides accessibility for students who are deaf or hard of hearing. Additionally, open-captioned television in student lounges and other public places can help to create an environment of inclusion for all students.

Finally, to make the campus a safe environment for all students, signaling devices such as *visual* smoke detectors and fire alarms should be installed in all buildings. Provisions should be made to provide emergency signaling at campus security and elevator phones to allow all students to alert campus personnel when necessary.

Ongoing planning and development. Planning is a result of organizational development and is an essential part of managing the DSS office. Personnel in DSS have the opportunity to examine trends and plan accordingly. For example, within the institution, are students who are deaf and students who are hard of hearing increasing or decreasing in number? Are their requests for support services changing? What are the trends affecting all students on campus, including those who are deaf or hard of hearing?

The staff of the DSS office should assess their strengths and weaknesses both as a unit and as individual members of the institution as a whole. Program priorities should be established that reflect the quality and availability of support services and offer an efficient approach to providing them. Finally, the strategic direction of the DSS office should be developed and used as an operational guide by all staff members. As changes occur in legislation, demographics, and priorities, modifications and revisions should be made as appropriate.

FACULTY/STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Purposes of faculty/staff development. Dalton (1988) defines staff development as "the intentional and systematic effort to enhance the knowledge and skills of staff members" (p. 535). The purposes of staff development are to benefit all students, improve the individual staff member, and improve the institution (Dalton, 1988).

Since change is a constant, all employees in postsecondary educational institutions should have the opportunity to gain additional experiences, broaden their base of knowledge, and participate in situations involving professional growth, for greater satisfaction in their work. Faculty and staff members must stay current with the trends and developments in their respective areas and integrate new beliefs and practices into their professional roles and responsibilities.

Meeting the needs of a diverse student body can pose a significant challenge for all aspects of a college or university. Within its academic areas, support services that are provided in tandem with effective instruction can make the difference between success and failure, persistence and withdrawal, among students who are deaf or hard of hearing. By enhancing the understanding of the general campus community to the needs and issues of students who are deaf or hard of hearing, the efforts of the DSS staff are made significantly easier. From the student's perspective, a benefit of well-prepared faculty and staff is the delivery of quality instruction and services.

Philosophical Issues. In general, faculty and staff development activities and programs need to be related to the mission and goals of the institution in order to bridge the commitment of personnel to that of the institution. While Christensen (1975) found that the body of literature supports the idea that individual goals should be linked to the organization's goals and objectives, Belker (1993) observed that, in practice, faculty development programs frequently were not oriented to institutional goals and objectives. According to Evans (1984), the communication of mission and goals to all employees is essential so these will become "driving forces in the organization" (p.65).

Understanding the mission, philosophy, goals, and objectives of an institution provides the foundation

for what transpires within the college. According to Solomon (1987), "organizational effectiveness, then, is dependent on behaviors of each person within the organization" (p.7). Ideally, the purposeful learning experiences that encompass staff development occur in direct response to the immediate and long-term needs of individuals and their institutions, the ultimate effect being the emergence of campuses where administrators, faculty, and students enjoy full participation in active and vigorous educational communities.

Planning for faculty/staff development. In order to develop a strategic human resources plan, the faculty and staff should have the opportunity to express their perceptions of their development needs. Three main approaches have frequently been used to assess the needs of the organization's employees: front-end analysis, task analysis, and attitude surveys.

A *front-end analysis* directs organizational research into performance analysis to identify deficiencies and to prescribe cost-effective solutions (Harless, 1988). The *task analysis* approach includes the identification of activities, tasks, sub-tasks, human resources, and support requirements that are necessary to accomplish specific results in a job or an organization (McLagan & Bedrich, 1983). And third, *attitude surveys* have been widely used in postsecondary settings to collect feedback from members of the institution to discover perceptions about a wide variety of topics (Elizur, 1984).

When considering the topic of faculty and staff development, issues such as pre-service preparation, career development, and individual development should be considered. Pre-service training refers to the educational background and previous work experiences of the employee. Career development is an organized, planned effort resulting in the development of a career plan mutually agreed upon by the employee and the organization. It is significant that the plan must be mutually agreed upon; it is important that the organization consider its planning efforts and encourage workers to pursue opportunities that match both the individual's and the organization's needs (Hill and Miller, 1982).

These activities can contribute to improved productivity, assist employees in dealing with high technology, encourage them to exercise greater self-determination, enhance growth and development,

and improve their image outside the organization. As an individual employee's career development plan unfolds, specific actions must be taken. Gilley and Eggland (1985) suggest that individual development is broader than simply trading activities; it incorporates "personal growth through learning programs" and "includes communication, interpersonal skills, and other areas in addition to training" (p. 26). Learning can occur in both formal and informal situations and should be based on the needs of the learner as he/she interfaces with the needs of the organization.

DISABILITY SUPPORT SERVICE PERSONNEL

Staffing. Since the DSS office is a part of the institution as a whole, it is important that the development of staff positions, hiring practices, and all other personnel policies and procedures follow those already established within the institution. Guidelines published in 1973 (Stuckless, p. 6) recommend that this should include "rights, privileges, and responsibilities, and extend to considerations such as salary, rank, tenure, and fringe benefits."

Efforts should be made to determine appropriate classifications of positions, particularly in areas where comparable positions elsewhere within the institution do not exist. In addition to providing an equitable setting for staff members, these considerations also contribute to the credibility, acceptance, and stability of the program within the institution.

As faculty and staff positions within the DSS office are created, job descriptions that include a clear delineation of roles and responsibilities should be developed. According to French (1994), job descriptions can be beneficial during the recruiting and selection process, during employee orientation and training, and during the evaluation process. Accurate job descriptions provide the basis for determining performance standards. When these are clearly communicated with the staff member, s/he is more likely to be able to carry out his/her responsibilities successfully and may feel more motivated and committed to doing his/her best work.

Qualifications. While a new staff member should be provided with the orientation and initial training essential to making a smooth transition into a

particular position, s/he should already possess the general skills and qualifications to carry out the responsibilities of the job. As positions are being developed, minimum and desired qualifications should be designated.

The knowledge and skills needed by program staff members vary by position. Given a specific discipline, the appropriate training, certification, and experience should be demonstrated. For example, a sign language interpreter may have a degree from a postsecondary interpreter training program, certification at the state or national level, several years of interpreting experience, or a combination of any of these three qualifications.

It also should be expected that a staff member whose responsibility is to work with deaf and hard of hearing students in the postsecondary setting have adequate knowledge of the implications of hearing loss on individual development, and appropriate approaches and techniques for meeting the needs of the student.

The ability to communicate effectively with students who are deaf or hard of hearing is a critical issue to consider when bringing in new staff members. As the student population becomes more diverse, different communication methods must be utilized. It is not uncommon for communication preferences to include the use of American Sign Language (ASL), some form of Signed English, Cued Speech, speech, speechreading, listening, or written communication.

While it would be unrealistic to expect all staff members to be proficient in each of these modes of communication, it is important that they be aware of the students' preferences and work toward effective communication with all students. New staff or faculty members who lack good skills in communicating with deaf and hard of hearing students should be given every opportunity and encouragement to develop their skills.

Ongoing staff development activities. While the DSS office may have a cadre of well-qualified staff and faculty, ongoing staff development issues should continue to be addressed. Additional needs may result from several areas, including advances in subject matter, technology, or legal and legislative issues. Up-to-date information and practices are strongly desired to provide quality services to students.

Additionally, training and development can provide intellectual stimulation that can promote the concept of lifelong learning. Morrisey (1983) identified two goals for effective employee development: (1) improving performance in current jobs and (2) preparing the employee for future opportunities. The concept of staff development is comprehensive and refers not only to the renewal and growth of faculty and staff with regard to job-related knowledge, but also to personal and institutional revitalization.

As suggested earlier, professional development is typically sought and achieved through participation in purposeful activities. Attending professional conferences and taking courses related to one's field are generally intended to enhance knowledge and sharpen skills, particularly those that are essential for maintaining an optimal level of professional performance.

Professional development may be achieved through or in conjunction with organizational development; for example, faced with retrenchment, the DSS office may find it necessary to re-train staff members so they can assume new responsibilities, thereby yielding positive outcomes for both the individual and the organization. Increased skills may lead to new opportunities and possible advancement.

Growth may also occur as the result of participation in activities designed to address personal needs; for example, participation in stress management workshops may serve to alleviate personal barriers to effective performance, thereby producing the desired outcome of renewed professional vitality.

Professional Development Planning. Institutions that support formalized staff development plans should certainly extend this opportunity to faculty and staff members in the DSS office. One option in providing staff development is to offer a variety of activities in anticipation that they will be of benefit to various members of the staff. For example, workshops and seminars may meet the general needs of a group of staff members.

However, a more individualized and structured approach that involves a needs assessment and individual professional development plans may provide the staff members with a more personalized way to meet their needs and further enhance their development. In meetings with their supervisors,

DSS staff members may discuss their current level of performance to identify strengths and deficiencies in skills, and their professional goals for the future.

Staff development activities may be included in the individual's employment record, as part of a resume, on a transcript of experiences, as a compilation of annotated credentials, or in portfolio form (Brown & Citrin, 1977). A written record of professional development experiences validates the acquisition of new skills and documents personal growth and change.

Possible Activities. *Professional workshops* and *conferences* that are sponsored by local, state or national organizations provide an important supplement to what is offered on campus. By becoming involved with off-campus activities, faculty and staff members have the opportunity to benefit from other approaches and perspectives. Networking with other professionals and exchanging information and ideas broaden the bank of resources for providing quality services to students on campus.

In addition to participating in professional conferences, *delivering presentations* can serve as another professional development activity. These require faculty and staff members to consider their knowledge and current practices and further develop these to share with others.

For those individuals who are motivated to learn independently, *self-directed training* opportunities may be of interest. These could be offered either through structured classes that are selected by the staff member or through a program of independent study and research.

Mentoring programs provide opportunities for more experienced faculty and staff members to assist newer members in their professional development (Dalton, 1988). While an effective mentoring relationship is highly dependent on individual characteristics such as personality, rapport, and communication, it can be a very powerful approach to staff development.

Although a formal mentoring program may be difficult to organize, the staff member who is being mentored has a strong connection to a source of information, support, and encouragement. If a formal relationship cannot be arranged, faculty and staff members should be encouraged to seek

informal mentoring relationships. While the most obvious benefits are to the person being mentored, the mentor also can grow significantly from the relationship.

Certification or licensure may be goals for interpreters, counselors, and instructors. As faculty and staff prepare for this, administrative encouragement in one way or another is important. Consultation with those who have already achieved certification or licensure, assignments related to the evaluation process, and released time could all be helpful. Once certification or licensure has been granted to an individual, s/he could serve in a mentoring role for others who are pursuing similar credentials.

While most positions in the DSS office are closely related to specific skills, there may be some opportunities for *job rotations or temporary assignments* to renew and refresh personnel. While new assignments may be difficult to arrange due to the need for highly specialized skills in certain positions, they can provide an opportunity for individuals to explore new areas of interest (Dalton, 1988).

Job enrichment strategies can be developed for those faculty and staff members who seek additional growth in their current positions. These experiences are designed to provide additional duties that may include leadership opportunities and additional recognition.

Participation on *special project development teams* or *task forces* can provide staff and faculty with opportunities to interact with others on campus for the development of projects in which there is shared interest, while at the same time creating an enhanced campus environment.

The needs of part-time staff members and student workers should not be overlooked. For example, many colleges and universities hire interpreters on a part-time basis. Many of the activities offered to full-time staff members can be of significant benefit to part-time or contractual employees as well.

However, providing compensation to these employees during training sessions can be a major barrier. The administration needs to balance the costs associated with these activities with the benefits accrued as a result of having a better-prepared staff.

Student workers. Another group whose needs should be considered are student workers. They may be employed in a variety of areas that interface with the DSS office, many in tutoring or notetaking positions. General orientation to the policies and procedures within the DSS office as well as a discussion of their own role and function should be a part of each tutor's and notetaker's employment (Orlando, Cramly & Hoke, 1997; Hastings et al., 1997). Additional training may be developed by the DSS office to enhance their skills and increase the quality of services provided to the student population.

INSTITUTIONAL FACULTY AND STAFF

Staffing and Qualifications. In most situations, the institution's faculty and staff are not likely to have the specialized skills necessary to work effectively with students who are deaf or hard of hearing. While the postsecondary environment can provide numerous opportunities for students to enhance self-advocacy skills, the burden of preparing faculty and staff should not be their responsibility. Institutions wishing to demonstrate their commitment to providing an accessible environment should include a comprehensive plan for staff development that encompasses all aspects of the institution. Woodrick (1991) emphasized that "staff development activities must become an integral part of the institutional policy for both staff and faculty" (p. 10), indicating a variety of programs that could be developed to meet the needs of faculty, staff, and administrators on campus.

Orientation for new faculty members or for faculty members who have never had deaf or hard of hearing students in their classes should be a well-established part of campus-wide staff development activities. These initial activities may combine formal presentations, informal meetings, handbooks and other printed information, and video or other media presentations (Stuckless, 1973). Topics that can be covered will vary based on the institution, its services, and the unique aspects of its student population. Most orientation sessions should cover the various communication methods used by students, the role and function of the educational interpreter, the use of notetaking services, and the role and function of the DSS office.

While an orientation program can provide a general introduction to the issues related to having students

who are deaf or hard of hearing in the classroom, one contact is generally not sufficient to have a fully aware faculty and staff. The orientation session may also serve as an informal needs assessment to assist the DSS staff in better understanding the needs of the faculty and staff and developing appropriate methods of meeting these needs.

Staff members from the DSS office may be invited to make presentations during campus-wide training sessions. It would not be unusual to address issues such as reasonable accommodations and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act or to demonstrate equipment or new technology that may be used on campus. The DSS staff may also have the opportunity to provide coordinated staff development activities for small groups. Frequently, sign language classes are offered for interested faculty and staff members. Courses such as these are not designed to develop interpreting skills, but rather to enhance conversational sign language skills and create a better understanding among campus personnel of the needs and life experiences of the student population.

Ongoing consultation with faculty and staff members is one of the regular activities of the DSS office. Questions regarding the provision of appropriate accommodations, as well as general information regarding various disabilities are common. On some campuses, there may already be a cadre of faculty who have had a great deal of experience in working effectively with deaf and hard of hearing students. Mentoring programs among faculty members might be an appropriate avenue to pursue. While there are numerous models to follow, a basic premise might be to provide intensive training for selected faculty members who, in turn, share information and effective practices with members of the same academic department. Facilitating communication among faculty members of the same department may be more easily accomplished than using an "outsider" who does not share a background and set of experiences related to the specific discipline.

While face-to-face contacts often provide the best opportunities for identifying specific concerns and conveying complete information, individual schedules do not always allow this to occur. Many DSS offices find that handbooks for students, and for faculty and staff members, can be very beneficial. These may review the policies and procedures of the

DSS office and can offer suggestions and strategies for successful interaction with students who are deaf or hard of hearing.

In addition, interested faculty and staff members should also have the opportunity to peruse a variety of handbooks, brochures, professional and consumer publications, and videotapes. As a supplement to personal contacts, these materials can support the information that was previously shared during staff meetings and consultative visits and can enhance the credibility of the staff of disability support services. While these may be housed within the disability support service office, they may be just as easily maintained in the library, media center, or learning resource center for easy access. The staff of the disability support service office may wish to consult with the library/learning resource center staff and make recommendations for additional resources.

Postscript pertaining to laws and regulations[3]

Among the first points made in this chapter is that institutional commitment is hard to quantify, but there is little doubt in anyone's mind when it is present. Nevertheless, as difficult as it may be to define, an institutional commitment to access for deaf and hard of hearing students can be one of the best defenses to charges of discrimination. While the law only requires access, in essence a floor not a ceiling, the institution which goes the law a few better will accomplish two things: decreasing the likelihood of liability for failure to accommodate and providing a better quality of education for all its students. Think of it this way, what institution markets itself as providing the minimum in higher education? Nevertheless, this is the message sent to deaf and hard of hearing students on many campuses. It can make an institution quite vulnerable.

Perhaps the most important route to demonstrating institutional commitment is hiring qualified staff who are able to ensure the effective delivery of services, including consultation with faculty when they have questions about integrating deaf and hard of hearing students into their classes. This chapter points to some key qualities necessary to ensure that your institution is relying on truly competent people to provide reasonable accommodations to deaf and hard of hearing students. Reasonableness too, can be

a hard concept to nail down. The question of what is reasonable is a common one in higher education and one with which the courts have wrestled for years in various contexts. For example, the court in United States v. Rodriguez-Morales, 929 F.2d 780, 785 (1st Cir. 1991), cert denied, 1 12 S.Ct. 868 (1992), noted that "reasonableness has a protean quality." Likewise, the court in Sierra Club v. Secretary of the Army, 820 F.2d 513, 517 (1st Cir. 1987), paraphrased Ralph Waldo Emerson observing that " 'reasonableness' is a mutable cloud which is always and never the same." No wonder service providers and institutions are unsure of themselves.

The best way to gauge reasonableness however, especially in the context of communication, is to gauge its effectiveness. In fact, the ADA requires that communications with persons with disabilities are to be "as effective as" those provided to nondisabled persons. The U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights has articulated that standard as encompassing three basic components of communication: "timeliness of delivery; accuracy of the translation; and provision in a manner and medium appropriate to the significance of the message and the abilities of the individual with a disability." (University of California, Los Angeles, Complaint No. 09-97-2002, OCR Region IX, April 7, 1997).

The importance of qualified staff who understand both deaf culture and hearing loss is critical. One of the biggest obstacles to access for students who are deaf and hard of hearing is the utter lack of knowledge about the effects of hearing loss on a student's ability to communicate and thus to effectively participate in classroom and other campus activities, including social activities. The impact of deafness in early childhood is not the same as learning English as a second language, although there are parallels. The staff member who mistakenly believes them to be the same may not ever be able to understand why computer-assisted real time (CART) reporting is not as effective as using an interpreter for many deaf and hard of hearing students.

Another critical piece of the institutional commitment puzzle is the physical campus environment. For example, while the regulations only require one text telephone per block of five public telephones, a school with no blocks of five telephones could easily find itself with no accessible telephones. While this is unlikely to pass muster with

OCR, it also tells students that they are neither welcome, nor able to place routine calls to basic campus resources, such as financial aid, the libraries, counseling and placement, and the bursar.

An institutional commitment to safety requirements for students with disabilities makes the campus safer for the entire campus community. Fire officials often point out that in a fire everyone has a disability; we have trouble seeing detail, we can't breathe easily, we can't hear what's happening or localize critical sounds. Thus, the regulations require that fire alarms and smoke detectors be both visual and auditory.

As has been pointed out in this chapter, access to the entire campus environment is crucial to demonstrating institutional commitment. As more institutions become familiar with the "basics", OCR complaints are beginning to call into question institutional failures to integrate deaf and hard of hearing students into the campus community. The institution that takes its obligations seriously and responds with a mind open to learning the nuances of access for deaf and hard of hearing students, will find its community enriched.

IN CLOSING

The institutional commitment of a college or university to its deaf and hard of hearing students canot be separated from its commitment to all its students, inclusive of those with disabilities. For deaf and hard of hearing students, institutional commitment is reflected in large part on the consistent availability and quality of needed services. Other reports in this series focus on these services, and implicitly on standards for quality.

Less tangible than services, the *institutional atmosphere* with regard to students with disabilities is also a component of institutional commitment. An institution may have exemplary academic support services, e.g., interpreting, but this has little to do with faculty and staff attitudes and interactions inside or outside the classroom with students who are deaf or hard of hearing. These are discussed in considerable detail within this report under the topic of "Faculty/staff development", both for "at large" faculty and staff, and for direct service providers who have specific continuing responsibilities for working with deaf and hard of hearing students.

By intent, this report focuses largely on the organizational and academic side of an institution's commitment to its deaf and hard of hearing students. Little is said about its commitment with respect to the quality of campus life for these students. The latter is considered in depth by a companion report in this series titled *Campus life and the development of postsecondary deaf and hard of hearing students: Principles and practices* (Porter et al., 1999).

Repeating what was said early in the present report, "Institutional commitment incorporates more than policies. It involves also the culture of the institution and the campus atmosphere. It is established from the top level of administration and extends throughout all programs and services."

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[3] Contributed by Jo Anne Simon, consultant/attorney specializing in laws and regulations pertaining to students with disabilities.

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