



December 2016

Director's Message



Dr. Carolyn Ball,
executive director

Recently, I was searching the local library for an audio book to listen to while traveling for the VRSII. My search resulted in the exciting find of an audio book that was published by National Public Radio (NPR). The audio book highlighted interviews that NPR reporters conducted with a variety of

people. Many of the people interviewed by NPR were not famous, but their stories were moving, and I was reminded that every person has an astonishing life.

As I listened to the NPR stories, I thought of the many incredible people the VRSII team met this past year during our Educator Empowerment Series (EES) course that we took "on the road," meaning we taught the EES course on college and university campuses across the country. The on-the-road experience provided an opportunity for the VRSII team to meet 74 outstanding sign language interpreter educators.

What the VRSII team learned in its travels was that each teacher, educator, mentor and administrator we encountered had a prodigious story to tell – much like the NPR stories I mentioned above.

The educators we met are amazingly talented and gifted. Many work alone at their colleges or universities and are isolated in their programs. Yet these sign language interpreting educators are doing astonishing work.

The goal of the educators participating in the EES course was to improve their teaching skills. The consequence of their desire to become even better teachers will become evident in better-prepared interpreter training students and interns who then become professional sign language interpreters – and eventually, future leaders and educators in the field. The ultimate beneficiary will be the Deaf community.

Until interpreter educators' exceptional stories become publicly known like the NPR stories, we will continue to have the honor of quietly learning their stories, of working with and getting to know these extraordinary people. As a team, we have the privilege of learning from a remarkable group of people.

Congratulations to the 2016-2017 SVRS Excellence and Innovation in Interpreter Education Award

The VRSII is pleased to announce that for the 2016-2017 academic school year, the SVRS® Excellence and Innovation in Interpreter Education Award (Award of Excellence) was presented to Augustana University (AU). AU is located in Sioux Falls, S.D.



Marlee Dyce

AU's IEP director Marlee Dyce is the founding faculty member of the IEP. Dyce says the university is lucky in that the state of South Dakota and the local Deaf community are incredibly supportive of the program. ASL students are introduced to

Deaf culture and work with Deaf mentors, lab instructors and people in the Deaf community from their first ASL class going forward. One of the program's Deaf lab mentors is the former superintendent of the South Dakota School for the Deaf, Larry Puthoff.

In addition to the collaboration students have on campus with the Deaf community, AU offers many social activities that bring the Deaf community together with students, such as ASL Open Houses, picnics, open-mic nights and dinner and movie nights. By the time students are juniors and seniors, many are playing on Deaf softball and volleyball teams, sharing Thanksgiving dinners with Deaf families and attending Deaf clubs.

Dyce says one of the measures of the program's success is that students no longer come only from South Dakota. They now come from all over the country for their interpreting education. "I tell students when they enroll in our IEP that they should be prepared to change their lifestyles. We want to ensure they know, before they arrive, that this is a commitment to a culture," says Dyce. "Students need to be involved to understand the community. They may be expected to participate in activities for which they won't get credit. Anyone can go anywhere and get a degree. To be an interpreter, you have to be able to change your life." Congratulations to this outstanding IEP. AU

will be featured in the VRSII's 2017 Innovator's Showcase, in Salt Lake City. To learn more about AU, visit www.augie.edu/sign-language-interpreting

2016 Educator Empower Series Course Concludes at the University of Arizona

This year, the VRSII conducted its Educator Empowerment Series (EES) class "Interpreter Education and the Assessment Cornerstone" on-the-road, presenting the course across the country on university and college campuses. The final class, held Oct. 14 through 16, was conducted on the campus of the University of Arizona (U of A).

U of A IEP Director Cindy Volk was one of the class attendees. We talked with Cindy to get her reaction to the course.



Cindy Volk, IEP director, University of Arizona

VRSII: Obviously, assessment is a vital part of interpreting training, but why do you personally feel it's critical in IEP curriculum?

Volk: We need to give students an idea of how they're doing in the program. As faculty, we need to have a way to measure how students are

doing and help them improve. If we don't know strengths and weaknesses, it's difficult to improve.

VRSII: Were there unique aspects of the training that surprised you?

Volk: Yes, there was content in the training that had never occurred to me and that I thought was very beneficial.

The trainers gave us a variety of resources we could use to help develop students' skills. One of those was getting students involved with the Toastmaster's organization. Interpreters need the ability to express themselves well and deliver what

they're interpreting in a public speaking voice, so Toastmasters makes sense. At U of A, we have our IEP students take communication classes, but sometimes, that isn't enough. I would love them to participate in an organization like Toastmasters.

The most beneficial part of the training for me was the group work. I had only two other people in my group. As a small group we were able to consider and develop very specific ideas related to assessment. It was phenomenal! We created a process to screen interpreting students' English skills. This is something with which many educators struggle. We identified nine screening categories that apply specifically to interpreting. Many English screening exams already exist, but most don't apply to criteria specific to interpreting – categories like: main idea, retelling, antonyms, synonyms, explicit and implicit meaning. The group created sample questions for each category and wrote them at a twelfth-grade reading level. We created an entire examination with about 60 questions. This is something that's been missing in our program, so I can't wait to implement this in the screening process. I can incorporate it in the program right away. To my knowledge, it's something no one else has.

VRSII: What else did you enjoy about the training?

Volk: I appreciate that each group could share its work on a Wiki page to which we all have access. There were many original thoughts that hadn't occurred to me before. I also felt that the group bonded very well. At the beginning of the training, the VRSII ensured that everyone had a chance to introduce themselves and get to know each other a little better. And it was nice that this year, the VRSII took the training to the various campuses so educators who typically couldn't attend could be involved.

VRSII: Cindy, thank you so much for your time. We're so glad you enjoyed the training. Thank you for hosting us on your beautiful campus.



Participants of the final 2016 Educator Empowerment Series class on the U of A campus.

Personnel Changes at the VRSII

Ann Pattenaude Assumes New Role

For the past six years, Ann Pattenaude has been an integral member of the VRSII team, serving as an



Ann Pattenaude

internship coordinator, particularly for the School-to-Work Program. Now, as a full-time staff member, Pattenaude's responsibilities will expand. She will work on new programs being developed at the VRSII, such as the Pathways and COMPASS programs.

A member of the first School-to-Work Program cohort, Pattenaude says she never imagined she would work at an organization like the VRSII, but she has loved being part of the growth. "There are so many things to love about the VRSII. It's a very positive environment here. Team meetings are extremely open. There are no obstacles – the sky is the limit when it comes to possibilities and how we can make improvements. We are always looking ahead at what the interpreting community needs and how we can support that," she says.



First STW cohort, 2010. Pattenaude is located back row, second from right.

Pattenaude says it has been wonderful to see the ideas that have grown to fruition since she began working with the VRSII six years ago. "Our ability to implement Situation-Based Learning and mock interpreting practice is world-class. The scope of these concepts that we have been able to implement in the School-to-Work program has never happened before. It has been cool to look back at 2010, when the ideas were beginning to form, through today and see what they have become. Now people come here and benefit from these concepts in application and practice."

The most rewarding part of her job according to Pattenaude has been seeing the impact of hands-on interpreting opportunities she has been able to offer new interpreting graduates through the VRSII. "Knowing I've provided those opportunities so that so many interpreters can go back to their communities better prepared is satisfying. Her

advice to new interpreters? "Do any pro-bono work you can with the support of a certified team or mentor. Hands up practice and having a supportive team is the key to your growth."

Welcome, Christine Multra-Kraft

Have a conversation with new VRSII staff member, Christine Multra-Kraft, and you will see why she is now a valued member of the VRSII teaching and mentoring staff. Multra-Kraft's energy and enthusiasm for her new role at the VRSII are contagious. Before coming to the VRSII, Multra-Kraft worked for Sorenson Communications in the professional development department as a language mentor and later as the manager of that program. Then for two years, she managed Sorenson-hosted workshops. Last spring, Multra-Kraft supported the VRSII team during development of the new Pathways Internship Program. She was invited to join the VRSII staff in July.

Multra-Kraft says, "The VRSII gives a lot back to the community. I'm inspired how the VRSII makes opportunities happen for people that may not otherwise have access to top-notch training." She says the best feature of her current role as well as her previous position has been connecting with people and seeing the growth of the person she's working with as well as the growth she experiences. "That's the essence of teaching and mentoring," she says. Multra-Kraft has been a mentor for more than 10 years and since 1993, has taught ASL and interpreting. She says, "I think teaching is one of the coolest things a person can do. Through the VRSII, I don't just teach in my immediate community, but I work with people all over the U.S. and Canada. I'm fascinated with the ways we're all different, and yet can connect through our shared experiences. I'm forming life-long relationships and connections through teaching and mentoring. When I later run into people with whom I have worked, I love seeing how they've grown and are supporting others' growth."

Helping new interpreters get on the right path is what Multra-Kraft finds inspiring. "I love seeing

interpreters become more courageous and jump into 'deep water' with interpreting," she says. A CDI herself, she says she can relate to fears interpreters feel at the beginning of their careers



Christine Multra-Kraft

or taking on challenging jobs. When mentoring or teaching, she says she and her students will talk about interpreting and language, but, she says, "You don't know what you don't know, so we discover things together." Multra-Kraft says when a student begins interpreting, there are often gaps which keep the student from being ready. He or she may feel lost. A mentor is able to provide support in specific areas and grow the student's confidence.

Multra-Kraft says, "As individuals, we can always improve what we do. When someone wants to improve their interpreting, there are ways to analyze the process. Through understanding and practice, the separate parts of interpreting can be improved so the overall product is more effective. There's never an absolutely perfect way to do something, but we can always find ways to make it better. The processes of analysis and improvement are important. The best interpreters know how to continuously analyze what they're doing. When I'm mentoring, my goal is to stimulate this ability with those I work with and not have them rely on me to tell them what's wrong. Like the old proverb says, 'Give a man a fish and he eats for one day. Teach a man to fish and he eats for a lifetime.'"

Multra-Kraft says the secret to successful teaching and mentoring lies in finding commonalities with whom you're working. She relates a story that occurred when she was part of the Shared Reading Project when she mentored hearing parents with Deaf children by supporting them in learning how

to sign stories to their children. Multra-Kraft had a difficult time connecting with the mother of a Native American boy until one day when it became necessary for Multra-Kraft to take one of her children with her when she visited with the mother. When the boy's mother realized that Multra-Kraft was also a mother, a bond was formed and their mentoring and teaching relationship became much more productive. "After that experience, I learned to look for ways to connect, and I still do that with my work with the VRSII today."

Multra-Kraft is currently working on her dissertation for a Ph.D. in applied linguistics from Ball State University. She is a mother of four children and, during her free time, enjoys shopping, cooking, camping and traveling.

School-to-Work Program A Look Back and Ahead

During 2017, the VRSII will gather graduates of the past six School-to-Work Program (STW) cohorts to research program outcomes and incorporate the findings into future curriculum. While this research is being conducted, applications for the program will not be accepted.



Dr. Carolyn Ball, VRSII executive director, says, "The STW Program has become well-known and popular. We want to take a moment to research the program to learn how we can make it even more effective in bridging the gap between IEP graduation and readiness for working as a professional interpreter."



STW Program 2013 cohort

To date, 122 students have graduated from the STW Program. Many of these graduates have gone on to work in schools for the Deaf; in the K through 12 school system or post-secondary settings;



STW Program 2015 cohort

and in the interpreting community as freelancers or for VRS companies. Two interns joined the VRSII as staff and two are now in Ph.D. programs. Ball says,



STW interns share a laugh at 2012 graduation.

"We are so proud of the graduates of the STW Program. They continue to impress us year after year with their accomplishments and drive. It is gratifying to see the relationships they have built and the networks they have maintained and grown in the interpreting community across the nation. This is an outcome we never could have anticipated. We are excited to learn how we can make the program even more effective for future cohorts."

**To learn more about the
VRSII, visit us at
www.vrsii.com**