



June 2014 Issue



Director's Message

The VRSII is thrilled to begin the eighth session of the School-to-Work (STW) Program. This STW session began on June 5, 2014. Twelve recent graduates from Interpreter Education Programs (IEPs) across the country have arrived here in Salt Lake City to participate in the STW Program for the next 12 weeks. When this group

graduates in August 2014, the VRSII will have more than 100 interns that have completed the STW Program since it began in 2010. This graduation number will continue to increase as the VRSII fulfills its mission to engage interpreting graduates in individualized and authentic experiences that promote transition to professional practice as interpreters.

The goal of the VRSII is that, upon completion of the STW Program, interns will be able to:

1. Demonstrate ethical and competent interpreting practices
2. Assess the essential aspects of their interpreting work
3. Use American Sign Language (ASL) and English with native-like proficiency
4. Demonstrate social and cultural competence
5. Demonstrate the skills necessary to complete professional interpreting assessments
6. Develop short- and long-term professional development plans
7. Contribute within the interpreting profession and associated communities

The VRSII is delighted to have this mission and will continue to provide STW immersion experiences for

recent graduates of IEPs. We encourage those who are preparing to graduate from an IEP to plan to apply for the next session of STW, which will be held in June 2015.

Welcome New School-to-Work Program Interns!

The eighth cohort of School-to-Work Program (STW) interns was chosen during April 2014 for the June 2014 program. Only 12, top-level students are chosen for each cohort. For the 2014 summer cohort, those students are:

Elizabeth Curtis	University of North Carolina Greensboro
Parker Dorrity	Austin Community College
Ana Galvez	California State University Northridge
Dionne Hart	Gallaudet University
Katie Langford	Douglas College
Kristy Mathisen	Utah Valley University
Klaryne Quirarte	Salt Lake Community College
Rebekah Spring	University of North Carolina Greensboro
Juliana Vadala	Community College of Baltimore
Jennifer Vega	University of North Carolina Greensboro
Kelly Watchel	Portland Community College
Cheryl Witters	Western Oregon University

IEP graduates chosen for the STW program must pass a rigorous process of written and signed application and interviews as well as meet certain interpreter industry

criteria. Congratulations to the summer class of 2014 and the IEPs that helped them qualify to be accepted to the program!



Summer 2014 STW Interns

A New Perspective: Situational Based Learning

The following article is submitted by faculty member Annette Miner.



Annette Miner

Working Toward Our Mission with Scenario-Based Learning

By Annette Miner

The mission of the VRS Interpreting Institute (VRSII) is to *provide innovative educational experiences that empower interpreter educators and interpreters to achieve professional excellence.* In our flagship School-to-Work (STW) program, we strive to do just that. The recent interpreting program graduates who attended this 13-weeks-long, residential program came from a variety of

colleges and universities across the United States and Canada, and have had a wide variety of educational experiences and training. Because of this, our mission becomes especially important. We must provide learning experiences that are *innovative* and different from anything the graduates may have had in their college or university settings.

When developing our STW curriculum, we knew we had to create something different than additional ASL classes and interpreting and ethics classes. But what? We needed to engage interpreting program graduates in individualized, authentic experiences that would promote their transition to professional practice interpreters. ASL interpreting is one of many fields that presents a difficult transition from training to the professional work environment. To smooth this transition, educators in a variety of fields are turning to Scenario-Based Learning as a solution.

What is Scenario-Based Learning?

SBL is an educational approach based on situated learning theory. With SBL, “students have opportunities to engage with realistic sets of circumstances, experience true-to-life tasks, accept authentic challenges and assume work-oriented roles — all mediated through the language and communication styles found in real-life settings” (Errington, 2011). Students are presented with life scenarios in which they must suspend some disbelief and become involved in the scenario that is presented. They must face a problem, work with others to resolve it and use the language and terminology from the field for that environment. This exercise helps students develop their professional identities.

Applying the SBL approach to the STW curriculum took time, commitment, brainstorming and, most of all, teamwork. We reviewed the goals of the program to ensure our implementation of the SBL approach would help students reach those goals.

Bridging the Gap with Scenario-Based Learning

The STW program has 11 weeks of instruction. Each week begins with an introduction to a specific setting that students will potentially face upon entry into the professional field: K-12 education, deaf community, corporate field, post-secondary education, non-profit and volunteer interpreting, the Video Relay Service (VRS) environment, social services and conferences. Students are also introduced to medical and legal settings. Most

of the experiences that students encounter each week revolve around a setting programmed for that week. For example, during one week, ethical decision-making lessons are structured around potential work scenarios that would require ethical decision-making skills. Language development and application to interpreting work occurs within the context of scenarios that could arise based on the setting of the week.

Students prepare for the upcoming week by reflecting, and sharing what they know, about the setting for that week. They draw on personal experiences or any interpreting experience they have had in the past in that setting. On Monday, the week begins by presenting the theme and setting of that week and by providing details specific to that setting. For example, on the first day of conference week, students are given the specific scenario for conference week. Here is an example scenario: The student applied to interpret at a conference and has been selected to be on the interpreting team. Students then discuss the types of places at which they might interpret, brainstorm who the people involved may be, consider roles of the various individuals they may encounter and determine goals typical of individuals in the conference setting. Finally, they predict interpreting issues they may face.

Next, students develop decision-making processes and ethical foundations for the week's setting. For example, during post-secondary week, the week's scenario is the students work at a local college for the Disability Resource Center that provides interpreting services for deaf students and faculty on campus. Students learn about and apply decision-making within the context of specific scenarios: interpreting for a college class, interpreting for a student presentation or interpreting for a teacher/student meeting. Details are provided for each scenario, and students discuss demands they may face and controls they can employ.

After grappling with decision-making responses within the given scenarios, language and interpreting skills are developed within the context of the overarching scenario. For example, during conference week, students practice giving formal presentations in an auditorium in both English and ASL, while other students interpret their presentations. Through this experience, students are able to see the setting from various perspectives; determine how to use language in formal register; realize the value of preparation for interpreting work; and

discuss with peers how to work together in an interpreting team.

Students continue language development relevant to the setting of the week and apply interpreting skills through mock interpreting opportunities. For example, during K-12 week, deaf students from the local deaf school may visit the VRSII and give presentations that the students interpret. During conference week, students interpret for the presenters at an actual conference. During community week, deaf and hearing guests from the community visit onsite to simulate the various interactive appointments commonly encountered during community interpreting.

Other skills-development and practice activities may include interpreting recorded media within the context of the setting for the week. For example, during VRS week, students work with recorded simulations of VRS calls. Students also learn discourse analysis methods and develop self-assessment skills, all within the context of the setting and scenarios for a particular week.

In all SBL activities, students meet challenges that they are likely to face in the particular setting in which those activities are contextualized. Addressing the challenges allows them to integrate the theory they learned in their interpreting program with professional practice. They must analyze situations, think critically, make decisions and solve problems. They can take risks because the situations are "near-life" instead of "real-life" (Errington, 2009).

The effort of the entire team was necessary to make the SBL approach possible. When developing the curriculum, new roles for instructors had to be explored. During learning activities, new levels of instructor involvement had to be negotiated. Student response to SBL has been positive. Based on student evaluations completed at the end of the most recent STW program, 92 percent, or 11 out of 12 students, were in strong agreement that the scenario-based approach to ethical foundations, language skills and interpreting practice was effective and engaging.

The SBL approach has provided us with an effective framework to support our mission of providing innovative and authentic experiences to promote STW students' transition to professional practice as interpreters. The opportunity to critically analyze scenarios, work with others to solve the problems of

interpreting and engage in the language of the interpreting field, all within the context of near-world experiences, provides the bridge for students to enter the world of interpreting. They are prepared for successful decision-making, demonstrate improved interpreting skills and are ready to transition into the interpreting profession with newly found self-confidence.

References

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VRSII Presentation at Street Leverage

VRSII Executive Director, Carolyn Ball, gave two presentations at the annual Street Leverage Live conference (<http://www.streetleverage.com/>), held on Saturday, May 3, in Austin, Texas. Street Leverage is an acclaimed on-line resource site for ASL interpreters. According to Street Leverage, the conference "endeavors to provide a platform where ideas are exchanged, connections are formed and proactive thinking is encouraged in order to refocus attendees on the impact of their work." The conference ran May 1 through 4.

Ball's first presentation, titled "Does the Past Hold the Answer to the Future of Sign Language Interpreting?" examined how the profession of sign language interpreting might be very different if 50 years of recommendations had not gone ignored.

Ball's second presentation, "Hindsight Isn't 20/20: Historical Perspectives and Sign Language Interpreting," guided participants in exploring current interpreting competencies, training domains, testing standards and

then set the stage for reflection and comparison to many recommendations made in the field since 1964.

Ball says, "It was an amazing opportunity to be among colleagues who were eager to learn and discuss the current issues and trends that are occurring in our field today. That the people in attendance were excited to learn added so much to the discussions of each of the workshops that I presented. The participants were open and eager to understand how we can learn from the past to implement changes in our current teaching and testing by analyzing our past. It was an outstanding experience!"

**Second Session of
VRSII/UNF Master's
Program Begins**



VRS Interpreting Institute

Empowering Interpreters and Educators®

For the first time in interpreter education history, academia and industry have collaborated to build an exciting opportunity offering interpreters a chance to earn a master's degree that will prepare them to teach and lead program growth in colleges and universities. The VRS Interpreting Institute (VRSII) and University of North Florida (UNF) are combining their expertise, energy, and resources to deliver a leading edge Master of Science degree in ASL/English Interpreting, Concentration: Interpreting Pedagogy.

The program was established 2012, and the first cohort of 15 students graduated in December 2013. The second cohort of the joint master's degree program began May 12, 2014, and will conclude December of 2015.

Program curriculum includes specialty coursework in Adult Learning, Curriculum Development, Distance Learning, Teaching Translation, Teaching the Interpreting Process, Deaf Community and Interpreter Alliance, Applied Research, Leadership, and Field Experience. The program consists of 33 credit hours of courses delivered

online and within two summer sessions (10 to 12 days each) in Salt Lake City at the VRSII.

Known for its reputable faculty and innovative bachelor's and master's degree programs in ASL/English Interpreting, UNF is a forerunner in distance learning for interpreter education. The VRSII's world-class training facility offers on-going education for Interpreting Education Program (IEP) graduates and IEP educators. Prospective students must be RID-certified interpreters (except deaf interpreters) and teaching experience is preferred.

Applications are now being accepted for summer 2015 admission. Website: Master of Science Degree: Interpreting

Pedagogy <http://www.unf.edu/coehs/edie/vrsii/>. The UNF/VRSII master's program in ASL/English interpreting with a concentration in interpreting pedagogy is the only program of its kind offered in the United States.

VRSII Faculty Profile: Samond Bishara

Samond Bishara has been a faculty member at the VRSII since 2010. Prior to joining the VRSII, Bishara worked as a



Samond Bishara

trainer for Sorenson Communications in California. He later joined the I.T. department at Sorenson headquarters.

Now, the VRSII benefits from his experience as an educator as well as his technical experience. Bishara works as a mentor in the VRSII's School-to-Work (STW) Program as well as teaches ASL to Sorenson Communications employees.

He also trains potential Sorenson interpreters in Sorenson's Short-Term Advanced Training (STAT) program, an online program developed to assist interpreters in honing their skills to the level required to be Sorenson interpreters. Bishara also teaches ASL as an adjunct professor at Brigham Young University, a major private Utah university. Bishara recently completed a master's degree in Interpreting Education through the master's program partnership between the VRSII and the University of North Florida (UNF).

Bishara says he enjoys the educational setting the VRSII creates, as it goes beyond the traditional educational format by offering many online classes. "The STAT program is a good example of a strong online class," says Bishara. "We didn't want to require people to have to come for weeks to the VRSII campus for class because they have their lives to live and traditional education schedules can be too much of a disruption."

Another program Bishara appreciates is the hybrid master's program created by the VRSII and UNF. That program assisted him in obtaining his master's degree. "I probably wouldn't have been able to complete my master's degree as soon without this program," says Bishara. "I learned so much about interpreting education, including philosophies, theories and different teaching approaches. I have been able to apply what I learned to my teaching here at the VRSII and at Brigham Young University. The learning I obtained from the master's program is very applicable to my daily life and career."

Although Bishara enjoyed the flexibility the online program, he says the three weeks spent on campus during the master's program was invaluable as it provided a forum for all the students to meet face-to-face and exchange ideas and information. "Being together as a group was much different than learning online. The group environment helped us understand concepts more quickly," says Bishara.

When he's not busy teaching and mentoring, Bishara enjoys taking road trips with his family and doing home renovations. His latest project is remodeling the layout of his house, which he admits, has his wife a little nervous.

Bishara comes from a global family. Born in Korea, he was adopted at age four by a deaf California couple – the first deaf California couple to adopt a baby outside of the U.S. He was raised in Simi Valley. Bishara's mother is Mexican and his father is Lebanese. Bishara's wife, who also mentors at the VRSII, was born in Malaysia. The Bisharas have two children who are both hearing.