San Antonio College IEP Featured in Innovator Showcase

Winner of the SVRS® Excellence and Innovation in Interpreter Education Award

May 17 through 22, 40 Interpreter Education Program (IEP) educators from around the country attended the Innovator's Showcase, hosted at San Antonio College (SAC). SAC is the most recent winner of the SVRS® Excellence and Innovation in Interpreter Education Award, which includes being featured in the Innovator's Showcase. The showcase provides a forum for the award winner to share best practices with other college and university IEP faculty. The winner also helps attendees develop materials for implementation into their own IEPs.

The SVRS award includes an $8,000 grant to be reinvested into the winning IEP as well as $2,000 funding for materials. This year, rather than bringing the winning IEP and other educators to the VRSII for the Innovator Showcase, participants visited SAC's IEP facilities, in San Antonio, to offer participants the chance to interact with all of the members of SAC's faculty as well as take advantage of its outstanding facilities and the opportunity to network and exchange ideas.

Funds from the SVRS award, as well as funds from an additional Texas grant acquired by SAC, were used to bring participants to the workshop and finance their training. Holly Nelson, VRSII faculty member and program coordinator says the VRSII hoped the funds would be used this way. "It's

wonderful that the money from the award is being used to bring educators here to learn, network and share information. As participants incorporate the newly-developed materials they create this week into their own curriculum, the award benefits not only one IEP, but many across the country," she says.

The San Antonio College IEP is located on the lower level of the Nail Technical Center. The IEP fills nearly one full floor of the building.

Showcase Focus
In addition to group work to develop materials for use in IEPs, four presentations were given over the course of the showcase. Annette Miner, VRSII faculty member, lectured about situated learning, a concept developed by Jean Lave and Etienne

Wenger.

Annette Miner presents to participants about situated learning.

Lave studied adult Americans and noted that often, though very good at doing fractional and other mathematical exercises in real-world environments such as the market or when determining dietary information, these adults were unable to do the same equations on paper, in a classroom. This led Lave to believe that real-world contexts provide the supports for authentic learning. Miner talked about the components of situated learning which include:

1. Communities of practice: The environment in which work is done. For interpreters, this is anywhere interpreting happens. This community cannot be created – it must be authentic. The novice interpreter is only on the periphery of this community until they have worked as an interpreter with deaf people for years and naturally become established as part of the community.

2. Cognitive apprenticeships: The student must have a knowledgeable and skilled person available to them who is already part of the environment who can model and coach the interpreting activity for the student.

3. Authentic activity: Interpreting for a "real" deaf person. The experience of interpreting for deaf people must happen within real-world contexts for an interpreter to continue on their path toward becoming an expert.

Miner said that currently, no instruction is available that explains how the concept of situated learning should be applied to sign language interpreting. While the founders of the concept were adamant that students strictly adhere to the concept's elements, Miner thinks that for teaching sign language interpreting, more flexibility is needed. She suggested a continuum with four stages be created. One end of the continuum would be completely authentic (the student is immersed in the Deaf community) and the other end would consist of "near real world" experience. The "near-real-world" end of the continuum would apply to teaching interpreting skills in a classroom environment. This would be an appropriate place for interpreting students who were still learning interpreting skills. The student's teacher would provide coaching and modeling within the context of the classroom.

During the next stage, the students could participate in role play interpreting activities.

The third stage would expose the student to the Deaf community and/or interpreting practice, although not provide the opportunity for the student to practice interpreting.

Finally, at stage four, the student would be independent with full access to the Deaf community and would interpret for deaf people in "real" situations. Miner says if instructors can facilitate students' access to experiences at the fourth stage earlier in their programs, they may be

better prepared for the world of work upon graduation. Miner reminded educators that sometimes, students may need to return to a previous stage rather than moving forward. She stressed the importance of educators being flexible and fluid in providing for students' needs. Miner encouraged educators to seek out quality community partnerships with organizations to provide authentic working experiences for students. Some examples were museums, schools, hospitals, the Deaf community, colleges and schools. She stressed creating a variety of experiences.

Tom Cox, SAC faculty member, shared techniques for objective scoring and using technology to record student signing in teaching labs. Cox encouraged smaller programs that don't have access to recording equipment and facilities to check into Macintosh® technology from Apple®, stating that a Mac® makes it extremely easy to film, edit and upload material. He also suggested

Tom Cox, SAC faculty member

investigating technology offered by GoReact.com®, a company that offers video software that students can use to film themselves and share the recordings with faculty. Cox also gave a presentation about objective scoring and shared a technique SAC uses. Cox gives students a script or story to interpret. Within this script or story he notes, in his copy, key words or phrases that are most important to communicate during interpreting. As he watches

the students interpreting the written piece, he looks for those key messages to ensure that the students are clearly communicating the most important information. Students are scored on the number of key points they interpret correctly. This method trains students to focus on the most important information in a conversation, ensuring the deaf person receives that information as well as provides an objective scoring tool for an educator, regardless of the student's signing style. The example Cox used during the workshop was a script about shopping for the best car insurance plan.

Holly Nelson talked about preparing students for the National Interpreter

Holly Nelson, VRSII faculty member

Certification (NIC) test. Much of the test has changed since 2013, and many educators are not familiar with the changes. Nelson encouraged educators to take interpreting tests so they have a better framework for what students will be tasked with during the certification process. Options for testing exist from the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, state certification boards, and Boy's Town (the organization that oversees the Educational Interpreter Performance Assessment), to name a few. Several educators said they were planning to take the National Interpreter Certification test upon their return home from San Antonio.

Finally, Lauri Metcalf, department chair of SAC's IEP, spoke about the historical development of the Board of Evaluation of Interpreters (BEI) certification test and its components and helped educators understand how to best prepare their students to

take the test, including offering mock testing situations. Metcalf shared information about how

Lauri Metcalf, department chairperson, SAC

scoring is performed through the BEI. This test, which was developed in Texas, is now being used as the interpreter testing standard in Michigan, Illinois and Missouri.

Showcase participants spent the week working in groups to create video scripts and training videos to meet different levels of student expertise and prepare for certification testing. Categories for practice scripts included:

1. Fingerspelling and number activities
2. Directional/verbs sentence activities
3. Role shift sentence activities
4. Listing sentence activities
5. Use of Space
6. Sentence activities
7. English idioms
8. Interactive
9. ASL to English

The following is an example of one group's plans for its project. This group's category was "ASL to English."

The group felt that videos of realistic situations were needed for students to practice interpreting. They decided to create a series of videos from beginning level through two additional levels of

difficulty. Students would choose the scripts they were interested in interpreting and the appropriate level of difficulty. The group decided to make varying lengths of videos – from five to 10 minutes, with reference material included between the practice videos. The videos would include deaf and hearing people signing. The deaf people would be the sign models. The group decided one camera would be placed facing the person signing and another camera would be placed behind or to the side of the other person in the video. The goal was to make the models realistic and modern. The group decided to create five possible scenarios that would appeal to college students who were

practicing interpreting. An example of the first three of those scenarios were: renting an apartment; buying a car; and meeting with a college counselor about grades.

At the end of the week, each group's videos were uploaded to a shared site that participants can use indefinitely for student training.

Workshop participant, Buddy Bauer from the Southwest Collegiate Institute for the Deaf (Howard College), said he found the exchange of information and updating of accepted mindsets helpful. "The speakers at the workshop have all brought something different to the table," he says. "I found the continuum principle in the Situated Learning presentation interesting as well as Tom Cox's points about objective rating. The information about the changes to the NIC test is new to me, so

that was very helpful." Bauer said he was looking forward to gathering peer feedback at the workshop and felt that goal had been achieved.

Melissa Cochran, from Amarillo College, said the conference helped her realize how she can apply concepts she learned at the workshop to the resources currently available at her college. "I will be working with two technical people in the future and, as I've listened to the presentations about technology and students videotaping their work, I've wondered how I can apply this to our program. We will have to take baby steps, but I know these techniques can be applied to our IEP," she says.

Nelson, who oversees the SVRS® Excellence and Innovation in Interpreter Education Award for the VRSII, says the VRSII was happy to accommodate SAC by helping to bring educators to its facility to see the excellent work SAC faculty is doing. "What

better way to see best practices in action than to bring people here?" she says. "I think we can always learn from SAC administration and best practices in technology. They are always doing great things that keep us on our toes. I admire Lauri Metcalf very much for always finding the right people and for empowering them to maximize their talents." In an effort to provide additional resources to educators, Metcalf contacted Dawn Sign Press prior to the workshop and requested a donation to support the event. Dawn Sign Press generously donated eight text books to each educator from author Carol Patrie's *Effective Interpreter* series – a donation valued at more than $28,000! Nelson says this is another example of how Metcalf, San Antonio College and Dawn Sign Press are going above and beyond to support the innovative work of interpreter educators.

Workshop participants pose with books and thank Dawn Sign Press. Each participant's gift was worth more than $700.

Tom Cox distributes books donated from Dawn Sign Press.

Applications for the 2015 SVRS Excellence and Innovation in Interpreter Education Award are being accepted through July 31, 2015. Apply now

to have your IEP considered for this award. The 2015 award winner could be you!

To learn more about the award and apply, visit
http://www.vrsii.com/programs/iep