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Director's Message

Mentoring: The Key to Success

By: Dr. Carolyn Ball

The VRS Interpreting Institute's (VRSII) School-to-Work Program (STW) helps bridge the gap for students who have recently

graduated from an Interpreter Education Program (IEP) by providing a strong mentoring opportunity. According to the Standard Practice Paper from the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID), "The interpreting profession as a whole benefits from mentoring relationships by having more well rounded professionals in the field and opportunities for collaboration between interpreters and Deaf community members." (RID 2007)¹

STW interns have the opportunity to work with mentors for 13 weeks. This is unique because mentoring can be a strategy for helping students to feel more comfortable in the field of interpreting. Mentoring is also a vital part of bridging the gap for novice interpreters to succeed in obtaining national certification. Additionally, mentoring can help IEP graduates learn to function with confidence in their role as an interpreter. As RID states, "Mentoring allows an interpreter to target specific areas for improvement and to set goals in consultation with a mentor." (RID 2007)

One benefit of the STW Program is interns do not have to find their own mentors or pay for services. Each intern in the program receives 20 hours of mentoring per week. On average, interns receive 260 hours of one-on-one mentoring during the program.

As Betsy Winston states, "As students continue to graduate from interpreting programs with gaps in their skills, and with the transition from program to profession sometimes difficult to make, mentoring has been touted as a way to close the gap, and to ease the transition." (Winston, 2006). (Winston, 2006)²

¹ RID Standard Practice Paper: Mentoring. 2007. Retrieved August 3, 2011 from <http://www.rid.org/interpreting/Standard%20Practice%20Papers/index.cfm>

²Winston, E. (2006). Effective Practices in Mentoring: Closing the Gap and Easing the Transition. In E. Maroney (Ed.), *Proceedings of the 16th National Convention Conference of Interpreter Trainers: A new chapter in interpreter education: Accreditation, research, & technology*, (pp. 183-191). San Diego, CA: Conference of Interpreter Trainers.

The VRSII believes that STW graduates will be successful in the transition from IEPs to career through the assistance of a mentor. I believe that we are making a difference in the lives of each person here through the mentoring process implemented at the VRSII.

VRSII Announces New Master's Program at RID Conference

The VRSII has formed a partnership with the University of North Florida to offer a Master of Science degree in ASL/English Interpreting with a concentration in Interpreter Education. The announcement was made in July at the Registry for Interpreters for the Deaf 2011 conference in Atlanta, Ga. Hundreds of guests who visited the VRSII booth expressed excitement and interest in participating in the program. More information will become available in the coming months on the VRSII's website at www.vrsii.com/training.

STW Interns Go to the Races

During the 2011 summer session of the STW program, interns had the opportunity to interpret for deaf racecar driver, David Byrnes of B&T Motor Team at the Rocky Mountain Raceway, in Salt Lake City. STW interns interpreted in the crew pit for Byrnes and pit boss Trenton Marsh, who also works as a STW mentor, as well as for deaf fans in the stands. Marsh says before the interns began interpreting for the team, very few of the other racecar teams would talk to them because of the language barrier. Once the interns arrived, the entire situation changed, both in the pits and in the stands.

"Once the other pit crews and drivers were able to communicate with us, they would come over and exchange advice or congratulate David," says Marsh. "I was amazed at the level of support in the stands. I think the interpreters drew the deaf community out. It was much more interesting for them because they knew what the announcer was saying. For example, in one race we won, David took a victory lap. Instead of going forward around the track, David went to the finish line, drove backwards and did a 180 degree turn while waving to the fans, then drove away. The announcer said 'Wow! I just got chills. I haven't seen anyone do a victory lap like that since the '70s. It's called a Polish victory lap.' If the interpreters hadn't been there, the deaf fans would not have understood what happened."

Ann Pattenaude, who schedules the STW interns, said she saw the interns' confidence grow through the unique experience. Marsh says the experience helped the interpreting interns understand that they need to adapt to each interpreting environment, Marsh tells the

following story: "During the first week's race there was a problem with the car. I was lying on the ground under the car, quickly working on the engine trying to get it going. Before I knew what was happening, there was an intern down on the ground interpreting to me. She was getting really dirty, but she just kept going. I think the raceway experience opened our interns' eyes to the very broad ways that interpreting can work in the deaf world. Interpreting doesn't only take place in business or academic settings."

Marsh says the STW program is important because it empowers new IEP graduates to gain the skills that school can't provide – skills that are normally learned on the job, which can be frustrating for the person for whom they are interpreting. "In the STW program, interns grow through one-on-one mentoring assistance and role playing situations. B&T Motor Team is very appreciative to the VRSII. With them, we've taken a major step into the future of our racing."



Left to right: Trenton Marsh, Brynn Elliott, STW intern; Sandra McClure, STW intern; David Byrnes, Jen Byrnes

School-to-Work Program Receives Support at the RID Conference

The VRSII's STW Program received high praise from RID conference attendees who visited the VRSII conference booth. The STW Program readies Interpreting Education Program (IEP) graduates to take the National Interpreter Certification (NIC) Interview and Performance test as well as prepares them for a career in professional ASL interpreting. The next STW session will begin on Jan. 4, 2012.

"Many educators who visited the booth said they wished the program had been available to them when they were IEP graduates," says Samond Bishara, VRSII faculty member. More than 240 STW packets were distributed to interested interpreters and educators. To learn more about the STW Program, visit www.vrsii.com/training or send an email to Dr. Carolyn Ball at vrsii@sorenson.com.

Class Announcements

VRS Curriculum Infusion Course

Curriculum Infusion will be offered Oct. 14 through 16, 2011. This course gives class participants effective techniques to incorporate contemporary, VRS interpreter training methods into traditional IEP curriculum. Class participants will receive course curriculum on a DVD and thumb drive. They will also have the opportunity to network and share ideas to further develop teaching concepts and techniques for effectively combining VRS and traditional IEP content. There is no cost to participate. Instructors: Dr. Lisa Godfrey and Holly Nelson. To learn more, visit www.vrsii.com/training or send an email to Dr. Carolyn Ball at cball@sorenson.com.

Teaching in Collaboration

Scheduled for Dec. 2 through 4, 2011, "Teaching in Collaboration" will bring American Sign Language instructors and interpreter educators together for an engaging experience. Participants will define collaborative teaching relationships and learn strategies for working together to create a better journey into the ASL/English Interpreting field for students. There is no cost to participate. Instructor: Jimmy Beldon. To learn more, visit www.vrsii.com/training or send an email to Dr. Carolyn Ball at cball@sorenson.com.

VRSII Executive Director Chosen to Present at RID Conference

RID Conference

Carolyn Ball, Executive Director of the VRSII, was chosen to present at the 2011 RID conference. Her presentation focused on her passion – the history of American Sign Language interpreter educators. Ball has documented interpreter educators' stories and history because of the link they provide to the past. She has also collected copies of every CIT newsletter ever written because they document the development of ASL interpreting education in the U.S. "There's so much left to do," says Ball. The more you learn, the more you know what you don't know." Ball is driven to provide a historical account about ASL interpreting education to provide a roadmap for the future. "Because we don't have a historical account detailing what has been done, what worked and didn't work, we continue the same patterns that may or may not be working in our profession," says Ball. To drive home her point, Ball references the medical profession: "Doctors used to use leeches to 'cure' people. Because medical practices were documented throughout history, doctors today know that this practice didn't work. Similarly, it is important for us to have historical documentation so that we will not repeat ineffective practices of the past. We also need this history to honor the people who have shaped our profession. My hope is that esteemed educators will no longer pass away without us knowing what they knew. We need a clear vision of our history."