Mentoring in the Department of Access Services at the National Technical Institute for the Deaf

Gayle Macias

Follow this and additional works at: http://scholarworks.rit.edu/theses

Recommended Citation

This Master's Project is brought to you for free and open access by the Thesis/Dissertation Collections at RIT Scholar Works. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses by an authorized administrator of RIT Scholar Works. For more information, please contact ritscholarworks@rit.edu.
Mentoring
in the
Department of Access Services
at the
National Technical Institute for the Deaf

By
Gayle Macias

Research Project Proposal
Master of Science: Service Management
College of Applied Science and Technology
Rochester Institute of Technology
September, 2005
M.S. Service Management

Statement Granting or Denying Permission to Reproduce Thesis/Graduate Project

The Author of a thesis or project should complete one of the following statements and include this statement as the page following the title page.

Title of Thesis/project: Mentoring in the Department of Access Services at the National Technical Institute for the Deaf

I, Gayle Macias, grant permission to the Wallace Memorial Library of R.I.T., to reproduce the document titled above in whole or part. Any reproduction will not be for commercial use or profit.

OR

I, ____________________________, prefer to be contacted each time a request for reproduction is made. I can be reached at the following address:

________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________

Date __________ Signature _________________________________
M.S. Service Management

Presentation of Thesis/Project Findings

Name: Gayle Macias

Title of Research: Mentoring in the Department of Access Services at the National Technical Institute for the Deaf

Specific Recommendations: (use other side if necessary)

Thesis Committee: (1) Joan Johnson, Ph.D. (Chairperson)

(2) James W. Jacobs, Ph.D.

OR (3)

Faculty Advisor: Joan Johnson, Ph.D.

Number of Credits Approved: 4

Note: This form will not be signed by the Department Chairperson until all corrections, as suggested in the specific recommendations (above) are completed.

cc. Department Student Record File – Original
Table of Contents

Chapter One: Background.............................................................................................................. 5
  Introduction.................................................................................................................................. 5
  Background................................................................................................................................. 6
  Problem Statement.................................................................................................................... 10
  Purpose of Study....................................................................................................................... 10
  Significance............................................................................................................................... 11
  Major Questions Section........................................................................................................... 12
  Methodology............................................................................................................................. 12
  Literature Review...................................................................................................................... 13
  External Considerations............................................................................................................ 14
Chapter Two: Literature Review ................................................................................................. 15
Chapter Three: Methodology....................................................................................................... 20
Chapter Four: Findings and Discussion....................................................................................... 23
  Mentoring Café..................................................................................................................... 23
  Technology Interviews.......................................................................................................... 25
  Mentoring Interviews............................................................................................................ 30
  Discussion................................................................................................................................. 36
  Similarities............................................................................................................................... 36
  Differences............................................................................................................................... 37
  Trends................................................................................................................................... 38
  Issues..................................................................................................................................... 40
Chapter Five: Conclusions........................................................................................................... 42
  Questions................................................................................................................................... 43
  Recommendations..................................................................................................................... 44
  Further Investigation................................................................................................................ 48
    Short Term View (Years 1-2)............................................................................................... 48
    Intermediate Term View (Years 3-4).................................................................................... 50
    Long Term View (Year 5 and beyond)............................................................................... 52
  Benefit to NTID........................................................................................................................ 53
  External barriers to success....................................................................................................... 53
  Internal barriers to success........................................................................................................ 54
  Summary................................................................................................................................... 55
Definition of the terms:................................................................................................................. 57
Bibliography ................................................................................................................................. 58
Appendix A................................................................................................................................... 62
Chapter One: Background

Introduction

Interpreters simultaneously work between two languages and cultures facilitating communication among individuals who cannot directly communicate with one another. At the post secondary level, American Sign Language interpreters are charged with conveying all academic and extra-curricular information so that Deaf and hard of hearing people may participate in all facets of university life and successfully pursue individual academic and career goals.

Mentoring has been a vehicle sign language interpreters have widely used in order to continue to develop themselves as professionals. Traditionally, older and more experienced interpreters have taken younger, less experienced interpreters under their wings at the beginning of the latter interpreters’ careers. As the profession matured, interpreters recognized a need for continued growth and development. Highly skilled interpreters developed their mentoring skills and abilities. Mentors continued to interpret and remain current with the profession. Concurrently, they mentored interpreters seeking targeted professional development goals. “In the context of the interpreting profession, mentoring is a goal-oriented relationship between two interpreters…Mentoring is not a substitute for comprehensive interpreter education or for the internships and practicums associated with such formal training. Mentoring can augment the training received in academic settings…. Common to all successful mentorships is mutual commitment to professional growth.” (Mentoring).

1 This paper will use the word, “Deaf” to include people who are deaf and consider deafness a medical condition as well as people who are Deaf and identify themselves as members of a cultural and linguistic minority.
Background

American Sign Language was first recognized as a bona fide and complete language in the 1960’s. Linguist, William Stokoe published the first linguistic study of ASL in 1960 (Timelines). The Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID)—the national professional organization for American Sign Language Interpreters in the United States--was established in 1964 and incorporated in 1974 (ITP's: Two Sides of the Coin). RID established certification standards for qualified interpreters and wrote a code of ethics for Sign Language interpreters.

The first Sign Language interpreters were family members, friends and others who worked with Deaf people. They were not formally trained. Their qualifications were fluency in English and American Sign Language. Today, there continue to be interpreters who enter the field under similar circumstances. Many of these interpreters are children of Deaf adults who have functioned as interpreters for their parents throughout their lifetime.

In the early 1970’s, interpreter training programs were established and lasted six to eight weeks in duration. These programs focused primarily on scenarios interpreters were most likely to interpret (religious, telephone, courtroom, medical). The linguistic focus of these programs was on vocabulary building. There was little or no discussion of the mental process required to interpret (J. Everts, personal communication, January 31, 2006). These programs were not long enough for interpreters to develop a foundation of knowledge (technical and general), skills nor linguistic fluency to be able to interpret effectively. Clearly, the complexity of the task of sign language interpreting was not completely understood (Van Nostrand, 2003, p. 9). Interpreters recognized the need to continue to develop themselves as professionals. The mentorship experience has been a vehicle for sign language interpreters to continue their professional development.
Presently, sign language interpreter education typically continues for at least two years. Programs may or may not be degree granting. Those that grant degrees do so at the associate, bachelor, and master levels. Students who complete interpreting education programs exit these with varying levels of knowledge, skills, and linguistic fluency. In general, interpreting education focuses on the technical and linguistic aspects of the work. Technical aspects of the work include cognitive processing models, translation from frozen texts, consecutive interpretation and transliteration, and simultaneous interpretation and transliteration. Linguistic aspects of the work include acquisition or further development of an additional language (i.e. American Sign Language) as well as cultural information and perspectives on the Deaf experience. Interpreter education focuses primarily on the “what”. Those cognitive skills interpreters need to develop in order to interpret from one language to another language. Context—the when and where events occur—is mentioned in interpreter education programs (and within the field in general) as an assessment tool for the interpreter. For example, interpreting for a Deaf person in the context of business negotiations will differ from interpreting for the same Deaf person at a holiday gathering which will differ from interpreting for the same Deaf person in the emergency room at a hospital. The register—formality of the venue—is different for each event as is the impact of each event’s outcomes. Context is a technical aspect of the work. However,

“context also entails the situational circumstance associated with an event and how it happens…Thus, individuals must be able to bring their own situational context to an experience and co-shape their experiences accordingly. That means the company must have foresight to understand the heterogeneity of individual experiences and build an infrastructure that enables a variety of individualized experiences” (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004, p. 12).

There is a plethora of information written on mentoring in general. The Center for Coaching and Mentoring offers a variety of resources and tools for mentors and mentorship
relationships. More specifically, Northeastern University’s Interpreter Education Project for New England is a clearinghouse of information and resources for mentoring within the field of sign language interpretation. Contemporary interpreting literature describes skills and knowledge sets mentors should possess prior to learning how to be a mentor such as cultural, communication, linguistic, diagnostic, and adult pedagogy competencies as well as goal-setting, and decision-making skills to name a few (Mentorships, n.d.). Mentorships are also starting to become specialized. For example, there are opportunities for interpreters to request a mentor who specializes in ASL exclusively and Deaf culture (For Working Interpreters, n.d.).

Historically, mentors have developed themselves in a variety ways. Some mentors are self-taught. This method of development is informal and without evaluation. Also, the U.S. Department of Education, Rehabilitation Services Administration has funded formal mentor training opportunities via regional sites. The regional sites provide mentor training to interpreters in a workshop/weekend-training format and also serve as a technical resource for mentors and protégés alike (About RITC, n.d.). Evaluations are standardized and include programs logs—to verify meetings take place—and goal oriented evaluations which tracks the protégé’s progress toward his or her self-identified goals (Clark, n.d.). Northeastern University is home to the Master Mentor Program which teaches experienced interpreters about mentoring on the Masters level (“Master Mentor Program” n.d.). Mentors are generally paid for their services. Payment varies from mentor to mentor. Grants that support mentor training often also include payment for mentors actively functioning in the role of mentor. Clearly Sign Language Interpreters continue to value and promote mentoring.

The location of this study is the Department of Access Services (DAS) at the National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID)--a college--at Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT).

NTID also established a Department for Interpreting Services that employed American Sign Language interpreters to work in RIT’s other colleges (e.g. College of Engineering) where deaf students attended classes. This department continues to operate under its current name—the Department of Access Services (DAS). Within DAS, mentoring is considered a valid and reliable method interpreters utilize in their professional development pursuits. Mentoring is identified in the Department’s Career Ladder. Interpreters who are lower in rank (Level 1 or Level 2) are described as employees who “may be assigned a mentor” (Department of Interpreting Services, 1996). Interpreters who are higher in rank (Level 3 or Level 4) are described as employees who possess the ability to mentor others within the department. Interpreters, who act as mentors within our department, do so to support their colleague’s professional development goals. Mentoring is recognized on their yearly appraisal.

The Department of Access Services (DAS) at NTID has verbally acknowledged mentoring. However, mentoring in DAS remains an informal process. There is no formal coordination effort in place to match mentors and protégés, develop potential interpreters to become mentors, nor to evaluate the mentor/protégé experiences which do take place informally. Additionally, DAS is not current with contemporary mentoring trends within the profession of sign language interpretation. Mentoring sites around the country are collaborating with each other. Distance mentoring and visiting mentoring opportunities have become a reality.
Likewise, e-mentoring is emerging. DAS is absent in this evolution. NTID remains isolated from the field.

**Problem Statement**

DAS is a department which provides access to students, faculty, staff, and administrators who are Deaf and hard of hearing within the Institute. NTID’s administrators are acutely aware of the expenses involved in providing access. DAS has not developed value offerings to retain and attract highly qualified interpreters nor has it collaborated with other NTID departments (e.g. Admissions) to develop value offerings for interpreters working across the United States and thereby position itself to become an income-producing asset for NTID.

DAS has not fully comprehended the complexity of the task of mentoring, its impact on the human capital and social capital within DAS, and its potential impact externally for NTID.

**Purpose of Study**

The purposes of this study are to:

1. Identify and define a robust mentoring program for the DAS.
2. Develop of a proposal for NTID administration’s consideration. Concepts from *Delivering Profitable Value, The Experience Economy, Execution*, or other Service Management resources will be used to demonstrate the outcomes a formal and robust mentoring program can have on DAS internally and externally. For example, a robust program shall aid DAS in moving away from its internally driven focus and singular focus of a targeted number of hours interpreted per week. The customer’s resulting experiences must become the focus for DAS.

The end customer at NTID is the student. Intermediary customers are interpreters who work with students at NTID (in DAS) and in mainstream settings around the United States. Interpreters, via mentorship, who develop themselves, will have the opportunity to experience a transformation.
As they aspire to new levels of competence and hone their craft, their own service provision will result in a better quality product to their consumers—students. Students, who can easily access the educational environment via highly skilled practitioners (i.e. interpreters), will have an enhanced educational experience. Students will also have the opportunity to aspire to and potentially pursue higher levels of education. NTID can utilize a formal mentorship program to help execute one of its Strategic Vision initiatives which is to develop an educational outreach consortium to share NTID’s expertise to improve the education and career development of individuals who are deaf and hard-of-hearing (Strategic Vision 2010, p. 13).

**Significance**

The result of this project will be a proposal for the leadership of NTID. The proposal will be written as well as presented to invited administration players such as the Vice President and Dean of NTID, the Director of Admissions, the Director of Access Services, and other appropriate persons decided upon as the project unfolds.

The significance of this project is to demonstrate a model of mentoring which will has the potential transform the lives of its consumers. Mentoring has the potential to develop relationships with practitioners across the country that will last a lifetime. It will become a recruiting tool for future employees (interpreters) as well as a retention tool for current employees. This project will also consider the monetary impact a mentoring program would have on NTID.

Additionally, this project will demonstrate the strategic impact ancillary departments, like DAS, can have on future demand (students) at NTID. NTID has the opportunity to affect the educational outcomes of its future students by enhancing the competencies of their current practitioners. Students who may have never considered higher education will have the
opportunity to do so because they will be receiving enhanced access in their educational environments. These same students may become NTID students because of their indirect association with this institution.

**Major Questions Section**

What will a formal, robust mentoring program look like in the Department of Access Services at NTID?

How can such a program enable NTID to execute its Strategic Vision 2010?

**Methodology**

This study will investigate contemporary mentoring models, literature and practices. It will investigate mentoring in general and mentoring in the interpreting field.

A literature review of current, formal mentoring programs around the United States will be undertaken. Follow up interviews with mentor trainers or coordinators, technical specialists and mentors will be conducted to gather information practice of mentoring in the field of Sign Language Interpretation and future directions and opportunities in mentoring. Additional interviews and/or questions with mentor coordinators and administrators will explore the costs versus benefits for the organization which sponsor mentorships.

For the purpose of data collection, a Mentoring Café for interpreting practitioners from the Rochester, NY area will be hosted. Participant input will be gathered from those who would serve as mentors as well as those who may choose to participate in a mentorship experience as protégés. The Café will have minimum number of fifteen interpreters participating in three rounds of structured dialog. Each round will introduce a new question. The participants, via discussion, will identify characteristics of a robust mentoring program for DAS and identify assumptions which need to be challenged. Additionally, the participants will be asked to identify
what has been overlooked or needs clarification in order for a robust mentoring program to be successfully established.

Coupled with this investigation will be an investigation of technologies currently available, or on the horizon, which can be applied to the mentorship experience. Traditionally, mentoring has been an in person experience. With technological advances, the experience has potential to be achieved without regard to geographical boundaries.

A review team of interpreting professionals (3 to 5) who are respected and recognized mentors in the field and/or within DAS will be established. The purpose of the review team will be to validate the authenticity of findings with regard to the current state of mentoring within DAS, as well as to identify resources and key individuals, programs and technologies needing investigation. This team will review findings, and identify cultural and perceptual challenges that may exist within DAS and NTID.

Concepts from *Delivering Profitable Value, Execution, and The Experience Economy* will be examined in relation to strategies that utilize DAS’s (proposed) mentoring program in its recruiting and retention efforts (students and employees) to further NTID’s mission and the execution of its strategic vision.

**Literature Review**

In order to understand the current state of mentoring, a review of existing literature will target mentoring within service organizations, business entities, and interpreting organizations. The scope of the review will include scholarly and trade journals, dissertations and research findings.

In addition to the above, a review of recent research project(s) at NTID will be conducted in order to understand challenges in education access for students who are deaf and hard of
hearing. The purpose of this part of the literature review is to develop a focus which will be incorporated in the mentoring proposal to be developed.

**External Considerations**

Technological advances, including advances in nano-technology, are making dreams from the last century become a reality in this century. Technological advances impact Deaf people as well. For example, videophones are no longer a dream. Increased bandwidth and speed across internet connections allow deaf people to communicate directly with one another, in their native language (e.g. American Sign Language) via videophone.

Cochlear implant procedures, which enable deaf people to hear better, are becoming more commonplace. Translation devices and automatic speech recognition devices are technologies which are (and have been) in development for many years. The complexity of the human voice and the way in which humans interact with one another have been a barrier for the successful development of these devices and their entry in the marketplace. Future technological development may remove these barriers.
Chapter Two: Literature Review

Recent literature shows that mentoring programs are used to cultivate talent (Eby & Lockwood, 2005, Owens, 2006, Cohn, Khurana, & Reeves, 2005), improve diversity and enhance knowledge and skill sets (Eby & Lockwood, 2005). The most common benefits business wide are higher productivity rates, reduced turnover, leadership development and the advancement of minorities (Alleman & Clarke, 2000). The most common benefit to individuals (i.e. protégés and mentors) is learning (Eby & Lockwood, 2005, Owens, 2006). The best matches between protégé and mentor occur when both parties have realistic expectations, minimal pressure and enthusiasm for the mentoring relationship (Owens, 2006). The best programs are aligned with the business's strategic focus (Perrone, 2003, Cohn, Khurana, & Reeves, 2005, Friday & Friday, 2002). They have a clear and comprehensive communication of the objectives and purpose(s) of the mentorship (Eby & Lockwood, 2005, Alleman & Clarke, 2000). They also provide training and have selection and matching processes, adequate resources, measurable objectives, (Alleman & Clarke, 2000) and evaluate their effectiveness--on an individual level (protégé and mentor) and on a business level (Perrone, 2003, Alleman & Clarke, 2000).

Online mentoring is an initiative companies, like Intel and KPMG--a New York based tax and audit firm, are using to expand the pool of talent and better match protégés and mentors (Owens, 2006). Additionally companies, professions and government agencies, who are facing skilled labor shortages, are reaching out to universities and engaging students before they enter the workforce (Owens, 2006, www.mentornet.org, Kalisch, Falzetta, & Cooke, 2005). In 2002, the US Department of Labor (USDOL) partnered with the University of Michigan, School of Nursing. An e-mentoring site for nursing recruitment was established to reach female students in high school as they considered career choices (Kalisch, Falzetta, & Cooke, 2005, www.gem-
nursing.org). An earlier grant by the USDOL partnered with the University of Illinois at Chicago to establish e-mentoring for the recruitment of women into the fields of science, engineering and technology (Kalisch, Falzetta, & Cooke, 2005, www.uic.edu/orgs/gem-set/index.htm). Added benefits of e-mentoring include removal of geographic and scheduling barriers, as well as status differences (Owens, 2006, Kalisch, Falzetta, & Cooke, 2005). Additionally, asynchronous communication provides time for thoughtful questions and responses from all participants (Kalisch, Falzetta, & Cooke, 2005).

Recent mentoring literature in the field of sign language interpreting is sparse. Most sources focus on specific programs, grants or needs within the field. Mentoring, traditionally, has been targeted at the general service provider and in specialized interpreting venues such as medical, courtroom and post secondary educational settings. Recent literature suggests a move toward collaboration. Also, the needs of interpreters in the primary and secondary educational settings are an emerging area of focus.

The Western Region Outreach Center and Consortia (WROCC), a partner in the Post Secondary Educational Programs Network (PEPNET) established a Video Outreach Mentorship Program in 1996. Its mentorship program was based on the program the National Center on Deafness uses with its educational interpreters at California State University, Northridge and focused on interpreters in post secondary settings who lived in the Western region. An article, published in 2000, noted the greatest challenge faced by protégés and mentors alike was "establishing a quality relationship" (Marshall & Tabor, 2000). Other challenges included the means of interaction. The primary vehicle for distance mentoring was via text (Marshall & Tabor, 2000). Webcams were not commonly used and they were very expensive. Also, computer bandwidth limited speed, which impeded sign language communication via webcam.
Additionally, the asynchronous nature of email and postal mail introduced time delays in ongoing dialogues. Some protégés wanted to continue their mentorship after the formal relationship ended. However, most mentors were very busy and unable to commit to this. Some of the mentors and protégés continued their contact after the mentorship. For example, they met at regional or national conventions and or continued to email each other. The distance mentoring program ended in 2001 when the 5-year funding for the project ended (C. Tabor, personal communication, September 4 and 19, 2006).

In 2005, the US Department of Education, Rehabilitation Services Administration awarded six grants establishing a National Consortium of Interpreter Education Centers (NCIEC) ("New Interpreter Education," 2005). These renewed previously existing grants; however, the philosophy and structure have been significantly changed. Previously, all centers, which received funding, operated autonomously. Under the new grant, five regional centers will operate as a network in cooperation with a single national center (National Interpreter Education Center (NIEC) housed at Northeastern University ("New Interpreter Education," 2005). The member organizations of the consortium are: Northeastern University Regional Interpreter Education Center (NURIEC), Boston, MA; CATIE Center at the College of St. Catherine, St. Paul, MN; Mid-America Regional Interpreter Education Center (MARIE) at University of Arkansas at Little Rock and University of Northern Colorado’s DO IT Center, Denver, CO; Gallaudet University Regional Interpreter Education Center (GURIEC), Washington, DC; and Western Region Interpreter Education Center (WRIEC) at Western Oregon University, Monmouth, OR and El Camino College, Torrance, CA (National Consortium of Interpreter, n.d.). NIEC and all of the regional centers have an online presence. All of the regional centers have links to resources (e.g. professional organizations, third party vendors, libraries). Additionally, all of the
regional centers highlight mentoring as a means of professional development for interpreters. In late September 2006, NIEC sent out a survey to the membership of RID about mentoring--being a mentor and being a protégé. The surveys collect demographic information about the respondents and ask the respondents about their perceptions, experiences, characteristics and philosophies of mentoring sign language interpreters.

A suggested guideline, prepared for New York State, suggests qualifications, definitions and procedures for mentors who work with sign language interpreters in K-12 settings. These include knowledge of K-12 educational setting, certification, educational interpreting assessment levels and language fluency (Sheneman, 2000). As of this writing, New York State standards for educational interpreters working in primary and secondary settings have not been enacted.

Articles outlining interpreters’ needs have appeared in RID's *Views* (monthly newsletter). For example, an interpreter, working in a primary educational setting, expresses a feeling of isolation where she works—the only interpreter—in rural Alaska. She is already employing the technology she has at hand (video tape, email, online, digital media and telephone) to reach out to interpreters she knows outside of Alaska. She expresses dissatisfaction with the isolation she finds herself in without any live support (Keller, 2006). In the same issue of *Views*, an article by Ray James begins by stating, "It is common for educational interpreters to feel isolated and not know where to turn when there is a question that needs an answer” (James, 2006, p. 8). He continues by offering an FAQ-like article for interpreters in primary and secondary educational settings.

The literature review described the traditional paradigm for mentoring, as it is practiced in business organizations. It appears that changes are occurring with regard to practice—incorporating online, computer based and distance mentoring activities; and organizational
structure--moving from autonomous, independent operations to collaborative programs. At the individual level, it was revealed that there are continuing needs for professional support.
Chapter Three: Methodology

A qualitative approach was used to gather the data for this project. Three discrete activities took place: a “Mentoring Café,” and two distinct sets of personal interviews. Each activity is described in detail.

A Mentoring Café occurred on January 3, 2006. Invitations were sent to all of the registered interpreters in the Rochester, New York area via email. Participation was voluntary. During the Mentoring Café, twenty-three interpreters from the Rochester metropolitan area participated. Most of the twenty-three interpreters were also staff interpreters at the National Technical Institute for the Deaf.

The event followed the process delineated in Juanita Brown’s guide, *The World Café*. Café participants sat among six tables. Three rounds of conversation were held. At the beginning of each round of conversation, a question was posed to the group. The questions discussed were:

- Round One: What would a robust mentoring program look like in the Department of Access Services at NTID/RIT?
- Round Two: What assumptions do we need to test or challenge here (DAS) in thinking about mentoring? and
- Round Three: What’s missing from the picture so far--what do we need more clarity about?

Each table discussed each question for twenty minutes. At the conclusion of the first and second rounds of conversation, participants changed tables and joined different groups of people. A video camera focused on and captured one table’s discussions throughout the Café. A table host was assigned to each table to act as liaison between the conversation and participants who had just departed and the participants who newly arrived at the table. At the completion of the third round of discussion, the entire group reconvened and discussed collective themes which emerged throughout the afternoon. All notes from the tables as well as from the concluding discussion were collected.
In addition, a total of twelve interviews took place between April and July 2006 (See Appendix A for the interview questions.). Each interview was done either in person or over the phone. The interviews lasted about a half an hour each.

The following four people were interviewed about technology and sign language interpreters’ use of technology. Each person was identified because of his/her knowledge of the sign language interpreting field as well as knowledge and use of technology and technologic applications. The interviews were divided into two sections. The first half focused on interpreters’ knowledge and use of technology. The second half focused on technology itself.

Dan Veltri, Treehouse Video, San Francisco, CA
Doug Bowen Bailey, Digiterp Communications, Duluth, Minnesota
Elouise Oyzon, Associate Professor, Golisano College of Computing and Information Sciences, RIT
Richard Smith, Academic Support Coordinator, NTID

The following eight people were interviewed about mentoring sign language interpreters. The organizations and people were chosen because of their national reputation and involvement in mentoring sign language interpreters. Questions focused on the mentoring programs with which each person is affiliated and the philosophies of each.

Dale Dyle, National Center on Deafness, California State University at Northridge
Patricia Gordon, Minneapolis, MN
Storyblend and mentor for Minnesota’s Department of Education K-12 sign language interpreters
Linda Siple, ASL & Interpreter Education (Student Practicum experience), National Technical Institute for the Deaf
Wendy Watson and Laurie Shaffer, Peer Mentoring program, Massachusetts/Virginia
Betsy Winston, Master Mentor Program, Northeastern University, Boston, MA
Anna Witter Merithew, Distance Opportunities for Interpreter Training (DO IT) Center, University of Northern Colorado

Additionally, Phyllis Rogers from Gallaudet University’s Visiting Interpreter Program responded to a general email inquiry with a wealth of information. For this reason, an interview
was not conducted.

The literature review, mentoring café and interviews focused on mentorship initiatives in the workplace. A limitation of this study is that the business case for mentoring within organizations was not completed.

Other limitations are the sample sizes of the mentoring café group and interview groups. The mentoring café participants represented 21 percent of the size of DAS interpreters and approximately 7.6 percent of the interpreters in the greater Rochester area. The interview groups’ sample sizes were small—four and nine respondents respectively.

Strengths within the design are that mentoring leaders in the field of sign language interpreting were interviewed and represented a cross section of mentoring practices from the major interpreting organizations across the United States. The interviewees were the coordinators or managers for the mentoring programs. All—100 percent—of the individuals contacted agreed to participate.

Another strength within the design balanced the cross sectional view of lead mentoring organizations with practitioners’ view in the field. The Mentoring Café targeted working interpreters in the Rochester, NY area. The participants in the Café represented both mentor and protégé perspectives. The results illustrate a diversity of perspectives from those who manage mentoring programs to those who participate or would participate in such endeavors.
Chapter Four: Findings and Discussion

Summaries of the mentoring café and interviews are recorded below. A discussion of the findings follows.

Mentoring Café

During the Mentoring Café’s group discussion, several key themes were discussed. A robust mentoring program needs a definitive structure. The structure should include definitions in which a shared vocabulary emerges. Every aspect of the program warrants definition. For example, participants expressed a desire to define mentoring as a concept and its process, scope and theme as well as expectations for each role (e.g. mentor and protégé) within the relationship, for DAS, and for NTID.

Participants expressed the need for screening and training for mentors and protégés. Mentors need diagnostic knowledge and training. Additionally, they need to know how to mentor. Protégés need to know how to successfully participate. Participants suggested a matching process be designed into the structure of the program. Mentor specific attributes were also discussed during the group discussion. Mentor competencies included technical skills competencies and knowledge in content specific areas, as well as knowledge of interpretation models and processes, and linguistics of English and American Sign Language. Attitude, in the form of passion among those who participate in the program--especially mentors--was expressed as an important participant attribute.

Equally as important is the organization’s (i.e. NTID) attitude about such a program. Participants discussed and wondered if NTID would value and support such a program. They discussed strategic opportunities for DAS and NTID. An example of a strategic opportunity is to
reach out to interpreters in the form of life long learning and provide a dynamic service where
the “form” may change as long as there is a structure underpinning the concept. For some, the
program may be more holistic while for others it may be more targeted. For some, the program
will be quite formal while for others it may be quite informal. Additionally, DAS has
traditionally limited its professional development opportunities to members of its staff.
Participants agreed that a robust program should be opened up locally, regionally and nationally.
Other opportunities mentioned were to identify RIT as a stakeholder and seek opportunities for
this program to bring in external money either via grants or income.

Participants discussed operational issues such as accountability, management,
compensation and program oversight. If such a program were fully supported and valued by the
College, an operational structure needs to be defined with compensation and accountability
structures. Participants observed that without an operational structure in place, a robust
mentoring initiative would not endure.

Finally, participants discussed resources and partnering. Participants encouraged the
development of DAS resources. Also, suggestions were made to look for opportunities to
partner internally and externally in order to provide a product which reaps the best of the best.
For example, Deaf individuals, not employed by NTID or RIT, may be the best available
resource for ASL linguistics. DAS should partner with and utilize resources where expertise is
readily available and for which it does not have the content expertise.

Individual notes corroborated the themes expressed during the group discussion.
Development of mentors appeared repeatedly in the notes. The most often noted (paper)
response was:

- Training--specifically training for mentors with structured activities, tools and curricula to
qualify and prepare mentors. The second most noted discrete response was that

- Diagnostics should be a part of the structure. Suggestions included flexibility in diagnostic form (e.g. each mentor, a team, Deaf diagnostician, mentor and protégé together) and content (e.g. with in a specialty area).

- The third most noted response regarded the assumptions that needed to be challenged within DAS. This response was the assumption that the program be limited to DAS only. Individual comments expressed ideas of opening up our department locally (e.g. local interpreters and local mentor talent) as well as nationally. Several comments expressed interest in “visiting mentor positions” and mentor “swapping” (e.g. with CSUN’s mentors). There was a strong sentiment to design this program with a national focus from it beginning.

**Technology Interviews**

When given a series of labels across a continuum, sign language interpreters were said to have a distributed amount of knowledge and skill level. Most were considered “average users” of technology. Although there are some interpreters who are considered “advanced”, none were reported as “master”. There are also some interpreters considered, “below average” and few were reported as “dinosaurs”.

Everett Rogers’ Adoption of Innovation continuum (as reported by Gambil & Kirk, 1999) was used to discover the perception of sign language interpreters’ attitudes toward adopting new technological innovations. Sign language interpreters tend to be in the early and later majority adopters. A point, noted by one of the interviewees, is that conceptually, interpreters are early adopters. However, the cost of technology during this phase is usually prohibitive for them to actually adopt.

Another limited resource for interpreters is time. If a specific technology directly impacts
their work or they have a connection to it in some way, interpreters will tend to be motivated to learn and adopt that technology or related technologies. The complexity of the technology will also have an impact on the level of adoption. If it’s too complicated, interpreters will not want to invest the time and energy into learning it.

Interpreters are seeing changes in the field. Instant messaging, paging, text messaging, email, and blogs are examples of text-based technologies that Deaf people have readily incorporated into their daily lives. Deaf people are using video phones and VRS (Vide Relay Service) needs are increasing dramatically. This direct influence has injected a need for interpreters to learn technological applications. VRS centers are also training interpreters to use the technology. As a result, more interpreters are becoming familiar with the computer related technology applications.

Technology is having and will continue to have an impact on the field. Deaf peoples’ expectations, with regard to the availability of interpreters and access to sign language, are changing. Deaf people are beginning to expect a virtual interpreter (i.e. VRS) to be readily available any time of day or night.

Interpreters, when they work at VRS centers, are exposed to Deaf peoples’ “whole” life. Levels of register within phone conversations are intimate. There is an emotional impact on interpreters who are involved in interpreting intimate level conversations. In addition, as interpreters are hired by VRS centers, fewer interpreters are available to work in local interpreting venues. Technology has impacted the availability of human capital in localities where VRS centers have been established.

VRI, video remote interpreting, is “the second technological wave behind the VRS wave (Veltri).” It is an emerging frontier in the interpreting field. Since VRI is not regulated by the
FCC as VRS is, small start up companies can easily get into the remote interpreting business.
Remote interpreting has the ability to remove geographic boundaries. An example offered by
Dan Veltri is of a company called, “Sign On.” This California based company is working with
public schools in Alaska. Interpreters are sent to work in Alaska, in person, for about six
months. While there, the interpreter introduces the concept of remote interpreting to the people
at the school. Remote interpreting is used in tandem with the live interpreter. When the
interpreter leaves Alaska, remote interpreting is exclusively used at that school. As VRI becomes
more readily available, younger Deaf people will start to expect this as a communication option.

When asked what interpreters can do to keep up with technology, all respondents agreed
that using technology is the best way to remain current. Going to a workshop or training will not
help the interpreter to use technology. Taking an online class (in any content area) is one avenue
interpreters can become familiar with and use technology. Other suggestions included regular
email use, IM use (including and using features such as “away messages”), text messaging and
blogging. Also, web cams or video phones are technologies that allow interpreters to keep up
with communication trends and technological uses as well. VRS centers train the interpreters
who work for them. Interpreters may opt to work at VRS centers as a mean of learning
technology and using it in their work.

When asked which technologies could be used for remote (or in person) mentoring, the
responses were that mentoring (and interpreting) in “live” situations is preferred because the
sound quality is better and live contact enables relationships to be more easily established.
However, there are existing technologies that work for mentoring when it cannot be done in
person.

The internet is a great communication channel for remote mentoring. A computer with a
good graphics card is able to process web video (e.g. net meeting). Email is ubiquitous. There are also applications like GMAIL that have chat features. GMAIL specifically allows the participants in the chat to save a copy of it. Instant Messaging (IM), blogs and wikis could also be used with mentoring. Group blogs could be an avenue to explore ethical situations. For example, a hypothetical situation could be posed to a group and people can post their replies to it.

The three biggest challenges with electronic (on line) interaction are the size of the video interface, bandwidth, and interactivity in courseware systems and other group sites. Firstly, web video interfaces are limited in size—usually 240 x 240 pixels or approximately 2” x 2”. Because the size of the web interface is small, it is harder to read sign language. This can cause frustration and subtle nuances of ASL may be lost. Although the windows may be resized, the quality of the picture degrades as pixels become visible to the naked eye. One solution, for synchronous communication, is to use D-Link video phones. They are better than web cams because a D-Link is hooked up to television. The picture quality is much sharper and it is presented in a larger dimension. Sign communication is more readily achievable and allows for remote mentoring as well as VRI, VRS, language discussions and human contact. Secondly, bandwidth is an issue when streaming video files. A high speed internet connection is required in order to be able to utilize video interfaces and video streaming. Thirdly, courseware applications (or other group applications) are underutilized. At present, they are best used as a repository of stimulus, resources and reference information. Courseware applications have potential for remote or asynchronous mentoring. One challenge with this, as noted previously, is the video interface window size (240 x 240). Another challenge is the text-based format which characterizes courseware applications. At NTID a simple sign language test was administered via
“Mycourses,” RIT’s course management software. Students saw a simple sign language sentence (video) and responded in a test format (text). Interactivity was achieved using an asynchronous, text input mode. A group people at NTID are experimenting with Flash in which a “player” (software application) would be bundled with the content. The player will have a larger sized video interface (i.e. window) thereby allowing the video content to be more readily seen. One could imagine an ASL sample being posted to a courseware site; protégés could access it at their own convenience and provide voice interpretations for the source (audio or video input). Currently, the voice interpretation would have to be accomplished through an additional and alternate piece of technology as simple as an audio voice recorder or, more complicated, focusing a video camera on the computer screen and recording the interpretation in that manner. The alternate piece of technology (audio tape or VHS) cannot easily be uploaded to the website because audio and video are analog technologies. These need to be delivered to the receiver by alternate means. As technology improves and as equipment is upgraded to digital formats, participants in courseware applications can learn how to use and upload digital media in order to allow asynchronous, digital video based interaction.

CD’s are easy to use and to copy. CD’s (as well as video tapes) can be made by either party and sent to the other. This existing technology can be used in more creative ways. For example, iMovie with a mini-DV camera can be used. The source information can be burned onto a CD or DVD. The protégé can send the mentor a CD of his/her work. The mentor can view it, insert his/her own comments—within the protégé’s sample—and then return the same CD to the protégé.

From a cost perspective, initial purchases of equipment can be prohibitive for individuals. Several of the respondents suggested that one should work with the diversity of resources
available. For example, there is a lot of freeware on the web. Applications targeted for use by interpreters should take advantage of freeware such as QuickTime or Adobe. Respondents advocated for financial investment in the overall purpose, use and functionality that is necessary rather than on the newest bells and whistles which may not enhance the experience or the effectiveness of its delivery. Finally, as good as technology is, humans will always be needed to interface with it and with the people who use it. Interpreting is a people centric business. Human interaction is paramount in mentoring.

**Mentoring Interviews**

The mentor programs, selected for interview, can be partitioned into three categories: employer based, education based (i.e. degree or certificate granting), and independent or stand-alone programs. The Master Mentor Program is a unique Certificate program that trains interpreters and interpreter educators to serve as mentors within their communities ("Master Mentor Program," n.d.).

Approximately three quarters of the programs (7 out of 9) follow a more traditional approach to mentoring in the field. These programs are characterized by: participants who are considered more knowledgeable and have the role of “mentor;” other participants who are seeking specific goals and have the role of “protégé”; mentors and protégés are matched in a pair or small group; goals are established for the protégé; and operate from the point of view of a deficit model (i.e. looking at the protégé’s weaknesses and establishing goals to reduce them).

Typical goals among the traditional programs are for the protégé to achieve certification, to increase interpreter competence, to improve self confidence (i.e. for students who are studying to become interpreters) and in the case of the Master Mentor Program, to produce mentors who will work with interpreters.
Protégé criteria were similar among the traditional programs. Protégés must be officially affiliated with the program (e.g. employee or student) in order to participate. Video samples of work are used to determine those who wish to be affiliated with a program; but currently are not (e.g. SLA and Gallaudet). In the case of Gallaudet’s Visiting Interpreter Program, protégés compete for available “slots”. Annually, Gallaudet chooses four individuals to be visiting interpreters out of an applicant pool of approximately one hundred. In the case of the DO IT Center’s program as well as NTID’s Interpreter Education program, students must be qualified by each program’s criteria (e.g. GPA, pre-requisite courses) in order to participate in the mentoring (practicum) experience.

Likewise, mentor criteria were similar among the traditional programs. Experience as an interpreter is highly valued among traditional mentoring programs. All programs required mentors to have a minimum number (3 years to 7 years) of interpreting experience. Most required certification by RID or NAD (the National Association of the Deaf). Two of the nine programs (CSUN and DO IT Center) require their mentors to have a bachelors and masters degree respectively. The Master Mentor Program is considering requiring a minimum of a bachelor’s degree (beginning January 2007) for the mentors it educates. More than half (4 out of 7) of the traditional programs mentioned things such as self image, organization, and sensitivity when working with others, as personal criteria mentors must have.

Less than one quarter of the programs (2 out of 9 programs)--Storyblend by Gordon and Peer Mentoring by Watson and Shaffer--use non-traditional approaches to “mentoring” and non-traditional goals. Both programs are recent and independent efforts—created and sponsored by individuals, not organizations. Storyblend’s goal is to increase comfort with ASL among interpreters who do not live in areas where there is a critical mass of Deaf people and therefore
do not have a wealth of repeated exposure to ASL. Peer Mentoring’s goal is to create a community of learners where networking occurs and where participants can experience on-going support.

Protégé and mentor criteria for the Peer Mentoring program were exactly the same. Peer Mentoring is based on the premise that participants will be in the role of mentor as well as be in the role of protégé throughout the experience. The criteria are that participants must be working interpreters and they must commit time (for workshops and meetings).

Storyblend criteria for protégés were minimum certification and interpreter education requirements as well as a lack of significant relationships with Deaf people. This criteria was for the Summer 2006 experience. Some of the criteria may change from year to year in order to match the theme for that year.

All of the mentoring programs are contained geographically. Interpreters must locate or relocate to the site of the program in order to participate in these experiences. However, the DO IT Center and Master Mentor Program (both educational in focus) are largely hosted online with minimal requirements for face to face, in person, interactions. For these programs, face-to-face meetings are valued because of the importance of meeting and getting to know one another.

Technology utilized among mentoring programs, whether they are in person or at a distance, is video, DVDs, CDs, chat rooms, IM, video phone (VP), telephone, course management software (i.e. Blackboard and Web CT). Video email is on the horizon for at least one of the mentoring programs.

All of the programs have established time frames for their mentorship experiences. All programs, with the exception of the NTID’s interpreter education practicum program, have training for their mentors. Additionally, four of the seven programs offer training for protégés.
All programs, with the exception of Peer Mentoring, pay mentors (This does not apply to the Master Mentor Program since it educates mentors.) In the Peer Mentoring program, facilitators for the group process are paid; the participants (who take on the role of either protégé or mentor) are not. Other mentor payment is recognized as part of the interpreter/mentor’s position in an organization (e.g. SLA, CSUN, Gallaudet) or a mentor is specifically contracted or hired to be a mentor (NTID, DO IT, MN DOE, Storyblend).

The traditional mentorship pairing (1:1, mentor: protégé) is still seen in sign language interpreter mentoring relationships. However, there is some fluctuation in their appearance.

CSUN, NTID, and SLA, utilize 1:1, in person mentorships one hundred percent of the time. These programs are located in areas where there is a high concentration of interpreters and Deaf people. SLA has Deaf consultants on hand to assist the mentorship pairs. Also, SLA has built in flexibility and collaboration for their mentorship pairs. For scheduling purposes and the needs of the consumers, protégés may work with a different mentor if their assigned mentor is unavailable (e.g. if protégés are not allowed to be present in specific venues).

In larger school districts within Minnesota’s Department of Education K-12 program, mentorships follow a traditional 1:1 pairing. In outlying school districts, where there are few mentors available, there may be as many as 1:11 (mentor: protégé) ratio. The mentor and protégés meet in small groups. The mentor meets with protégés (1:1) on a rotating basis. These meetings take place once every few weeks or a month for the protégé.

The DO IT Center and Gallaudet consistently provide two (one deaf and one hearing) mentors for each protégé or small group of protégés. They differ in that Gallaudet’s mentoring program is on site. At the DO IT Center, mentors and protégés meet in person, during the summer, for one month (for three consecutive years). The rest of the experience is on line and at
a distance.

Storyblend and Peer Mentoring occur in groups. Storyblend’s experience is 4 (mentors): 12 (protégés) all working together in a group for a 2 week period of time. Its design is to be a group process. Peer Mentoring’s approach incorporates the notion of pairing individuals within a group of approximately 14 colleagues. The group comes together for five workshops over the mentorship period. Mentors and protégés roles are fluid; pairings are established and change over the course of the mentorship. The group (and it facilitators) continue to be the one constant unchanging element within this mentorship experience. All programs evaluate the effectiveness of the mentorship experience—the program itself and the mentor/protégé relationship. There are quantitative approaches (e.g. the number of protégés who become nationally certified) as well as qualitative means. Most have a formal evaluation instrument. Some do mid-experience assessments/evaluations. This mid-experience assessment focuses on the protégé’s progress in achieving goals established at the onset of the relationship. This is also a time where the effectiveness of the experience is discussed and can be adjusted. Most of the programs do continuous informal means of collecting feedback via dialogue with the protégés and/or the mentors.

Approximately half of the programs have a specific matching process. One program uses learning style inventories and skills profiles in its matching process. Programs that have personal knowledge about both parties may also attempt to match according to interest areas (e.g. horsewomen). Since some programs accept protégés who are new to their organization, skills are the least common denominator used to match protégés with mentors.

Among all of the interviewed programs, time, structure, money and data centricity were listed as weaknesses. These are not manifest in all of the programs. Rather, these were reported
among the programs.

First, time for the individuals in the relationship may be a challenge when scheduling meetings and collaboration time with one another. Secondly, time is required to also recognize growth. One respondent said sometimes the protégés have other professional issues (non skills related) that need to be supported and addressed before skills can be targeted. In these situations, time and patience must be employed in order to support the protégé and provide the environment where s/he can develop his/her skills. Third, time is required to implement changes in institutions like academia.

Structure was listed as a weakness because when a program is too structured, it must be followed from beginning to end without deviation. Programs without modularization reduce the flexibility they can offer. Also, structure was identified as a weakness because some people are seeking structure. When a program is too unstructured, people don’t know what to do.

Data centricity was mentioned as a weakness when programs focus on a stated goal and forsake the impact the work is actually having on clients. An example is setting goals to pass a certification test rather than setting goals to focus on improving interpreting in “x” venue.

Programs also reported financial constraints which limit their ability to convert older technology (i.e. VHS) to new media (i.e. digital) as well as remaining up to date with technology.

Among all of the interviewed programs, a variety of strengths were expressed. As with the weaknesses, these are not manifest in all of the programs. Rather, these were reported among the programs. The most common strength reported was the individualization of the program. Mentoring can be effective for all skills levels and experience presented by the protégé. The knowledge and experience the program can offer in terms of knowledgeable mentors (or faculty) was also a strength identified more than once. The positive impact the mentorship experience
had on the participants was also noted. Some organizations, which require employment in order to participate, stated the mentorship experience was considered a “perk” and attracted interpreters. Some of the same organizations also expressed the positive impact it had on both mentors and protégés in terms of dedication to and reinvigoration with their own work. Distance mentoring allows for time to digest and apply knowledge and information and to incorporate feedback. Other strengths identified were the uniqueness of the program (Storyblend), the support provided to both mentors and protégés, quantitative measures used by the program, the program’s reputation in the field and in specialized areas (e.g. courtroom interpreting), commitment to lifelong learning.

Discussion

Findings among the literature review, mentoring café and interviews reveal ideological similarities, differences and new trends. Many of the data findings substantiated information in the literature review. There were a few dissimilarities. However, longstanding issues surfaced as well as emerging trends. These trends may complement the traditional approach to mentoring or, because of the longstanding issues, alter its concept.

Similarities

Many of the comments expressed by café participants agreed with characteristics of the best mentoring programs identified in the literature review. (e.g. select and train it mentors, align the program with the College’s strategic focus). Café participants agreed with the current practices in the field of establishing an operating structure for the program (i.e. It is not ad hoc). Comments expressed by mentoring café participants were aligned with characteristics of traditional mentoring programs (e.g. diagnostics). Most of the programs interviewed also
followed the traditional form.

The literature revealed that the best mentor/protégé matches occur when there is enthusiasm for the relationship. Likewise, mentoring café participants and individuals interviewed expressed this as a criterion for mentors.

Individualization was expressed as a strength in mentoring program interviews. It was likewise acknowledged by mentoring café participants.

Technologies used in mentoring in practice versus those reported as possible for use (i.e. in the technologic interviews) were virtually the same. The respondents in the technologic interviews encouraged the use of additional technologies such as blogs and wikis as well.

The literature review showed that developing the mentor/protégé relationship is a challenge when participating online or e-mentoring. The DO IT Center solves this problem by physically meeting on campus for one month. Relationships are established and the rest of the mentorship is accomplished at a distance. Additionally, Sign On uses a similar approach to remote video interpreting. Mentoring Café participants did not discuss remote technologies because of the availability of interpreters/mentors locally. However, mentoring café participants were open to alternate modes of mentoring in order to expand the pool of talent (e.g. visiting mentor). If distance or online mentoring were to be incorporated as part of a program at NTID, the establishment of the mentor/protégé relationship needs to be a priority so that the online experience can flourish.

**Differences**

Mentoring café participants believe a mentoring program should have a matching process. The literature showed that good matches occur when expectations as well as passion are aligned between the mentor and protégé. In reality, according to the interviewees, unless the participants
are personally known, matching—other than skills based—is a very difficult thing to accomplish. This suggests that an escape mechanism be built into the matching process to allow matches that are not fruitful to be terminated.

In the literature review, most mentor/protégé matches were 1:1. Whereas responses from the mentoring café participants and interviews indicate that matches are perceived in a more flexible way. There clearly were matches that followed the literature review (i.e. 1:1). There were others either by design (e.g. Storyblend, Peer Mentoring) or out of necessity (e.g. small groups of protégés due to a lack of available mentors), which did not follow the traditional pairing.

In current practice, protégés who are not officially affiliated with some of the mentoring programs can become protégés via an application process. Once they are selected they must become affiliated (i.e. become an employee or student). Mentoring café participants saw value in expanding participation in the program locally, regionally and nationally to include non-affiliated interpreters. A strong mentoring program would be of value for non-affiliated (i.e. non-NTID staff) interpreters who reside in the Rochester area and work part of the time at RIT. These interpreters impact NTID students’ education but heretofore have been prohibited from participating in any DAS professional development opportunities.

**Trends**

Mentoring café participants expressed interest in a dynamic model that would be able to accommodate the diversity of needs presented by individual protégés. In practice, some mentoring programs identified the program’s structure as a weakness because of its rigidity and lack of modularization.

Mentoring programs are beginning to value academic credentials in addition to work
experience for its mentors. Traditional mentoring and its techniques are complex. The profession is recognizing advanced knowledge and its application in the mentoring relationship.

Time was expressed in the literature review as well as in all of the data collected. Time is a limited resource. It is difficult for people to build more time (i.e. participate in a mentoring program) into already busy schedules. Additionally, time is required for individual growth and development. Distance mentoring was expressed, in the literature and in the interviews, as a means of allowing protégés the development time necessary to realize recognizable growth in skills.

Technology continues to be a trend which is ever changing. As technology continues to advance, sign language interpreting professionals within the field will need to be current with communication technologies that their consumers use and prefer. The literature review discovered changes in technological uses (e.g. online) as well as unmet needs (e.g. geographic barriers) that technology can assuage.

Collaboration is also emerging as seen in the National Consortium of Interpreter Education Centers. Participants of the mentoring café echoed this sentiment. They encouraged DAS/NTID to partner with internal and external service providers in order to provide a top-quality product. Collaboration is also apparent in the two newer mentoring experiences. Rather than follow a traditional 1:1 pairing or out of necessity meet in small groups, the design of each initiative places the group at the center of the experience.

There also seems to be a new paradigm emerging. The traditional mentoring model is deficit based. It looks at a protégé’s weaknesses and focuses on reducing these. It is either mentor determined (via diagnostics) or co-determined (via mentor/protégé dialogue). This model is limited in its focus. The newer model (i.e. Peer Mentoring) is a reflective model. It is
protégé determined and allows the protégé to explore his/her interpreting work and determine his/her directions for change. It, potentially, can become an upward spiral of ongoing professional dialogue and development.

**Issues**

The issue of funding was apparent throughout the literature review of mentoring in sign language interpreting. Programs established by grant money disappear once the grant cycle ends. In the case of Minnesota’s Department of Education, the State has mandated mentoring (paid for by individual school districts) for educational interpreters in K-12 settings who are not certified. Once an interpreter becomes certified, school districts are not obligated to and do not pay for continued mentorship opportunities. Traditional approaches to mentorship payment have been via a stipend (usually paid for by grants) or hourly formulas. Grants opportunities (on the part of the protégés) are limited in number and availability. Hourly formulas for payment are cost prohibitive for the individual practitioner on an ongoing basis. In the mentoring interview with Patty Gordon, she said, “Everyone agrees that mentoring is good. No one wants to pay for it (personal communication, April 14, 2006).” A weakness in the traditional model is the lack of sustainability due to the costs involved in the mentorship tasks.

In the literature, the image of interpreters feeling isolated was widespread. Concomitant to isolation is the desire to continue professional support and development relationships at the end of a mentorship; but due to time constraints, and the lack of available mentors, the possibility does not exist. Therefore, the learning relationship ends. One response to the feeling of isolation has been addressed with the Peer Mentoring model. The Peer Mentoring Model is a direct response to the dearth of mentors. Its founder, Wendy Watson, originally had a traditional model in mind for interpreters working in southeastern Massachusetts. She found that many
professional interpreters were interested in participating as a protégé; however, very few felt competent as mentors. The design of the program changed and evolved into what has become the Peer Mentoring Model where dependence on a single mentor is not part of the design. Rather, Its founding premise is to develop an ongoing support structure and to develop an interpreting learning community network (W. Watson, personal communication, March 25, 2006).
Chapter Five: Conclusions

Mentoring in the sign language interpreting field has been stable and unchanging. In practice, the traditional approach to mentoring prevails. The traditional approach is marked by a working relationship between two or more people. The mentoring relationship includes a person (or persons) who is (are) considered more knowledgeable and experienced (i.e. mentor) and a person (or persons) who is (are) in need of development (i.e. protégé). The traditional paradigm uses a deficit approach in which a diagnostic instrument is used to determine the protégé’s weaknesses. An individualized plan of development is written by the mentor or by the mentor and the protégé. It has a predetermined time limit. During and/or after the mentoring process occurs, an evaluation of the experience is conducted. When the mentorship officially ends, mentor and protégé may decide to remain in contact professionally; however, this is not an expectation. Modifications to the traditional mentoring model tend to focus on the structure and delivery of a mentorship experience (e.g. Deaf and hearing mentors working with one or more protégés) and less on the content exchanged within the experience or the resulting experience itself. When interviewing mentoring programs across the US, one of the strengths expressed was that protégés considered the mentoring program a fringe benefit while mentors felt reinvigorated in their profession. The literature supports this finding as well.
Questions

This project examined two questions:

• “What will a formal, robust mentoring program look like in the Department of Access Services at NTID?”

• “How can a mentoring program enable NTID to execute its Strategic Vision 2010?”

The answer to the second question is found in NTID’s strategic plan, *Strategic Vision 2010: Creating our Future*. In Decision #2 of the *Strategic Vision 2010: Creating our Future*, NTID seeks to establish referral programs with community colleges for students who are not ready for admission to NTID (2005, p. 9). In Decision #4, NTID seeks to “develop an educational outreach consortium to share our expertise with others to improve the education and career development of individuals who are deaf and hard-of-hearing (2005, p. 13).” Interpreters work with Deaf and hard of hearing students in primary, secondary and tertiary mainstreamed educational settings. NTID’s Department of Access Service employs over one hundred interpreters on its staff. The expertise of its staff interpreters can be used as a resource and should be included in NTID’s outreach efforts.

When considering the first question, the literature review, mentoring café and interviews revealed underlying issues and emerging trends that should be considered in addition to the strengths of the traditional model.

Financing emerged as an issue that limits some mentoring programs’ sustainability. Grant based programs do not continue beyond the grant cycle. Most programs, which have sustained themselves, are part of the operating structure of a larger organization. Other underlying issues relate to the profession as a whole. For example, interpreters, who live in outlying areas, live in professional isolation. These individuals have been and continue to be
disengaged from mentoring opportunities and professional, collegial relationships in general.

Emerging trends included the concept of time as a limited resource. When investigating the feasibility of any activity, time in addition to financing will be a resource that is considered. Ironically, time—longitudinally—is also required in order for growth to occur. Other emerging trends include preferences for networking, collaboration, community or group process as well as modularity. Reflective, protégé driven experiences were expressed in the mentoring café and designed into newer, non-traditional models of mentoring.

Technology has become part of the global landscape. The interpreting profession is incorporating technology as a means of service delivery for distance interpreting via VRS and VRI. Technology has allowed programs like the DO IT center to provide mentoring in a distance format. Heretofore, technology has been an “add-on” to the traditional mentoring paradigm.

Findings from the literature review, mentoring café and interviews suggest that the traditional mentoring model is beneficial to those who are able to participate. However, its reach is limited, it’s expensive, and issues of isolation and a lack of a collegial community continue. Deaf and hard of hearing consumers, with whom interpreters work, have readily embraced technology. Technology is impacting the field and in the way it conducts business.

**Recommendations**

Based on the first question, a formal, robust mentoring program will not look like the traditional paradigm. At its center, mentoring offers professional growth and support, knowledge exchange, interaction, collegial relationships, and individualization. These foundational building blocks with emerging trends of collaboration, time, ubiquitous technology, networking, group process and protégé driven interactions coalesce into a new service model.
The cornerstones of this model are interactivity and the development of relationships (i.e. learning community), coupled with knowledge and content offerings.

Based on the second question, the new service model will be used in outreach efforts identified in NTID’s *Strategic Vision 2010: Creating our Future* document. The recommended service model will outreach to sign language interpreters in all educational settings—from primary to post secondary.

The new service model’s purpose will be to develop a network or community of educational interpreters across the United States, to foster professional practice and growth, knowledge exchange, and collegial support. The larger and ultimate purpose is to enhance interpreting services to Deaf students in educational settings at all levels. Its objectives are:

- To connect with interpreters in primary, secondary and post secondary settings as well as connect interpreters with each other.
- To provide professional support for interpreters working in educational settings.
- Be a knowledge resource for interpreters working in educational settings in all fields particularly in the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) disciplines.

The backbone of the system will be the knowledge and expertise NTID’s staff interpreters and its partners can offer to a young, developing and eventually mature network or community of educational interpreters across the country. NTID, specifically the Department of Access Service, has individuals with a wealth of interpreting experience at the post secondary level. DAS’s interpreters have technical knowledge in many or all of the technical degree programs RIT offers. In addition, some of these individuals are nationally certified and hold advanced degrees. One of NTID’s internal partners may be the American Sign Language and Interpreter Education (ASLIE) degree program. Its instructors also have a wealth of interpreting
experience as well as hold advanced degrees. Individual interpreting practitioners seeking credentialed colleagues for advice will, at minimum, be able to interact with NTID’s interpreting professionals.

For an initiative of this scope to succeed, NTID must commit itself to the success and sustainability of a national community of sign language interpreters who specialize in education of Deaf and hard of hearing students. Additionally, it must execute a well-developed business plan that includes the development of internal and external partnerships. The new service model will be a learning organization that implements a customer relationship management paradigm where value offerings are co-created.

The following matrix illustrates the issues or trends found (on the left) and the resulting experience interpreters connected to the network should have with the recommended service model (on the right).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issues</th>
<th>Resulting experience (&quot;I&quot; interpreter who accesses the new service model)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relationship terminates at end of cycle</td>
<td>Relationship is ongoing and sustained “I have worked with and continue to work with (name) via NTID’s network”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling of isolation and no professional support</td>
<td>“I feel connected and supported.” (to NTID and other interpreters)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grant cycle ends, program closes</td>
<td>Grant cycle ends, program sustains itself “I pay a fee to ensure its sustainability.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Trends**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time: expensive--hard to schedule time that fits both (mentor/protégé) schedules</th>
<th>Time: “I choose the time—smaller or larger increments—at my convenience.”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time: need more time to realize growth</td>
<td>Sustainability = time for growth “Over time, I am developing my interpreting skills and knowledge. I have more confidence in my abilities.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>Geography: isn’t an issue; “I am connected in my locale to colleagues across the nation.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>“I have access to a network of colleagues for knowledge and support.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dynamic</td>
<td>“I design my program…short term or longer term or “information on demand” (very short term).”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deficit model—the mentor tells the protégé where his/her faults are</td>
<td>“I decide what I need help with; they design or already have a resource for me.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Other experiences**

- “I have ongoing relationships with colleagues across the nation.”
- They understand my needs as an interpreting professional.”
- “I know that I have a trusted, knowledgeable resource readily available.”
- “I am part of its continued success.”
- “The students I interpret for are receiving a better product because of my professional development and network”
Further Investigation

In its July 24, 2006 issue, *Fortune* magazine highlighted seven new rules that replace the old rules businesses’ have traditionally operated under. The new rules are:

- to be agile,
- to find a niche and create something new,
- to be customer centric, to look outward (to the future and to changing trends),
- to hire passionate people,
- to hire a courageous CEO, and
- to have a long-term view (Morris, 2006).

The new service model suggested in this paper is at the concept level. Its concept is the result of a literature review, mentoring café and individual interviews. It dovetails with future trends in business.

Further investigation and development of a business plan must occur. Targeted areas for further research include short, medium and long-term views.

Short Term View (Years 1-2)

To achieve the resulting experiences indicated above, the new service model should be piloted in the Department of Access Services. The purposes of the pilot program will be:

- to further investigate and begin to apply the best approach to protégé centered mentoring with an emphasis on co-development;
- to identify and test technologic applications
- to establish a definitive frame for the new service model; and
- to lay a foundation for the program’s long-term vision.

Relationships and connectedness will be achieved primarily through live, in-person
interactions. Technologic applications will be piloted and evaluated as well.

Knowledge and content offerings will be co-developed. Protégés will be part of the
design of professional development and mentorship initiatives. They will suggest additional
content and value offerings that are suited for an online community environment. A knowledge
base—repository--will be the result of content co-development. This repository will be available
and feed initial outreach efforts.

Time, as it was discussed in this paper, will be examined in terms of the length of
offerings, the depth and the frequency of offerings.

Internal and external partnership opportunities will be identified. Initial contact and
solidification of partnerships will be a priority.

Organizational structure and staffing will be determined. In collaboration with the
Director of the Department of Access Services, recognition, compensation and scheduling details
for DAS staff interpreters who are engaged in support of the new service model will be
determined.

Additionally, determination of where this service model, with its long-term agenda, will
be housed within NTID will occur.

As an internal effort, financing is available via professional development monies. A
portion of the professional development monies from DAS as well as professional development
money from NTID can be used to finance the pilot. In addition to these funds, grant and research
opportunities will be explored to supplement the initial and on-going program. Further
investigation into grants, as seed or start up monies, will also occur.
**Intermediate Term View (Years 3-4)**

To achieve the resulting experiences indicated above, the pilot program will expand to the local Rochester community. External partners, such as BOCES, and other knowledgeable service providers will be included in continued, co-development efforts. Programs such as interpreter exchange programs will be investigated. For example, interpreters from BOCES (K-12) programs and interpreters from DAS’s staff may switch positions for a period of time (one semester or one year).

The purposes of the continuing the pilot program and introducing an exchange program will be:

- to test, evaluate and validate the design and technologic applications developed and selected during Years 1 and 2.
- to gather data and examine practices which are unique in primary and/or secondary educational settings
- to further investigate and begin to apply the best approach to protégé centered mentoring with an emphasis on co-development;
- to give DAS interpreters hands on experience in primary and secondary settings. The external partnership, as well as the hands-on experience, will give credibility to NTID’s objective of working with interpreters in these settings.

Relationships and connectedness will be a hybrid of live, in-person interactions and social networking, technologic applications. Since the participating interpreters, in this phase, will be from the Rochester-area, the ability to meet in person will be possible. However, since the long-term view of the model is to outreach to interpreters across the country, use of technology (synchronous and asynchronous) will be imperative. Evaluation of social networking
technologies will be ongoing and will be a priority. Connectedness is a vital piece of the experience this service model will offer.

Knowledge and content offerings will continue to be co-developed. Time will also continue to be a central consideration as offerings are developed and evaluated.

Grant money will be sought out to establish the infrastructure and design of the service model. Grant money may be obtainable because in the past and present grants are funding and have funded other mentoring initiatives. Additionally, further investigation into the amount of money practitioners is willing to pay for this service will occur.

Also, the identification of sign language interpreters, in primary, secondary and post-secondary educational settings for initial outreach efforts, will occur. Research funding that focuses on the use of an online, distance format to outreach, educate and connect interpreters will be explored.

Internal and external partnerships will continue to be identified and nurtured. External partners, who already have an online presence, will be resource partners as well as advisors as this project embarks in its initial outreach efforts. Internal partners, for example the Office of Enrollment Management, will be engaged to help identify initial outreach contacts. In addition, identification of interpreters who hold an Educational Interpreter Performance Assessment (EIPA) of 4.0 or higher will be undertaken. In June, 2006, interpreters who have achieved an EIPA score of 4.0 or higher and join RID have been granted recognition as certified by RID (EIPA-RID Membership Agreement, n.d.). These interpreters will be initially targeted in outreach efforts and will be valuable partners.

Outreach efforts will commence.
**Long Term View (Year 5 and beyond)**

To achieve the resulting experiences indicated above and to achieve a national reach, the new service model will be largely hosted online.

Interactivity will be achieved via synchronous connections and asynchronous discussion technologies. Synchronous technologies will be limited in their availability during the day or week. However, synchronous technologies will be integral in the development and sustainability of relationships between and among practitioners. Asynchronous features will be available 24/7.

Relationships and connectedness will be achieved through the interactive technologies as well as the formation of affinity groups and special interest groups. (e.g. “interpreters interested in science”). The interactive approach suggested in this service model encourages professional relationships to develop and continue beyond the scope of a traditional mentorship or educational experience.

The time an interpreter spends during any one session will vary. In the long run, time will accumulate and provide the interpreter practitioner with a consistent, available, and sustained resource. Geographic boundaries will be eliminated. Interpreters will not have to physically travel to NTID in order to benefit from its expertise and NTID’s reach will be national in scope.

In the long term, there are opportunities to host local and regional workshops and/or meetings in locales around the country in order to physically bring together the members of the learning community.

Partnerships will continue to be fostered and connected.

This initiative, in its complete implementation may be a hybrid of free and subscription services. The subscription portion will sustain the program over time. The determination of
financing over the long term will be done during the intermediate phase of the project.

**Benefit to NTID**

As a result of the development of a new value delivery system to interpreters in educational settings, NTID will benefit. As educational interpreters connect and become engaged in the community, they will invest time in their professional development. They will form a perspective that NTID is a place that wants to see Deaf and hard of hearing students be successful in their educational endeavors. Interpreters often chat with their students. The Code of Professional Conduct prohibits interpreters from influencing communication interactions. However, it does not prohibit them from interacting with their clients. Potentially, more Deaf and hard of hearing students will hear about NTID from their interpreters. As a result, they may consider NTID when looking at colleges and universities.

The interactive portion of this service model is not limited to interpreters. Once the concept has been tested and proven with interpreters, different portfolios may be targeted for outreach. Discrete communities, such as, Deaf and hard of hearing students in primary and secondary educational settings, NTID/RIT alumni, Teachers of the Deaf, C-Print and text service providers, and Parents of Deaf and hard of hearing children, can be developed.

**External barriers to success**

NTID does not have a national reputation for mentoring sign language interpreters. It is not part of the National Consortium and has not been a regional, autonomous player prior to the establishment of the National Consortium. The establishment of partnerships as well as pilot efforts will enhance NTID’s status. Also, NTID’s name and historical place in the field will attract interest.
NTID’s *Strategic Vision* expresses the need to free resources for new initiatives. This service model will need an abundant amount of resources in its infancy. Alternate funding sources must be investigated to alleviate the consumption of resources NTID will experience during the start up years.

Additionally, technology issues that need to be addressed are bandwidth and server capacity. The actual content delivery will not have scaling issues. Another technologic challenge is the ability to develop group and have group interactions.

**Internal barriers to success**

Motivation will be an issue within the Department of Access Services. For this initiative to truly succeed, management needs to be on board. Management needs to agree this project is a high priority initiative and not an auxiliary or ad hoc service. Concurrent to management’s recognition (and potential participation) in this effort, encouragement of staff innovation and creativity must occur. Without support from management, staff interpreters will, more than likely, be unwilling to participate.

Possible arguments that may be brought up against this initiative are:

- This is outside DAS’s core competency.
- DAS doesn’t have enough interpreters to satisfy the current interpreting demand. This project will drain those limited resources.

Counter arguments to be made are:

- DAS’s core competencies are interpreting and providing access. This initiative targets interpreters working with NTID’s future clients. NTID (and DAS) has a vested interest in supporting interpreters in primary and secondary educational settings. DAS’s direct impact on them will indirectly impact its future end customers.
• Interpreters from DAS who participate in this initiative will be expected to interpret their full interpreting load for DAS.

• Scheduling will be a challenge. The Director of the Department of Access Services in collaboration with the Director of this initiative will co-create rules to address this challenge. For example, the “live” portion (in Year 5 and beyond) may not be available between 10 am and 2 pm Eastern Time because this is a time of high interpreter need on RIT’s campus.

• DAS has a tremendous amount of content knowledge and experience. Educational interpreters in primary and secondary levels don’t have the luxury of working in a professional group where access to knowledge is taken for granted. This initiative provides an expanded knowledge base for their benefit and for the benefit of the student.

Summary

In NTID’s Strategic Vision 2010: Creating our Future, the conclusion addresses the reality of change (2005).

“The pace of change in the world will continue to accelerate; it is not just the volume, it is the velocity of change. To survive we must learn how to make change a fundamental part of our culture….We must constantly reposition ourselves, and we must do it now. This applies from expediting the curriculum process to freeing resources on an annual basis to initiate new activities (pp. 15-16).”

A new service model is proposed to aid NTID in the execution of its Strategic Vision 2010. The service model is in alignment with Strategic Vision 2010’s conclusion because it recommends positioning DAS to become a participant in NTID’s outreach efforts.

The service model’s direct purpose is to develop a network or community of educational interpreters across the United States, to foster professional practice and growth, knowledge
exchange, and collegial support. These central themes were expressed in the literature, mentoring café and interviews. Challenges of time, geography and financial resources and trends towards collaboration and dynamic design must be considered in the program’s overall architecture. Emerging trends and innovations in technology have suggested an online approach to this effort.

In its full implementation, its reach will be nationwide. Its impact will be to further the education of Deaf and hard of hearing students by supporting, connecting and enhancing the skills and knowledge of the interpreters who provide service to them.

This new service model is ideally positioned at a time when the term, “business as usual,” is taking on a different appearance. It is in line with the new look of the marketplace while it incorporates the foundations and goals of the mentorship experience for sign language interpreters.
**Definition of the terms:**

**Mainstream:** Educational environments which are located in the vicinity of a child’s home (local public or private school). These settings are marked by an overwhelming majority of non-deaf people, who do not know sign language and a low incidence of Deaf peers or adult role models. The Deaf or hard of hearing child will typically receive support services of some type. The Deaf child will typically participate in a regular classroom with his/her non-deaf peers.

**Support Services:** Professionals and para-professionals who will work with Deaf students in their educational environments. Examples of support services include but are not limited to: interpreting services, C-Print or captioning services, note taking services, speech therapy and tutoring.

**Video Relay Service:** A Deaf person phones a non-Deaf person by connecting to a sign language interpreter via a video phone. The Deaf person gives the sign language interpreter the phone number of the person s/he wants to call. The sign language interpreter phones the non-Deaf person using a telephone channel. Once connected, the interpreter interprets for both parties.

**Video Remote Interpreting:** May occur when both deaf and hearing consumers are in the same room but the interpreter is in a remote location. Also, the interpreter and one of the parties may be in one location. The other party is in a separate location. The interpreter, in both cases, interprets for both individuals from a distance via a video phone.
**Bibliography**


http://www.asl.neu.edu/tiem.online/RITC/all.html


*EIPA-RID membership agreement frequently asked questions*. (n.d.). Retrieved November 19, 2006, from Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf Web site:

http://www.rid.org/EIPA_FAQs.pdf


Unpublished master’s thesis, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN.

http://www.asl.neu.edu/tiem.online/mentoresource_VanNostrand.pdf
Appendix A

Technology Interview Questions:

Interpreter (human) related questions:

1. Please rate, in general and from your experience, interpreters’ knowledge and skills related to technology and technological applications (master, advanced, average, below average, dinosaur)

2. Please rate, in general and from your experience, interpreters’ attitudes toward technology and technological applications. (innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, laggards)

3. How good do you think interpreters are at dealing with changes in technology? (if not good—how do you help interpreters adapt to changes in technology?)

4. How is the field likely to be affected by changes in technology?

5. What kinds of education, specialized training, or readings would best prepare interpreters to use and/or keep up with technology in their work?

Task (Mentoring) related questions:

1. What technologies can be used in remote mentoring and in-person mentoring? a. Which are the best—technology wise? i. Are the costs of the above reasonable for interpreters to bear? ii. If not, which technologies are best from a cost perspective?

2. What are the major advantages of using technology with mentoring?

3. What are the major disadvantages of using technology with mentoring?

4. What is changing (technology wise) in the next 12 to 24 months? Will you incorporate these changes in your work? Why or Why not?

5. How do you measure the success of technological applications in mentoring or interpreting?
Mentoring Programs Interview Questions:

1. What is the over-arching goal for the mentorship program?

2. Are there criteria protégés must meet in order to participate? What are they?

3. Are there criteria mentors must meet in order to participate? What are they?

4. Is there training for either party? What does it look like?

5. Are mentors paid? How is payment determined? If the program is volunteerism, describe the process for recruitment of qualified persons. How is commitment assured?

6. What do mentorship relationships look like?
   a. 1:1 always?
   b. In person always?
   c. Technology utilized?

7. How do you assess effectiveness of the experience? Do you have a formal feedback system? Is it informal?

8. How are protégés and mentors matched?

9. Do you differentiate mentorships from practica and internships? Do skill levels play a role in this differentiation?

10. Is there a suggested protocol for a mentor who feels that their protege is in the wrong field?

11. What are the weaknesses of the program you participate in?

12. What are the strengths of the program you participate in?