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NTID

National Technical Institute for the Deaf • A College of Rochester Institute of Technology

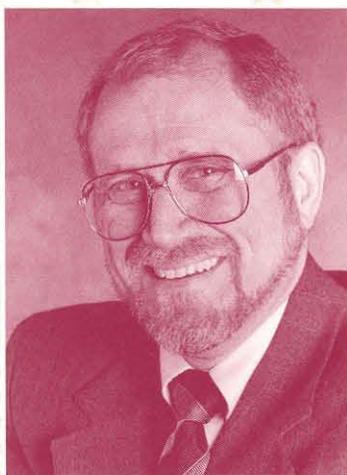
As NTID Dean and Interim Director James DeCaro leads the Institute into its 28th year of educating deaf students, he reflects on NTID's future as a world leader in education, as a college of Rochester Institute of Technology, and as a recipient of federal and other sources of funding.

What major issues and initiatives will NTID be addressing in the coming years?

NTID offers the world a model of postsecondary education with unequaled programs and services for students who are deaf. We have a responsibility to lead the way with regard to the critical areas of academic excellence, communication accessibility, and fiscal responsibility.

These three issues will guide NTID policy and initiatives throughout the next several years. Currently, NTID is engaged in a thorough review of its curricula, developing new programs and refining existing ones with the ultimate goal of strengthening the academic preparedness of our graduates as they enter the world of work.

In addition, as NTID has become a more established member of the



Dr. James DeCaro

RIT academic community with increasing numbers of deaf students enrolling in bachelor's and graduate degree programs in the other RIT colleges, the entire university community has become engaged in addressing the issue of communication accessibility.

Finally, in the face of significant budget constraints and challenges, NTID is called upon to reduce and reallocate its current resources while cultivating funding sources other than the federal government. Although not always an easy task, NTID continues to succeed in its efforts toward fiscal responsibility and has been commended for those efforts by the House Appropriations Subcommittee, which noted the following in its final report accompanying the 1996 Appropriations Bill:

"The Committee notes that this recommendation [for funding reduction] was one of the most difficult decisions it faced and wishes to commend NTID for the many actions it has already taken to downsize its work force, control costs, increase efficiency, and develop nonfederal sources of support."

How is NTID keeping pace with rapidly changing technology and other workplace demands to prepare graduates for successful careers?

The most critical and exciting recommendations of NTID's strategic plan relate to curriculum development and refinement. During the next two academic years, NTID's three curriculum centers (Center for Arts and Sciences, Center for Baccalaureate and Graduate Studies, and Center for Technical Studies) will be engaged in intensive reviews of their academic offerings. Specific areas of evaluation include program entrance requirements, coordination of efforts across centers, and transferability of NTID credits and associate degrees to professional programs in the other RIT colleges.

In addition to the redesign of some programs currently offered, a number of new curricular options are being investigated. For example, the Center for Arts and Sciences is studying the feasibility of offering a bachelor's degree in educational interpreting and expanding the current interpreter training program. Within the Center for Baccalaureate and Graduate Studies, a prebaccalaureate program is being developed to better prepare deaf students to succeed in RIT's highly competitive academic environment. And the Center for Technical Studies is investigating options in the health sciences field as well as development of associate in occupational studies (AOS) degree programs to complement current offerings of associate in applied science (AAS) degrees.

Perhaps the single most exciting new effort related to curricular offerings is the development of NTID's First-Year Experience program, which is being designed to maximize student retention and lay the foundation for our students' successful completion of academic study. This program will be characterized by a combination of innovative curricular and co-curricular activities, flexibility, and responsiveness to individual students' needs during their critical first year in the college environment.

The First-Year Experience as well as the noted curricular reviews and improvements are expected to be fully implemented and operational in fall 1997.

Now that increasing numbers of deaf students are enrolling in baccalaureate programs through other RIT colleges, what is the value of NTID's technical programs?

NTID's technical programs are central to the Institute's mission of educating deaf students to compete in the workplace on a par with their hearing peers. The direct instruction model of these programs paired with the strong partnership that NTID has forged with business and industry is a winning combination. This is evidenced by how well those programs prepare young people for very successful employment.

In addition, the technical programs play a critical role as "feeders" for RIT's baccalaureate programs. Currently, about half of RIT's baccalaureate-level students who are deaf have come through NTID's technical programs.

However, we have to remember that not every student has the desire or the capability to earn a baccalaureate degree. I would be concerned if NTID were to shift its focus to serving the educational needs of only those students at the high end of the academic continuum, the "crème de la crème," so to speak, and thereby deny opportunities to other deaf students who could benefit from our services.

For now, the 60 percent-40 percent balance of student enrollment that we have in our technical and baccalaureate programs, respectively, seems about right. Of course, the fact that about 25 percent of NTID's resources are currently allocated for the 40 percent of our students who are in baccalaureate programs needs to be addressed. I anticipate reallocating additional resources in that direction over the next three years.

With so many students matriculated in RIT baccalaureate programs, how is the Institute addressing the increased demand for access services?

While the majority of our students are enrolled in NTID's technical programs, the fact that a significant minority are pursuing professional degrees through the other RIT colleges creates challenges for the entire university system. The magnitude of access and support services currently required was never anticipated by NTID or the greater university. The original agreement that established NTID as a college of RIT indicated that the host institution would neither profit nor lose by the existence of NTID on its campus. Because of this, services for deaf students generally have been NTID's responsibility.

Since the original agreement was negotiated in 1966, however, there have been significant changes nationwide in the expectations of colleges and universities for providing access to people who are deaf. RIT has lived up to its responsibility as originally contracted. Now, however, as with all things in higher education, the circumstances have changed. One way that RIT is working to reassess its institutional responsibility to deaf students is through the Provost's Access Committee, which is developing recommendations pertaining to access and accommodation for deaf students studying in the other RIT colleges.

The partnership between NTID and RIT has grown significantly through the years. As with all partnerships, as time goes by and the relationship matures, the responsibilities of each partner have to be modified. It's a living contract with a continually evolving dynamic.

One result of this growing relationship is the fact that NTID truly is becoming an integral part of the fabric of RIT and is a full player on the university stage. We have a university president who has stepped forward to emphasize that the presence of NTID and deaf students on campus is integral to the multicultural nature of the university. There is significant leadership

and stewardship across RIT, in particular from Provost McKenzie, as it relates to issues of accessibility for deaf students, and that makes a big difference.

Also, what we think about today as “access” is significantly better than that which was provided 20 years ago, but we also can look at what we have achieved and still see significant room for continual improvement. That’s natural. The concept of access isn’t an absolute. Time, technology, and expectations change our perceptions, so what was once considered a major breakthrough in access services is now looked upon as a given.

Access is an issue that will continue to challenge NTID and the university to keep pace with the changing social expectations as well as with our own internal expectations. When you do something well, you expect to keep improving on your success.

How is NTID addressing the challenge associated with ensuring that students with various communication styles and backgrounds find a welcoming environment at the college?

These are challenging times because communication backgrounds and preferences continue to cause polarization in our field. At NTID, we are confronting this issue directly. We continue to work to ensure that our students find an educational home at NTID that encourages them to develop in ways that best suit their needs.

Therefore, we offer a range of the best services and instruction available; for example, speech and audiology services, American Sign Language courses, and language and culture offerings. We strive to offer a wide array of opportunities and support to students of varying backgrounds. We will continue to do so.

What is NTID doing to compensate for decreasing levels of federal support?

The federal government has made it clear that it cannot support NTID at the same level as in the past. If we were to simply downsize without developing increasing revenues from other sources,

NTID is prepared to take on the challenges ahead with an eye toward a distinguished and prosperous future. 

we would downsize ourselves out of existence. The pursuit of other sources of revenue must be an important part of NTID’s overall strategy.

NTID has a solid private development program that is growing more vital every year, as witnessed by the strength of the recently established NTID Foundation. The substantial endowment that NTID has built in just 10 years of private development efforts is an excellent indication of our value as an educational institution. Industry donates equipment to educational programs that are productive, like ours. Individuals and foundations establish scholarships for young people in programs with proven success rates, such as those offered at NTID.

In addition, NTID’s dedicated graduates are becoming increasingly important in our development efforts. As the Institute and its alumni mature, so too does the realization of individual responsibility for continuing to provide high-quality educational opportunities for future generations of deaf students.

NTID’s excellent record to date has allowed us to be effective in this regard, and with the ongoing commitment of all members of the Institute community, I am confident that our development efforts will continue to bring positive results.

Will NTID survive these times of critical fiscal cutbacks from the federal government while still maintaining its commitment to educational quality and state-of-the-art technology?

NTID not only will survive, it will thrive. It’s true that the Institute faces considerable financial challenges caused by a decline in the federal government’s ability to support educational programs. We will rise to meet those challenges by reassessing our priorities and redirecting our resources to areas of most critical need.

In the end, NTID will be a stronger and more viable educational institution. An analogy is what happens when you anneal steel: the heat tempers the steel, which then, when cooled, becomes even stronger than it was before it went into the furnace. NTID is not going to find itself incinerated in the process.

NTID is challenged now to reconsider the assumptions upon which its educational model was based 27 years ago. This is not to say that those assumptions were wrong or that the model hasn’t worked; indeed, the success of NTID’s programs and graduates over the past quarter century is testament to the accuracy of those early decisions.

However, the world is a different place now, and NTID must change with the times. The early assumptions about deaf students’ academic competencies and needs, for example, may no longer match what deaf students tell us today about their need for independence and freedom from patronizing behaviors. Deaf students today want to be treated as equal members of the RIT learning community alongside their hearing peers, and the burgeoning numbers of deaf students enrolled in bachelor’s and graduate degree programs in other RIT colleges prove their level of academic competence.

One thing that NTID has been particularly good at from the very beginning is looking ahead to the future instead of resting on the accomplishments of the past. That’s not to say that we don’t celebrate and take real pride in our accomplishments. But past success won’t ensure that deaf people will be employed in the future. That will happen only through excellent programs based within an educational institution willing to undergo change. NTID is prepared to take on the challenges ahead with an eye toward a distinguished and prosperous future.

—by Susan Cergol

Leadership

Welcome

to what promises to be another exciting year in the life of RIT.



Dr. Albert Simone

“A Time of Opportunity for People of Courage, Confidence, and Creativity”

*Excerpts from the September 1995 community address
by Dr. Albert Simone, President,
Rochester Institute of Technology*



I, now more than ever, feel genuinely privileged to have the opportunity to serve RIT. Before coming to Rochester, my wife, Carolie, and I had some knowledge of RIT: We knew a few of its people, we knew of its quality programs, and we knew of its solid reputation as a leading cooperative education institution and as a partner with industry. However, we did not fully appreciate why RIT is the unique and prominent university it is today until we began meeting and getting to know the people whose visionary ancestors founded this university, and the people—RIT's dedicated faculty and staff—who continue to bolster its mission and chart its future.

Indeed, I believe we have a reservoir of talent not found at many universities. We should all take great pride in knowing that RIT's academic programs rank among the world's finest and that we are seen as a major comprehensive university.

Another component of keeping RIT true to its mission is to recognize and address the many obstacles and challenges that will continue to emerge throughout the life of this university. These are not easy times. Yet we

must be willing to continue dealing with each issue in a spirit of teamwork, developing effective solutions that will give us the very best hope for tomorrow.

I would like to profile some of the challenges RIT will be facing over the next year as well as some of the developments that have occurred over the past year.

Managed attrition

With the cooperation and leadership of RIT's vice presidents, we have met our managed attrition replacement target during the 1994-95 and 1995-96 academic years. Thus, on an institute level, the process of managed attrition is achieving what we intended it to achieve. Because of managed attrition, we were able to fund one of the largest salary increases in higher education and expand and initiate several programs of strategic importance for RIT.

Program review

Based on the results of the academic program review [that each RIT college completed last fall], some programs will be enhanced, some modified or consolidated with others, and some identified as candidates

for discontinuance. The goal of academic program review is to shape our program portfolio so that it is consistent with our vision.

Year in review

Let me review a few of the many activities of the past year, many of which will continue into this year.

Board of Trustees Under the leadership of William Whiteside Jr., a parent of two RIT alumni, our trustees have demonstrated their strong enthusiasm for advancing RIT. In particular, parallel to the campus review of programs, our board, with outside counsel, has concluded a demanding self-assessment and established guidelines for continual board evaluation, feedback, and improvement.

Ten-year University Reaccreditation A campus-wide Middle States Association self-study is underway. RIT's accrediting group, which will be on campus during the 1996-97 academic year, will base its review on RIT's ability to meet the goals and objectives of its strategic plan.

Enrollment We have just attracted the second largest freshman class in our history. This is the product of our sound enrollment management strategies, our reputation that includes cooperative education, the overall quality and drawing power of our academic programs, and the outstanding efforts of our admissions personnel.

The bigger challenge now is retention. We must work to provide a campus climate in which students receive counseling, genuine faculty and staff interest inside and outside the classroom, and personalized support services so that RIT will continue to be their college of choice.

NTID The National Technical Institute for the Deaf, under Dr. James DeCaro's intrepid leadership, has successfully

minimized federal budget cutting as it affects NTID, while at the same time recognizing the need for NTID to be a financially responsible citizen. I join Jim's faculty, staff, and students in expressing appreciation for his and his team's courageous and effective efforts.

What lies ahead?

Student Life A major student focus for the year is to improve the overall campus environment through creating increased opportunities for student/faculty interactions outside the classroom—such as improving the availability and awareness of social, athletic, and cultural activities throughout the year.

College Goals All RIT deans made presentations at the July Board of Trustees meeting. Let me now share with you some of the goals they articulated:

Wiley McKinzie, dean of the College of Applied Science and Technology [CAST], proclaimed that by the year 2000, CAST will be a "virtual college" with any-time, any-place education and service, including ubiquitous global access.

Dr. William Nowlin, interim dean of the College of Business, stated that he wants RIT to be home to a total quality business college with 100 percent customer satisfaction in its technologically focused, internationally networked business programs.

Dr. Raymond Santirocco, interim dean of the College of Continuing Education [CCE], wants to build on CCE's nimble and entrepreneurial strengths to become the center for cross-disciplinary programs, the service agency for all part-time students, and RIT's primary delivery agent for external outreach programs.

Dr. Paul Peterson, dean of the College of Engineering, by the year 2000 envisions the college having a "best in class" advising system, a responsive program portfolio that includes software engineering, and the

beginnings of a Ph.D. program that enhances undergraduate programs and is affordable.

Dr. Robert Clark, interim dean of the College of Science, looks forward to the addition to the science building, which will enable faculty to reduce restrictions of time and place on learning opportunities for all science offerings. Also, as part of the academic program review process, he anticipates adding emerging disciplines to the program portfolio, particularly a bachelor's degree in biochemistry and a combined biology/MBA degree in collaboration with the College of Business.

Dr. Margaret Lucas, dean of the College of Imaging Arts and Sciences [CIAS], defined the challenge for CIAS as sustaining the unique features of its internationally famous schools while giving special attention to human resources and building student enrollments through programs featuring emerging cross-disciplinary opportunities such as those offered through the new Center for Digital Media.

Dr. William Daniels, dean of the College of Liberal Arts, was off studying at Harvard, but Associate Dean Glenn Kist presented the college's vision of enhanced scholarship and research, particularly as it relates to classroom teaching. New degree programs are anticipated in psychology, humanities and technology, and environmental studies, and the entire general education curriculum is up for review.

Dr. James DeCaro, dean of NTID, emphasized that NTID will continue to be challenged to increase enrollment in the face of competition from new programs for deaf students, downsize the number of faculty and staff members, increase the percentage of deaf students matriculated in other RIT colleges, and depend less on

federal government funding while not harming curriculum quality.

Dr. Edwin Przybylowicz, director of the Center for Imaging Science [CIS], wants the center to be industry's preferred source of graduates in imaging science and systems at all degree levels. CIS's strategic plan will develop incentive reward systems for faculty, define and promote imaging science as a discipline, and involve all faculty in recruiting students at the undergraduate and graduate levels.

Personal note

On a personal note, I plan to spend more time this year visiting the colleges and hearing directly from the faculty. I will do the same with student affairs, student groups, and other university divisions. My external involvement will expand to cultivate more major donors and to encourage our alumni to become more involved in the life of their alma mater.

You can see why I am so enthusiastic about RIT. Yes, the challenges are great, but then so are the rewards. There is no limit to the heights to which RIT can soar, if we are willing to assess ourselves realistically, plan together in a spirit of mutual respect, appreciate the importance each person plays in the life of RIT, and have the courage to make tough decisions.

I challenge you to make this vision a reality. Together we can make a difference at RIT and in all of higher education.

"If we continue to be demanding of our students and set higher and higher standards for them and for ourselves as educators, we all have a lot to gain."

Dr. Albert Pimentel 

The only deaf child of Portuguese-speaking immigrants from the Azore Islands, Dr. Albert Pimentel brings broad perspectives and strongly held positions to his dual roles as chairman of NTID's National Advisory Group (NAG) and a member of RIT's Board of Trustees.

As NAG chairperson since 1991, Pimentel—director of career education for deaf students at Northwestern Connecticut Community College—leads the group in its efforts to help shape NTID policies.

While the primary role of NAG is to advise the NTID director on policies governing the operation and direction of the Institute, the group also actively participates in activities that lead to securing private funds, relates appropriately with governmental agencies, and works to enhance the Institute's overall reputation.

Although his own academic background includes degrees in political science and psychology, Pimentel since childhood has expressed considerable interest in the technical fields. Such interests led him to early and continued support for the formation and development of NTID in the 1960s.

International travel has deepened Pimentel's resolve to provide American deaf students with opportunities to secure an education that prepares them for life and enables them to get jobs.

"I'm grateful the United States has NTID," he says. "The opportunities we offer here should allow us to continue to attract large numbers of deaf students."

In a time of diminishing financial support for NTID from the federal government, Pimentel asserts that the resulting challenges might not be altogether negative.

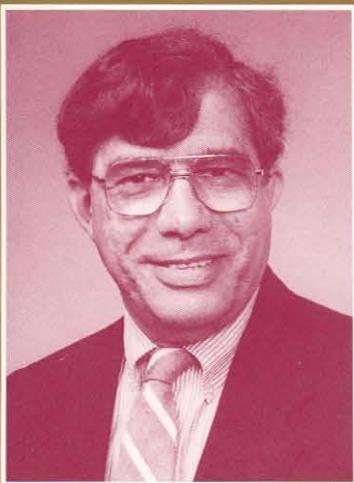
"A sharper focus could be beneficial," he says. "NTID might discover more specifically what it can and should do."

Pimentel's vision, which, he says, is shared by other members of NAG, is "helping NTID maintain its focus on student learning opportunities and reduce, if necessary, resource allocations for activities less directly related to the educational development of students."

With Pimentel at the helm, NAG holds fast to its optimism.

"If we continue to be demanding of our students and set higher and higher standards for them and for ourselves as educators," he says, "we all have a lot to gain."

—by James Graves



Dr. Albert Pimentel

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Without fuss or fanfare, one of the first things that William Whiteside Jr. did on becoming chairman of RIT's Board of Trustees in November 1994, was to start learning American Sign Language.

Whiteside followed the lead of Dr. Albert Simone, who began taking sign classes when he became RIT's president in September 1994, signalling a new era of leadership with regard to NTID and the presence of deaf students on campus.

"In order to do the job correctly, I felt I had to show my interest in learning the language of an important segment of the RIT community," says Whiteside, a partner in the Philadelphia law firm Fox, Rothschild, O'Brien, and Frankel.

Whiteside affirms that "NTID, as one of the eight colleges of RIT, is as important to the success of the larger university as the College of Engineering or any other college." He views RIT's ability to

provide mainstream education for deaf students as "an extraordinary opportunity to blend the best of all worlds."

Although the Board of Trustees relates to NTID in the same way it relates to RIT's other colleges, there is a singular connection in that the board provides a special seat for a member of NTID's National Advisory Group (NAG), currently Dr. Albert Pimentel, NAG chairman. The magnitude of NTID's programs, its uniqueness, and its strong relationships with external constituencies make it a college with a high profile for board attention.

Despite challenging economic times, changes in federal support of educational institutions, and increasing competition with other postsecondary institutions, Whiteside is optimistic about the future of NTID.

"Yes, NTID may look different in the future, but I'm confident that it will continue to live up to its mission," he says.

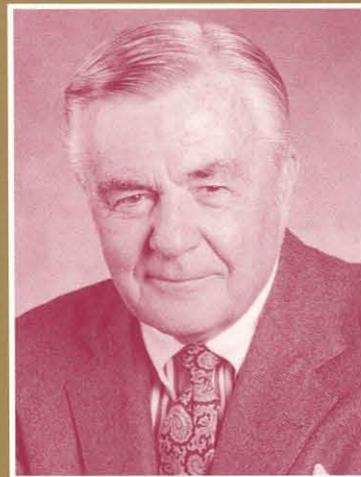
Praising NTID's strong leadership, Whiteside also points to its success in proving its worthiness to the federal government. Although additional federal funding cuts may be necessary, he says, "RIT's commitment to NTID will not waver." In addition to strong RIT support, Whiteside says he expects NTID will have ongoing success in attracting external funding sources to make up for governmental reductions.

Whiteside's respect for NTID and its administration significantly influenced his decision to accept the chairman position on the Board of Trustees.

"If NTID were not here to provide RIT a singular opportunity to educate deaf students alongside their hearing colleagues," Whiteside says, "I don't think I would have accepted the job."

"NTID is a most precious institution, and RIT's Board of Trustees will assist in the care and oversight of it in the best way we can."

—by James Graves



William Whiteside Jr.

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