

FALL / WINTER 2014

FOCUS

NTID

National Technical Institute for the Deaf • Rochester Institute of Technology



Scholarships Support Student Success

14th Annual NTID Job Fair



PHOTOS BY MARK BENJAMIN

Making Connections A total of 80 employer representatives from more than 40 companies came to RIT/NTID for the 14th Annual NTID Job Fair in October. Several hundred students and alumni seeking co-ops and permanent jobs shared resumes and interacted with the representatives, some of whom were RIT/NTID alumni. Employers included Air Products & Chemicals, BNY Mellon, Department of Defense,

Dow Chemical, IBM, Lockheed Martin, National Security Agency, Procter and Gamble, Prudential, SWBR Architects, Whirlpool Corporation, ZVRS and more. The NTID Center on Employment arranged for an Employer Panel the day before the fair to give students the opportunity network with company representatives prior to the fair.

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ABOUT THE COVER

Scholarships help ensure students can make the investment in their future that will pay a lifetime of dividends (see p. 3).

FEATURES

- 3** Keeping College Affordable: Scholarships Support Student Success

- 5** Expanding Health Care Career Opportunities

- 6** Thirty Years of Working Together

- 8** Going Global

- 9** The Next Big Idea Winners: Where Are They Now?

- 12** Cultural Integration on Campus

DEPARTMENTS

- 2** From the President: Fulfilling Our Mission

- 10** Student Profiles:
Kathryn Meeks
Cooper Norris
Justin Simmons
Mary Rose Weber

- 14** Advancing the Mission: New Faces, New Energy

- 15** Alumni Profiles:
Norbert Biderman
Debbe Hagner

- 16** Faculty/Staff Profiles:
Talila Lewis
Mark Pfuntner



FOCUS

NTID

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MARK BENJAMIN

Fulfilling Our Mission

Whenever I give a presentation, I always start by reminding the audience that NTID's mission is to prepare deaf and hard-of-hearing students for successful careers. Everything we do is centered on providing the education and experiences that students need to pursue their goals and lead productive, rewarding lives. And every person who works at RIT/NTID, no matter what their job, plays a vital role in fulfilling our mission and ensuring student success.

The first step in fulfilling our mission is making sure that students can take advantage of the opportunities available to them at RIT/NTID. In order to do that, we have to provide the financial support that students need, and we can't do that alone. We are grateful to the generous donors who support scholarships that enable students to get the education they need to achieve their goals. Today, more than ever, our students rely on scholarships to help

fund their education. Every gift, no matter the amount, makes a difference in our students' lives and ensures that they have the opportunities they deserve to excel (see p. 3).

Once students are here, they find a diverse community in which to learn and grow. One of the hallmarks of an RIT/NTID education is the blend of Deaf and hearing cultures on campus (see p. 12). This provides a rich environment that helps students learn how to work with people from a variety of backgrounds, which prepares them for careers in a rapidly changing world. Expanding global experiences and study abroad opportunities also foster student growth and prepare them to enter workplaces and communities that are increasingly diverse (see p. 8).

When our students are ready to enter the world of work—either to gain experience in a co-op assignment or to start their careers after graduation—NTID's Center on Employment (NCE) is here to help them. This year, we are celebrating the 30th anniversary of NCE's workshop for employers, Working Together: Deaf and Hearing People, which educates employers and helps them integrate deaf and hard-of-hearing employees into their workplace (see p. 6).

Seeing our students graduate and start their careers is a tremendous source of pride for all of us at RIT/NTID. With each individual success story, our mission is fulfilled. But our work is never done. We continue to welcome new students and help them on their journey to successful careers and lives. It's not just what we do. It's who we are.

Dr. Gerard J. Buckley
NTID President
RIT Vice President and Dean



Scholarships Support Student Success

by Ilene J. Avallone

A college education is an investment that can pay a lifetime of dividends. A 2013 study by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics shows that college graduates earn an average of 70 percent more in median earnings than their peers without degrees. While most families understand the financial and other benefits of a college education, some have concerns about whether and/or how they can afford it.

“A college education is one of the most important investments students and their families can make, and we are committed to ensuring that the ability to pay doesn’t prevent students from enjoying the benefits of an RIT/NTID education,” says Dr. Gerry Buckley, NTID president and RIT vice president and dean. “Not many deaf and hard-of-hearing students at other postsecondary institutions nationally can benefit from the type of financial support that NTID can offer.”

The special federal support NTID receives makes an RIT/NTID education an exceptional value for students and their families. Deaf and hard-of-hearing students, as well as hearing students enrolled in NTID’s American Sign Language–English

Interpretation program and Master of Science program in Secondary Education of Students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing, pay about one-third of RIT’s regular tuition rate, regardless of family financial status. RIT/NTID also offers a comprehensive financial aid program to help further defray the cost of a student’s education.

Barb Polle, coordinator for NTID financial aid counseling services, assists students and their families with funding their education, and says there are several sources of financial aid available for students.

Merit Scholarships: Awarded to students upon admission, these are based on high school academic performance and extracurricular activities.

Endowed Scholarships: Established by donors, these scholarships are awarded to current students in good academic standing who meet the criteria specific to each endowed fund. Some of these scholarships are based partly on financial need and others reflect the college’s commitment to achieving a diverse student body by focusing on a specific ethnic group, talent or expertise in a particular field.

Grants: These typically are need-based awards and, like scholarships, do not need to be repaid.

Vocational Rehabilitation Support: This is a source of financial assistance that varies by state for students who are deaf or hard of hearing. Visit www.rit.edu/ntid/vr for more information.

Work Study: Part-time work-study employment on campus enables students to earn a portion of school costs.

“A college education is one of the most important investments students and their families can make, and we are committed to ensuring that the ability to pay doesn’t prevent students from enjoying the benefits of an RIT/NTID education.”

—Dr. Gerry Buckley, NTID president and RIT vice president and dean

Loans: The money students borrow from the federal government or private sources to cover school costs must be repaid.

Financial aid awarded to RIT/NTID students in 2014 totaled more than \$23 million, with an average amount of \$13,029 awarded per student in the form of scholarships and grants.

Despite reduced tuition and financial aid, the full cost of attending per student, when factoring in room, board, books and fees, averages \$15,116 per year, which sometimes can make an RIT/NTID education feel out of reach for some students and their families.

“For qualified deaf and hard-of-hearing students who want to attend RIT/NTID, but who lack the financial resources to turn their hopes and dreams into reality, an RIT/NTID education only is possible with additional scholarship support,” says Bryan Hensel, senior director of NTID Development and Special Funding. “That’s why we encourage donors to endow scholarships and make gifts to existing scholarship funds as ways to create life-changing opportunities for students.”

“And because of the growing gap between the full cost of attending RIT/NTID, and the government support that NTID receives, the need to boost scholarship support is crucial for our students,” adds Buckley. “It’s a top priority for the college.”

Alex Van Hook, a student majoring in Political Science, is one of NTID’s scholarship recipients.

“The scholarship I received made an education here possible for me and was important to my success,” he says. “There are many opportunities that I got here that have been life changing—from securing an internship in Congresswoman Cathy McMorris-Rodgers’ office through the American Association of People with Disabilities Internship Program in Washington, D.C., to serving as president of the NTID Student Congress. As a scholarship recipient, I am able to pursue my dreams.”

“Increasing the amount of financial resources we have available is critical to support our current students, to ensure our ability to continue to attract the best and the brightest deaf and hard-of-hearing students, offer a diverse learning community, and reduce the

amount of debt students carry after graduation,” says Hensel.

Alumna Katie Hoheusle feels strongly about giving back, and makes it a priority to donate.

“Every gift, no matter the amount, helps NTID support the next generation of deaf and hard-of-hearing professionals who want to study here, but would otherwise lack the funds to do so,” says Hoheusle. “RIT/NTID provided a scholarship that enabled me to focus more on my studies and less on worrying about the financial means to finish college. I came from a lower middle class background, so the scholarship money I received meant the difference between a comfortable life and barely making ends meet for my parents while I was a student.”

A Lifetime Investment

Gifts to scholarships at NTID are investments that not only are life changing for recipients, but also ultimately yield significant benefit to society as a whole. A recent study found that at age 50, RIT/NTID students with a bachelor’s or associate degree earn 178 percent and 95 percent more, respectively, than deaf and hard-of-hearing graduates from other postsecondary institutions around the country. The increased earnings of RIT/NTID graduates result in greater federal, state and local tax contributions.

“RIT/NTID students have the potential to become tomorrow’s leaders,” says Buckley. “They deserve every opportunity to excel. Investments in scholarships help ensure that deserving deaf and hard-of-hearing students at RIT/NTID can afford the cost of a world-class education, and pursue professional careers that would likely be out of reach for them otherwise.”

Visit www.ntid.rit.edu/giving for more information about giving or to make a gift online.



Why Support RIT/NTID Scholarships?



One in four students at RIT/NTID come from families with annual incomes of less than \$30,000. For these students, an RIT/NTID education is possible only with scholarship support.

50%

At NTID, 50 percent of students (compared to the national average of 36 percent) participate in the Pell Grant Program, a federal program that provides need-based financial support for low-income undergraduate students. The Pell Grant is a reliable indicator of low socioeconomic status, which means that many RIT/NTID students come from families with very limited financial means and have no other source of funding to pay for college. This reflects the high degree of need for scholarship aid at NTID.

37%

The number of students who take out loans to pay for their RIT/NTID education has increased 37 percent over the past five years.



All gifts to endowed scholarships at RIT/NTID are matched dollar-for-dollar by the federal government, thus doubling the impact of donors’ support.

Expanding Health Care Career Opportunities

by Susan L. Murad

In 2012, the Task Force on Health Care Careers for the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Community—a partnership between RIT/NTID, Gallaudet University, University of Rochester Medical Center and Rochester General Health Systems—issued its final report, stating, “While people who are deaf or hard of hearing have made inroads in many sectors of employment, the health care field is an area where there still is a lack of representation in occupations requiring higher degrees.”

Since then, NTID’s Health Care Careers Implementation Commission—made up of faculty, staff and administrators from RIT/NTID and partners across campus—has embarked on initiatives based on the report’s recommendations.

Health Care Careers for the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Community Website

The website is the first of its kind, and is designed to provide inspiration by highlighting a number of deaf and hard-of-hearing medical professionals and professionals-in-training, as well as videos and links on career preparation, education and advocacy and the law. Visit rit.edu/ntid/healthcare.

Bridges to the Doctorate

With funding from the National Institutes of Health, this partnership between RIT/NTID and the University of Rochester prepares eligible students for the behavioral or biomedical science fields. The program takes deaf and hard-of-hearing students in specific master’s degree programs at RIT and provides guidance and readiness to enter doctoral programs at the University of Rochester. Visit deafscientists.com.

Certificate in Health Care Interpreting

This program works to meet the growing need for qualified professional ASL/English interpreters in a variety of health care settings. The program is a blend of consolidated, weeklong face-to-face classroom experiences and online learning components.

Visit www.ntid.rit.edu/aslie/certificate-healthcare-interpreting. Future plans include a master’s degree in health care interpreting.

Presentation Series

Working in partnership with various organizations, members of the commission are developing a series of panel discussions with deaf and hard-of-hearing professionals as well as employers, faculty and others related to training and employment in the health care field.

The panels provide students and others interested in health care employment opportunities with a chance to meet those who are in these fields and to learn about their experiences. The panelists share their journey and provide tips to overcoming obstacles.

Career Exploration Camps

RIT/NTID’s highly successful Explore Your Future summer program for high school juniors and seniors now incorporates a health care component during the one-week camp to give students an introduction to the types of high school and college courses necessary to qualify for careers in health care. NTID’s Outreach Department also has developed a one-week Health Care Careers Exploration Camp for deaf and hard-of-hearing high school students.

RIT’s College of Health Sciences and Technology

RIT/NTID has been enhancing collaboration with RIT’s College of Health Sciences and Technology and its programs in allied health. The leadership of CHST has been dedicated to supporting the success of deaf and hard-of-hearing students studying in health science fields.



Bridges Toward His Doctorate Bridges Scholar Lorne Farovitch of Tucson, Arizona, is an Environmental Science graduate student in RIT’s College of Science. His research interests include the survival of various pathogens in surface water, sediments and soils.

Future Plans

Collaboration with the Association of Medical Professionals with Hearing Loss is planned on a variety of programs and activities to provide additional access to deaf and hard-of-hearing medical professionals and role models for RIT/NTID students.

“The goal is to establish a pipeline for deaf and hard-of-hearing students pursuing health care careers and to support access technologies for deaf and hard-of-hearing health care workers,” says Rose Marie Toscano, co-chairperson of the commission.

Also planned is a liaison with professional groups such as the National Organization of Nurses with Disabilities as well as informal advocacy and information sharing on admissions/technical standards/access technologies for deaf and hard-of-hearing students entering health care fields at other universities and community colleges.

“Our goal is to light the fire within deaf and hard-of-hearing students who never thought a career in health care was in their future,” says Dr. James J. DeCaro, dean emeritus and co-chairperson of the commission. “And, to make sure programs and employment opportunities are in place when they are ready to enter the medical field.”

Thirty Years of Working Together

by Kathy A. Johncox

The year 2014 marked the 30th anniversary of Working Together: Deaf and Hearing People, an interactive workshop created by the NTID Center on Employment to help employers integrate deaf and hard-of-hearing employees into their workforce. The workshop is designed to make employers feel comfortable hiring deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals—to give hearing participants information and hands-on experience, so they can build their own strategies for working with, and being sensitive to the needs of, deaf and hard-of-hearing employees. Working Together is offered to supervisors and/or co-workers of deaf or hard-of-hearing employees, human resource professionals and diversity and disability hiring professionals.

From experience, NCE staff have learned that three areas of concern expressed by potential employers have been the safety of the deaf or hard-of-hearing employee, the existence of possible communication issues and the cost of any accommodations that might be necessary. Therefore, workshop topics include communication on the job, strategies for helping employers integrate deaf and hard-of-hearing employees into the workplace, accommodations for deaf and hard-of-hearing employees and understanding deafness and Deaf culture.

History

Thirty years ago, successful employment of deaf and hard-of-hearing students and graduates was partly a function



Working Together Linda Iacelli and John Macko share tips and strategies for interacting with deaf and hard-of-hearing employees at Qualcomm in San Diego, California.

of employer development—making connections and building relationships with employers all over the country who were searching for workers in fields where RIT/NTID students and graduates were skilled, trained and could hit the ground running. The people charged with making these connections were staff members of what then was called The National Center on Employment for the Deaf, now NCE.

At that time, NCE staff realized that, because many employers had not worked with deaf or hard-of-hearing individuals before, they might be uncomfortable, and therefore, hesitant to hire. NCE staff knew they needed to educate employers to change their perceptions.

In 1984, NCE staff members Mary Rees and Ellie Stauffer began to implement Working Together: Deaf and Hearing People and document program outcomes and success. It started as a two-day program. The workshop was experiential, and there were hands-on activities, including exercises that created communication barriers and white noise to give participants an idea of what it was like to experience hearing loss. There also were speech reading and listening strategy activities offered in a fun, comfortable and engaging manner. NCE staff later added a unit on Deaf culture and included more information about accommodations because of increasing numbers of technological advances in that area.

“The growth of this program was quite organic,” says Stauffer, now retired. “It was a fertile time for employment, especially technical employment, in the economy generally, not just for our students. Mary Rees and I were traveling around the country trying to connect with employers, and in doing so, we realized that we needed to do more than just visit.”

They wanted to offer something of value that would speak to concerns that employers might have about taking the step to hire. After designing the workshop,

“The Working Together program is an exceptional training that I have found to be a great asset to supervisors and co-workers of deaf and hard-of-hearing personnel. The workshop provides a clear understanding and demonstrates the importance of the culture. The interactive exercises provide a great learning tool for attendees to experience firsthand the challenges that a deaf or hard-of-hearing person may experience in the workplace, which provides insight and helps to ensure proper accommodations are in place to have a successful work environment.”

—Sharon Parish, Head, Warfare Analysis & Advanced Concepts Division (W10) Warfare Systems, Department (W) Naval Surface Warfare Center Dahlgren, Dahlgren, Virginia

Stauffer and Rees each had a list of employer contacts, which they used to recruit participants.

Early program attendees were IBM, AT&T, Department of the Navy, Citibank (now Citi) and Morgan Guaranty Trust (now JPMorgan Chase). At that time, NCE brought employers to campus for Working Together, introducing them to faculty, staff and students and providing academic observations and social activities, making sure the employers saw that deaf or hard-of-hearing people could do anything that hearing people could.

Stauffer says NCE saw the number of students being hired grow, as the level of comfort within the companies grew. With buy-in from company executives, NCE worked directly with supervisors and those who could carry the message to hiring managers to address concerns about having deaf or hard-of-hearing employees.

Linda Iacelli, assistant director and employer development coordinator for NCE, has been presenting the workshop since the earliest days of the program. In 1990, as coordinator of Employer Outreach and Training, she began traveling all over the country to present the workshops as word spread and demand increased. For five years, she responded to all requests for Working Together and other workshops NCE offered. She also coordinated teams of NCE staff and faculty who focused on several cities a year to bring employer workshops to those locales, develop awareness of NTID and the services of NCE, and ultimately foster the hiring of NTID students and graduates.

“It was my pleasure to travel around the country offering these workshops,” says Iacelli. “Employer outreach was one of several programs NTID was turning its attention to in those days to share its expertise with various external audiences.”

Today

Thirty years later, employer development continues to be a key factor in finding co-ops and jobs for deaf and hard-of-hearing students and graduates. Working Together is offered on site at employer locations in various U.S. cities each year and can be designed to fit a particular

“We have offered the Working Together workshop to managers, human resource professionals, employees who provide internal customer services and work groups that include both deaf and hearing employees. The unique experiential nature of this workshop has the potential to make a lasting impression on participants, which may lead to breaking down barriers, and improving communication, teamwork and productivity among deaf and hearing colleagues.”

—Cynthia S. Mitchell, Human Resources, Solar Turbines Incorporated, San Diego, California.

organization’s needs. It also is offered on a community-wide basis with various employers attending. NCE staff have presented more than 900 workshops to more than 17,000 participants.

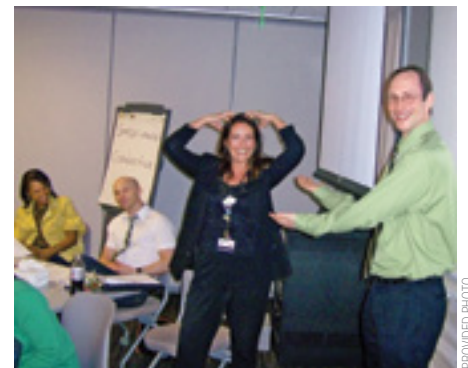
“We still find that employers hiring our students for the first time may have questions regarding communication or accommodations,” says John Macko, NCE director. “The content of the workshop is designed to explain that not every deaf person communicates the same way, and we offer suggestions to enhance communication and answer questions employers might have. Our teams of presenters most often include one hearing and one deaf person. Our staff has a wide variety of experience in different businesses and fields of employment and understands the hiring needs of businesses.”

NCE has condensed the content to a two-and-one-half hour workshop that contains some of the highlights of past workshops, one of which is the simulated hearing loss component. Staff members continue to travel nationwide to meet and network with employers to develop relationships and help them see the value of offering co-ops and permanent jobs to RIT/NTID students. Some employers still have concerns about barriers to hiring

deaf employees and integrating them into the workplace.

NCE’s task is to show that the barriers are small and can be overcome. The more employers know about deaf people, Deaf culture and accommodations, the more comfortable they become and the more willing they may be to hire deaf and hard-of-hearing employees. When they do, they find the diversity of their organization is enhanced. And NTID is able to maintain its historically high job placement rate for students and graduates.

“Working Together is a win-win,” says Macko.



PROVIDED PHOTO

Learning to Sign At Walt Disney Company and at most other Working Together workshops, attendees enjoy learning some sign language related to their business.

Some of the employers who have participated in Working Together: Deaf and Hearing People

BNY Mellon	IBM	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration	Procter & Gamble
Central Intelligence Agency	JP Morgan Chase	National Security Agency	Tiffany & Co.
The Dow Chemical Company	Kaiser Permanente	NAVAIR	Toyota
Fisher-Price	Lockheed Martin	Northrop Grumman	U.S. Department of Defense
Highmark	National Institutes of Health		Walt Disney Company

Going Global

by Ilene J. Avallone

RIT/NTID students are taking advantage of new opportunities for study abroad experiences.

“NTID is expanding its faculty-led study abroad opportunities so that more deaf and hard-of-hearing students can have a global experience before they graduate,” says Dr. Denise Kavin, NTID’s study abroad liaison.

Programs also are open to hearing students enrolled in NTID’s American Sign Language–English Interpretation program as well as students in NTID’s Master of Science program in Secondary Education.

Santiago, Chile: January 2-13, 2015

This program, which was led by NTID professor Michael Stein, included a three-credit fall semester course that culminated in a two-week excursion to Chile during the January intersession.

In Chile, students worked with deaf educators and organizations that assist deaf people to gain insight into the current situation for deaf people in Chile and to assist with community improvement efforts.

Students learned about the history, politics, laws, social situations and education, especially as it relates to the deaf community. Students also acquired basic skills in both written Spanish and Chilean Sign Language.

An international co-op experience grew out of this study abroad program for Megan Bernella, a fourth-year International Studies major from Austin, Texas, who visited Chile last January. This summer, she worked at Jorge Otte School for the Deaf in Santiago, Chile, and assisted in the classroom and taught English after school.

“The sense of independence I felt while abroad boosted my self-confidence tremendously,” says Bernella. “This experience changed my life.”

Costa Rica: May 28-June 7, 2015

Led by NTID faculty member Dr. J. Matt Searls, this program provides students the opportunity to learn about the unique historical, geographical, economic, social and political conditions in Costa Rica as



PROVIDED PHOTO

Greetings from San Jose, Costa Rica Back row left to right: Dr. J. Matt Searls, Christina Less, Maya Penn, Reena Banerjee, Joshua Mora, Christopher Pasquarelli. Front row left to right: Dr. Jess Cuculick, Clara Rich, Demara Jeanty, Corbin Register, Gina De Naples, Ashley Wood.

well as the Costa Rican deaf community. This program includes two, three-credit courses and the trip.

RIT/NTID students visit and meet students and faculty at schools for the deaf and members of associations of the deaf; engage in discussions with Costa Rican community leaders; and learn about biodiversity in Costa Rica by visiting a rain forest, cloud forest, beaches, waterfalls and national parks.

Summer Deaf Studies Program, Siena, Italy: June 20-July 10, 2015

NTID faculty member Pam Conley will be teaching a Global Deaf Literature course as part of a three-week Deaf Studies summer program in the Tuscan countryside. This program offers students an opportunity to study Italian Sign Language (LIS), learn about Italian Deaf culture and history, and about the deaf experience through literature. The program blends an intensive study of LIS with direct interaction within the deaf community of Siena. Students also will meet with local members of the Italian National Association of the Deaf.

Students will see the Palio di Siena, Siena’s world-famous bareback horse race;

take trips to Rome and/or Florence; tour a vineyard; and explore and study the economic, socio-historical and cultural aspects of Tuscany.

Japan: January 5-18, 2016 (dates subject to change)

RIT/NTID students will participate in a 12-day excursion to Japan led by NTID Business faculty member Scot Atkins. Students will interact with Japanese deaf students at the National Tsukuba University of Technology and take excursions to well-known attractions in Tokyo, Kamakura, Hakone, Kyoto and Osaka. Students will experience local culture and traditions such as a tea ceremony and sushi making. Students also will see a demonstration of the latest robots, visit modern pop culture sites and meet local deaf people. The program consists of two, three-credit courses and the trip.

STORY AND VIDEO EXTRA:

- See video, photos and more information on these programs at rit.edu/ntid/studyabroad

The Next Big Idea Winners: Where Are They Now?

by Kathy A. Johncox

Entrepreneurs abound in the business world and television offers *Shark Tank* with wealthy visionaries ready to buy what they consider the next successful invention. Many entrepreneurs and aspiring entrepreneurs can be found among the ranks of RIT/NTID students, and thanks to The Next Big Idea competition sponsored by ZVRS, RIT/NTID entrepreneurs have a chance to get support for their ideas. The Next Big Idea is an annual competition in which cross-disciplinary teams of deaf and hard-of-hearing students work together to create a product, technology or a business that will be useful to the deaf and hard-of-hearing community. Participants can win cash prizes.

As the competition completes its third year, *FOCUS* caught up with some of the past years' entrepreneurs to see where they have taken their ideas.

MotionSavvy



Top row left to right: Wade Kellard, Ryan Hait-Campbell, Jordan Stemper. Bottom row: Alexandr Opalka, Michelle Giterman

The MotionSavvy team of Ryan Hait-Campbell, a New Media Design major; Wade Kellard, a Mechanical Engineering Technology major; Jordan Stemper, an Industrial Design major; Alex Opalka, a Computer Engineering Technology major; and Michelle Giterman, a Financial Accounting major, has taken their project to the next level and then some. MotionSavvy was one of the winners in RIT/NTID's The Next Big Idea competition in 2013 with their prototype for gesture recognition software that will convert sign

language to text and text to sign language.

Following their NBI win, the team was accepted to RIT's Saunders Summer Start-Up Program, an intense summer program aimed at assisting entrepreneurs/innovators in developing their business concepts to a point where they are ready to seek investors. After that, they were accepted into Leap Motion's LEAP AXLR8R in San Francisco. Leap Motion, Inc. manufactures and markets a computer hardware sensor device that supports hand and finger motions as input. The device acts similar to a mouse, but requires no hand contact. The AXLR8R is an extremely competitive program, and MotionSavvy was accepted to continue development of the MotionSavvy gesture recognition software.

"Our product is intended to give deaf people power over their lives and allow them to lead the lifestyle they want to have," says Hait-Campbell. "That is all accomplished by being able to communicate. Our product is very ambitious, and we're still exploring all the options available to us."

"Being an entrepreneur is hard, exciting, stressful, fun and life-changing," he says. "In a startup like ours, everything you do will contribute to the success or failure of the business, and it forces you to adopt new skills and responsibilities to make up for being a small-sized entity taking on the challenges of building an empire."

Cenify



Patrick Seypura and Alec Satterly

RIT/NTID students Alec Satterly and Patrick Seypura, both Management Information Systems majors with minors

in Entrepreneurship, met in business class where they discovered that they had the same vision and passion for creating things—in this case, a wireless alarm clock for deaf and hard-of-hearing people based on Wi-Fi and Bluetooth technology. They enlisted the help of RIT/NTID student Sophie Phillips, a Biomedical Science major. After winning first place in the 2014 Next Big Idea Competition, Satterly and Seypura were chosen as finalists for the New York Young Entrepreneur Challenge in New York City. Phillips left the team for other responsibilities, and Satterly and Seypura currently are leading a team of seven developers and engineers and are building prototypes for their first three products.

"We strongly believe that smart home-based systems are the future of technology," says Satterly. "We are working on our first product called Alarmify, an alarm clock smart enough to read your daily schedule, review the traffic and weather and communicate with your coffee maker in a way that will put a hot cup of joe in your hands as you leave the house. That will require an automation system that interacts with people based on their needs, and that is our focus right now."

On being an entrepreneur, Satterly says, "It's hard, it's easy, it's exciting, it's stressful, and it's awesome. Many people say to be an entrepreneur you have to think outside the box. I think otherwise. I think you have to think inside the box or framework of the problem and come up with an innovative solution to solve it."

STORY AND VIDEO EXTRA:

- Learn more about MotionSavvy at motionsavvy.com.
- Learn more about Cenify at bit.ly/cenify.

Kathryn Meeks

by Kathy A. Johncox



A. SUE WESLER

Kathryn Meeks has a plan. And she always knew it would include going to college.

“My high school’s requirement for graduation was to be accepted by a college,” the third-year student from Midlothian, Virginia, says, “and my family always encouraged me to find a college that was the right fit for me.”

In ninth grade, she met an RIT/NTID admissions counselor who sparked her interest in RIT, and after attending RIT/NTID’s Explore Your Future summer program, she knew her goal was to be accepted here.

“Being an oral deaf student with bilateral cochlear implants, I appreciate the C-Print, interpreting, tutoring and notetaking services offered for deaf students at RIT,” says Meeks. “Professors are understanding of my needs as a deaf student. I get the best of both worlds with hearing and deaf people here—something I have never had before.”

After enrolling, Meeks looked at a number of majors and chose Psychology.

“I like to help others, and I really like psychology because I can apply what I have learned at RIT to help improve people’s lives,” says Meeks.

Working for two summers as a teacher’s assistant at a child development center in her hometown, Meeks continues to build on her plan for the future.

“I love working with children,” she says, “so I would like to explore working with children either in a school or a counseling setting.”

This NTID Presidential Scholarship recipient works hard, but still finds time to play.

“I love hanging out with friends, watching Netflix and working out or playing sports,” she says.

Her goal now is to find a co-op and to continue to follow Mark Twain’s advice in this quote: “Twenty years from now, you will be more disappointed by the things you didn’t do than by the ones you did do, so throw off the bowlines, sail away from safe harbor, catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover.”

Cooper Norris

by Kathy A. Johncox



MARK BENJAMIN

“I see strong diversity energy around RIT,” says Cooper Norris, a second-year student from Fairport, New York.

“It is definitely unique because here many groups of races, disabilities, sexual orientations, religions and beliefs blend into one and work together.”

Norris, 20, chose RIT with some encouragement from friends, family and teachers. His desire to major in engineering also influenced his choice, as he knew the reputation for strong engineering programs at RIT.

“I always have been fascinated with math and how it works, and I’ve always wondered how things work out there in the world,” says Norris. “I thought that a major in Mechanical Engineering Technology would suit me greatly. Now I love my major because there are so many different factors to learn about how things work. It really has interested me so far.”

RIT’s variety of support services to make sure students have the best learning environment in college was important to Norris, and he also wanted the experience

of studying and living with both deaf and hearing students.

Norris is involved on campus as secretary for the student organization Spectrum, and plays in the Deaf Volleyball Association. He also is a member of the Sigma Nu fraternity. He finds time for his hobbies of listening to music, hanging out with friends and cooking.

Even though in day-to-day life he’s busy, he also is thinking about the future.

“My goal is to work in a place where I can construct things, or even invent something new,” he says. “I believe that no matter how hard the obstacles are that you encounter in your life, you always must find a way to overcome them. Don’t let anything stop you.”

Justin Simmons

by Ilene J. Avallone



A. SUE WESLER

Justin Simmons, 22, from Pickering, Ohio, is a fourth-year Packaging Science major who plans to graduate in May.

“The field of Packaging Science is something I really enjoy,” says Simmons. “I’m very creative, and I like to design, but I also like math, science and business, so this major is perfect for me because it combines all the subjects I love.”

Simmons attended RIT/NTID’s Explore Your Future program as a high school junior and knew right away he wanted his future to include RIT.

“I was searching for a place where people understood me and where I could be part of a Deaf community, because I didn’t have that experience in my mainstream high school,” he explains. “By coming to RIT I knew I would be with other people like me, have many academic choices to choose from and could take advantage of wonderful support services.”

Simmons is making the most of his time at RIT. Last year, he placed third in RIT’s Tiger Tank, a competition that gives students the opportunity to pitch their business ideas to

judges to win cash prizes. This past summer, he participated in RIT’s Summer Start-Up Program, an intense 10-week program where he was coached and mentored in developing his business concept to a point where he is able to seek investment. His product is a fraud detection system that can tell if items such as clothing are worn and used for a given length of time, which gives retailers a defense against retail fraud. He has some major retailers already interested in his product.

When he’s not focusing on academics or furthering his entrepreneurial interests, Simmons works part-time in NTID’s Office of Admissions and serves as an NTID student ambassador. He also is a member of RIT’s CRU (a Christian student club) and the Institute of Packaging Professionals.

“I think RIT has the complete package,” he says. “The wonderful support I get from faculty and being part of the Deaf community in such a warm and welcoming environment makes RIT so unique.

“I came to RIT/NTID with an open mind, and I found myself here—both scholastically and socially.”

Mary Rose Weber

by Susan L. Murad



A. SUE WESLER

Mary Rose Weber’s favorite quote is from Albert Einstein: “The only source of knowledge is experience.” She is taking Einstein’s words to heart and experiencing all she can during her time at RIT/NTID.

Born and raised in Apple Valley, Minnesota, Weber, the only deaf member of her family, attended Metro Deaf School for 13 years before coming to RIT/NTID.

She majors in Information Technology, and completed a cooperative work experience as a computer technician at PCs for People in St. Paul in 2013.

“I repaired and did troubleshooting on many old computers’ hardware and software programs,” she says. “My boss gave me two projects: setup/install a server with Microsoft Server 2012 and create a program with Visual Basic. I had never used that program before, but I did my research and asked my co-worker for help. I was really proud to have accomplished that task, and it was a great learning experience for me.”

Back on campus, Weber stays busy being involved with the Deaf Basketball Association,

Deaf Volleyball Association, NTID Geek Club, Windows Club, College Activities Board and more.

“RIT/NTID is a good fit for me because it is a new environment and challenges me,” she says. “My favorite classes are Introduction to Psychology, Beginning Japanese I, Web II and Windows Phone 8 App Development.”

When asked what advice she would give to other students who are looking for a college, Weber is a believer in doing your homework.

“Check college websites to see if they have interesting majors, apply early, visit a few colleges to get a sense of what they are like and if they are the right fit for you, and definitely look for scholarships early,” she says.

And how would Weber sum up all of the knowledge she’s gained through her experiences at RIT/NTID?

“Go Tigers!”

Cultural Integration on Campus

by Susan L. Murad



Collaboration is Key Left to right: Students Aaron Sorrin, Neil Hiranandani and Paul Bourgeois present on affirmative action as part of their First Year Writing Class.

Since NTID's establishment at RIT in 1968, there has been increased integration between Deaf and hearing cultures, creating a unique and continuously changing environment for living and learning found on no other campus in the nation.

In recent years, there has been a surge of interest by hearing students in Deaf cultural studies and American Sign Language courses, unprecedented participation in No Voice Zone—a peer teaching program for students to learn sign language—and the addition of an NTID cross-registered student government senator representing deaf students who take classes in the other eight colleges of RIT. Other deaf-hearing activities include collaborative theater productions and the RIT/NTID Dance Company.

Collaboration also is a key element in the class, First Year Writing: Writing Seminar, where deaf and hearing students work together to research and develop presentations on a variety of topics of interest to the members of the teams. Faculty members Linda Rubel, Rose Marie Toscano and Dianna Winslow piloted the conjoined class for the first time in fall 2013.

“These collaborative presentations reflect the importance of being able to work in diverse teams,” says Dr. Kevin McDonald, RIT's vice president and associate provost for Diversity and Inclusion. “Organizations all over the world are looking for employees who can work on teams that comprise various aspects of compositional diversity, because they believe that diverse teams will positively impact their bottom line. Research also suggests that diverse teams outperform homogeneous ones time and time again, so having students grapple with this experience during college helps to prepare our leaders of tomorrow, today.”

For the students involved in the collaborative projects, the benefits began immediately.

“The experience benefited me in multiple ways,” says Aaron Sorrin, a first-year Environmental Sustainability Health and Safety major from Randolph, New Jersey, who is hearing. “I found that having to adapt to different communication styles provided an interesting challenge that I haven't had to face in any of my classes throughout high school or college. This challenge became a learning experience for all of us. Because we had to work around a

language barrier, we developed various ways of communication. I also benefited by the experience because it provided an opportunity to break down barriers that may exist between hearing and deaf students.

“I would definitely recommend this experience to other students. I found that it was a great way to establish effective communication. Rather than relying on my usual method of vocal communication, I had to adapt, and overall it provided a useful experience and learning opportunity for me. I do think that it requires some patience in order to figure out the best ways to communicate, but the effort definitely pays off.”

For Paul Bourgeois, a first-year New Media Marketing major from Milton, Ontario, Canada, the experience helped broaden his perception of what it would be like to work with a group of hearing students.

“It was an interesting experience working with two smart writers who were able to accommodate my deafness,” he says. “We all worked hard individually and kept each other in the loop. We contributed evenly and in different aspects. It was a pleasure to work with Aaron [Sorrin] and Neil [Hiranandani, a first-year Computer Engineering major, and the third member of the team]. They were very easy to work with. I have had a lot of experience working in different types of groups, but very rarely do I work with hearing people. To have this type of experience be so successful gives me hope for the future of bridging the gap between the hearing and deaf worlds.”

Input from the students themselves drives the manner in which these new experiences are created, implemented and ultimately adopted into everyday campus life. Trevor Klemp, the cross-registered senator for RIT Student Government, is an example of how these changes happen organically.

“The RIT/NTID community as a whole views itself as diverse and complex, but as you become integrated into the system, you begin to realize that there are two

separate communities working independently and often cross-working together,” says the Biomedical Science major from Houston, Texas. “NTID specializes in providing excellent services to the deaf, while RIT has the hefty task of focusing on both hearing and deaf students. This is where I come in. My role as a cross-registered senator is to make sure students are successful and achieving their goals in the other eight colleges.”

“Student life at RIT has always benefited every student much better when we have engagement and perspective from student leadership that is as diverse as our students, and all of us—students and staff members—aim to continuously create, evolve and enhance the out-of-class environments to broaden participant diversity,” says Dr. Karey T. Pine, senior director of RIT Campus Life. “As importantly, we all have continued to evolve our definitions and understandings of an integrated and inclusive student life at RIT because of the experiences and feedback from deaf, hard-of-hearing and hearing students who partner in navigating and participating in activities, events and governance structures.”

Cross-cultural collaboration in the arts at RIT/NTID is more than just a coincidence. NTID Performing Arts faculty Dr. Luane Davis Haggerty and Thomas Warfield regularly collaborate with colleagues from RIT’s other colleges as well as community members and have many tangible examples of artistic success.

For Warfield, the artistic director of the RIT/NTID Dance Company, concert materials that combined the talents of NTID Performing Arts and faculty from RIT’s College of Liberal Arts, School of Film and Animation, Computer Gaming, and College of Science resulted in *Astrodance*, a production developed through a grant from the National Science Foundation combining dance and scientific information on astrology.

“Theater and dance create a bridge between cultures and communities allowing students from a variety of ethnicities, cultural backgrounds and linguistic differences to find a place that they consider ‘home,’” says Davis Haggerty. “A community that is tied together by experiences in creating performance art that brings the students, staff and faculty together in this way is a great benefit.”

“To have this type of experience be so successful gives me hope for the future of bridging the gap between the hearing and deaf worlds.”

—Paul Bourgeois, first-year New Media Marketing major from Milton, Ontario, Canada

If you were to look at the hard numbers, you would find that students participating in the performing arts program—deaf and hearing—have a high rate of retention and graduation. They hold themselves together and do not let each other fall off the grid.”

“From the onset of students arriving on campus, RIT does an outstanding job of integrating deaf and hearing students together and fostering cross-cultural understanding and collaboration,” says Dr. Gerry Buckley, NTID president and RIT vice president and dean. “It’s a key factor in why so many deaf and hard-of-hearing students choose RIT.”



Raise Your Hands Students participate in RIT/NTID’s No Voice Zone to gain sign language skills and an understanding of Deaf culture.

New Faces, New Energy

by Susan L. Murad

Two new members of the RIT/NTID Development and Alumni Relations Office are taking on their roles with energy and enthusiasm. Heather Emerson Jeremy grew up in Rogers, Minnesota, and attended the University of Minnesota at Duluth for two years before transferring to RIT. She graduated from RIT's Saunders College of Business with a bachelor's degree in Business Administration in 1997 and earned a master's degree in Professional Studies from RIT's Center for Multidisciplinary Studies in 2013. She worked in retail and corporate settings before joining RIT/NTID as an admissions counselor and then worked in the Pre-College Outreach Department. She has been assistant director of development at NTID since August. She lives in Penfield, New York, with her husband and two daughters.

Loriann Macko grew up in the Youngstown, Ohio, area, and earned her bachelor's degree in Social Work from RIT's College of Liberal Arts. Macko also worked in the NTID Admissions Office for most of her career at NTID, later working with PEPNet-Northeast and NTID Pre-College Outreach before moving to an interim role with Alumni Relations. She has been in this role permanently since last spring. She lives in Mendon, New York, with her husband and two children.

FOCUS sat down with Emerson Jeremy and Macko to learn more about their new roles and their goals for the future.

WHAT ATTRACTED YOU TO THESE POSITIONS?

LM: I'm lucky enough to work in a job that inspires me on a daily basis. Seeing what our amazing alumni are doing in the world is a constant motivator. My objective is to encourage relationships between our alumni and RIT/NTID, and really enjoy working on a variety of projects that benefit alumni, students and other friends of the college. I'm meeting so many new people and also rekindling connections from days gone by.

HEJ: The idea of expanding my network really appealed to me, and that's exactly what is happening. I'm working with corporations and organizations that may already have connections with RIT/NTID, and creating new connections with others. I'm constantly amazed by the impact of NTID on our community. We set the bar as a model of deaf education and are an example for others to follow. It's a great story to be able to share with the business community.

ARE THE REALITIES OF THE POSITION LIVING UP TO YOUR EXPECTATIONS?

LM: Absolutely, and then some! The layers of connections among the college, our alumni and the community are remarkable. It's like pieces of a puzzle that fit together in a wonderful way. It's so much more than I ever expected.

HEJ: The connections—yes, that's the one of the many great parts! I knew it might be a challenge to enter the world of development, but I found I had more skill than I realized. What's great is that I can share first-hand the benefits of an RIT/NTID education. I'm a living example. I believe in the college so much and can't stress enough the importance of giving back.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE GOALS YOU HAVE SET FOR YOURSELVES IN YOUR NEW JOBS?

LM: I have three overarching goals: to host events for alumni that provide



Loriann Macko and Heather Emerson Jeremy

an opportunity to learn something new and make connections; to grow alumni involvement in the chapters and to encourage more alumni to volunteer in ways they are able and that are mutually beneficial; and to educate alumni on philanthropy and the many ways there are to give back and have a positive impact on the future.

HEJ: We have very similar goals. I'm focused on letting my audiences know the kind of impact their gift can make; building relationships with corporations and foundations whose interests are aligned with ours; and helping people to understand the importance of giving back. If we can demonstrate that, we are doing something right. I like helping to instill the concept of life-long connections to the college and greater university.

NTID's 50th Anniversary Reunion Survey

Don't miss the opportunity to share your thoughts on plans for this momentous occasion. Visit rit.edu/ntid/reunionfeedback and tell us what YOU think! The survey closes April 15, 2015.

Norbert Biderman

by Susan L. Murad



SUNY POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE

Norbert “Norb” Biderman advises young people he meets to seek and maintain balance between their academic, professional and personal lives. He now takes these words to heart as he continues his own education, pursuing a Ph.D. in Nanoscale Engineering at the newly formed SUNY Polytechnic Institute in Albany, New York.

Biderman grew up in Woodbury, Minnesota, along with a younger deaf sister and three hearing stepbrothers. He attended a deaf charter school in Saint Paul through eighth grade, then was mainstreamed at a local high school. He came to RIT/NTID as a transfer student from the University of Minnesota.

“I transferred to RIT in my junior year of college because RIT had the best of both worlds—quality education and a large deaf student population,” he says. “I took advantage of a number of support services, including sign language interpreting services and academic assistance. I held several part-time jobs at RIT/NTID, including being an English peer tutor and an assistant at the

NTID Learning Consortium.”

RIT/NTID provided the kind of academic rigor in a deaf-friendly setting that Biderman was searching for, and he is grateful for the preparation he received as a 2010 graduate in Mechanical Engineering Technology from RIT’s College of Applied Science and Technology. He completed co-ops at ITT Industries-Goulds Pumps in Seneca Falls, New York, and at Lexmark International in Lexington, Kentucky, and decided to pursue his doctoral degree because he is interested in a career in research and development.

“I learned a significant amount of necessary background in engineering and physical sciences at RIT, which has been very beneficial as I am nearing the completion of my Ph.D. studies,” he says.

Along with maintaining balance, Biderman advises students to be tenacious, especially through challenging times—and again can be counted on to take his own advice.

“Engineering and physical sciences are not supposed to be easy,” he says. “Do not become discouraged. Life is much more rewarding that way.”

Debbe Hagner

by Susan L. Murad



SUBMITTED PHOTO

RIT/NTID alumna Debbe Hagner is a big believer in legacy. In fact, she has made a career out of discovering the legacies of others through genealogy.

As one of the few accredited deaf genealogists in the country, Hagner turned her long-time hobby into a career when she was laid off in the early 1990s. She has traced her own family’s history back to the 1600s.

Born hard of hearing, Hagner now is profoundly deaf. She uses hearing aids, reads lips and learned sign language as a sophomore in high school in Illinois, and now lives in Port Richey, Florida.

“I went to NTID to major in Data Processing and then went on to earn a bachelor’s degree in Information Technology,” she says. “I came to RIT/NTID because of the school’s reputation for technology.”

Hagner feels RIT/NTID was a good fit for her because of her interest in computers.

After graduation, Hagner worked at IBM for 13 years as a systems programmer and then a systems tester for Virtual

Machine Systems.

“I have been involved with genealogy for 40-plus years,” she says. “I do genealogical searches for clients and teach research methods to various groups interested in genealogy. I’ve been the president of the West Pasco County Genealogical Society for more than 18 years.”

In addition to tracing the roots of families, Hagner is president of the Clearwater Chapter of the Hearing Loss Association of America and vice president of HLAA in the State of Florida. She is treasurer of the Suncoast Chapter of the Association of Late-Deafened Adults and a member of National Association of the Deaf.

And in keeping with her commitment to legacy, she recently committed to a generous bequest intention at RIT/NTID to create an endowed inspirational lecture series in her name.

“It was important to me to give back to RIT/NTID, since this school gave me so much,” she says.

Talila Lewis

by Susan L. Murad



A. SUE WEISLER

A desire to work with young people and involve them in social justice advocacy brought Talila Lewis to RIT/NTID.

A 2007 graduate of American University with a bachelor's degree in Political Science, Lewis earned her Law degree from American University Washington College of Law in May 2014. She began teaching at RIT/NTID this fall.

"I am an activist-entrepreneur whose research and advocacy focuses on correcting and preventing wrongful convictions of deaf people, and on ending discrimination against deaf and disabled people affected by mass incarceration," Lewis says. "I founded and direct Helping Educate to Advance the Rights of the Deaf (HEARD), an all-volunteer nonprofit organization that develops contemporary and transformative approaches to creating a universally accessible justice system. HEARD primarily focuses on correcting and preventing wrongful convictions of individuals who are deaf; ending deaf prisoner abuse; decreasing recidivism rates for deaf citizens released from prison; and increasing representation

of the deaf in the justice, legal and corrections professions."

Lewis also is a young activist-organizer who gains energy and inspiration from engaging students in changing the world.

"I think my students are drawn to my passion and are happy to find a medium in which their voices are heard," she says.

It is crucial to Lewis that her students learn and understand the most effective methods to successfully advocate for issues they believe in. And that they become involved in the process as young people.

"Advocacy that does not feature youth leadership is shortsighted and unlikely to succeed in the long term," she says. "I want to share my knowledge with others, so we can fight for and win our freedom together."

Lewis' passion and devotion are reminiscent of cultural anthropologist Margaret Mead who said, "Never underestimate the power of a small group of committed people to change the world. In fact, it is the only thing that ever has."

Or as Lewis says, "Never underestimate the power of collective activism."

Mark Pfuntner

by Ilene J. Avallone



A. SUE WEISLER

When Mark Pfuntner was a student at RIT, he learned he liked working with people, so he took a hotel management class and loved it. That decision turned out to be a defining moment in his journey—from getting a bachelor's degree in Hotel and Resort Management and an MBA, both from RIT, to working in hotel, banquet and catering management positions for 15 years prior to coming to work at NTID.

Pfuntner, associate professor/coordinator for NTID's Business Studies Department, joined NTID in 1998 and worked for two years in the NTID Development Office. From there he transitioned to the NTID Center on Employment, where he discovered a passion for teaching.

"I had to teach a Job Search class, and that experience working with students was so much fun that when an adjunct position was offered to me in the NTID Business Studies Department, I took it," he says.

Today, Pfuntner teaches courses in NTID's Business Studies Department and tutors deaf and hard-of-hearing students enrolled

in RIT's Saunders College of Business and in the Hospitality and Service Management program in RIT's College of Applied Science and Technology.

"Using my own experiences helps create open dialogue in the classroom and a learning environment in which students participate actively and become engaged with the course material," he says.

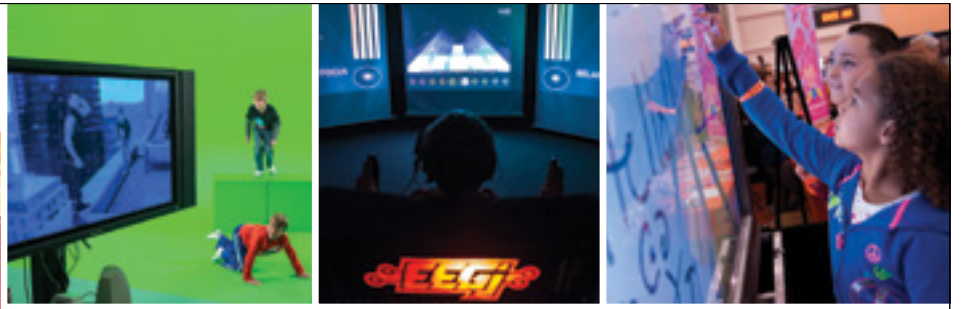
"I tell my students that hard work will grant success; that you should always finish what you start to the best of your ability; and that you should embrace change because change is constant," he says.

Pfuntner finds his job very rewarding.

"Watching my students walk across the stage on graduation day and knowing I played some small role in their success is inspiring," he says. "RIT was instrumental to my personal career success, so the opportunity to pay it forward is so gratifying."

In his spare time, Pfuntner enjoys golfing, reading and bowling with his son. He plans to continue his education and is exploring doctoral programs.

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SATURDAY, MAY 2

A Free Festival For Everyone

What: Imagine RIT: Innovation and Creativity Festival is the university's signature event, a showcase that displays the ingenuity of students, faculty and staff.

When: 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday, May 2.

Admission: Free and open to the public, rain or shine. Parking available on RIT's campus and at Monroe Community College with a free shuttle service to RIT.

What you'll see: Nearly 400 interactive presentations, exhibits, research projects, hands-on demonstrations, and live performances.

Plan your day: Build an itinerary of your favorite exhibits and live performances. Check out the entire festival program at www.rit.edu/imagine.



NTID Student Ambassadors

Find out what it's like to be a student at RIT/NTID. Meet NTID's student ambassadors, follow their blogs and learn about life on and around the RIT campus. You'll get a glimpse into classes, campus life and more. Visit www.ntid.rit.edu/ambassadors.



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“Midfall Night Stroll” This 3D illustration, created by Heather L. Smith, a lecturer in the NTID Visual Communication Studies Department, was featured in NTID’s 2015 Visual Communication Studies Department faculty exhibition. Smith has a strong interest in architecture and for this image wanted to depict a village street scene following an early evening thunderstorm.

HEATHER L. SMITH