

NTID researcher recognized for accomplishments

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by Kathleen S. Smith

Dr. Susan Foster is one of NTID's most well-respected researchers. Her work on the topics of educational and career access for deaf people has earned her nationwide recognition, and she has published two books on the subject: *_Deaf Students in Postsecondary Education_*, co-edited with Dr. Gerard Walter; and *_Working with Deaf People: Accessibility and Accommodation in the Workplace_*. Both were published in 1992.

This January, Foster added another feather to her cap when she received the 1996-97 Phi Delta Kappa Award for Research from the organization's Rochester chapter in recognition of her "long-term contributions, significant accomplishments, and demonstrated potential for future service." In introducing her to receive the award, NTID Dean James DeCaro noted, "Susan's work is unique in postsecondary education. Phi Delta Kappa has made a truly outstanding choice in recognizing Susan and her work."

This is not the first time that Foster, an associate professor, has been recognized by her colleagues. In 1991, she received the Award of Excellence from NTID's Deaf Professional Group. That award recognized her "demonstrated commitment to the interests and goals of deaf professionals."

Foster has been at NTID since 1984. She began her career as a research associate and moved to the center for postsecondary career studies in the late 1980s. She currently works in the department of educational and career research.

Over the years, she has been a leader and team player in several of NTID's most important research projects, including studies related to deaf people in the work place and the Americans with Disabilities Act; how deaf and hearing students interact with each other; the partnership between students and teachers in their classes; and the effects of mainstreaming deaf students. Royalties from both of her successful books have been donated to support the Robert Panara Scholarship Fund at NTID.

Foster and fellow NTID faculty member Jack Slutzky this year received an \$8,000 Provost's Productivity Grant to conduct a one- year research project on producing captioned videotapes for classroom use.

While Foster graciously accepts the various honors and awards that come her way, she clearly is motivated by the potential of her future research projects, particularly two in which she presently is involved. The first, a team project she is working on with the NTID Special Institute Project Group on Access, is looking at strategies for mainstreaming deaf students enrolled in the other colleges of RIT.

Nearly 10 years have passed since NTID last researched the extent to which deaf students have access to RIT classes. Has student access to communication and classroom information improved in the past decade? Are instructors and students using new strategies for access and communication? With approximately 400 deaf students enrolling each quarter in classes with their hearing peers, answers to these questions should provide a revealing look at the status of mainstreamed education at RIT.

Foster's second project, *Deaf Professionals in Supervisory Roles: Vertical Mobility in the Workplace*, will look at NTID alumni who have been or are supervisors of hearing people. Foster is collaborating with fellow researcher Janet McLeod-Gallinger on this project.

"Research has shown," says Foster, "that promotion is a challenge for deaf people. Our purpose in this study is to determine the characteristics and circumstances of NTID alumni who have become managers."

Foster and McLeod-Gallinger have found 25 alumni willing to be part of the project. The results, Foster hopes, will be used to develop curricula and programs designed to enhance opportunities for deaf people to move into supervisory or management positions in their places of employment.

Foster is a member of the American Deafness and Rehabilitation Association, the American Educational Research Association, the American Sociological Association, the National Association of the Deaf, the New York State Association of Educators of the Deaf, the Society for Disability Studies, and the Society for Applied Anthropology (Fellow status). She also is associate editor of the *Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education*.

"I've been very fortunate to have a job that I love and great people to work with," Foster says. "Feedback from deaf and hearing people in the field suggests that my contributions have been useful; what more could I ask for?"