

FOCUS

NTID

National Technical Institute for the Deaf • Rochester Institute of Technology



Congratulations to the class of 2016!



Leslie Williams

Chi Man "Chloe" Ho

Leslie Williams (left) and Chi Man "Chloe" Ho were selected as the 2016 NTID college delegates.

Delegates are selected based on their academic standing and give a speech at NTID's commencement.

Williams is NTID's undergraduate delegate. She studied in the laboratory science technology associate degree program, and had known since elementary school that she wanted to attend RIT and be a part of the deaf community in Rochester. From Chicago, Illinois, Williams is a member of the National Society of Collegiate Scholars. Following graduation, she will enroll in RIT's College

of Health Sciences and Technology and pursue a bachelor's degree in diagnostic medical sonography.

Ho, NTID's graduate delegate, has earned her master's degree in secondary education of students who are deaf or hard of hearing and will return to her home in Hong Kong following graduation. Prior to coming to RIT, Ho worked in sign bilingualism and co-enrollment in the deaf education program run by the Center for Sign Linguistics and Deaf Studies of The Chinese University of Hong Kong. It is the first program in Asia applying this specific educational model to

enhance inclusion of both deaf and hearing students in a mainstream school setting. She is returning to that program and is excited to contribute the experiences and knowledge she gained at RIT to the field of deaf education in Hong Kong.



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MARK BENJAMIN

ABOUT THE COVER

This spring, NTID held its first-ever Student Research Fair. Nearly 30 students presented posters or gave demonstrations related to their research. See article on p. 9 for more information.

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NTID

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MARK BENJAMIN

Greatness through difference

The title of RIT's strategic plan for 2015-2025, "Greatness through Difference," captures the essence of what has propelled the university and its students and graduates to ever-greater levels of success for more than 100 years. It also perfectly sums up what has led to NTID's tremendous success throughout our nearly 50-year history: our differences—as an institution and as the individuals who comprise the institution—are what make us great.

When NTID opened its doors on the RIT campus in 1968, the college revolutionized education for deaf and hard-of-hearing students. Never before had there been a postsecondary institution that offered degree programs designed specifically to enable deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals to hit the ground running in technical and professional fields and propel them to success in their careers and in life.

From its very inception, NTID has been different, and we continue to embrace and celebrate the things that make us different. One of those things is the diversity among our student body. NTID always has and will continue to welcome students from all communication preferences and backgrounds (see pp. 4-5). We are

committed to providing our students with a wide range of services and support to meet their individual needs and help them graduate with the skills necessary to achieve employment success.

Another area of distinction for NTID is our commitment to cooperative education, which provides our students with full-time work experience directly related to their field of study (see p. 7). Every year, more than 250 of our students participate in co-ops with employers around the country. A co-op gives students the opportunity to experience a real-life job situation and focus their career choice. It also helps them develop technical skills and enhance important soft skills like teamwork and communication, which makes them more competitive in the job market after graduation.

We also take great pride in our commitment to student research and the tremendous opportunities for learning and growth that it provides for our students (see p. 9). NTID recently increased its support for student research by providing a number of resources, including microgrants, summer research fellowships and additional support for student travel to conferences to present their research.

These are just some of the many things that set NTID apart. A look through this issue of "FOCUS" offers a glimpse of our diverse students (see pp. 10-11), faculty and staff (p. 13), alumni (p. 15), programs (pp. 3, 6) and history (p. 14). We embrace the many differences that make NTID such an outstanding place to learn, grow and achieve success. Our differences truly make us great, and we will continue to achieve greatness through our differences.

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

Trending: mobile application development

BY KATHY A. JOHNCOX

NTID has a new addition to its portfolio of degree programs. The New York State Department of Education has approved NTID's associate degree program in mobile application development. This new program will prepare students for work in the software development industry, focusing on application design and development for mobile platforms. Courses begin in fall 2016.

"The mobile app development field brings together concepts in programming, interface design and web development," says Elissa Olsen, chairperson of NTID's Information and Computing Studies Department. "Students will be able to use current and emerging technologies to develop their skills in app design, use programming languages for application development on a number of smart devices and learn the policies and procedures for submitting the apps for distribution."

Brian Trager, assistant professor in the Information and Computing Studies Department, who led the committee charged with developing the new mobile app program says, "I was adamant that we not offer our students a program that was similar to what other colleges were offering. We had to come up with a different strategy that would help our students stand out from the growing numbers of app developers. With that in mind, our team developed a two-and-a-half year program that offers a competitive edge over other mobile apps programs at the



Going Mobile Faculty member Brian Trager, right, discusses mobile application development with students Vincent Venutolo, far left, and Cody Johnson.

associate level. I couldn't be more proud of the framework that we created for this program. Our students will be incredible app developers after they complete it."

The demand for new and innovative mobile applications for mobile phones, tablets and hybrid devices is experiencing incredible growth. As the number and types of these devices increase, the greater the need for applications that allow those devices to fulfill their potential for users. The Bureau of Labor Statistics indicates that there will be faster-than-average job growth

in this field over the next eight years.

"This new major will allow us to develop more skills and focus on moving into programming in a big way," says Vincent Venutolo, a student from West Long Branch, New Jersey. "This gives me the confidence and the knowledge I will need to move on and pursue my bachelor's degree."

Cooperative work experiences, or co-ops, are an important part of education at RIT/NTID, and those, plus capstone courses, bring industry partners into the mix.

"Businesses such as Xamarin, a national leader in app development, have supported our efforts to stay relevant and ahead of the curve when we select and prepare courses for our students," says David Lawrence, associate professor and part of the app development team.

The team has developed partnerships with industries that have advised in all aspects of mobile app development. These partnerships enable students to learn not only the skills required for the job, but also the value of soft skills, teamwork and communication outside of the classroom.

New space

The Information and Computing Studies Department has moved into a new location in LBJ Hall.

There is a capstone lab, hardware and networking labs, mobile app development lab and self-instruction lab where students can work on or get assistance with projects. The "cage" is

a treasure trove of parts and pieces of equipment students may borrow to complete assignments.

With new technology and specially designed space, students have the tools to stay ahead of the curve and bring up-to-date skills to impress both co-op and permanent employers.

Communication diversity in NTID classrooms

BY ILENE J. AVALLONE

Prior to coming to RIT/NTID, Allison Higgins, a second-year administrative support technology major from Leicester, New York, thought communication in her classroom would happen through American Sign Language, her primary mode of communication.

Before David Tawil, who received an associate degree in business and now is pursuing a bachelor's degree in accounting, arrived at RIT/NTID, he thought everyone would use spoken language, like he does.

Both were surprised by the diverse communication environment on campus.

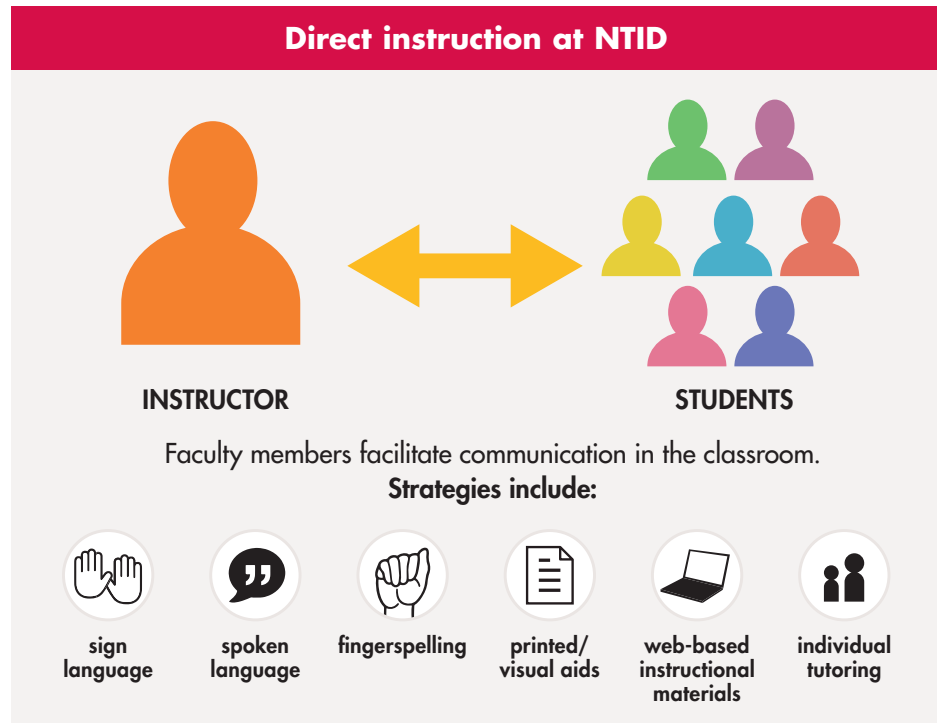
"Deaf and hard-of-hearing people communicate in different ways at NTID, and that took me by surprise," says Higgins. "Some people use their voice and sign, some only sign and some only speak."

"I felt a little overwhelmed when I first arrived on campus, because I didn't know any sign language," says Tawil.

RIT/NTID welcomes students who have diverse language and communication abilities and preferences. To facilitate communication, the college uses a direct instruction model in all classes taught within NTID.

The model gives NTID instructors responsibility for communicating directly with students in the classroom using a variety of strategies, including sign language with voice, sign language without voice, spoken language, fingerspelling, printed/visual aids, web-based instructional materials and individual tutoring. Instructors are responsible for making sure teaching and learning is happening through respecting and accommodating the language and communication preferences and needs of each student.

"I have to make sure that everyone leaves my classroom feeling confident, comfortable and more knowledgeable than they were when they first walked in the door," says Kathleen Szczepanek, faculty member in the NTID Business Studies Department. "I want my students to express themselves in whatever language they use, and then I match their communication needs."



NTID Engineering Studies faculty member Wendy Dannels says it's important to meet her students halfway.

"I want students to understand me, my background, my abilities, my communication style and the range I work in. At the same time, students need to make me aware of the communication styles they prefer, so we can figure out a common ground. I want to make sure that the learning and the teaching is a rich experience for all of us."

Szczepanek explains that communication in NTID classrooms, in general, is preference-based—there are some students who prefer sign with voice, some who prefer speech alone and other students who prefer signing only.

"No matter what the communication preference is of students, they all need to be respected in the classroom. We need to work together and be open-minded, so if communication challenges arise, they can be resolved," she says.

Dr. Kathryn Schmitz, associate dean for academic administration at NTID, says that every effort is made to place students in classes

with instructors who match students' communication preference.

"For students, however, who are not benefiting educationally from an instructor's application of the direct instruction model, flexible direct instruction (FDI) can be requested," says Dr. Schmitz. "The FDI process provides an opportunity to consider services that augment direct instruction when communication otherwise in place is inadequate to benefit a student educationally."

"The faculty and staff are very committed to focusing on the communication needs of NTID students, and the institute is always evolving and working to try to match the students' needs," says Brian Milburn, NTID English instructor.

Ryan Clark-Sulky, an NTID business technology student, says NTID is very unique and diverse.

"Deaf and hard-of-hearing students who sign and don't sign come together and become one large community. In my classrooms, we all work together to make communication work."

New master of science degree launches in health care interpretation

BY ILENE J. AVALLONE

The NTID Department of American Sign Language and Interpreting Education, in collaboration with RIT's College of Health Sciences and Technology, has launched a first-of-its-kind master of science degree program in health care interpretation. It marks the first time NTID has partnered with another college at RIT to provide a master's degree program. NTID received approval for the program from the New York State Department of Education earlier this year.

"This program provides in-depth specialized education in the field of health care interpretation that is currently not available to interpreters," says Dr. Kim Kurz, chairperson of NTID's ASLIE Department.

"The program is designed to teach the complex skill sets needed for interpreting effectively in patient health care settings, and meet the growing demand for specialized sign language health care interpreters as more deaf and hard-of-hearing professionals enter the health care field," explains Kathleen Miraglia, program director. "The program also will prepare professionals for leadership roles in the health care interpreting field."

"This program provides in-depth specialized education in the field of health care interpretation that is currently not available to interpreters."

According to projections from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, between 2012 and 2022, there will be a 46 percent employment growth for interpreters and translators, much faster than average for all occupations. Graduates of the master's degree program may find work as staff interpreters, freelance interpreters, or employment on a per-diem basis in health



A First-of-its-Kind Program NTID has partnered with RIT's College of Health Sciences and Technology to provide a first-of-its-kind master of science degree in health care interpretation.

care, health care education and health care research settings nationwide.

"The program appeals to certified interpreters aspiring to direct their careers into health care environments, as well as to interpreters who currently are working in the health care field," says Kurz.

The first cohort of students begin the program this summer, starting with a one-week on-campus residency professional seminar. The remainder of the program will be delivered online.

"We attracted a national pool of applicants," says Miraglia. "The interest in the program was overwhelmingly favorable, and we plan to increase the number of students we can accept every year."

Dr. Robyn Dean joined the faculty at NTID to help lead the program. Dean conducts workshops internationally on the topics of ethics, reflective practice, and work effectiveness, with particular emphases on healthcare interpreting and professional development.

"We are thrilled to be able to offer

"Adding the new master's degree program to NTID's interpreting options further promotes NTID's role as a national resource center of excellence."

such an opportunity to practicing interpreters," says Dean.

The new program complements NTID's other interpreting programs, which include a bachelor's degree in ASL-English interpretation and a certificate program in health care interpreting.

"Adding the new master's degree program to NTID's interpreting options further promotes NTID's role as a national resource center of excellence," says Dr. Gerry Buckley, NTID president and RIT vice president and dean. "We are proud to be the first to provide a program specialization in the field of health care interpreting and advance the skill sets of interpreters in health care environments nationwide."

MARK BENJAMIN

RIT's co-op program may be a requirement, but it's also a big draw for savvy students who know that getting real-world work experience while in college can confirm their choice of major and their future career. Co-op Corner introduces a number of students for each issue of "FOCUS" to give a snapshot of their co-op success.

BY KATHY A. JOHNCOX



MARK BENJAMIN

Brian Haslam

Hometown: Mystic Island, New Jersey

Degree program: A.A.S., Design and Imaging Technology; B.S., Graphic Design, 2018

Employer: Tapestries Sign and Design, Manahawkin, New Jersey

Job duties: I was responsible for creating signage, banners, decals and magnets for boats and cars using Adobe Illustrator and Photoshop. As a designer, I engaged in meetings with clients to get their ideas and feedback on our design plans and work. When the design was approved by our clients, I was responsible for finishing production by completing banners, printing signage and applying the design to magnets.

Benefits of co-op: I learned how to approach clients with designs and ideas and how to work faster and improve my ability to work with deadlines. Not only was I able to use my graphic design skills in the real world, but I also was able to learn about production—the different materials that can be used and how to apply finishing touches. I had a wonderful experience learning two important aspects of my chosen career during this co-op.



MARK BENJAMIN

Caitlyn Lacerra

Hometown: Marlborough, Massachusetts

Degree program: A.O.S., Administrative Support Technology, 2016

Employer: UMass Medical School, Shrewsbury, Massachusetts

Job duties: I worked in the Center for Health Policy and Research as an office assistant intern in the Disability, Health and Employment Policy unit where people with disabilities could get assistance with establishing career goals and/or finding a job. I worked with a team to prepare a workshop and plan a fall event and an event celebrating the 25th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Benefits of co-op: Doing this co-op made me realize how much practical work experience really will help me in the future. My co-op was an amazing way to start learning and experience what it's like to help improve life for people with disabilities. It will help me find a job in the real world after graduation.



MARK BENJAMIN

Ping Liu

Hometown: Harbin, China

Degree program: A.O.S., Applied Computer Technology, 2018

Employer: NTID Learning Center, Rochester, New York

Job duties: I worked in the NTID Learning Center as the Sprint Relay Lab specialist, helping make the lab a resource for adapting, evaluating and exporting innovative technologies that support deaf and hard-of-hearing learners. I provided technical and direct classroom support, including supporting remote classes, recording classes, editing videos and researching new technologies to apply to the classroom.

Benefits of co-op: First, I learned how to communicate with my bosses and customers and how to balance my schedule for work. Secondly, from real-world experiences related to my co-op, I learned how to use many different media technologies to troubleshoot and to provide computer support. Last, but not least, I learned that being responsible at work is very important. This co-op experience helped me to build skills to enhance my future in this field.



MARK BENJAMIN

Christopher Robinson

Hometown: Baton Rouge, Louisiana

Degree program: A.O.S., Computer Integrated Machining Technology, 2016

Employer: Cyromech, Syracuse, New York

Job duties: My job title was computer numeric control (CNC) operator, and some of my responsibilities were to use blueprints to create precision products on the CNC machine. I set controls; inspected machines; and scheduled maintenance and repair to ensure operation, quality standards and correct specifications.

Benefits of co-op: I learned much about blueprints, following directions, working on several products at once and how to use a variety of other machines: HASS lathe, manual lathe and mill and turning machines. My co-op gave me relevant work experience and helped me develop my knowledge and skills. And, I have accepted a full-time job with Cryomech for after graduation.

REACHing out

BY KATHY A. JOHNCOX

Researchers from NTID's REACH Center for Studies in Career Success focus their efforts in employment and career success for deaf and hard-of-hearing people.

Ronald R. Kelly, director of the center, says "Our purpose is to enhance the knowledge of deaf and hard-of-hearing graduates and professionals regarding factors that could potentially contribute to their career promotions and success. This helps individuals develop a greater understanding and personal insight into their career development. Armed with knowledge of current workplace expectations, along with the need for self-initiative and personal responsibility, individuals will be in a better position to influence their career paths."

Jordan Paradis, a business management major who graduated from RIT/NTID in 2013, is senior leader assistant to the chief



Improving Paths to Career Success REACH researchers collect and analyze data that can help deaf and hard-of-hearing people move up the ladder of career success.

human resource officer at the Yakima Valley Farm Workers Clinic in her hometown of Yakima, Washington. She has first-hand experience, both personal and professional, with REACH

and is an example of the center's successful outcomes.

"I learned much more than I realized working as an undergraduate research assistant in the center," says Paradis. "At REACH I was exposed to data and statistics on the important factors leading to career success. What interested me most is that personal effort is key. Being direct and reasonable while listening and understanding the perspective of others, especially my manager, was invaluable during my first year on the job. Having learned about the personal factors that lead to career success, I know that I can shape my future."

REACH grew out of a 2010 NTID project called "Taking on the Glass Ceiling: Knowledge, Strategies & Research for RIT/NTID Deaf/HH Graduates' Career Growth & Promotion." The project goal was to provide insights on career growth and promotion from published literature to help deaf and hard-of-hearing people improve their paths to career success. The project also gathered information about factors that contribute to career success and positively influence career planning.

"The data we are providing is critically important to better understand what happens to deaf and hard-of-hearing people after graduation," says Kelly. "It provides insight into how they function in their work environment and what factors would potentially contribute to enhancing their career pathways."

REACH Center grants from the National Science Foundation

The REACH Center has two multi-year grants funded by the NSF totaling \$834,706.

- "Deaf Learners' Acquisition of English Verbs and their Component Properties": Gerald P. Berent, principal investigator
- "Stereotype Threat Effects on Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing College Students' Mathematics Problem-Solving Performance": Ronald R. Kelly, principal investigator

Other recent grants

NTID has a number of new grants for 2015-2016, including 11 that total \$5,694,409. Here are some of the most recent awards.

Principal Investigator	Title	Sponsor	Award
Brian Trager	RoadMaPPs to Careers: A New Approach to Mobile Apps Education featuring a Mapp for Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Students	NSF	\$820,504
Peter Hauser	Mechanism of Health Literacy and Information Accessibility	DHHS	\$600,189
Matthew Dye	Development of Temporal Visual Selective Attention in Deaf Children	NSF	\$449,947
Jeffrey Rubin	Substance and Alcohol Intervention Services for the Deaf	DHHS	\$165,495

Sharing research and scholarship

BY SUSAN L. MURAD/VIENNA MCGRAIN



Teaching, Learning, Sharing Faculty member Jason Listman, above, presented findings on being a deaf scientist. Upper right, Elder Berroa, a Laboratory Science Technology major, explains his research findings to science and mathematics instructor Jason Nordhaus.

among others. The Student Research Fair coincided with National Undergraduate Research Week.

Dr. Todd Pagano, associate dean for Teaching and Scholarship Excellence and founding director of NTID's laboratory science technology program, is among the coordinators of the research fair.

"NTID has a history of providing our students with access to cutting-edge technology that helps enhance their research endeavors," says Pagano. "Pair that with a top-notch core education and partnerships with faculty mentors who are experts in their fields, and it's apparent that we are able to successfully deliver a strong research-based student experience."

January's Scholarship Symposium attracted more than 220 faculty, staff and student attendees to 40 presentations and poster sessions held during the day-long event.

One presentation involved integrating experiential

learning to develop problem-solving skills in deaf and hard-of-hearing STEM students by faculty member Wendy Dannels and student Matthew Marshall. Another offered advice on becoming a deaf scientist by building "navigational capital" by Dr. Jason Listman, a faculty member in NTID's American Sign Language and Interpreting Education Department.

"With RIT's elevation to a doctoral university, the emphasis on research and scholarship is more important than ever," says Dr. Gerry Buckley, NTID president and RIT vice president and dean. "What makes our work stand out is the emphasis on student-led research and partnerships between faculty and students in the process."

This year, RIT/NTID held two events focused on research and scholarship to showcase the work of students, faculty and staff.

Cody Cummings, a laboratory science technology student from Austin, Texas, is hoping that his research in the analysis of sealant bitumen from objects will help archaeologists better determine when and where ancient artifacts were created. And Nicole Pannullo, a chemistry student from East Patchogue, New York, is using fluorescence to

improve our understanding of what's in our water.

On April 15, Cummings and Pannullo joined 27 other deaf and hard-of-hearing student researchers at RIT/NTID's Student Research Fair in Rosica Hall. The first-ever event gave undergraduate and graduate students, in partnership with faculty mentors, the opportunity to present posters or give demonstrations on topics related to health science, communication studies, access technology and environmental research,

VIDEO EXTRA:

- See a video wrap up of the Student Research Fair at bit.ly/NTIDSRF.

Shareef Ali

BY ALLISON POLK



MARK BENJAMIN

Shareef Ali's skills are in high demand. He was recruited for a full-time job three weeks into the fall semester. He decided to stay on and finish his degree in computer science, but a job with VTCSecure, an international provider of telecommunications access, awaits him after graduation.

"I began my open source [software for which the original source coding is made freely available] journey five years ago when I started school here at RIT," says

"The professors at RIT understand disabilities, and that has a huge impact on my sense of belonging here."

Ali, who is from Moorehead, Minnesota. "That early start has had a huge impact on my current job."

Ali spends much of his time working on an open source video relay project for VTCSecure with NTID engineering faculty member Gary Behm. He works on building, debugging and testing systems related to 20 modules from various open source projects such as video compression.

"Sometimes I'm up until 3 a.m. trying to figure out a problem," says Ali, who credits Behm as well as Brian Trager, faculty member in NTID's Information and Computing Studies Department, with helping him grow and refine his skills in software development as well as softer skills such as effective workplace communication.

"The professors at RIT understand disabilities, and that has a huge impact on my sense of belonging here," says Ali, who has cerebral palsy in addition to being deaf.

Emily Suplinskas

BY ALLISON POLK



MARK BENJAMIN

Game design and development major Emily Suplinskas has a job as a software engineer waiting for her, starting a few weeks after graduation, with Lockheed Martin in Syracuse, New York.

"I went into gaming design because I liked playing video games growing up," says Suplinskas, who is from Haverhill, Massachusetts. The group projects assigned to gaming majors at RIT, however, helped her realize two things: the importance of teamwork and collaboration and that she had a strong interest in the back-end of gaming design—coding and programming.

Suplinskas will bring both of these skill sets to her new job, where she'll be working on radar systems for ships and airplanes. She met a recruiter from Lockheed Martin at RIT/NTID's job fair last fall, and was delighted when the recruiter turned out to be an RIT/NTID

alumnus. By December, the job offer had come.

"It's a deaf-friendly company," she says. "I didn't realize that at first. I'm looking forward to working there."

"Work hard, be organized and have fun."

In her spare time, Suplinskas enjoys exploring the Finger Lakes area with friends, seeking out farmers' markets and other local attractions. She also has had the opportunity to travel to Las Vegas and Colorado with classmates for gaming conferences.

"Work hard, be organized and have fun," Suplinskas counsels the students who will enter RIT/NTID after she graduates. "Do it, just do it," she says.

Shavone Moncrieffe

BY ILENE J. AVALLONE

"Be yourself and live life to the fullest," is a motto Shavone Moncrieffe strives to follow every day.

Moncrieffe, 22, grew up in Mount Vernon, New York. After attending RIT/NTID's Explore Your Future summer camp program, she fell in love with the college.

Like many students, she was undecided on what to pursue, and settled on the associate+bachelor's degree program in business. After earning her associate degree, she enrolled in the business management program in RIT's Saunders College.

"This major gives me a general background in management, marketing and accounting, so I can have the flexibility to pursue many different types of jobs in the business field," she says.

Moncrieffe completed a co-op last summer at the Department of Defense in Rome, New York.



A. SUE WESSLER

"Learning about the financial and managerial systems of the federal government was so interesting and challenging," she says. "The experience was invaluable for my future career."

Moncrieffe fills her schedule with clubs and activities. For NTID's Ebony Club, she served as financial director and co-chairperson of their 30-year anniversary

banquet. In her spare time, she likes to draw, play guitar and write songs.

"The experiences I have received through my studies, co-op and extracurricular activities have helped me grow from a follower to a leader," she says.

Moncrieffe is excited about graduating. She isn't sure what is next, but she knows she is well prepared for a bright future.

Ryan Clark-Sulkey

BY ILENE J. AVALLONE

Ryan Clark-Sulkey, 19, a second-year business technology major from Newark, New York, always wanted to attend RIT/NTID.

"I attended Rochester School for the Deaf, and we took several field trips to RIT over the years, so I knew from an early age this was the right college for me," he says. "I wanted a large mainstream campus, but I still wanted to have access to deaf and hard-of-hearing role models like I had in high school."

Since starting college, Clark-Sulkey has maintained a busy schedule. In addition to making Dean's List, he works at The College Grind coffee shop on campus and is a staff member for RIT Athletics where he helps execute campus sporting events. He also serves as president of Delta Sigma Phi, a new deaf fraternity, and enjoys playing soccer and basketball, and hunting fowl and game.

"I study hard, work hard and play hard," he says.



A. SUE WESSLER

Clark-Sulkey plans to pursue a bachelor's degree in marketing. His dream is to open and own a nightclub in the future.

"I'm pleased with my decision to attend

RIT/NTID," he says. "The college's deaf-friendly, welcoming atmosphere, the opportunities available to me, and the diversity of people have made RIT/NTID the perfect fit for me."



A. SUE WEISLER

Exploring Language in a New Way Recent RIT/NTID graduate Bryan Ward, ASL consulting student manager, and Sandra Bradley, instructor in NTID's American Sign Language and Interpreting Education Department, share information on new technical terminology.

Students share their skills through ASL consulting

BY SUSAN L. MURAD

At a meeting of RIT/NTID department heads and managers, NTID President Gerry Buckley encouraged those in the room to hire more students in order to give them work experience and help cover their college expenses.

Wayne “Kip” Webster, interpreting team manager in NTID’s Department of Access Services, thought about how his department could make use of students’ skills.

“It occurred to me that there are some fantastic signers among our deaf students, and they could become ASL consultants for my team,” he says. “I pitched the idea to DAS Chairperson Rico Peterson and Dr. Buckley and got approval. When I let students know I wanted to hire the best ASL users, names came in quickly, and there were too many to serve just my team, so we opened the service to all the DAS staff.”

The consultants and DAS staff meet one-on-one, and together they discuss and share best approaches to technical terminology that is used in the classroom.

Because language is ever-changing and new terms and discoveries are constantly introduced, the value of ASL consultants working in partnership with DAS staff ensures consistency and accuracy in terms used and understood by all.

Webster developed a method for scheduling the consultants, but after a semester it was clear that more coordination was needed. He hired Bryan Ward, a human resource development graduate student to manage the service, and also brought aboard Sandra Bradley, instructional/support faculty in NTID’s American Sign Language and Interpreting Education Department to help the ASL consultants with expert guidance on ASL, as well as how to effectively teach.

“All of the consultants feel as though they are making a real contribution to our fellow students and the RIT/NTID community,” says Ward. “It’s great to partner with DAS in this way.”

DAS has established a lab where staff can stop by for a quick question or to meet with their consultant, but sometimes it is most helpful to get first-hand

experience of what will be interpreted.

RIT/NTID student and ASL consultant Eric Epstein recently was asked by an interpreter about some concepts in computer programming. Eric took the interpreter to a lab in the Golisano College of Computing and Information Sciences and taught the interpreter how to program.

“Eric’s teaching, delivered in his amazing ASL skills, was crystal clear to the interpreter, and her program worked,” Webster says. “Our interpreter’s translations of computer programming now are enriched by Eric’s modeling of how to program in ASL. This kind of partnership could not be better—and everyone is enriched by this collaboration.”

“Interpreters love the opportunity to partner with expert signers who are willing to learn about the role and work of interpreting,” Webster continues.

“The consultants bring ASL skills, content knowledge from their majors, and share their experience of using interpreters in their lives at RIT/NTID and prior to coming here. It’s been a great experience for all involved.”

Jessica Hurd

BY SUSAN L. MURAD



MARK BENJAMIN

People, connection and growth. These are three of the most important things to RIT/NTID Student Life Team Program Coordinator Jessica Meaghan Hurd.

Originally from Los Angeles, California, Hurd supervises Step-Up, an academic and peer support program for first-year AALANA students. She also is one of the liaisons for RIT's Center for Women and Gender, Q Center, and Sex in the Brick City, a program run by the RIT Wellness team focusing on student sexual health.

"Everything I do focuses on developing programming for the NTID student community by staying in touch with our deaf, deaf-blind, deaf plus and hard-of-hearing students to find what types of programs they need for their academic success and social development," she says.

Hurd earned a bachelor's degree in psychology from California State University at Northridge and a master's degree in mental health counseling from

"The students are the best part of my job, no question."

Gallaudet University.

"The students are the best part of my job, no question," she says. "I have the opportunity to learn their stories, how they're doing academically, and what kinds of programs and services we need to offer to support their journey in college."

Hurd's love of learning is nourished by finding interesting things to read—books, the latest news—and to learning from those around her as well.

"I learned from a former professor to listen before you share, think before you react, and always keep space and awareness in your heart and mind for experiences that you don't know, understand, or may be new to you," she says.

Matthew Lynn

BY KATHY A. JOHNCOX

Matthew Lynn always knew he would have a job using two languages. When he was growing up in Ohio, his abiding interest in languages led him first to French, and then he thought about Spanish. After completing his Ph.D. in physical and organic chemistry from the University of Arizona, he was hired there as an assistant staff scientist for computational chemistry. Then serendipity took over.

"I like to try different things, and I wanted to do something outside of chemistry, so I enrolled in an ASL class at Pima Community College for fun," says Lynn. "I knew immediately that my third language would be American Sign Language. For an ASL class project, I decided to learn about Sir John Cornforth, a Nobel prize-winning deaf chemist, and that research took me to the laboratory science technology program at RIT/NTID where they happened to be looking for a tenure-track chemist."

He was hired in fall 2007, started in academic support, taught organic chemistry in the LST program and now is chairperson of NTID's Department of Science and Mathematics.

While a significant part of his job is planning for and running a growing department, what is most motivating for Lynn is seeing students grow.

"They arrive nervous, maybe homesick, struggling a little, and then there is the point when they get what it is we are teaching them, and they confirm to themselves that they want to be scientists. To see this is the best," Lynn says.



A. SUEWESLER

Lynn has also accompanied a student group to Japan and visited RIT/NTID's sister institution, National University Corporation Tsukuba University.

"What a unique opportunity for our students," says Lynn. "RIT/NTID is a national gem that gives deaf and hard-of-hearing people an incomparable variety of opportunities."

NTID's history is rich in milestones and achievements that have fueled the success of thousands of students and graduates. This "FOCUS" feature provides a look at some of the people and events that have been significant in the history of our college community.

BY ALLISON POLK

Sunshine Too!, 1978

In 1978, Sunshine Too, a theatrical touring company was established at RIT/NTID. The troupe evolved from an ensemble of faculty and staff (Sunshine and Company), which performed poetry and songs at the National Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf convention, to a professional touring company. Comprised of six or seven NTID and RIT students, Sunshine Too traveled to schools and public venues throughout the nation—and occasionally abroad—performing original shows with themes relevant to schoolchildren and other audience groups. Performances and workshops incorporated ASL, dance, mime and music to educate audiences around the country about the Deaf community and culture.

The group disbanded in 2000, but this year, the troupe is being revived as a theatre outreach program. Fred Beam, an NTID alumnus known for co-founding the Wild Zappers, has been appointed coordinator.



Road Show The 1978 cast of Sunshine Too! gathers around a banner with the company name.

ARCHIVAL PHOTO

Trivia Tidbit BY SAM HOLCOMB

Q: When did RIT first start offering ASL classes?

A: NTID was established at RIT in 1968. ASL classes started shortly thereafter. In 1969, the Student Interpreter Training Program was established. NTID was the first in history to offer such a program.

The ASL Interpreting Education Department was subsequently created to train ASL interpreters and to provide ASL instruction for faculty and staff.



MARK BENJAMIN

Sam Holcomb is a retired faculty member from NTID's American Sign Language and Interpreting Education Department.

From the Archives



ARCHIVAL PHOTO

No Disco Ball Necessary NTID students learn to get footloose in this 1976 dance class.

Barbara Jean “BJ” Wood

BY ALLISON POLK

Ask NTID’s 2016 Distinguished Alumna Award recipient Barbara Jean “BJ” Wood about the impact RIT/NTID has had in her life, and she starts telling stories about people instead.

She mentions Christine “CB” Buchholz, who attended NTID with Wood. Originally from southern California, Buchholz broke her leg during the Rochester winter, and went back home to warmer climes to recover. Buchholz, widely known for her work with sexual assault and domestic violence issues, recently passed away, and Wood smiles as she talks about her.

“I have to honor her,” says Wood of Buchholz. “She influenced me. She encouraged me to learn ASL. We became close during SVP ’70, and she’s always been an important person to me.”

Wood, originally from New Jersey, is retired and lives near Boston, Massachusetts, with her wife, LeWana Clark. She is best known for her work leading the Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, the Colorado Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, and the New Mexico Commission for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Persons. Her retirement notwithstanding, Wood’s drive to serve people is evident; she currently serves on the Massachusetts Attorney General’s Disability Rights Committee and is especially passionate about bringing agencies and communities together in a way that is effective, both in terms of costs and services rendered.

“The diversity of races, backgrounds and experiences present in the people I met [at RIT/NTID] taught me a lot about different communication styles and interests.”

“I carry that world with me,” says Wood of the people she met and the experiences she had while at RIT/NTID. She graduated with a bachelor’s degree in social work in 1975. “My world blew



Distinguished Alumna Barbara Jean “BJ” Wood, left, and her wife, LeWana Clark.

open when I got there. The diversity of races, backgrounds and experiences present in the people I met taught me a lot about different communication styles and interests.”

It certainly seems as if those lessons carried over to her career. To illustrate, she tells another story, this time about arriving in Colorado to head the state commission. She did not yet have many inroads into the deaf community there. One day she came across a well-known community member riding his motorcycle. She asked if she could take it for a spin, and he handed the keys over with a look of skepticism on his face. “Cool ride,” she said upon returning from her test drive.

“Word got around then,” says Wood. “I was able to start building some

genuine rapport with the community. That’s important when you want the community to partner with a state agency and work together. That work ends up benefiting everyone.”

With more than 30 years of public service, Wood is a renowned trainer and public speaker. When she was awarded the 2016 Distinguished Alumna Award, RIT/NTID President Gerry Buckley noted her spirit of advocacy and collaboration. Given the stories she has to tell about the people she works with, it’s clear that her leadership style is one that is undeniably people-centered.

“Go in with an open mind and an open heart,” she counsels future RIT/NTID students and alumni. “Be part of the solution.”

PROVIDED PHOTO

Community members support student scholarships

BY ALLISON POLK

One of RIT/NTID's highest strategic priorities is scholarship support for students. Funding for scholarships is particularly meaningful when it comes from members of the RIT/NTID community.

Two such scholarships recently have been established: one by a recent RIT/NTID graduate, and one by colleagues committed to honoring the memory of an RIT sign language interpreter who passed away.

The Michael E. Lawson Endowed Scholarship

Michael Lawson, who graduated with a bachelor's degree in social work in 2007 and a degree from the Master of Science program in Secondary Education (MSSE) in 2009, is a teacher of the deaf at Neptune Middle School in New Jersey. He also is a former RIT men's soccer standout and assistant coach who was inducted into the RIT Athletics Hall of Fame in 2012.

Lawson and his parents, Edward and Peg, established the scholarship to support deaf and hard-of-hearing students studying in the College of Liberal Arts and in the MSSE program.

"My parents and I wanted to give successful deaf and hard-of-hearing



KEN A. RUTH

A Family Affair Parents Edward and Peg Lawson established a scholarship named for their son, RIT/NTID alumnus and soccer standout Michael (center).

students the opportunity to experience what I had at RIT/NTID by creating the scholarship," says Lawson. "My time at RIT/NTID was and continues to be a pivotal part of my life.

"We were fortunate to be able to create the scholarship and are extremely happy knowing it will be helping deserving students," adds Lawson.

The first awards from this scholarship will be made in the 2017-2018 academic year.

The Jennifer Van Atta Hayes Memorial Endowed Scholarship

The Jennifer Van Atta Hayes Memorial Scholarship was established in memory of staff interpreter and alumna Jennifer Van Atta Hayes. Hayes passed away in January 2014 at the age of 44 after a seven-year battle with cancer.

Community members subsequently banded together to fund the scholarship in Hayes' memory, hosting and attending

events, including an art exhibit, silent auction, benefit concert and a jump-a-thon. Fellow RIT interpreters Kathy Darroch and Colleen Freeman helped lead the effort to make sure the scholarship met its fundraising goals.

"She was the 'queen' of creating opportunities and making them happen, whether it be with her family or her friends," says Freeman, whose friendship with Hayes spanned more than 20 years. "We believed creating this scholarship in her name, offering opportunities for deaf students, would be exactly the kind of thing she would approve of."

Hayes was an avid traveler and was known for providing interpreting support during RIT/NTID study abroad experiences. The scholarship in her name will support deaf and hard-of-hearing students studying abroad as well as interpreting students who participate in study abroad mentorship experiences.



MARK BENJAMIN

Support and Remembrance RIT/NTID interpreter Nicole Crouse-Dickerson, center, describes some of the items available at an auction event raising funds for the Jennifer Van Atta Hayes Memorial Endowed Scholarship.

Conference on Best Practice in Mainstream Education



Information Sharing and Networking

RIT/NTID hosted the first-ever Conference on Best Practice in Mainstream Education June 24-25. More than 150 educators from around the country and the world gathered to learn, share information and network. More information about the conference is available at www.ntid.rit.edu/bestpracticeconference.



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Showcasing Black Deaf Artists In celebration of Black History Month, RIT/NTID's Joseph F. and Helen C. Dyer Arts Center hosted a rare exhibit showcasing the work of black deaf artists from around the globe. "Unfolding the Soul of Black Deaf Expressions" featured more than 150 works of art from 30 black deaf artists. A three-day symposium also was held Feb. 25-27 in the Dyer Arts Center with presentations that included "Empowering Young Black Deaf Artists" by Emily Blachly; "Preserving the Legacy of Black Deaf Art," by LeeAnne Valentine; "How to be an Art Patron," by Fred Beam and Earl Terry; and "Success Stories of Black Deaf Artists," presented by a group of participating artists.

YUSUF YAHYA, DANCING LADY WITH THE JAZZ, 1986