

AA to BA Partnership: National Summit for AA/Two-Year Interpreter Education Program Directors Historic Gathering of Program Directors a Worthwhile Event

It was beautiful in Denver - blooming flowers, sweet breezes and snow capped mountains. Not that anyone who attended the first *National Summit for AA/Two-Year Interpreter Education Program Directors* would have known that fact. For over the weekend of May 18 to 20, 2007, program directors from 48 two-year institutions found themselves sequestered for what would be marathon sessions devoted to identifying the many elements that constitute successful partnerships within post-secondary education.

How did the Summit come to be you may ask? As we are aware, RID has adopted a system-wide policy that will require certification candidates in 2012 to possess baccalaureate degrees. While the policy does not require that the baccalaureate degree be in interpretation, the current configuration of interpreter preparation programs in the country will directly impact the policy and the supply of certified interpreters. As illustration, a survey conducted in 2006 by NCIEC revealed that of the 127 institutions offering degree programs in sign language interpreting, 98 of them operated at the associate level or below.

In response to the RID mandate, NCIEC is preparing for this transition by spearheading a multi-year initiative entitled *AA to BA Partnership*. The goal of the initiative is to forge stronger links between two year and four year Interpreter Education Programs, to elucidate for the field, effective models of AA/BA partnerships that lead to successful interpreter education program design, and to establish and promote language standards and programmatic accreditation as critical underpinnings for educational success.

This year, the AA to BA work team is focused on obtaining a “snapshot” of the current state of two-year and four-year interpreter education programs. To this end, the work team has sponsored face to face intensive meetings with each group. Program directors representing four year institutions met at the CIT Conference in San Diego, while program directors from two year institutions met in Denver for a two day Summit. By year’s end, the work team hopes to publish a comprehensive report of this year’s findings.

The Summit

The purpose of the National Summit was to afford associate level/two year interpreter education program directors the opportunity to collectively address the issues of transition, transfer and articulation between two-year and four-year interpreter education programs. Over the three-day meeting, participants identified and explored current and creative models for successful AA to BA partnership, and networked with colleagues from programs exploring similar partnership models.

The Summit afforded participants the opportunity to engage in learning from three sources: learning from others, learning from each other and collegiate network learning. Day One was devoted to the topic of articulation. David Longanecker, a representative from the American Association of Community Colleges, addressed the topic of articulation from the perspective of higher education, while panelists from the fields of Early Childhood Education, Respiratory Care and Rehabilitation shared the bumps, bruises, joys and successes as their fields moved along the professionalization continuum.

Day Two turns learning inward, with a close up look at interpreter education programs currently engaged in AA/BA partnerships. Through panel discussion and structured small group activities, directors shared such information as: What is your program doing now regarding partnership? What would like to do or/how do you see the face of interpreter education in 5 years? What plans does your program have for change in the next 5 years? What barriers do you feel you will face in making the changes you would like to see in your program (if any)? The group also participated in round table discussions that focused on a particular AA/BA Partnership model of interest.

Day Three activities allowed time for program directors within a RSA-defined region to network, form alliances and develop future collegiate sharing. Linda Stauffer, Chair of the AA to BA Work Team, closed the Summit with a summary keynote that reflected the richness of the Summit.

The reality is that our field of interpreting is changing rapidly and changes in the profession are driving changes in interpreter education. The Summit afforded this group of directors an opportunity to think about change innovatively, and the opportunity to dream.

The positive synergy at the Summit was undeniable. After visiting the Summit, program directors re-entered their home environments refreshed, re-invigorated, re-inspired and re-connected. We left recognizing that:

- collaboration is hard work and that voluntary collaboration is even harder;
- building new models requires much time and daring if we are to creatively construct “outside the box” and outside our comfort zone;
- “no” really isn’t an option;
- we won’t all look the same in terms of partnering and “becoming” and that is good;
- we are all unique but we have common constraints;
- thankfully we have models in other professions from which we can learn; and
- we now know what the initials NCIEC mean!

The Summit not only illuminated the beauty of the diversity of thought and approaches among us but also resonated the harmony we share in our desire to improve our programs for our students. It was clear from the Summit that, as a collective body, we want to:

- provide quality education to prepare qualified interpreters who can meet the needs of Deaf, Deafblind and hard of hearing consumers in a changing environment with new educational requirements;
- obtain resources to help us do the best job we can;
- gain better understanding from our administrators; and most importantly
- make a difference.

Regardless of our two or four year status, we all face:

- Changing demographics of our students and consumers;
- the challenge of meeting demands for qualified faculty;
- decreasing resources with ever increasing demands on our time and programs;
- fiscal restraints out of our control; and
- how and what to “become” in the next few years.

The AA to BA Partnership work team hopes to publish the findings of the Summit and the team’s related work in early 2008.

Summit Planning Committee: Linda Stauffer, Chair, Pauline Annarino, Rob Hills Leilani Johnson, Shelley Lawrence, Pam Morris, Cynthia Roy, Lynda Remmel, Betsy Winston

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For more information about the AA to BA Partnership initiative or the Summit, please contact Linda Stauffer at lkstauffer@ualr.edu.

Biographical Profile

Established in 2005, the National Consortium is a collaborative network comprised of the National Interpreter Education Center and five Regional Interpreter Education Centers. Its goal is to significantly increase the number of qualified and credentialed interpreters in the field by forging collaborative links

and facilitating practice and product sharing among interpreter education service providers, practitioners, educators, and consumers nationwide. This *National Summit* is one of the many steps toward achieving that goal.

Consortium Members: Northeastern University, Gallaudet University, College of St. Catherine, University of Arkansas at Little Rock/University of Northern Colorado, and Western Oregon University/El Camino College

For more information about NCIEC, go to <http://www.nciec.org/>

The U.S. Department of Education Rehabilitation Services Administration, Interpreter Training Grants, 2005-2010, funds this and all initiatives of the National Consortium of Interpreter Education Centers.