



RID-NCIEC MENTORING GRANTS



The Mentorship Program, Massachusetts

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The Mentorship Program was fortunate to receive funding through an RID NCIEC Mentoring Grant, which allowed us to launch a pilot ASL Mentoring Program this year. The goal of this program is to enhance ASL fluency and to increase interpreters' comfort in interacting with deaf individuals of various cultures. As our mentees and Deaf mentors complete their time together, we are pleased to announce that this program has been a resounding success!

Mentees

We carefully selected 10 mentees to participate in this pilot program. Six mentees were also participating in interpreting mentorship. Two mentees had participated in interpreting mentorship in the past and two mentees had no prior experience with The Mentorship Program. All mentees were graduates of interpreting programs and two were also screened interpreters.

Mentors

We recruited ten Deaf mentors, keeping in mind the need for geographic and cultural diversity. We looked for friendly individuals with native or near-native ASL skills who were patient, respectful of others, interested in working with new interpreters to improve their skills and interested in working with mentees and mentors from diverse backgrounds. These ten mentors plus the Coordinator for ASL Mentoring attended a two-day training in November 2007 with Gino Gouby, CDI, CLIP-R, National Professional Development Manager for Sorenson Communications. The training focused on linguistic features of ASL, how to analyze mentees' ASL samples, goal setting with mentees and approaches for working with mentees in mentoring sessions.

Program Design

Mentee/mentor pairs were to meet for a total of 8 hours, including a mix of private one-to-one mentoring sessions and participation in social events of the mentoring pair's choosing. One-to-one mentorship focused on conversational ASL skills, with the mentor prompting the mentee to produce spontaneous ASL texts on various subjects, the mentor modeling how a native ASL-user would produce a similar text and the mentee practicing incorporating ASL features

as modeled. Social gatherings provided an opportunity for guided entrée into the Deaf community where mentees could interact with deaf individuals with a variety of signing styles and from a variety of cultural backgrounds. At these events, mentors supported mentees in meeting new people and acted as linguistic and cultural mediators. Afterwards, mentoring pairs discussed any linguistic or cultural challenges the mentee faced.

Accomplishments

- Trained 11 fluent Deaf signers to provide ASL mentorship (10 recruits plus our Coordinator for ASL Mentoring)
- Provided 68 hours of ASL mentorship to 10 mentees by the end of April. Mentoring pairs are in the process of completing the remaining 12 hours of mentorship.
- 30% of mentees/mentors participating in ASL mentorship are individuals of color
- Mentees and mentors felt that this was a positive experience!
- Mentees overwhelmingly responded that they benefited from this new program and only wish that it could have been longer!

Plans for FY 09

As mentoring pairs complete their work together, we are collecting data regarding the effectiveness of the program in helping mentees accomplish their goals, need for additional training and support and overall recommendations for improvement. This information is gathered through written evaluations, group meetings, email, phone and videophone.

Based on the feedback we have received so far, we are planning the following enhancements/modifications in FY 09:

- Provide follow-up training to current mentors focusing on how to work with mentees in setting achievable goals and effective methods of dialoguing/working with mentees
- Increase number of mentoring hours per session from 8 hours to 10 hours
- Allow more flexibility in the number of hours per meeting and the number of social vs. one-to-one meetings based on the individual needs of each mentee
- Host a Kick-Off event for mentees and mentors including a group review of the program set-up, expectations, responsibilities, and a question and answer period. This will also provide an initial opportunity for mentoring pairs to meet, as well as an opportunity to meet others in the program.
- Host a Mentee Gathering early in the program to monitor progress, clarify expectations and address any issues
- Host a Mentor Gathering early in the program to monitor progress, clarify expectations and address any issues

- Simplify Journal Notes completed at the end of each meeting. These notes will document the mentoring pair's agreements re what was learned in the current meeting and what the focus of learning for the next meeting will be.

A wide range of interpreters, from novice to experienced, has expressed interest in ASL Mentoring! With the completion of funding through the RID NCIEC grant, we are pursuing alternative funding sources in order to maintain our current program. Given sufficient funding, we also plan to provide mentor training to a new cohort of mentors and correspondingly expand the number of mentees the program is able to serve. We greatly appreciate the opportunity RID NCIEC grant money has given us to launch this popular new program and we look forward to its continued success!

For additional information about The Mentorship Program and all our programs and services, please visit our web site at www.massmentorship.org or contact Irma Kahle at irma.kahle@massmentorship.org.