
Mentorship at the National Center on Deafness

by Caroline Preston, MCSC, SC:L, OIC:C

The concept of mentoring is an age old one, following the idea of the apprentice and the craftsman, the student and the sage.

In the area of interpreter training, the standard method has been in the classroom and in practicum situations. In 1984, the National Center on Deafness at CSUN implemented what at that time was called a practicum experience, where one employee (a first year interpreter) worked with an experienced, certified interpreter. The class was Human Anatomy and the practicum interpreter wanted to develop skills using classifiers. It turned out to be the most fabulous experience for both interpreters. Not only did classifier use improve, but the experience was like private training for an entire semester. The program structure, now called The NCORD Mentorship Program, is designed for working interpreters. Any employee may apply for a mentorship. A videotape sample of their interpreting is submitted prior to the start of their mentorship. This serves as a tool for the mentor to diagnose the skills of the mentee

and to establish goals and objectives to work on.

Prior to the start of the mentorship, the mentor and the mentee meet and go over the tape and agree on areas to focus on.

During the mentorship, both interpreters work together in a pre-assigned class. They may switch off, observe on alternate days or come up with a different method. They both take copious notes and meet outside of the class to discuss their observations. The Mentor will often make recommendations for further upgrading.

At the end of the semester, a new videotape is made and the mentor and mentee view it to determine accomplishments of goals set at the beginning of the semester. At that time, new goals and recommendations are made.

Each semester the NCOD receives approximately 30 applicants from among 95 employees. This has proved to be one of the finest and most effective means of in-service training for the professional interpreter. If you would like more information - Call Caroline Preston at (818)885-2614. □
