

Office Memo

Center for Research, Teaching, and Learning
Voice/TTY: (716) 475-5482 FAX: 475-6580
E-Mail: MEMRTL@RITVAX.ISC.RIT.EDU

To: Jim DeCaro

From: Marc Marschark 

Date: August 24, 1994

Re: OFSD

This is in response to your request for administrative recommendations with regard to the future of OFSD, its personnel, and its functions. The following is based on several sources of information in addition to that gained in my service on both the OFSD Program Review Committee and the Faculty/Staff Development Working Group. Information and feedback on the Program Review Report (hereafter, "the Report") was solicited from the seven Faculty/Staff Development Coordinators (henceforth "Coordinators"), individuals with previous supervisory or developmental roles in OFSD (or OFD), current OFSD members, and members of several other relevant constituencies (DPG, HDRC, SPC). In addition, I have had extensive one-on-one discussions with several Coordinators (both faculty and staff) who were recommended by OFSD, their center directors, or other constituencies, as well as with Geri Curwin, David Strom, Jack Clark, and, many times over the course of the year, Chris Licata. Some of those individuals gave me written feedback in addition to or in lieu of personal meetings, but most preferred the latter.

I am pleased (and surprised) to inform you that there was almost complete unanimity on the part of those from whom I have received feedback. With only the possible exception of OFSD itself, which found the Report to be a positive endorsement of their activities and was largely mute with regard to any content-related specifics (see attached), the information available to me from all of the above sources was consistent, clear, and extremely helpful in developing a plan for the future. I thus have considerable confidence in the recommendations below. For your convenience, I separate the remainder of this memorandum into five sections: **Summary of Findings**, **Future Needs**, **the Future of OFSD**, **Personnel**, and **Additional Comments**.

I. Summary of Findings

Professional development is an integral part of NTID and an area in which we have broad recognition both within and without the University. Those individuals who have established, maintained, and extended our efforts in this regard have done a superb job and all deserve to share credit for our enviable position. In fact, there is some sentiment that "we don't know how good we have it" in this regard. Perhaps precisely because of our success in this area, it appears that we may have lost some of our "focus." There is a very large array of offerings, some of which are in need of improvement, reduction, or elimination. There is strong sentiment at all levels that much of the current programming could better serve staff and faculty needs if it were organized and conducted at the center level.

At the same time, there is unanimous agreement that there must be a mechanism to ensure that College-level programming is not lost, but becomes an opportunity for collaboration. Concomitantly, there is broad concern that if programming were entirely left to center-based efforts, current variability across centers would increase and professional development could become functionally nonexistent in some (this according to center coordinators themselves).

In addition to making programming more sensitive to the needs of our new structure, there is a broad feeling that it must become more sensitive to our new goals relating to communication, awareness of the deaf community and deafness-related issues, and student needs. There is recognition of the need for -- and strong support for -- more serious training activities relevant to these goals and more collaboration within NTID and with RIT to achieve this end. In order for all of this to be successful, however, there must be a College-wide effort -- with strong support from all center directors -- to increase access to programming for both NTID and RIT personnel. This will require more flexible scheduling of event programming, a greater willingness of supervisors to encourage and support staff attendance at events, and more convenient locating of events for people who work in the Hugh L. Carey Building,

Despite the feeling that faculty and staff programming may be too broad, there is consensus that the current resources devoted to OFSD (and, to a lesser extent center-based activities; see "Additional Comments," below) are not commensurate with their products. Examination of current programming suggests that one of our full-time OFSD personnel does little if any programming and that neither of the other two have enough responsibility to justify their full-time positions. Adding "more of the same" programming, however, is not seen as the answer.

Finally, there is widespread belief that staff and faculty programming can better serve our community if we give the center-based committees more responsibility and resources for College-wide planning. Meanwhile, if we take better advantage of RIT's training expertise and encourage RIT to take better advantage of our expertise and experience in development activities, we can further enhance collaboration and understanding both inside NTID and across the University. This goal is consistent with the Strategic Plans of NTID and RIT.

II. Future Needs

For the most part, the needs assessment incorporated into the Report speaks for itself. However, it is important that we proceed cautiously and not try to do too much at one time. To do so would run the risk of squandering resources as well as the attentiveness and cooperation of our "audience." The frequencies (of need identification) provided in the Report indicate the relative ranking for those who responded to the questionnaire, but do not provide absolute mandates beyond several highly-ranked and consistent needs. The most fruitful approach is likely to be tackling these high-priority needs now and re-assess the others as we move forward. Considering the major sections of the needs assessment, it looks like this:

At the level of Institutional Needs, I believe that there are mandates to:

- (A) improve and enhance collaboration ("team building")
- (B) provide skills necessary for coping with stress (as well as reducing the current levels thereof)
- (C) improve training and support relevant to student needs, leadership, and cultural and communication issues.

Clearly, some of these can be addressed at the level of individual centers, but there **MUST BE** centralized, well-articulated organization and cooperation across the centers. These are issues of concern to all of us, and responsibility for their support lies at the level of the College leadership.

At the level of Development of Knowledge and Skills and Student Services: I believe that most of these can be handled at the level of individual centers with the collaborative support of OFSD as envisioned below.

III. The Future of OFSD

In order to achieve the above goals, I believe that a reorganization of OFSD is necessary. In particular, I suggest that more responsibility for College-wide programming be placed with the center coordinators (as a group) in concert with the to-be-established OFSD Advisory Committee (see item V. (B). below). Drawing on the feedback and discussions I have had with experienced coordinators and OFSD-ers, there appears to be a consensus for the following positions/functions within an Office of Faculty and Staff Development:

- (A) A full-time person is needed in the central office to support scheduling and arrangements
- (B) A half-time (supervisory/organizational) person is needed in the central office to work with the center coordinators, maintain and encourage College-wide programming, administer the centralized resources at the direction of the coordinators' group, and serve as a liaison with the center directors. I have referred to this as "the coordinators' coordinator," but some coordinators find the term not precisely on target.
- (C) A full-time person is needed to coordinate and run various workshops, seminars, and similar sessions on topics of College-wide and University-wide interest. This person also should have a stronger liaison relationship with RIT and David Strom's office than is currently the case. This represents an expansion of and increased responsibility for the position that Mort Nace now occupies; a position that currently is not seen as entailing full-time duties.

* There is unanimous agreement that any secretarial functions needed to support center-based programming should come from the resources of those centers. Such functions needed at the College level can be supported by making the position currently occupied by Betty Morrow full-time, supplemented by secretarial resources of the Dean's Office.

Programs that comprise the New Employee Orientation (summer) program could be accomplished through either short-term summer contracts to individuals who have run those programs in the past or as a collaborative responsibility of center coordinators. The latter alternative would contribute to the multi-level team-building supported by a broad segment of our community. Other special-purpose

programs currently offered by OFSD can be subsumed by the RIT Personnel Office, center-based programming, or the collaborative efforts of the center coordinators and the half-time, "cross-center development organizer."

IV. Personnel - Action Recommendations for current personnel

Temporary Secretary - Discontinue.

Betty Morrow is an important resource for NTID. Her position should be up-graded to 35 hours per week from its current 30 hours. She would handle scheduling and arrangements for the above programming and would report to Mort Nace (see below).

Mort Nace appears an appropriate choice for the above-described expansion of his current responsibilities. He would work more closely with both RIT and David Strom's office and report to the Director of the Center for Research, Teaching, and Learning.

Part-time Cross-Center Coordinator - This position would be filled by a center coordinator or other individual as a Special Assignment (with appropriate stipend). Following appropriate "advertising" and discussion, the individual would be appointed by the Director of the Center for Research, Teaching, and Learning, ideally for a period of 2-3 years. *(not permanent)*
former coordinator

V. Additional Points for Your Attention

(A). It is essential that the OFSD Advisory Group be implemented as soon as possible.

(B). In the course of discussions with Coordinators, it has become clear that the amount of time they give to F/S Development activities varies more widely than we realized on the F/S Development Working Group. While one or two coordinators do put in the 12-hour per week that we estimated, most spend 6 hours or less. With that in mind, the above recommendations with regard to increased center-based programming should not, in my view, be seen as requiring any additional compensation.

(C). Judy Egelston-Dodd has requested the raw data from the Report for OFSD's consideration. That request is now passed on to you; I would share my thoughts on it if you so desire.

(D). In David Templeton's cover memo to you (on the Report), he requested that comments associated with specific individuals be deleted prior to its public dissemination - a request that he reiterated to me. My memory of the Committee's discussion of that point is directly contrary to that request, but I would be happy to re-poll the Committee if you so desire.

The budget signing authority could reside either with the cross-center development organizer in OFSD or the Director of the Center for Research, Teaching, and Learning. Non-salary resources of OFSD could go toward a budget to be used for College-wide programming, to be used at the discretion of the coordinators as a group.