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**Award-winning Effort** Carl Kriger (left), manager with IBM Software Group, presents NCE Director John Macko (center) and NTID Assistant Vice President for College Advancement Dr. Gerard Buckley with IBM's Excellence in Career Services Award.

# Collaborations and Partnerships Get the Job Done

by Kathy A. Johncox

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics indicated in its March 2010 Employment Situation Summary that the number of unemployed persons in the United States was 15 million, and the unemployment rate was 9.7 percent. That employment picture can be somewhat discouraging as RIT/NTID students search for summer cooperative work experiences (co-ops) required for their majors, and as spring 2010 graduates look to enter the workforce. In these tough economic times, the staff of the NTID Center on Employment are using current and developing employer networks, collaborations and partnerships to help make it easier for students to get that first co-op or job.

“We know that hiring deaf and hard-of-hearing RIT/NTID co-op students and graduates gives businesses a competitive advantage by bringing high-tech skills as well as diversity to the workplace,” says John Macko, NCE director. “It’s our job to help employers see those

benefits by bringing awareness to organizations looking for employees with the type of skills our students and graduates offer.”

Bringing awareness means NCE staff members spend about one third of the year on the road. Trips to conferences such as the Society for Human Resource Management Diversity Conference allow NCE staff to network with human resources people from around the nation. They travel to present *Working Together: Deaf and Hearing People*, a workshop designed to help employers learn about working with deaf employees, and to inform employers all over the country about the quality and skills of RIT/NTID’s deaf and hard-of-hearing students.

“Creating and maintaining strong recruiting relationships is important,” says Macko. “Personal visits to organizations and contacts throughout the year let them know that we are committed to working with them and helping them benefit from the skills and diversity our students bring.”

## Networking Reaps Rewards

Last year, NCE visits to California resulted in emerging relationships with potential employers such as Qualcomm, Solar Turbines, Pepperdine University, NAVSEA and Aerospace Corporation. As a result of previous West Coast networking, the University of California San Diego hired three visual arts majors for co-ops, and the City of Los Angeles Department of Public Works hired four students—one graphics intern and three engineering interns.

“The NTID Center on Employment representatives contacted me in 2008 to ask if we had a need for interns,” says Bill Weeks, personnel director for the City of Los Angeles Department of Public Works. “We had no experience working with deaf interns or co-ops, so we invited NCE staff to come and meet with some of our personnel from different agencies. A few managers were interested right away, and by the end of the summer, program managers and supervisors were so excited about the wonderful experience of working with deaf interns that they arranged

to award certificates to the students affirming their excellent summer efforts for us.”

### An Enduring Collaboration

Information Technology students benefit from a longtime collaboration with IBM, which involves field trips to IBM’s New York State facilities where groups of students meet deaf and hard-of-hearing IBM employees, and begin to see what types of jobs and skills are required, so they can be prepared upon graduation.

“I’ve been working with NCE since 1999, and IBM and NCE have developed a close working relationship,” says Bill Strachan, technical recruiting program director, IBM Research. “And there is a clear understanding from NCE as to the caliber of student IBM seeks. I would describe our relationship with NCE as enduring. Business relationships tend to change over time for a number of reasons, however, the relationship between RIT/NTID and IBM is as strong today as it was 11 years ago.”

As a testament to this long and successful relationship, NCE this year received IBM’s Excellence in Career Services Award—one of only two colleges worldwide that have received this honor, which recognizes efforts in

preparing students for a career upon graduation, and helping IBM recruiters find students with the skills they need.

### Partnering with Government

“Our relationship with NCE started in 2006 after the NTID career fair. Our then-deputy director requested that I work with NCE to establish a partnership,” says Michael Duignan, a human resources consultant for the Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) in Rome, N.Y. “Our collaboration has been exceptional. We work closely with NCE staff by describing the type of work, and the staff suggests applicable majors. With this close collaboration, co-op placements have always worked well, and I believe, from the students’ perspective, have provided meaningful work and career experience.”

NCE’s relationship with the Department of Defense has led to an additional collaboration. RIT is one of the first of a growing number of college campuses where the Department of Defense hires a student to educate fellow students and alumni about employment opportunities for people with disabilities, and encourage them to apply. This year Kyle Edenzon is both an RIT graduate student in Multidisciplinary Studies, and an

on-campus recruiter for the United States Department of Defense Student Training and Academic Recruitment (STARS) program.

“The partnership between the NTID Center on Employment and the Department of Defense through the STARS program has benefitted not only me, but the RIT community in general,” says Edenzon. “I have opportunities for both co-ops and full time positions as well as some great networking. The program also has benefitted a number of students and faculty here at RIT. This has been an absolutely wonderful experience and given me the opportunity to learn a lot!”

Another such partnership is with The Workforce Recruitment Program for College Students with Disabilities, which connects federal government agencies nationwide with interested college students and recent graduates with disabilities from all over the country. Since the mid-1970s, NCE has partnered with the WRP to bring recruiters to campus annually to interview students and place information from these student interviews in a searchable database available online to federal human resources specialists, equal employment opportunity specialists, and other hiring officials in federal agencies. Last year, WRP interviewed 80 RIT/NTID students, and 15 students accepted job offers and worked last summer.

### Networking is the Key

Once a relationship begins, NCE staff can provide resumes for employers to review and schedule pre-screened on-campus interviews. Employers can benefit from NCE’s job posting services, access to a dedicated employer website and *NewsNotes*, an electronic newsletter. Employers also are invited to attend the annual NTID Job Fair in October where they can meet hundreds of potential employees.

“What we emphasize to students and graduates looking for co-ops and jobs in this economy applies to our own efforts with employers as well,” says Macko. “The key is networking.”



JASON WITIG

**Government Jobs** RIT graduate student Kyle Edenzon (left) and Roland Omnipieg from the Department of Defense teamed up at NTID’s annual Job Fair to talk with, interview and encourage students to apply for federal jobs.