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Higher Education

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Each member of the panel spent approximately ten minutes describing his respective program. The three regional programs for deaf people at community colleges are now three years old. The community college concept has expanded greatly since the establishment of these programs by the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare in 1968. Nationwide there are more than 25 programs, some serving only a handful, others serving large numbers.

It was mentioned that at the present time Gallaudet serves half of the nation's 2000 hearing impaired students in higher education programs. Among the remaining half, nearly 40 percent attend the National Technical Institute for the Deaf, and 60 percent are distributed among a number of regional and local programs.

The panel agreed that all of the integrated programs offer basically the same supportive services – interpreting, note-taking, counseling and tutoring. Most of the participants expressed the feeling that experience has led to an emphasis for stronger counseling services than was originally planned, based on evidence of need.

The primary difference noted among the various programs were pinpointed to the differing characteristics of the sponsoring institutions rather than the services offered. Another difference was frequently seen to be the population of students served in terms of level of achievement, vocational or career objectives and so forth. Several members of the section audience were currently involved in establishing local higher education programs and reported on their progress and observations. Questions and

HIGHER EDUCATION

comments from the floor were quite lively. The problem of fast growth in number of programs in terms of available trained and qualified staff was raised and discussed. The need for a consortium of all higher education programs, particularly in order to handle referrals and dispense information to vocational rehabilitation counselors, was discussed.

There was little disagreement concerning the positive effects of the current trend to offer a widening choice of higher education programs to the deaf school graduate. The only area in question seemed to be whether the programs were truly doing an adequate job in terms of quality.