CHOOSING A COLLEGE

T. Alan Hurwitz

DR. T. ALAN HURWITZ: Jane or Carolyn got in touch with me and asked me I would be willing to give a workshop on what to look for in a college. I thought that would be a wonderful opportunity to share with whoever might be interested. Maybe there would be some people who have children or maybe are thinking about going to college, or even members of ALDA who would be considering going back to school, or maybe even starting a new career and can take advantage of that information. My wife Vicki started going back when she in her 30's. And then later on she graduated, got her bachelor's degree at the age of 39 and her master's degree at 49! So it's never too late.

I remember when I was a small boy my grandmother at that time was about 84 or so. I was looking through the purse of my grandmother when 1 saw a small little dictionary. I said "Ga, Ga," I called her, I said, "you've got a dictionary in your purse." She said, "I'm never too old to learn new words." This had a profound impact on me that it's never too late in life to learn. It's a life-long learning process. So I was honored to be asked to speak about choosing a college.

Now, there are several different issues that I want to discuss. One thing I want us to think about is the right academic fit for the individuals. What's your area of interest? Is this the right major or minor that you are having? What about the courses? When you think about going to college later on, will this lead to a degree? There are some people who are more interested in taking courses just for their self-improvement, or job enhancement. Some people actually want to go back to school for the degree.

You have to think about the opportunities that the program could offer. Could it be more of an academic program that seems to mesh with a Map. A map program has both

academic studies and work experience. We call it a co-op. It's cooperative education program.

Also, you might want to think about the academics and your area of expertise. Sometimes when high school students are thinking about going to college, they need to take some college tests. The tests are ACT or the SAT to find out where the students stand so that they can find the right program that's going to fit in with their academic excellence and their interests and career exploration as well.

The next thing that you need to think about is cost. I remember a long time ago when I went to college my tuition was about $1,000 for one year. Now today, my word! It wouldn't be unreasonable to expect tuition for a private school to be anywhere from $20,000 to $30,000. I am talking about tuition alone. Plus you have room and board and additional costs and fees with books, supplies, and so forth. The list is endless.

My wife and I sent our son to college. The tuition was $18,000 for the first year. I was astounded at the time. By the time he graduated, it was already over $25,000. So cost is something you have to consider as well.

However, you want to do a comparison of different school's costs. Looking at price, don't go with just the cheapest one because there may be hidden costs that you might assume are covered. For instance, at Rochester Institute of Technology the tuition is $24,000 a year. However, deaf and hard-of-hearing students attending RIT pay a reduced tuition that is about $9,000 a year. The difference is almost $17,000 because the federal government subsidizes that tuition. It is important not only to look at the fit academically but also financially.

Don't give up. Don't think, "Oh, college is too expensive. I'm not going." There are many opportunities and ways to seek out funding and scholarships. There may be a scholarship for someone who does well in high school. Maybe you apply for merit scholarships. Or you could apply for a variety of different grant-in-aid funds. You could apply for a loan as well. Some people may qualify for Vocational Rehabilitation services, so sit down with your rehab counselor and discuss that, see what the potentials are for financial assistance.

Then you have to calculate the different categories. For instance, the parents can contribute. There may be a scholarship or then maybe students can work either on campus or off campus and help offset the cost. As a last resort, students may apply for a loan. You have to look at the entire scope.

With my son, when we were trying to make decisions about which colleges he could go, of course, we looked at the price. On the list of several colleges our son selected there was a wide range of prices; one had the lowest tuition, and then there was also the most expensive college. I thought, "We couldn't afford the most expensive college." Then we started looking at different ways of applying for financial aid. We subsequently learned that the bottom line for parental contribution didn't make any difference. We

realized that our son could go anywhere as long as he qualified for a scholarship or some form financial aid. He would probably have to work or apply for a loan. So my word of advice is don't look at tuition alone at its face value without making other considerations. I advise you to look at all possible avenues to cover the college costs.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Many families of students are very confused with all of the financial options. Does the NTID or RIT have a financial aid office that helps? Is it rehab?

DR. T. ALAN HURWITZ: Oh, definitely. We actually have two offices. One is at RIT, called the financial aid office. At NTID have financial advisors for our students. You can apply for financial assistance, and through FAFSA form. The paperwork is very complex. When my son looked at the paperwork, he said, “Oh, it's so complicated." He is well educated, but the paperwork plus the tax forms, and everything else is cumbersome. But yes, we do have an office of individuals who can assist students filling out the appropriate papers, making sure the paperwork gets mailed out and reviewed. We give students advice on how to apply for the financial aid.

There are many different scholarships, university based scholarships. National, state and local, and regional funds are available. You could apply for a PELL grant or other state funds. For example, in New York it is called the TAP, the tuition assistance program, for those individuals who live in New York State and are going to a New York university or college. If you want to go out-of-state, you may not be eligible for TAP. So there are options that you have to explore in your respective states.

When you are making decisions, you have to look at not just the academic programs and the financial programs, but you also have to explore what is available for access to a variety of services. We talk about access and support services. Access means that you can actually receive the information in the room maybe through interpreters, real-time captioning, note takers, we call that accessible information or access services. If you are talking about support services, those services may entail tutoring, whether individual or group tutoring. You may need in-depth tutoring as well. Also, you may need academic advising, career counseling, or some personal counsel especially if you are making some adjustments to the collegiate life. You are away from home, and you will need to deal with being away from home.

So there are some personal adjustments that have to be made. Does the college offer those types of services? You have to consider those before you go to college. Maybe a deaf student wants to have hearing and speech therapy services. Find out if it's available at that college. Find out if there are some local services that are tied in with the college.

Are there cochlear implant services? At NTID we have over 200 students with cochlear implants. We have, I think, a total of 10 full-time audiologists. All of them have been trained to work with students with cochlear implants. We have the equipment for mapping purposes. In the past, when students with implants had difficulties, they had to

fly to their home area to get the mapping support and come back. It is expensive equipment but now the NTID students can get that support through our services.

The application process is definitely the beginning, but it is very complex process, believe me. We have people at the college to assist students through that. We have the Admissions Counselor who works with interested students to make sure that they have the appropriate form and the necessary information. We have a complete package for them. We want to make sure that they have the results of ACT or SAT test, and their high school transcripts.

Some students may have completed high school four or five years ago, and attended a community college for a couple of years, and now they want to transfer to a different college. They may not have taken the ACT or the SAT. We have that waiver ability; we look at their transcripts and make some determinations based on that. We need to have proof of hearing loss. We have an agreement with the Department of Education for students who have a demonstrated hearing loss. Now, in the past, we were very strict and had specific guidelines with 70 decibel loss or greater. Over time we've become a little bit more lenient, so we're looking at their functional level of hearing loss.

The college or university requires essays on the application form itself. We look at the essays and their language expertise to see if they have the right type of placement, what English-level course is required. We need to be able to determine that with the essay.

Can the students be creative with what they want to write about? When our son applied for college and had to write the essay, he decided to write about his experience going to the World Series between the New York Mets and the New York Yankees. He brought about $200 with him but he couldn't buy a ticket for under $300, so he tried to figure out how he could get into the game. He noticed that there were people standing on a subway that overlooked the stadium so he decided to walk up there and see what was going on there. He realized that he could view the game pretty well. There were other people standing there with him, so he got to watch the World Series for free! He wrote about his experience when he applied to go to college just to show that he had some creativity and writing expertise. I think that type of creative work is helpful.

As you delve deeper into the university life, you want to see what student life is like. You have to look at the student life. What are the students like there? How many students are there? Is it a large campus, a small campus? What are the opportunities for deaf and hard-of-hearing students at that campus? Is there a cohesive group of deaf students, or are they more a mixed group between deaf and mainstream students? What services do they have for students who live on campus? What's the dorm life like? Do they have Greek organizations, sororities/fraternities there? Do they have athletic clubs? Are there other types of clubs? There are so many choices within the university campus life.

For example, RIT has over 160 different student organizations. So many options to choose from, and not all students have the same interest. A variety of interests exist. What are the options available to deaf and hard-of-hearing students? If they say, "I want to go to a deaf class only with deaf students, a small class," or, "I want to go to more of a mainstream class with accessible services," or maybe a combination of both, you have to listen. It important for students to seek out what the options are available to them.

An additional thought when you go to college is the distance from home? Is it closer to home? An individual student may have a family or a spouse, plus children, so they have to consider which school is best for them.

Technology is an important issue. Does the college have a technical support system? Does it have the technology for wireless, or broadband technology, and all of these things? What do you want to major in, hard science technology? You have to find out what type of support system that university has for that technology. There are all types of things to consider when you are going to a college.

Now, let's set that application process aside. I want to talk about the Internet potential, and some of the resources that are available there. To give you an idea of what to check, go to NTID's website. Of course, I picked NTID because I am most familiar with it. This is not a promotion. I just want to give you an example so that you can check it out. Go to the section for
Prospective Students. In the past, colleges used to send out packets of information. Now, they want to do it by way of Internet. Students want to be able to look into the college by way of the web. You can have a chat with an admissions counselor. You can connect with an admissions counselor by way of video and talk with them, or you can instant message with them. That's 's becoming more popular in colleges all over the United States.

The Internet also can allow you to get into the admissions office. It can show you how to contact a counselor at the school, or even how to talk with the staff. Maybe if you are interested in a specific program like imaging science or something else that's more specific you can contact a specific faculty in that area and ask them questions about it. There are other resources to look for.

Parents, a lot of times, want to get more information about what the tuition costs are going to be, and what the different opportunities are going to be. That way they can have an intelligent conversation with their son or daughter. Also international students are able to check out in general what's going on in the school so they can obtain more information as they go about trying to select a college.

It's possible when people think about college, they're not very sure about what area of expertise they wish to go into. By way of a website, students are able to check on different careers, and studies that may interest them. They'll be able to take a self-assessment test, sort of an evaluation to see where their interests lie. Maybe students

want to know which career they have a better fit with. What kind of personality matches with which kind of field? Am I more of a data person? Am I more of a people person? When you find a school that you are interested in, you can always bookmark it and add it to your favorites list. There are so many different resources that are available. Before it was all done by printed page. Now with websites and people becoming more expert, people can use those Internet resources to look for a college.

Financial sites. One of the most popular websites for finding financial information is www.fastweb.com. It has a wealth of information about scholarships, different scholarships related to different schools, or different career choices, or different areas of interest. It also gives you information about jobs that will help people to go to school, and to give them internship opportunities. There's a lot of information about Vocational Rehabilitation.

At the Northeast Technical Assistance Center at NTID, there is a website that has the information on financial assistance through VR. Many VR agencies require applicants to have SSI or SSDI funding before they qualify for VR services money. VR agencies have a limited amount of funds, so we encourage you to apply for that money. A university would rather you apply for all of the funding and then they might add some grants in later, or loans, or whatever it is that you will need. But actually VR prefers that the student apply for all possible funding first before they qualify for VR services and support.

Each state, each VR agency, is different. Even if you go to one agency and talk with a counselor, s/he may tell you that you can't get any funding. If you go to another VR counselor, you might get a different answer, different information, and different advice. So I think that the students and the parents and the school counselors need to be smart about it and figure out creative ways to get what you really want. There's a lot of money out there that you can take advantage of it. You just need to look for it.

I'm not sure it's the same for every college, but I talked with someone about what his university was doing. He said they have a Disability Services Office that provides services to deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals who have disabilities. Maybe the student has a vision need or a need for another special service. Maybe the student has a learning disability, or is someone with ADHD. The Disability Services Office helps the students get special accommodations for the classes. All of the colleges have set up their own Office of Disability services for students who have additional disabilities. From those offices of disability services students can find out whether or not they will be able to access the services they need. What kind of accommodation do they need? No time limit for the testing, for example. Maybe they need to go into a separate special room in order to take a test. Or maybe they need to have large print. There are many different ways that they can get services.

Applying. There are two ways you can apply. There is the old way, which is with paper and pencil, filling out a form, putting it in an envelope, putting a stamp on it, and sending it out. That's the traditional way. More and more it's being done online. That's

becoming a very popular and fast way of applying. But more and more applications are being done online. You can print a PDF, fill it out by hand, and mail it in or you can fill it out on line and sent it that way. It's a rapidly growing way of doing applying.

You can talk with an admission officer by way of video or by way of instant messenger. Instant messaging is becoming more and more popular in schools. Also videophones are popular because you can set up a chat with admissions counselor and actually see the counselor while you carry on a conversation. There are some challenges because some schools may not have the resources. Instead, you may have to use a pager to instant message or maybe use your computer again to instant message with the admissions counselor.

Prospective students can ask for our CD, our CD-ROMS. Many universities are now distributing CD-ROMS. You ask for it, it is mailed to you and can look at offerings from the college or university in your own time. There are many different options available.

In the past, in the old days, there were many students who were not proficient with computers. They would go to a school counselor who would then guide them through the process. I remember when I was teaching computer sciences courses, I'd have a new student come into class, and would have to teach the new student how to log on, how to register for an account, and go through each step by step of the process. Nowadays, I don't need to do that anymore. The students are already proficient in it. There are a lot of students that are teaching me how to use the computer. I mean, it's really been challenging for teachers to keep ahead of the game because the students are already ahead of us, and they're not afraid of technology. Some day I will have to ask my granddaughter how to do something because she will be already way ahead of where you and I ever were.

More and more schools have technology by way of the Internet. There's just so much information that you can access from all over the world. That means public school counselors or guidance counselors have to be proficient in this. They really need to stay ahead of the game.

With e-mailing, we have a challenge of traveling all over the world. Many people have never heard of NTID or RIT. We do good promotion, but there are still a lot of people who are not familiar with us because so many students are now mainstreamed. I want to say that a lot of the students before would find out about NTID and RIT through the deaf schools. Now 80-90% of the students are mainstreamed. So they're spread out. More than 50% of the students who apply are from schools where the deaf student is the only student in class. That is really a challenge for us to find them. In the past it was a lot easier since they were all within one geographical area.

There are many colleges and universities now that have what's called a "virtual tour." For those who can't afford to travel and visit the campus, they're able to tour the campus online to be able to learn more about the campus, what it looks like, what the students look like, and from that they're able to narrow down their decision to a couple

of colleges that they want to physically visit. Maybe go during the college's open house time. This way the student can do a lot more checking into the colleges before they make a decision on where they want to actually visit.

More and more students are finding ways to get the information they need. Students also are looking for additional information. For example, communication and access, will they have an interpreter? Will they be able to get real-time captioning? Will they be able to use a FM system? They want to find out more information about what services will be available to them. A lot of the schools have videophones. It's a new technology that is emerging, and we must make sure that we have that for the students who are looking into our school.

A lot of young people coming to the colleges and universities bring a lot of emotional baggage with them. Maybe they're from a broken home, or they're from an alcoholic family, or maybe they even sell or use drugs. We're finding more and more adolescents all over the country who are experiencing those kinds of problems. We have to be able to provide services to those students and make sure that it's in a confidential environment so that they can get what they need. Safety is also an important factor for people who go to colleges. Is it safe for the female students? What about the walking distances from class to the parking lot? Are there blue lights or some kind of an emergency system in place? If the student needs help, are they able to access it immediately? With the blue boxes, all a student has to do is go up and press the button, and the campus police will be right there. The campus police do communicate quite well.

Do the dorms have alarms? Do they have the correct lighting systems? Do they have the strobe light systems that are needed during an emergency?

Career services, are they able to find a major, and also are they able to access co-op jobs?
A growing number of students request hearing and speech services because a lot of the students who go to work in a co-op realize they have to develop their communication skills. So they'll come back to us and say that they want those services. We do provide those services.

That's it for my presentation. But I'm certainly happy to open the floor up for any questions and discussion.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: What are the requirements to qualify for that the federal subsidy for deaf and hard-of-hearing students?

DR. T. ALAN HURWITZ: It's actually an automatic thing for students who apply to go to RIT through NTID. If the person decides s/he wants to go to RIT directly, then s/he doesn't qualify for the subsidy. But the students who go to NTID for the associate's degree would receive the subsidized reduced tuition. If they're going to go to another college, like RIT for their bachelor's program, they can apply through the NTID if they

meet the qualifications. If the student has a hearing loss, an overall academic achievement level of 8th grade, and is a United States citizen, the student can qualify for Federal subsidy.

For international students who are coming in, by law it's the same thing. At Gallaudet University we have similar standards. International students are required to pay twice what the deaf individual United States citizen would have to pay. For the hearing United States citizen, tuition for RIT is $24,000 a year. For NTID students if they're not NTID, but RIT, deaf or hard-of-hearing, tuition is reduced to about $9,000 a year. International students can apply through NTID to attend RIT and they would pay $18,000 a year for tuition.

Now, there is a little bit of confusion because I think that they have to qualify for the subsidy only if they attend NTID classes. But then if you go to RIT you have to pay full tuition. That's not the case if you apply through NTID to go to RIT programming, then you can qualify for the subsidy. .

AUDIENCE MEMBER: How do NTID and RIT students adapt to each other? Hearing and deaf, how do they interact with each other?

DR. T. ALAN HURWITZ: RIT has 15,300 students including approximately 1,200 are deaf and hard-of-hearing students. That's about 8% and I would say that 45% of the deaf and hard-of-hearing students go to the other seven colleges within RIT with mainstream students. They intermingle with the hearing students.

Students have choices in life on campus. They can live with deaf students only; they can live with hearing students only; or they can live in a mixed dorm of hearing and deaf. Let me give you an example. NTID has its own student government, called NSC, NTID Student Council. That's the student council. RIT has its own student government for all of the students going there. We have deaf students and hearing students, and this year finally, one of our deaf students, a former president of NSC, was elected President of the Student Government at RIT. That's 15,000 students at RIT. She really went through quite a bit, went through running the meetings for all of the different colleges there. The students really encouraged her to run for the office. They had an interpreter for each of the meetings that were held. It was a major accomplishment for us. So many people were excited about that. Maybe you've seen the name, Lizzie Sorkin. You may have read her name somewhere already, but I think that you will see her name more and more. She is a wonderful leader for the future.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Do you have people from RIT and NTID going to other schools, like the EDCO program in Newton North High School and talk to the students there?

DR. T. ALAN HURWITZ: Oh, yes, definitely. Our admissions people every fall are on the road constantly visiting high schools. Before they would just visit deaf schools, but now with the proliferation of mainstreaming, we go and visit the mainstream schools.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I asked this question because I found your presentation very impressive, very informative and interesting. Think that it's worthwhile just to check to see if you do go to other schools with deaf students and hard-of-hearing students. I live in Newton, and I know Ed Mulligan, the Executive Director of that program.

DR. T. ALAN HURWITZ: We have several students from Edco High School. Many of them have done very well at RIT/NTID. One of them has almost a GPA of 4.0. He majored in engineering and is part of the Deaflympics in soccer as well. We have another student from EDCO who now is a graduate program in public policy.

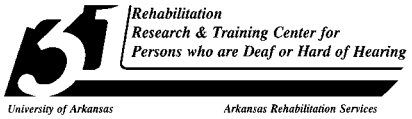
AUDIENCE MEMBER: And he is from EDCO in Newton, Mass? Wow!

DR. T. ALAN HURWITZ: Thank you!

BIOGRAPHICAL

Dr. T. Alan Hurwitz, a prelingually deaf son of deaf parents, is Vice President of Rochester Institute of Technology and Dean/CEO of the National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID), a college of Rochester Institute of Technology. He has been a member of the NTID faculty since 1970. Prior to his faculty appointment to NTID he was employed for five years as an Associate Electronics Engineer and Senior Numerical Computer Programmer at McDonnell Douglas Corporation in St. Louis.

Dr. Hurwitz received his B.S. degree from Washington University in St. Louis and M.S. degree from St. Louis University, both with a major in Electrical Engineering. He holds a doctorate in teaching and curriculum from the University of Rochester.



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The following is a copy of the accompanying PowerPoint presentation

What to look for in a College

T. Alan Hurwitz
Vice President of RIT
CEO/Dean of NTID
October 19, 2006

A College Search Process

Academic Fit With School

- Do they have the program you want?
  - Major, minor, or simply course offerings.
  - Can it lead to a degree in the end?
  - Co-Op Opportunities
- How likely are you to academically qualify?
  - Use of the Middle 50% ACT/SAT Listing

Cost of Attendance

- First choose your first-choice schools…then look at cost of attendance
- Be sure to compare apples to apples learn the following at ALL schools:
  - Tuition
  - Room and Board
  - Books
  - Supplies
  - Fees
  - Transportation Costs

Available Financial Aid

- Never rule out a college before you know the following:
- Need-Based Financial Aid
  - Federal, State, and College Grant Programs
  - Vocational Rehabilitation
- Scholarship Programs
  - National, Regional, and Local
  - College Scholarship Programs

Support Services Offered

- Learn EXACTLY what support services are offered
- Know how to apply for them
- Know who to contact to discuss further or explain special circumstances

Application Requirements

- The sooner you know the following the better:
  - All parts of the application that are required. Typically as follows:
    - ACT/SAT Test Scores
    - High School Transcripts
    - Recommendations
    - Proof of Hearing Loss (Audiogram)
    - Actual Application Form itself
    - Essay
    - Additional Requirements for special programs
      - Art Portfolio, Video Tape, Creative Writing Samples, Athletic Statistics, etc.

Student Life

- What you want to know:
  - What are the other students like?
  - How many deaf and hard-of-hearing students are there on campus?
  - Are there other students like you?
  - Do support services extend into the dorms, athletics, club activities, etc.
  - Are classes mainstreamed? Or are all deaf students clustered for institutional convenience?

Importance of all of this

- Students need to know how this next life step will impact, influence and education them.
- There is so much more to the decision than finding a cheap college or one close to home.
- Ask all of these questions of all colleges you look at.
- We will focus on how students can use technology to get at many of these answers quickly and accurately.

The College Search: Internet and Other Resources

Schools admissions information

- College and university websites
  - You can find admissions and application information here such as requirements, deadlines, online applications, etc
  - Example: http://ntidweb.rit.edu/applicants/
- Sites can allow students to:
  - Contact Admissions Office
  - Send email to specific Admissions Counselor
  - Email specific faculty or department

College prep sites

- Sites help students prepare for college by providing information and resources on:
  - College searches
  - Test preparation online
  - Financial aid information
  - Show example college essays
  - Example: http://www.petersons.com/

Career Resources and Personality/Skills Testing

- Career-related resources - students can use resources to find a career that fits their skills and interests
  - Ex: http://www.careeradviser.com/
- Personality/Skills testing - students can use to match their personality or skills with appropriate major/program
  - http://www.myroad.com
  - http://www.collegeboard.com/apps/careers/index
  - Also, individual colleges may offer this at their website to help students choose a major at that school

Support Services

- Schools that offer support services usually have a link to Student Services, Disabled Student Services, etc
- It's a good idea to look at these sites to find out what a school has to offer a Deaf/HH applicant
- Example:
  - http://www.asu.edu/drs/services.html

Applying Online

- Admissions sites may offer options:

1. Request an application to be mailed to you

- OR -

2. Fill out and submit an application online

Example:
http://ntidweb.rit.edu/applicants/application.php

Videoconferencing

- Admissions representatives can do presentations via videoconferencing with schools or at other locations.
- School needs to have appropriate equipment and technology resources.
- Takes time to set up, but well worth the effort!
  - Bridge between:
    - University and High School
    - School for the Deaf and mainstreamed programs
    - Admissions Counselor and student (one on one)

CD-ROMS and DVD

- Students can look through a specific college/university's information at their leisure
- Provides an alternate option to website
- Demo NTID CD-ROM

The College Search: Students and Technology

Before Internet

- Students were not proficient users of computers.
- Students depended on Guidance Counselors/Catalogs/School Recruiters for information about different colleges

Today

- Students are now computer and technology proficient
- Most schools have computers in classrooms
- Global information sharing
- Students get information from internet/direct contact with College Admission Counselors

Virtual Tour

- Deaf and HH students rely heavily on visual aids
- Seeing and understanding College better
- Students who live very far can have a tour through College's virtual tour
  - http://ntidweb.rit.edu/aboutNTID/virtual_tour/tour.php?tour_id=7&location_id=9

Getting Connected

- More and more students using instant message to communicate with the admissions Counselors
- Students are able to talk with Admission Counselors
- Students are responding better about their application through instant message and web cam much more effectively
- Demo

Other Important Considerations

- Communication/Access
- Access equipment on campus – VP, etc.
- Confidential services – drug and alcohol dependency issues
- Safety
- Alert Signaling system in dorms/apartments
- Career services
- Hearing aid/Cochlear Implants services