

RAs Perform Irreplaceable Role at ICI

Wanted: Quick learner with boundless energy and can-do attitude who loves to work side-by-side with others on challenging projects in fast-paced environment. Must be available to work long hours on a flexible schedule and have ability to collaborate while working independently. Must not be claustrophobic. Apply now.

This past year, approximately 80 undergraduate and graduate students have fulfilled the above job description for Research Assistants (RAs) at the Institute on Community Integration (ICI). They've coordinated projects, conducted research, entered and analyzed data, presented at conferences, written publications, healed ailing computers, implemented technical assistance efforts, assisted in grant preparation, and word-processed all manner of documents. Summing up the role of the RA at the ICI, Charlie Lakin, Director of the Center on Residential Services and Community Living, says, "They do the work of the ICI. Everything we do, they do. RAs working here are irreplaceable as staff people."

The RAs at ICI come from a wide variety of backgrounds. Some come with experience in disability-related research, training, services, and policy-making, and many do not. Whether or not they arrive with experience in the disabilities field, by the time they leave they have learned a great deal about the community integration of persons with developmental disabilities.

Stephanie Tousman is an RA on the Transition Technical Assistance Project and is earning an MEd in Special Education. Reflecting on her experiences here, Stephanie says, "I learned as much being an RA as being in a degree program, especially about how things work, like educational systems. I will look at my teaching with a broader view now." David Fee, an RA with the Minnesota Statewide Direct Service Training Initiative for the past year who is working toward an MA in Social Work, has had a similar experience. As he sees it, "Doing an assistantship here fills major gaps that don't get filled through the School of Social Work, particularly in the area of disability issues." Ellen Blake is getting an MBA and has a background in sales and advertising. She was originally hired to do data input and analysis, and is currently part of the Residential Information Systems Project. Her position grew after attending a national conference on Quality Assurance and Enhancement. After writing a publication called *Reinventing Quality*, she decided to produce a larger edition and served as the editor, helping to build ICI's reputation as one of the national centers on quality in disability services. "I didn't have any background in developmental disabilities," says Ellen. "I didn't know the language. But, what I did bring with me was a quality management perspective and I try to bring a business background to the job. I never thought that I'd be in this field. Now I feel like I'll be staying in it."

As the 1994-95 school year begins, the veterans have the following words of wisdom that may help newcomers adapt quickly to the challenging RA job description: a) Get as much out of your experience as you can.

People here are willing to help you and explain things. Ask questions; b) If you find that your situation is not a good match, talk to your director early on; c) Take time to socialize; and d) You can find street parking if you get here before 7 a.m.

Staff Update

- **Staff Arrivals/Departures.** **New Staff:** Melissa Olive, RA with the SIPAP Project; Tony Paulsen, RA with Creating Capacities Project & ND Mild Disabilities project; Joe Muskin and Ross Flom, RAs with National Transition Network; Sarah Henderson, RA with the Longitudinal Study; Chad Storley and Angela Martens, RAs with RRTC; Erin Simunds and Susan Leevild, RAs with the Social Inclusion project; Susan Johnston, Research Fellow; Carrie Gustafson, RA for MDE Transition; Ruth Hampton, Learning to Lead Project; Theresa Heyne, RA for ECRI; Heidi Jo Kludt, RA for ADD & Inservice; Leslie Johnson, RA for the Self-Determination Project; Rachel Johnson, RA for the Continuing Progress Project; JoAnne Coleman and Pi Yen Huang, RAs for EBD; Laurie Nelson and Allison Seyforth, student secretaries for Room 102; Susan Rampf, new secretary in Room 111; and Tim Soulen has officially accepted the position of RTCG Coordinator. **Departing/Moving Staff:** Anne Fisher will be leaving to start her new career as a stay-at-home Mom; Nancy Krawetz has left to serve as the Work Experience Coordinator for Irondale High School; Troy Mangan starts a half-time contract position for the next nine months with the State Department of Human Services and will continue working at ICI on a part-time basis.

Dates to Remember . . .

- **September 20: Evaluation and Reporting Committee.** 9:30-11:30. 118 Pattee.
- **September 21: Staff Development Committee.** 10:00. 118 Pattee.

From the Front Office

News from ICI's Administrative Staff

- **Institute-wide Fall Kickoff.** Mark your calendars now! The entire staff of ICI is invited to participate in a staff retreat on November 11 from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. at the Radisson Metrodome on Washington Avenue. The retreat will begin with an introduction to developmental disabilities for new staff followed by a lunch break at 12:30. If you don't need this introduction, you can begin participating in the retreat at 1:30 p.m. The afternoon will include presentations on ICI, program area and service center overviews, poster board displays and time for socializing. This is the first activity from the newly formed Staff Development Committee.
- **It's moving time!** If you haven't heard yet, new space assignments have been made to better utilize the tight quarters of Pattee Hall. Bester Brothers is scheduled to assist ICI with its move on Tuesday, October 4. If you are moving to a new area, it is your responsibility to box your desk supplies and loose files by 4:30 p.m. October 3. It is very important that boxes be clearly labeled. If you have any questions about assignments, please see someone from your program area committee; for logistical arrangements see Marie Black. Tim Soulen is coordinating computer and networking changes and can be contacted at 4-7337 for any questions.
- **And it's time for those annual reports.** ICI's annual report to ADD and AAUAP is currently being prepared. Teri Wallace is compiling the information. Don't be surprised if she comes knocking on your door sometime soon.
- **Speaking of the AAUAP...** The AAUAP annual meeting, "Building Inclusive Communities: Closing the Gap," is scheduled for October 14-17 in Bethesda, MD. For registration and hotel information, call 301-588-8252.
- **Cultural Competency.** The Community Advisory Committee met in July and recommended that the Institute conduct a self-assessment regarding the degree to which the ICI conducts its activities in a culturally competent manner as required in the DD Act. An Ad hoc committee is beginning to meet regarding this issue. Look for more details on this soon.

Miscellaneous

- **Adaptive Technology workshop.** The University's Office for Disability Services is sponsoring a "hands on" workshop on adaptive technology. Work stations will be set up to demonstrate how people with disabilities can access information for computers, telecommunications, video, and print. The workshop is set for Tuesday, September 27, 8:30-10:30 a.m. (continental breakfast at 8:15) at Coffman Union Campus Club East Wing, 4th Floor. RSVP 626-9649.
- **Positions available.** A search has begun for a coordinator for the Center for Early Education and Development. If you have any questions, contact Judy Bartlett at 624-5780. The School of Kinesiology and Leisure Studies is looking for an Education Specialist and applications should be received by Debra Haessly in 111 Cooke Hall by September 20. And an Executive Secretary is being sought by the College of Education Dean's Office. Deadline for applications is Friday, September 16. Call Sharon Olson at 625-5078 for more information.
- **Birthdays.** Brian Aberly (10/17); Ellen Blake (9/17); Jennifer Ekblad (10/13); Mary Hayden (10/9); John Rynders (9/21); Kathleen Wolff (10/7).

Bits & Pieces

Information from the Institute's Research and Technology Consulting Group (RTCG, 110 Pattee, 4-7337) and the Publications Office (109 Pattee, 4-4512).

- **Data, Machines**
- **Data Entry Services.** The St. Paul data entry department closed effective 7/29/94. A memo will be circulated describing alternative sources of data entry services both within and outside the University. Several outside vendors have offered to give a presentation about their services. If you would be interested in such an event, contact Tim Soulen at 4-7337. If there is sufficient interest, he will arrange for those vendors to come in.
- **Some available equipment.** The RTCG currently has several items that are for sale/rent/free for ICI use. For further information, contact Tim Soulen at 4-7337.
- **New, Wordmark**
- **New Publications.** Recent arrivals include *What's Working in Transition, Fall 1994*; *Regional Perspectives, Fall 1994*; and *The Learning Readiness Initiative: Helping Children Come to School Ready to Learn Every Day*.
- **Are You Using the Wordmark Correctly....** We got a call this week from University Relations reminding us that when using the University wordmark, the word "Minnesota" must be at least one inch long when used on a sheet 8 1/2" x 11" to 12" x 12." On a sheet 2" x 3 1/2" to 8 1/2" x 11", the minimum length is 7/8" for the word "Minnesota." The College of Education does allow us to separate the College of Education wordmark from the University's. When using them separately, on an 8 1/2" x 11" sheet, "College of Education" length should be a minimum of 2 1/2". It is preferred that the College wordmark, if separated, be placed near the ICI/RTTC name. FFI call Vicki in ICI Publications (4-6347).