Assessing the Writing of Deaf College Students: Reevaluating a Direct Assessment of Writing

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The NTID Writing Test was developed to assess the writing ability of postsecondary deaf students entering the National Technical Institute for the Deaf and to determine their appropriate placement into developmental writing courses. While previous research (Albertini et al., 1986; Albertini et al., 1996; Bochner, Albertini, Samar, & Metz, 1992) has shown the test to be reliable between multiple test raters and as a valid measure of writing ability for placement into these courses, changes in curriculum and the rater pool necessitated a new look at interrater reliability and concurrent validity. We evaluated the rating scores for 236 samples from students who entered the college during the fall 2001. Using a multi-prong approach, we confirmed the interrater reliability and the validity of this direct measure of assessment. The implications of continued use of this and similar tests in light of definitions of validity, local control, and the nature of writing are discussed.

Educators and researchers give writing tests to measure achievement, to place students in appropriate courses, and to diagnose strengths and weaknesses. Development and use of a writing test minimally require agreement on the construct (what constitutes good writing), confidence that the test is doing what it was intended to do (validity), and confidence that the test is measuring the construct consistently and fairly (reliability). School and college programs in the United States have used both indirect (multiple choice) and direct (essay) assessments of writing. More recently, direct assessments of writing have become the norm, at least at the state level. Mabry (1999) reported that 38 states were measuring writing skills via direct writing assessment. While direct assessment of writing appears to be more valid than indirect assessment for deaf students (Berent et al., 1996), composition and testing theorists now question whether standardized measures, even if direct, are valid for all students given diverse local contexts (Huot, 1996, 2002; Ketter & Pool, 2001).

At issue here is the validity of testing students in diverse local discourse communities with a single test developed and scored at the state level. Recent discussions of this issue revolve around the nature of writing and definitions of validity. If writing is the product of “literate thought” and literate thought is “the ability to think reflectively, creatively, logically, and rationally” (Paul, 2001, p. 344), then we must question the validity of standardized assessments for writing. As Mabry (1999) put it, “The standardization of a skill that is fundamentally self-expressive and individualistic obstructs its assessment” (p. 673). According to Huot (2002), the notion in classical test theory that writing exists “out there” as a “fixed, consistent, and a contextual human trait” is rooted in positivist approaches that seek fundamental, context-free laws governing human nature (p. 3). Constructivist educators and composition theorists argue that writing, on the contrary, is an individual’s construction of meaning that depends at least on content, purpose, and audience. Similarly, a reader’s (or rater’s) construction of meaning is based on preconceptions, knowledge, and expectations.

Debate at the National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID) and perhaps other technical universities
centers on the content of writing instruction and its evaluation. Should instruction focus on general rhetorical forms taken as universal modes of academic writing or on the position paper, case study, and lab report, which are forms particular to certain disciplines, purposes, and audiences? Should writing be assessed by an “objective” standardized measure for college students or by a measure developed for a specific university or group within a university? This report describes the reevaluation of a measure specifically developed for deaf students entering a large mainstream technical university. It was developed when no direct assessment of writing existed that could distinguish among students who were not ready for entry into college-level writing courses. It is being reevaluated in a climate of high-stakes testing and theoretical developments that call into question the nature of current writing assessment practices. This reevaluation, it seems, is part of an evolutionary process of test development. Judging from current discussions on testing theory, it is a process that needs to occur locally. That is, the test described in this article (and other tests like it) is clearly not “exportable” to other programs; we hope, however, that a description of the development we have pursued and the issues we are still facing will be useful to others wishing to develop writing assessments.

The Assessment of Writing of Deaf Students

In the 1960s, the best predictor of teachers’ ratings of the quality of deaf students’ writing was grammatical correctness (Stuckless & Marks, 1966). This is hardly surprising as writing instruction for deaf students focused almost exclusively on morphology, syntax, and lexical choice (Albertini & Schley, 2003). However, as the teaching of writing to deaf students expanded beyond a focus on sentence-level grammatical correctness, so too has the scope of what is assessed. In addition to grammar and vocabulary, current assessments take into account such attributes as focus, voice, content, and organization; typically, they take one of three forms. Writing may be assessed directly with essay tests, indirectly with multiple choice tests, or longitudinally with portfolios. In essay tests, a sample of writing is elicited and scored according to preestablished criteria. In multiple choice tests, students are asked to select among grammatical and stylistic alternatives. In portfolio assessments, a collection of writing samples from a term or school year is assessed descriptively.

The selection of appropriate assessment method depends on a range of factors, chief among which should be purpose of the test and characteristics of those taking the test. At the center of educators’ concerns about high-stakes testing and deaf students are considerations of fairness and program accountability. The concern is that, under increased pressure to show gains on standardized tests across school districts, standards of validity and reliability for special populations will be overlooked or compromised. For example, for students with limited English language skills, a standardized test may be a better measure of English
language proficiency than the original intended focus of the test (e.g., writing; National Association for the Deaf, 2002).

With an increase in the number of deaf students entering postsecondary institutions in the United States, indirect tests like the Written English Expression Placement Test (Educational Testing Service, 1985) are frequently used for placement in reading and writing courses as well as during the admissions process. Use of these tests raises concerns of fairness and accuracy because the recognition of writing conventions and correct usage involves typical areas of difficulty for deaf writers, and the tests are nationally standardized, not standardized on deaf and hard-of-hearing students. In addition, the tests involve significant amounts of reading, a potential confound especially for deaf students (Berent et al., 1996). Another approach, used at NTID to place students in developmental writing courses, is the holistic rating of a short essay. Concerns surrounding this type of assessment include validity (measurement of “good writing”) and reliability of the ratings.

Whichever form of assessment is used, it must be applied similarly and consistently to student performance. The degree to which this is accomplished is a measure of a test’s reliability. The criteria should also be explicitly related to commonly accepted notions of good writing in a particular context. For example, college instructors agree that a good college essay includes a clear statement of the topic or purpose and intelligible language. The degree to which a test reflects commonly accepted criteria is said to reflect its validity.

Development and Maintenance of a Writing Test

The NTID Writing Test was developed by a team of English faculty and first administered in 1985. Until that point, a writing sample analyzed for grammatical correctness had been used to place students in English language courses. To better reflect the changing nature of the curriculum and a broader construct of writing, the team reviewed holistic rating procedures and pre-tested three designed to assess the writing of deaf and hearing (English as a Second Language) students who wanted to begin college-level academic work. Because raters’ standards may shift from paper to paper in a purely holistic procedure (Perkins, 1983), the team settled on a modified holistic procedure similar to that described by Jacobs, Zinkgraf, Wormuth, Hartfiel, and Hughey (1981). From 1986 to 1997, the test was administered annually to students entering the college of NTID, and the results were used for advising and research purposes. Studies of test–retest and rater reliability and external, concurrent, and predictive validity were conducted.

In 1997, to make both goal and path clearer to students, the English Department revamped its curriculum, replacing general skill and genre-specific writing courses with a developmental strand focused on academic writing. In the new writing curriculum, the focus shifted from the study of different genres (e.g., essay, creative, and professional writing) to rhetorical styles used in academic essays (e.g., narration, description, and classification).

The goal of the English curriculum at NTID is to prepare students to take the local equivalent of English composition, the gateway to associate and baccalaureate degree programs at the greater university. A test was needed that would place students in one of four developmental writing courses, which are precursors to the English composition course. Course descriptions for these four courses are as follows (excerpted from NTID Department of English, 2003, p. 6):

- Academic Writing I—students “begin to learn how to organize and develop paragraphs and brief compositions of various discourse types, with particular emphasis on narration and description.”
- Academic Writing II—students “organize and develop paragraphs and brief compositions of various discourse types, with particular emphasis on description and process.”
- Academic Writing III—students “plan, draft, revise, and edit short essays of various discourse types, with particular emphasis on classification and exemplification.”
- Academic Writing IV—students “gather information from various sources, plan, draft, revise, and edit longer essays (of at least 500 words) of various discourse types, with particular emphasis on description and exemplification.”

The college elected to use the NTID Writing Test to place students into the new writing strand. A few
years later, the raters (all writing instructors) decided to modify the prompt on the writing test to reflect the new emphasis on essay writing, and significant turnover in the pool of trained raters occurred. Given these changes and an ongoing need to monitor the reliability and validity of any educational assessment, new analyses were conducted. This report summarizes the results of these analyses.

Specifically, new analyses of interrater reliability were conducted to ascertain the reliability of scoring across raters and hence the reliability of placement in writing courses. A follow-up study of the validity of this direct measure compared to a standardized multiple choice measure of writing ability also was conducted to determine whether the effort and resources expended on rating a sample of writing were still warranted. Finally, a principle components analysis (PCA) of the scoring results was conducted to determine whether the scoring procedure could be used to diagnose component strengths and weaknesses in student writing.

The Sample

In the fall of 2001, the NTID Writing Test was administered to 236 entering students, ranging in age from 17 to 49 years; most were between 17 and 22 years of age. They had an average hearing loss of 100 dB in both ears (standard deviation [SD] = 17 dB). Most (92%) were from homes with only hearing parents. Most (53%) specified that their communication preference was some combination of sign plus speech, about a third (35%) preferred communicating via sign alone, 9% preferred using speech alone, and a few (2%) had another unspecified preference. Most (61%) were Caucasian; however, about 8% were black/African American, 9% were Asian/Asian American, 8% were Hispanic, 2 were American Indian or Alaskan Native, and the rest were of unknown ethnicity. The test was administered on campus during a student orientation program in which students investigated program and degree options and took a battery of placement tests, including those for the developmental reading and writing courses. For writing, students were given 30 minutes to respond to the following prompt: “You are in a new place. Write an essay on your opinions of NTID and the people here. Give reasons and examples.”

A pool of five English instructors was trained in the scoring procedure developed for this test. Three read each essay independently and assigned a rating from 1 to 100 to the essay. Students were placed in writing courses based on an average of the three ratings. Raters were asked to assign equal weight to four categories in their ratings: organization, content, language, and vocabulary (see Appendix 1). In our sample, the mean was a score of 47, and the standard deviation was 14.5 points. Scores ranged from 21 to 85.

It is important to note that these four categories are not meant to be any sort of scoring “rubric” on the NTID Writing Test. The categories and category descriptors were designed to help the raters score consistently and thus maintain reliability, but raters were also encouraged to use whatever else they deemed important in separating the essays into appropriate course placement levels. Thus, any particular essay score will not necessarily correspond to a meaningful measure beyond the site-specific goal of appropriate placement in a developmental writing course. The writing samples included in Appendix 2 are intended to show the range of ability of students entering this remedial writing sequence.

Table 1 summarizes the correlation coefficients for this analysis. Clearly, all correlations are strong and
positive (above .81), meaning that as one rater gave essays a higher or lower score, so did the other raters. From this, we can tell that there was a high degree of consistency among the raters. However, this type of analysis, although easy to do and interpret, does not account for the fact that trios of raters evaluated each essay. To account for groupings of three raters, a different approach using ICCs is necessary (Shrout & Fleiss, 1979).

Table 2 summarizes ICC results in each of the 10 trios of raters. Correlations at .70 or above indicate a reasonably strong association, and all except one of the ICC coefficients are in the .70 to .90 range. ICCs function somewhat like correlation coefficients between triads of raters and are interpreted much like regular correlation coefficients (Shrout & Fleiss, 1979). Four triads of raters have an ICC ranging from .72 to .79. Four triads are in the .82 to .87 range. One triad has a very strong ICC of .94, and one triad has an ICC of .69.

The ICC analysis shows strong overall interrater reliability. However, with several of the triads, we explored further whether reliability was below our expectations. As a general yardstick, interrater differences of less than 10 points (score range 1–100) were deemed acceptable as rater error. Although this 10-point criterion was somewhat arbitrary, sensibly one would not expect raters using a 100-point scale to rate a particular writing sample exactly equivalent.

Our next approach paired the individual raters with each other. Difference scores were calculated, and the absolute values of these difference scores were used in a one-sample t test because in this case we cared about the magnitude of differences between the raters but not the direction. Table 3 summarizes descriptive statistics on this variable across the pairs of raters. Means of the score differences range from 5.33 to 9.48 points on the score range of 1–100 (SDs = 4.2 to 7.58). In all cases, the average of these differences is less than 10 points, so on average, the paired differences show less than a 10-point spread. Table 3 also shows results of t tests for which 10 points was used as the comparison mean because we were not concerned with raters when they differed by 10 points or less. Thus, nonsignificance here means that the difference between pairs of judges did not differ significantly from our criterion (10 points). If the difference is significant and if the direction is negative, it means the raters in the pair differed by fewer than 10 points. If the direction is positive, it means the raters differed from each other by more than 10 points.

Results clearly show that in no case are raters statistically significantly different in a positive direction by more than 10 points. The descriptive statistics show that the pair of Rater A and Rater B is the most discrepant: On average, they differed by about 9.5 points. Certainly, there are some scores that are off by more than 10 points (the standard deviation for Rater A and Rater B is about 7.4 points), but on average they do not differ from each other significantly when compared to a mean of a 10-point discrepancy. Most pairs of raters in fact differed quite a bit less than 10 points on average. In Table 3, all of the statistically significant tests are in the negative direction, showing a smaller than 10-point difference between the raters. Five of these pairs are significant at the .01 level or less—the difference scores between these pairs of raters is significantly smaller than a 10-point difference.

In summary, these three approaches show that this administration of the placement test had acceptable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pairing</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A and B</td>
<td>9.48</td>
<td>7.38</td>
<td>-0.58</td>
<td>.564</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A and C</td>
<td>8.30</td>
<td>7.58</td>
<td>-1.95</td>
<td>.055</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A and E</td>
<td>8.01</td>
<td>7.17</td>
<td>-2.35</td>
<td>.021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B and C</td>
<td>8.18</td>
<td>6.41</td>
<td>-2.24</td>
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<td>B and D</td>
<td>8.12</td>
<td>6.26</td>
<td>-2.50</td>
<td>.015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B and E</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>-7.79</td>
<td>.0001</td>
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<tr>
<td>C and D</td>
<td>5.53</td>
<td>4.14</td>
<td>-9.22</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>C and E</td>
<td>5.64</td>
<td>4.46</td>
<td>-8.21</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>D and E</td>
<td>5.33</td>
<td>4.38</td>
<td>-9.28</td>
<td>.0001</td>
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Table 2 Intraclass correlations (ICCs)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Raters</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>ICC</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A, B, C</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A, B, D</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A, B, E</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A, C, D</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A, C, E</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A, D, E</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B, C, D</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B, C, E</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B, D, E</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C, D, E</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>.94</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 Paired difference analysis: Descriptive statistics and t-test results
interrater reliability. Simple correlation coefficients as well as ICC coefficients show reliability at an acceptable level, and overall, differences between the raters were not different beyond an acceptable level of 10 points on average.

### Validity of Direct Assessment

To determine the concurrent validity of this writing test, we compared its results to those of an indirect measure of English, the ACT (formerly the American College Testing Program). Used for admissions to NTID, the ACT includes four tests of educational development: English, Mathematics, Reading, and Science Reasoning. The ACT English Test in particular yields two subscores in Usage/Mechanics (punctuation, basic grammar and usage, and sentence structure) and Rhetorical Skills (strategy, organization, and style) (ACT, 1997). The English test has 75 multiple choice questions, and students are given 45 minutes to complete the test. Raw scores are converted to scale scores, which have a constant meaning across test forms and range from a low of 1 to a high of 36 for each of the four tests, as well as the composite measure across all four tests. Subscores are also reported; the scale for these ranges from a low of 1 to a high of 18. In 1997, the national average of high school students who took the test was 20.3 on the ACT English test. For the composite of all four tests, the national average in 1997 was 21.0.

Table 4: Means of ACT scores by NTID writing placement group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Overall, N = 209</th>
<th>Level A, N = 53</th>
<th>Level B, N = 72</th>
<th>Level C, N = 52</th>
<th>Level D, N = 22</th>
<th>Liberal Arts, N = 9</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACT English Test</td>
<td>13.1 (3.4)</td>
<td>11.4 (2.2)</td>
<td>11.6 (1.9)</td>
<td>13.8 (3.2)</td>
<td>17.3 (3.5)</td>
<td>18.9 (1.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACT subscore: Usage</td>
<td>5.7 (2.0)</td>
<td>4.8 (1.5)</td>
<td>4.9 (1.2)</td>
<td>6.2 (1.9)</td>
<td>8.1 (2.5)</td>
<td>9.1 (1.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mechanics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>ACT subscore: Rhetorical</td>
<td>6.9 (2.0)</td>
<td>6.2 (1.7)</td>
<td>6.0 (1.6)</td>
<td>7.3 (1.9)</td>
<td>9.1 (2.1)</td>
<td>9.8 (0.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Style</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

Of this entering class, 209 students provided the admissions office with ACT English Test scores, as well as ACT English subscores. Although these subscores do not exactly match the scoring categories of the NTID Writing Test, they provide an interesting point of comparison. Correlations between NTID Writing Test scores and ACT English composite scores and the ACT English subscores (Usage and Mechanics; Rhetorical Style) show that there is a positive and moderately strong relationship between these direct and indirect assessments of writing. The correlation between the NTID Writing Test and the ACT English Test is .49 ($p < .0001$), the ACT Usage and Mechanics subscore is .47 ($p < .0001$), and the ACT Rhetorical Style subscore is .36 ($p < .0001$). All Pearson correlation coefficients range from .36 to .49. However, as a tool for placement into developmental writing courses at NTID, the ACT is not as effective as the NTID Writing Test. The overall means of the ACT scores and means by writing course placement group are displayed in Table 4. Although the ACT scores are clearly higher in the upper developmental levels of the writing courses as well as in the liberal arts concentration course, there is not a clear demarcation of ACT scores that would effectively place students in appropriate writing courses. In fact, for the two lower developmental courses (levels A and B), there is no distinction between ACT scores.

### Diagnostic Validity of the NTID Writing Test

Finally, we wondered whether the four equally weighted subscales of the NTID Writing Test (organization, content, language, and vocabulary) form a coherent whole as an assessment of writing or should be regrouped into a different weighting scheme. Currently, the four subscales are summed. To evaluate this approach, each was used in a PCA (Afifi, Clark, & May, 2004) to evaluate directly the dimensionality of the subscales. This approach pools the variance of the original variables into a set of principle components; it takes possibly correlated variables and transforms them into a (it is hoped) smaller number of uncorrelated components for which each is a linear combination of the original variables.¹

The first principle component is generally an overall factor and its associated variance, in this case...
a measure of all four variables taken together: an overall writing evaluation. The remaining factors are evaluated for whether they account for a substantive amount of variance (i.e., filtering out the “noise”) and, if so, what they are definitionally. Here, only the first principle component is an important dimension (it accounts for over 96% of the variance, 3.83 of 4 units of variance); the others are noise. Moreover, each variable entered into the component (organization, content, language, and vocabulary) is weighted relatively equally (all four factor loadings range from 0.497 to 0.502); each variable contributes equally to the construction of the overall component. Thus, weighting them equally in any analysis (by summing them) is a valid approach.

Conclusions and Implications

The data in this study indicate that writing instructors trained on a locally developed scoring procedure produced reasonably reliable holistic assessments of writing quality. Placing students in developmental writing courses based on an actual sample is valid, and rating a sample discriminates among skill levels better than a standardized indirect assessment of writing. We are reasonably confident therefore that the NTID Writing Test measures what it is supposed to measure—the quality of deaf college students’ writing—and that students are being placed into the NTID English writing sequence fairly and consistently.

As stated, composition and testing theorists have raised two additional concerns regarding validity: (a) the use of standardized direct assessments that may be insensitive to local curricula, values, and standards and (b) use of a single, general sample to represent a complex skill or repertoire of skills. As to the first issue, we believe that by developing and administering the scoring procedure locally, we are using an assessment that reflects the objectives and values of the local community. This assumption needs to be validated by investigating accuracy of placement and success rates of students at the various writing levels. Regarding the second issue, we need to investigate the use of more than one sample for placement. Satisfactory performance of the test has suggested this is not urgent, especially given the cost of doubling the number of tests to be rated. However, multiple ratings may be desirable following future curriculum changes, and as Huot (1996) suggested, it may not be necessary for three raters to read papers at the high and low ends of the spectrum, for which agreement is generally high. If we reduced the number of readings necessary for each paper, we could conceivably increase the number of samples rated without a significant increase in cost.

Modifying the placement test in this way would better reflect the diversity in the construct we call writing and might also improve placement and success rates at all levels of the writing curriculum.

Appendix 1: NTID Writing Test Scoring Categories and Descriptors

Organization (25 points): This includes such features as
- clear statement of topic placed appropriately;
- intent is evident to readers;
- plan of paper could be outlined by reader (i.e., paper is unified and coherent);
- appropriate transitions (i.e., transitional markers and clear paragraphing).

Content (25 points): This includes such features as
- paper addresses the assigned topic;
- generalizations are supported by examples;
- no extraneous material;
- pertinence and noteworthiness of ideas.

Language use (25 points): This includes such features as
- correct use of grammatical structures (sentence and discourse level) and punctuation;
- correct use of complex structures;
- intelligible spelling;
- clarity of style and expression;
- clarity of reference.

Vocabulary use (25 points): This includes such features as
- appropriate semantic use of vocabulary;
- consistent register;
- sophisticated choice of vocabulary;
- appropriate use of figurative and idiomatic expressions.
Appendix 2: NTID Writing Test Samples, August 2001

Sample 1: Writing Test Score = 26

I am in a new place NTID to make a different from my grow up experiment of a society, and to make a different challenges to be stronge faith from my goal of my dream

I’m being an opporunity to learn around out real world deaf culture, communicate, and urge to people deaf to a became a suceeses. Sometime I not decision what I want go to college, but I Did, because I find my friend who advice me go to NTID college. While I was only in mainstream High school and I have not around deaf people culture there hard time to be decision, and there I see real out real world of NTID.

The time for me an experinment new life, new to be different of deaf world to straight but sometime I am stronge around hearing people that why I felt like to two world of me. Whenever the NTID is more stronge of symbol of the deaf world and help me to find of my career to be a one, get a hard to straight goal.

Therefore reason I find NTID is right for me a time, right place and right decision. The reason I am there in NTID to become me a suceesus of my career.

Sample 2: Writing Test Score = 46

I, . . . , who come from . . . come in a new world. I chose NTID because I want to get, not only a better GPA of 3.0, but also have a degree which I shall have good life with good pay, provided by any company. In addition, I need to have communication skills and writing skills. Moreover, I shall have an opportunity to get new experiences relating to my specific fields in connection to technology, provided by NTID. However, I have to pay a lot to get a good education.

Since, NTID is one of the best university for technology for deaf people as well as hearing persons, deaf persons like me need to achieve goals and need challenge. Moreover, they need to work in any office or company if they would have degree. They are dreaming of buying everything but they may not realize that money cannot buy everything. On the other hand, some students would suffer a lot without education. They would get low-paid salary and do odd jobs if they do not have degrees. They would work more harder than any educated and experienced people. Some of them would lead into criminal activities in order not only to support families but also to earn living. However, their lives would be short.

I shall have an opportunity to meet new people of different cultures and religions in NTID. I want to learn about their languages since it is my hobby. Moreover, I love cooking. I want to taste their varities of foods from them. Meanwhile, I shall get more informations from some experienced students from NTID regarding my major. Perhaps, I shall be offered to a temporary jobs through them in order to get some work experiences with some good pay since I am an International student.

Learning technology is very important for me in the future. If I would get a degree I would start a new world. I would teach new students in NTID after I would get a graduation. I would make NTID proud if I would support it.

Sample 3: Writing Test Score = 56

My view of NTID is very unexpected than I thought it would be. Looking back as a senior in High School, I wanted to attend a deaf college because I grew up in mainstream schools and High School. I wasn’t sure at which college I wanted to attend, whether it was NTID or public community college.

As time flew, I kept thinking of which college to attend so I made an appointment to visit RIT/NTID. As soon as I decided to visit NTID, I kept thinking of how the faculty and the students would be like compared to mainstream schools. I knew I had made the biggest decision in my entire life.

I flew from . . . to Rochester, New York to visit NTID. My heart was pounding like I recently woke up from a nightmare while I was thinking about NTID on the plane. I didn’t know what to expect from NTID because I never attended a deaf or mixed college before. I got off the plane and felt my heart beating slower and quietly as I was escorted to NTID in their van.

I looked around Rochester from the van and I still didn’t know what to expect. All of a sudden, I started to
see a lot of buildings and signs of NTID/RIT. I was amazed by its size of the building and the number of students. For the first time in ten years, every place I looked, there were students signing to each other. I felt very amazed to see that. I was introduced to my counselor and she could sign too! Everything that I thought would’ve happened did occurred but in a more friendly place.

I still couldn’t believe it with my own eyes about what has happened so far in one hour. Deaf students introduced themselves to me and was curious about my background. It was the first time I felt alive and recognized compared to being alone in mainstream school.

I cannot go into details about my feelings toward NTID and the community. I am very happy to be here to attend RIT/NTID. I know I am living up to my dream which is attending a deaf college. I had to ask my dad to pinch my shoulder so I would know I wasn’t dreaming.

Sample 4: Writing Test Score = 66

I am a first year student at NTID and originally from . . . . Being in a new environment is awkward for me, but I already feel comfortable. The reason for being so comfortable here is that the people are so friendly and aggressive. No one I have met are biased and think of themselves. I feel good about meeting people with the same interests as I.

The education here at NTID is satisfactory to me and I love it. I feel like I could be challenged in my classes I choose in my major. In high school, I didn’t care about my classes and found it pointless. Here at NTID, I am more motivated to learn something I’m interested in. The professors are wonderful and are able to communicate with me directly than using interpreters. That makes it a lot more easier for me to learn.

It may be easy to get lost on campus but it is so easy to ask others for directions. Today, I had to walk from LBJ to building 14 and I got lost. I saw a professor that I had met the previous day and asked for help. He was more than happy to help me out. I really appreciated it.

I’m really glad I chose to go to a wonderful place such as NTID.

Sample 5: Writing Test Score = 76

There are a few great things I have to say about NTID and the people here. The cultural diversity here is excellent. I have met a few interpreters and to my surprise they sign even better than me. Also the living conditions are exquisite.

There are numerous people here from all different parts of this country, and from other countries as well. For example, yesterday in my dorm building, I met a girl from . . . . Her name was . . . . At first I couldn’t understand a word she was saying. The sign language there is so different. For a couple of hours we were teaching each other different signs as we conversed.

When I arrived on August twenty second, I met a few interpreters who instructed me which buildings to go to. They asked me a few questions about where I’m from and what major I am interested in. They signed so skillfully I was so pleased to know that we have the best interpreting program here.

As I was unpacking I realized something about the dormitory. The rooms were so roomy. And the furniture was spacious for my clothes. I’m ecstatic that my room doesn’t feel like a cozy jail cell.

In conclusion I’ve named a few things about NTID. I love the cultural diversity, the interpreters, and the living quarters.

Note

1. Principle components analysis tools present the resulting factors in order of decreasing variance: The first component explains the largest amount of variance and the subsequent ones less and less. Thus, it is usually possible to reduce the number of units of analysis by focusing on the components that explain the largest amounts of variance. Any factor from the PCA that has much less than one unit of variance (in this case, of four total units of variance, one for each of the variables in the analysis) is rejected as minimally important.

References


