

# Foreword and Acknowledgments

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Building on the strong response from the first two PEPNet conferences, the third PEPNet conference – *Diverse Voices, One Goal* – provided a distinctive opportunity for professionals to interact with colleagues to learn more about best practices, technological advances, and more effective strategies for meeting the needs of students at the postsecondary level who are deaf and hard of hearing. The conference offered participants the opportunity to identify and implement theories and practices of managing and delivering effective support services and access to students and clients. As one of the participants commented, “What a wealth of information in one place!”

While numerous conferences address issues related to disability services in postsecondary education, the PEPNet biennial conference is the only one that focuses solely on issues related to students who are deaf and hard of hearing. Educators and service providers across the nation have seen significant changes during recent years regarding the provision of services to students who are deaf and hard of hearing in postsecondary education and training programs. Disability support service offices have been affected by changes within the student population, within the institution itself, within the state system, and within the federal government. The development and use of technology to assist deaf and hard of hearing individuals is undergoing constant change as well, with the addition of remote access, video conferencing capabilities, speech-to-text recognition technology, and a host of developing communications innovations. We are challenged as never before to keep pace with change in order to provide quality services and access for our students.

The PEPNet biennial conferences provide an opportunity to bring together professionals from across the country who are interested in enhancing the quality of postsecondary educational opportunities for students who are deaf and hard of hearing. Once again, the response to the conference was phenomenal. More than 350 participants came from across the United States and Canada to learn new information, share their experiences with their colleagues, and establish linkages with other service providers. The PEPNet 2002 conference offered sessions that were of interest to disability support services

staff, administrators, counselors, interpreters, tutors, and faculty members from developmental studies as well as college-level courses. In addition, faculty and staff from secondary education programs and service providers from rehabilitation also participated. Students in related professional areas such as rehabilitation counseling and interpreting were welcomed at the conference. The conference featured sessions that offered practical, replicable strategies for providing services to students who are deaf or hard of hearing and attending postsecondary educational programs. Featured technology for this conference included remote captioning, live internet connections, wireless internet connections, CART, C-Print captioning, and C-Print captioning with automatic speech recognition. This publication offers the reader a sample of the information that was exchanged during the conference.

As a result of this conference, we may feel more prepared as we look toward the future and deal with the changes as they occur. Surely one of the effects of the conference has been to more firmly establish collaborative efforts between professionals sharing a common goal: the most effective educational programs for students who are deaf and hard of hearing. Instead of operating in isolation, we can create opportunities to share knowledge and experiences to do so.

This conference would not have been possible without the involvement of many individuals and the support of their sponsoring institutions. The confidence and support shown by the directors of the four PEPNet centers is greatly appreciated. All of the members of the conference planning committee worked hard during the past year: Dave Buchkoski, Pat Billies, Debra Wilcox Hsu, Denise Kavin, Kay Jursik, Sharaine Rawlinson, and Gary Sanderson. So much of the work behind the scenes would not have been successful without the hard work of the staff members Julie Danielson, Pam Francis, Loni Germaine, Charles Johnstone, April Kirby, Jorge Maldonado, Rick Rizzo, Michelle Swaney, Patricia Tate, Charley Tiggs, Heather Webb, Sue Wickstrom, and Paula Zack. Numerous volunteers from each of the four PEPNet centers, state sites, hubs, affiliate programs, and “friends of PEPNet” offered their services, making this truly a collaborative effort. Ongoing support from the U. S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services enabled us to continue outreach and technical assistance efforts and reach an even larger audience than in the past. Of course, the interest and enthusiasm of all of the presenters and participants

made this conference a very meaningful event. We appreciate the time and effort extended by many of the presenters to also submit an article for this volume of conference proceedings. To everyone involved, thank you very much.

PEPNet consists of the four Regional Postsecondary Education Centers for Individuals who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing: Midwest Center for Postsecondary Outreach, Northeast Technical Assistance Center, Postsecondary Education Consortium, and Western Region Outreach Center & Consortia. The mission of the Network is to promote opportunities to coordinate and collaborate in creating effective technical assistance to postsecondary educational institutions providing access and accommodation to individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing. The members of PEPNet promote quality educational activities and outreach services through nationwide collaboration and information exchange and serve as a clearinghouse for resources and referrals. The four centers are funded through an agreement with the U.S. Department of Education. This publication was developed under a grant from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) and produced through a cooperative agreement between The University of Tennessee and OSERS. The contents herein do not necessarily represent the Department of Education's policies nor are endorsed by the Federal Government.

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