

## VIABILITY STUDY for an Associate of Arts Degree in ASL Studies

### I. BACKGROUND

The Modern Languages Department currently offers an AA degree in American Sign Language (ASL) Interpretation. The focus of this degree is narrow: it prepares students for a career in interpreting. As such, the degree is rigorous in service in its stated goal.

However, many students interested in ASL are not necessarily interested in interpretation as a career path. Thus, some features of the current program do not interest them

On December 8, 2017, the Educational Planning Committee (EPC) the committee voted to establish a viability review task force for the creation of the ASL AA degree in ASL

Studies to address this need. This was subsequently ratified by the Academic Senate on February 12, 2018.

The first meeting of the task force occurred on February 13, 2018. The Task Force reviewed the ASL proposal and discussed several relevant points:

- This new degree program would be a language-based program
- This degree would include ASL 1, 2, 3, and 4 as well as ASL 40
- This degree would not be CTE-focused
- This degree would need no new courses

These characteristics indicated early on to the Task Force that there was a present, unfulfilled need for such a program on campus.

Relevant data was included in the original proposal and was reviewed by the task force. The task force reviewed enrollment data from recent years which showed a large number of students who were completers of the proposed degree sequence. Data also showed success rates for completers of the sequence were increasing as compared to earlier years. Finally, the data showed that 36 out of 46 students or 78 percent of these completers received a Pierce College AA degree in a discipline *other than ASL interpreting*.

It was clear to the task force that this data shows a clear need on our campus.

However, the committee wanted to explore the proposal fully and needed some clarification on a few relevant details. Some questions were also included that were designed to clarify possible assumptions the task force might be making. These questions were emailed to the ASL faculty in the Modern Languages Department as well as to the Modern Languages Department Chair on February 15, 2018.

Faculty responded in a timely manner and responses were forwarded to the task force for review on March 6, 2018. Questions and answers appear in this report in Appendix A.

Through this process, the task force learned or clarified the following:

- The total unit requirement of the degree (including CSU transfer plan or IGETC) is 60 units.
- The specific sequence of courses a student would take over a period of 2 years
- No new faculty, facilities, or equipment would be required. The program utilizes existing resources.
- The closest program in the region is at Antelope Valley College, which is 63 miles away.
- The number of sections for each course offered in the past.
- The advisory notations are in the course catalog for ASL 3 and 4 are just recommendations and serve to “enhance opportunities for language exposure and acquisition.”

The task force met again on March 13, 2018. ASL Faculty members Allisun Kale and Stephanie Zornoza along with interpreter Ellin Sherman were also present to clarify any remaining questions. The task force was able to clarify all outstanding prerequisite information during this meeting.

Further, during this meeting, it was noted by ASL Professor Allisun Kale that students who do not want a degree in interpreting can funnel into this new degree program. This in turn would allow those who want to attend CSUN (where ASL 2, 3, 4 are already articulated) to continue in their studies. Such students would then have the option of completing ASL 30 and 31 or fingerspelling, putting them on track to pursue their transfer degree at CSUN.

Also noted was the fact that CSUN sends “bounce-back” interpreters to Pierce who would benefit from having an AA degree in ASL/Deaf Studies available to them.

Professor Margarita Pillado clarified with the ASL faculty whether the department is thinking of adding electives. Additionally, it was noted that students who take ASL at other institutions can transfer those courses for the degree. They may also test in to the degree sequence.

In making its final recommendations, the task force considered current curriculum, current facilities, regional offerings of a degree program of ASL/Deaf Studies, data on degree completion rates, as well as input from task force members.

All members of the task force were in agreement to move forward. All voted in favor.

## II. TASK FORCE MEMBERS

Sheri Berger (VP Academic Affairs)  
 Susan Rhi-Kleinert (Dean of Academic Affairs)  
 Margarita Pillado (Curriculum Committee)  
 Marra Kraemer (Academic Senate Designee and Task Force Chair)  
 Tom Vessella (EPC)  
 Joan Schneider (EPC)  
 Shannon DeVaney (APC)  
 Shilo Nelson (APC)

Yeprem Davoodian (AFT and Task Force Co-Chair)  
Brian Walsh (AFT)

### III. TIMELINE

December 8, 2017: The EPC votes to establish a viability review task force for the creation of the ASL AA degree.

February 12, 2018: The Academic Senate ratifies the creation of the task force.

February 13, 2018: The task force elects Chair and Co-chair. The task force reviews and discusses the original Associate of Art Degree in ASL

Studies Proposal, as well as supplemental research and data provided by the department through Professor Pillado. The task force creates a list of questions. The Chair forwards the questions to the ASL faculty for a response. The ASL faculty responds in a timely fashion and the answers are forwarded to the task force for review.

March 13, 2018: Allisun Kale (ASL) and Stephanie Zornoza (ASL) meet with the task force to answer questions. The Chair begins drafting a document for review.

March 21, 2018: A first draft is shared with the committee.

March 26, 2018: A final draft is approved by email

April 10, 2018: The study is submitted to the EPC

### IV. DESCRIPTION and ANALYSIS of Data

#### I. Course Data –

- a. Data looks at enrollment and success rates of students enrolled in the requisite courses of the proposed program from Fall of 2012 through Summer of 2017. These requisite courses are ASL 1, 2, 3, and 4 as well as ASL 40. Overall, data showed a success rate of 73% for students taking ASL 1, 2, 3, 4, and ALS 40 over the past 5 years.
- b. Data also showed the degrees awarded to completers of these courses, of which only 21% obtained an existing AA degree in Interpreting. This indicates a need for an additional ASL degree.

#### II. Enrollment Data –

- a. Over the last 5 years, enrollment numbers have varied, averaging 278 enrollees in ASL 1 over a number of sections.

#### III. History

- a. The department has a successful track record offering these courses and achieving a high student success rate. Our task force examined data from the

previous 5 years and found a robust program of existing courses that would make up this degree.

IV. Other Data

a. Curriculum

- i. No new classes are needed to create this program. It uses existing courses that have a demonstrated history of student enrollment.

b. Employment

- i. The task force examined details about many employment opportunities for students who may possess such a degree. Many jobs that require ASL fluency are not interpreting-related. For example:
  1. American Sign Language Outreach Specialist
  2. Health Educator where bilingual English-ASL is preferred
  3. Freelance American Sign Language Instructor
  4. American Sign Language Caregivers
  5. Signing Instructional Assistants
  6. Aides for programs like “Behavior Respite in Action”
  7. Behavior Specialists in programs like “California Psychcare Inc.”
  8. ASL-fluent case managers for supported living services programs

c. Program Competition

- i. The closest community college program in the region is at Antelope Valley College, which is 63 miles away. The task force sees no rivalry there.

V. RECOMMENDATION

The following recommendation derives from a review of the information and data:

Recommendation: The proposed ASL Studies AA Degree is a viable program and should proceed through the curriculum process.

## Appendix A

### 1. What are the requirements of this degree?

Completion of 4 language courses and one American Deaf culture class. In addition completion of the CSU Transfer plan or IGETSI requirements. A total of 60 units.

### 2. What are the required courses of this degree?

ASL I - American Sign Language 1 (4)

ASL II - American Sign Language 2 (4)

ASL III - American Sign Language 3 (4)

ASL IV - American Sign Language 4 (4)

ASL 40 - Deaf Culture (3)

Total Units (19)

### 3. What is the sequence of courses a student would need to take in order to achieve both an AA degree as well as AA in ASL/Deaf Studies?

Sequence of courses:

#### **Fall Semester #1 Courses:**

ASL 1 & GE Coursework

#### **Spring Semester 1 Courses:**

ASL II & GE Coursework

#### **Fall Semester #2 Courses:**

ASL III & GE Coursework

ASL 40 - Deaf Culture

#### **Spring Semester #2 Courses:**

ASL IV & GE Coursework

### 3a. Can a student complete the requirements of both with 60 units or during a 2-year time frame?

Yes. The ASL AA proposed program is patterned after similar sequencing in the Spanish AA-T and in French.

### 4. Does this program require any new or specialized faculty members to start or will it utilize existing faculty?

No.

### 5. Does this program require any new facilities to start or will it utilize existing facilities?

It will utilize existing facilities.

6. Does the program require any new equipment to start or will it utilize existing equipment?

It will use existing equipment.

7. Are there similar programs offering the AA in ASL/Deaf studies (or something similar) available in other community colleges nearby? In other words, are there similar programs in other community colleges (not CSUN) our students might be able to commute to? Would this program be unique for community college students in the region? Please advise.

No. This will all be a part of our narrative proposal we are working on right now. The closest AA in ASL Studies is Antelope Valley College (AVC) at about 70 miles away. There is a program Mesa College in San Diego. No other like AA degrees in our district. Several sister campuses offer ASL classes, culture classes but do not have a degree, or they have an AA in Interpreting.

8. What is the class schedule history for the previous 2 years for the required courses? In other words, how many courses (ASL 1,2,3,4 and ASL 40) and sections were available to students in the 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 school years?

**Fall 2016**

ASL 1 6 classes ( 4 on site) (2 outreach)  
ASL 2 3 classes  
ASL 3 2 classes  
ASL 4 1 class  
ASL 40 1 class

**Spring 2017**

ASL 1 6 classes  
ASL 2 5 classes ( 3 on site) (2 outreach)  
ASL 3 1 class  
ASL 4 2 classes  
ASL 40 1 class

**Fall 2017**

ASL 1 13 classes ( 6 on site) (7 outreach)  
ASL 2 3 classes

ASL 3 2 classes  
ASL 4 1 class  
ASL 40 1 class

**Spring 2018**

ASL 1 3 classes  
ASL 2 3 classes  
ASL 3 2 classes  
ASL 4 2 classes  
ASL 40 1 class

9. The data we have does not differentiate students who take ASL 1, 2, 3 and 4 only vs. students who take ASL 1, 2, 3 and 4 and then go on to complete a different ASL degree. Do you have this data? Please provide.

I met with Margarita and she has a more recent version than what is included in our attached proposal. Margarita can you please help explain the numbers we discussed (8 completers in the CTE Interpreting AA, another 27 who went for other AA degrees/21 possible transfers?)

10. ASL 3 and ASL 4 both have an advisory notation in the course catalog that says students also need ASL 30 and ASL 31. Why is this? Would students pursuing this degree have to also take ASL 30 and 31? Is there a way to create the program without ASL 30 and 31? We are interested in keeping this a 2-year program rather than a 3-year program.

They are just advisories - These are support classes intended to help students gain more fluency in practicing discrete language skills. Fingerspelling I & II (ASL 30 and ASL 31) and all other support classes/elective classes are in place to expose students to the rich components of ASL and culture of the American Deaf Community (ASL 16, ASL 25) . These support classes enhance opportunities for language exposure & acquisition.

Just as a follow up, the task force already has that information. This is part of the ASL preliminary data that the IEO provided the EPC. It shows that out of 46 students who completed the sequence ASL 1-4 + ASL 40 since 2012 through 2018, 10 continued into the Interpreting program and 36 completed other degrees or certificates. Out of those 36, 31 completed a transfer-oriented degree or certificate (yellow highlight). These completers could have easily claimed the ASL Deaf Culture degree as well, had it been available.

	Awards Received of the Sequence Completers*						Grand Total
	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018 <sup>†</sup>	
American Sign Language/Interpreting - AA		3	1	4		2	10
General Studies: Arts and Humanities - AA				4	1	2	7
General Studies: Social and Behavioral Sciences - AA	1			6	1	3	11
IGETC - General Education - C				2			2
CSU-General Education - C				4	1	4	9
Early Childhood Education for Transfer - AS-T				1			1
Child Development - Associate Teacher - C				1			1
Preschool - C				1	1		2
Preschool Director - C				1			1
Preschool Teacher - C				1			1
Theater - AA		1					1
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>46</b>

\*Duplicated count as students can receive more than one award

<sup>†</sup>Awards received after July 1, 2017