

DATE: July 22, 2021

SUBJECT: New Academic Program
University of Memphis
American Sign Language and Deaf Studies, Bachelor of Arts
CIP Code: 05.0211 (Deaf Studies)

ACTION RECOMMENDED: Approval

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The University of Memphis proposes a Bachelor of Arts in American Sign Language (ASL) and Deaf Studies. The university currently offers a minor in ASL and has established ASL as an acceptable course to fulfill the university’s world language requirement. The University of Memphis expects that a major in ASL and Deaf Studies will attract new students to the university because a similar degree is not offered within a 200-mile radius of Memphis. Additionally, the program is designed to offer the ability for students to double major in ASL and another major at the university.

INSTITUTIONAL GOVERNING BOARD APPROVAL

The proposed American Sign Language and Deaf Studies, BA program was approved by the University of Memphis Board of Trustees on December 4, 2019. Final approval of new academic programs has been delegated to the Provost. On June 7, 2021, Provost Thomas Nenon requested the proposed BA program be considered for approval by THEC.

PROPOSED IMPLEMENTATION DATE

Fall 2022

RELEVANCE TO INSTITUTIONAL MISSION AND STRATEGIC PLAN

The proposed program is aligned with the State Master Plan’s goal to raise postsecondary attainment rates in Tennessee, specifically in a high demand field. The US Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates the field of interpreters and translators will grow by 22 percent between 2018 – 2028.

The proposed program will also contribute to the University of Memphis’ mission to “provide the highest quality education by focusing on research and service benefiting local and global communities.” The proposed degree in American Sign Language and Deaf Studies will provide the highest quality education by employing native signers as instructors, as well as engaging with industry, educational, and service communities and organizations in the Memphis metropolitan area.

CURRICULUM

The curriculum for the proposed BA in American Sign Language and Deaf Studies will require 120 credit hours comprised of a minimum of 40 credit hours for the proposed major; 41 credits of general education; and 39 credits of electives. Only three new courses will need to be developed due to course offerings within the existing ASL minor.

Although there is no external accrediting body for American Sign Language and Deaf Studies, the American Sign Language Teachers Association (ASLTA) published national standards for learning American Sign Language in 2014 which were taken into consideration in the preparation of the proposed program. With this in mind, the proposed American Sign Language and Deaf Studies, BA has five broad program goals for students in the program which connect to the five "C"s of language instruction (communication, culture, connections, comparisons, and community):

- 1) Communicate in American Sign Language;
- 2) Gain knowledge and understanding of American Deaf Culture;
- 3) Use American Sign Language to connect with other disciplines and acquire information;
- 4) Develop insight into the nature of language and culture through comparison; and
- 5) Use American Sign Language to participate in communities at home and around the world.

Students will also be required to have a basic knowledge of communication sciences and disorders from a functional, biological, neurological, cognitive, linguistic, and/or cultural perspective.

PROGRAM PRODUCTIVITY

The first cohort of students of students is expected to enroll in fall 2022 will be recruited from students with the ASL minor or enrolled in ASL courses. The proposed program projects an annual fall enrollment of 20 students in year one and increasing to 81 students in year five. The proposed program projects eight graduates beginning in year three and increasing to 20 graduates by year five.

	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
Enrollment	20	38	58	73	81
Graduates	--	--	8	15	20

PROGRAM DUPLICATION

The proposed program will be the first American Sign Language and Deaf Studies program offered in West Tennessee. Currently, the two undergraduate programs in American Sign Language and Deaf Studies are located in East Tennessee. Maryville College offers an American Sign Language and Deaf Studies, BA program and the University of Tennessee,

Knoxville offers a newly approved program in Deaf Studies, Bachelor of Science in Education (with a concentration in American Sign Language) that was implemented in fall 2020. Additionally, East Tennessee State University offers a minor which focuses on basic and intermediate American Sign Language culture and history.

EXTERNAL JUDGEMENT

An external review of the proposed program was conducted during a virtual institutional site visit on February 16, 2021. Dr. Diane Clark, Professor and Chair of Department of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education at Lamar University served as the external reviewer. Dr. Clark recommended approval of the proposed American Sign Language and Deaf Studies, BA and commented: "I do recommend approval of the program. The level of interest is high among students, and the community wants the program. The faculty seem to be excited and interested in this new endeavor."

STUDENT DEMAND

The University of Memphis evaluated student interest based on historical data and prospective student inquiries. In the 2018-2019 academic year, staff at the school received 20 to 30 inquiries per semester about whether a major was offered, a minor was offered, or if American Sign Language would count as a foreign/world language. Additionally, the University of Memphis distributed a student interest survey to gauge prospective students' interest in the proposed American Sign Language and Deaf Studies program. Responses were received from 178 students, ranging from high school to graduate school levels. Across all students, 61 percent knew someone who was Deaf, and 93 percent indicated that they would like to become proficient in American Sign Language.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR PROGRAM GRADUATES

Graduates from the proposed BA in ASL and Deaf Studies program will be qualified for positions as ASL interpreters. Furthermore, having an American Sign Language interpreter pathway would provide students with opportunities to fill the need for ASL interpreters required by the Americans with Disabilities Act in school districts, universities and colleges, hospitals, courts, jails, and 501c3 organizations, or to become private contractors. In order to become an interpreter, one must have a bachelor's degree and pass the Interpreter Certification exam.

In 2016, Forbes magazine listed interpreters as being one of the 20 fastest growing jobs in America, forecasting a 29 percent growth rate. Additionally, national employment data and projections from the US Bureau of Labor Statistics present a positive outlook for occupations most likely to need sign language, second language, or interpreting skills. Median salary is \$49,930 nationwide; however, the average salary among the industries with highest employment of people with this degree is consistently higher, across all industries

Letters of support for the proposed program were provided by Germantown School and Shelby County Schools. These schools are willing to offer a dual enrollment program that

would enable their students to fulfill their high school and college language requirements simultaneously in American Sign Language.

INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY TO DELIVER THE PROGRAM

The proposed program will be housed in the School of Communication Sciences and Disorders. The school has an existing minor in ASL and will use existing minor courses in the proposed curriculum for the major in ASL and Deaf Studies. Additionally, space in the Community Health Building will be renovated for an ASL Laboratory. The laboratory will provide a dedicated, multi-purpose space for the ASL degree program for students and faculty. Its primary function would be a space for ASL students to use videos to learn vocabulary, practice interpretation and to be able to complete assignments that require them to record themselves signing.

The University of Memphis currently employs one full-time ASL instructor and several adjunct ASL instructors. Six additional full-time instructors will be needed for the proposed program and will be hired as follows: two in year 1, two in year 2, one in year 3, and one in year 4. One of the full-time faculty members will also serve as the program director.

Appendix A outlines the five year financial projections for the proposed American Sign Language and Deaf Studies, BA program.

ASSESSMENT AND POST-APPROVAL MONITORING

An annual performance review of the proposed program will be conducted for the first five years following program approval. The review will be based on benchmarks established in the approved proposal. At the end of this period, the campus, institutional governing board, and Commission staff will perform a summative evaluation. The benchmarks include, but are not limited to, enrollment and graduation, program cost, progress toward accreditation, and other metrics set by the institution and Commission staff. If benchmarks are not met during the monitoring period, the Commission may recommend that the institutional governing board terminate the program. If additional time is needed and requested by the institutional governing board, the Commission may choose to extend the monitoring period.

Appendix A: THEC Financial Projections					
University of Memphis: Bachelor of Arts in ASL and Deaf Studies					
Five-year projections are required for baccalaureate: June 2021					
	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
I. Expenditures					
A. One-time Expenditures					
New/Renovated Space/lab	\$ 2,300	\$ 10,000	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Equipment/computers	6,900	7,000	-	2,900	-
Library	2,000	2,000	1,000	-	-
Consultants			-	-	-
Travel	-	-	-	-	-
Other	1,500	-	-	-	-
Sub-Total One-time	\$ 12,700	\$ 19,000	\$ 1,000	\$ 2,900	\$ -
B. Recurring Expenditures					
Personnel					
Administration					
Salary	\$ 35,000	\$ 35,700	\$ 36,414	\$ 37,142	\$ 37,885
Benefits (60%)	21,000	21,420	21,848	22,285	22,731
Sub-Total Administration	\$ 56,000	\$ 57,120	\$ 58,262	\$ 59,428	\$ 60,616
Faculty (new lines)					
Salary	\$ 118,000	\$ 224,360	\$ 282,847	\$ 344,070	\$ 351,811
Benefits (36%)	42,480	80,770	101,825	123,865	126,652
Sub-Total Faculty	\$ 160,480	\$ 305,130	\$ 384,672	\$ 467,935	\$ 478,464
Support Staff					
Salary			\$ 48,000	\$ 48,960	\$ 49,939
Benefits (36%)	-	-	17,280	17,626	17,978
Sub-Total Support Staff	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 65,280	\$ 66,586	\$ 67,917
Graduate Assistants* (1/2 assistantship; 10 hours per week)					
Salary		\$ 5,000	\$ 5,000	\$ 5,000	\$ 5,000
Benefits	\$ -	\$ 285	\$ 285	\$ 285	\$ 285
Tuition and Fees* (See	-	8,500	8,670	8,843	9,020
Sub-Total Graduate	\$ -	\$ 13,785	\$ 13,955	\$ 14,128	\$ 14,305
Operating					
Professional Development		\$ 3,000	\$ 5,000	\$ 5,000	\$ 5,000
ASL Interpreting	8,000	10,000	12,000	12,000	12,000
supplies	1,000	1,500	2,000	2,000	2,000
Other: ADJUNCTS	25,000	25,000	25,000	25,000	25,000
Sub-Total Operating	\$ 34,000	\$ 39,500	\$ 44,000	\$ 44,000	\$ 44,000
Total Recurring	\$ 250,480	\$ 415,535	\$ 566,170	\$ 652,077	\$ 665,302
TOTAL EXPENDITURES (A + B)	\$ 263,180	\$ 434,535	\$ 567,170	\$ 654,977	\$ 665,302

NOTE: Admin Asst is on Administration line; Instructor/Coordinator is included on faculty line; advisor/grad analyst is on the support staff line.

***If tuition and fees for Graduate Assistants are included, please provide the following information.**

Base Tuition and Fees Rate		\$ 8,500.00	\$ 8,670.00	\$ 8,843.40	\$ 9,020.27
Number of Graduate Assistants	-	1	1	1	1

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
II. Revenue					
Tuition and Fees ¹ (majors)	213,394	405,448	618,841	864,244	960,271
Institutional Reallocations ²	49,786	29,087	(51,671)	(209,267)	(294,969)
Federal Grants ³	-	-	-	-	-
Private Grants or Gifts ⁴				-	-
Other ⁵	-		-	-	-
BALANCED BUDGET LINE	\$ 263,180	\$ 434,535	\$ 567,170	\$ 654,977	\$ 665,302

Notes:

(1) In what year is tuition and fee revenue expected to be generated and explain any differential fees. Tuition and fees include maintenance fees, out-of-state tuition, and any applicable earmarked fees for the program.

Tuition and fees will be generated immediately, as there are students already enrolled in ASL courses. It is expected that some students in the ASL Minor will be recruited into the Major as well as new students who will be seeking the major. These tuition and fee numbers were generated with the UofM tuition estimator, based on 15 credits per semester at the spring 2021 resident rate.

Tuition estimates do not include non-majors (e.g., ASL Minors, ASL as world language, ASL curious). As of fall 2021, there are 200 students registered for ASL courses without the major in place.

(2) Please identify the source(s) of the institutional reallocations, and grant matching requirements

Initial investment will be needed; however, the program will immediately bring in the revenue to offset its cost. There is a net benefit to the university by year three.

(3) Please provide the source(s) of the Federal Grant including the granting department and CFDA

There are no federal grants associated with this program at this time.

(4) Please provide the name of the organization(s) or individual(s) providing grant(s) or gift(s).

There are no individual grants or gifts at this time. Private funds will be raised to create the language laboratory, in this case to adapt space to accommodate a language lab and equip the space with computers and video. No specific source has yet been identified.

(5) Please provide information regarding other sources of the funding.

State appropriation not included in this chart. In the first year, the University would be credited an additional \$44,500 in state appropriation, according to the UofM Scenario Planning Tool.

*The Graduate Assistant will assist the teaching faculty, and where possible, staff the learning laboratory. Ideally, this would be someone with previous ASL experience.