

Establish a Sign Language Interpreter Training Program in Northern Nevada

ITP at UNR – Proposal Details

This project is a coordinated effort to address many problems in the Deaf Community with a comprehensive unifying solution. The ITP proposal was developed with an eye toward the unique challenges faced by the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community in Northern Nevada.

What are the challenges facing Deaf Nevadans?

1. Deaf Education lags behind public education.
2. The Deaf community has high unemployment rates.
3. Many Deaf are dependent upon government assistance/institutions. (Those without jobs collect SSDI.)
4. There is a serious lack of sign language interpreters in Northern Nevada, particularly in the community setting.
5. Many state institutions are non-compliant with ADA title II for lack of available, qualified resources. (Legislature, government services, hospitals etc)
6. There is currently no Deaf service center in Northern Nevada.
7. Deaf community members continue to struggle with accessibility issues in their daily lives
8. Only 28% of K-12 interpreters are certified at an acceptable level, indicating that nearly three quarters of Deaf students receive sub-par communication access during their entire public education.

Our mission is Two-fold:

1. To train a cadre of interpreters to work in our communities; and
2. To employ Deaf individuals as part of the program's implementation.

1. The Interpreter Training Program.

The ITP will train interpreters to work in our community. Qualified interpreters are in high demand at all levels of education and in the community at large. Graduates with a B.A.S. in interpreting will find a fertile job market. The demand for skilled interpreters is not limited to our local area; there is work to be had in all 50 states, in schools, businesses, and increasingly in Video Relay Service settings.

The scarcity of highly skilled interpreters in Northern Nevada has been persistent and continual. This lack of service providers means that communication access for the Deaf and HoH (hard of hearing) Community is severely limited. Flooding the area with new interpreters, and interpreters-in-training, will reduce state liability by providing the resources needed to satisfy community demands for accessibility.

Increasing the interpreter pool in Northern Nevada will improve the quality of K-12 interpreters as well as community interpreters in general. Interpreting is a job that is in

high demand, and part of a growing field. Establishing an ITP program in Northern Nevada will create interpreting jobs, and enrich the quality of life for Deaf and Hard of Hearing people.

Interpreting is a good middle class job.

From the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics:

Sign Language Interpreting

Requires a Bachelor's degree, fluency in ASL, voluntary certification.

Projected growth: 46% between 2012-2022

Average salary: \$47,920

<http://www.bls.gov/ooh/media-and-communication/interpreters-and-translators.htm>

2. The Deaf Jobs Program

The ITP should also function as a Deaf and HoH jobs development program.

It should employ a few highly qualified Deaf in stable teaching positions, but it can also employ Deaf community members on a part-time/temporary basis at all levels of the program: support staff, lab techs, class assistants, guest speakers, test monitors, etc.

If necessary, we will invoke the 700 hour rule to create specifically Deaf positions within the program. I strongly recommend that the staff be composed of 50% or more Deaf native/fluent signers. Deaf and hard of hearing individuals can be employed at all levels within the program.

Employment within the program is tiered, and some positions at each level will be reserved for qualified Deaf individuals:

- Top level teaching positions – a few full time instructor positions (requiring a graduate degree) ought to be reserved for qualified Deaf individuals
- Part time adjunct positions – at least 50% or more of the adjunct staff should be reserved for qualified Deaf /HoH individuals
- Lab tech/support staff – one or two positions, both of which are reserved for a qualified Deaf individual. The presence of Deaf lab techs ensures that a Deaf/Hearing interaction will take place each time an interpreting student needs help. This position makes sure that a Deaf person has a visible/interactive position within the program, and on the UNR campus.
- Tutors/Classroom assistants – part time, temporary, training positions, used for transitioning students into first time job experiences, or exposure and access to higher education. (4-6 per semester)

Additional Piecemeal work

- 1-2 Guest speakers per semester: Deaf individuals can be compensated for lecture, panels, and informational workshops, or classroom visits where they can share their perspectives on, and experiences with, interpreting.

- Video Library development: Deaf people of all ages and backgrounds should be utilized in the creation of our video library for course-work materials. The more examples we have of local signing dialects, the better we can prepare our students to understand and serve the target population.

3. Bridge Building.

This proposal aims to build working bridges between several entities within our community.

- From the Program to the social service sector: we will create home-grown interpreters that can serve in K-12 settings, post secondary settings, and in the community providing access to government services, hospitals, police and court rooms.
- We can also train CDIs (Certified Deaf Interpreters) to help us bridge the communication gap to the most sensitive Deaf populations: those with MLC (minimal language competency), or mixed sign modalities, which are common among Nevada's Deaf Latino population, and in our mental health settings.
- We must also build a bridge to the Deaf Community, we can reach out and open space for the Deaf Community on campus, both literally and figuratively. By engaging their talent and support for our program, by employing Deaf professionals at the top of the program, the benefits can land on both sides of the fence: with both hearing and Deaf jobs, with both hearing and Deaf investment in the outcome.

4. Vocational Rehabilitation - "Tutor/classroom assistant" positions can be used in partnership with VR. Deaf community members can utilize these positions on a part-time, temporary basis, as a springboard to more permanent employment. Graduating Deaf seniors from Wooster might transition better with access to this kind of position on campus. VR will be indispensable to our invocation of the 700 Hour rule for the creation of Deaf jobs.

5. Tutor Trading with Deaf teens at Wooster -

Our students and their students can forge tutor-trading arrangements that will benefit both parties. Interpreting students could offer Wooster teens assistance with homework, and Wooster teens can assist interpreting students with theirs. The tutor-trading program can be a recruitment path for transitioning Deaf teens into higher education.

General Reciprocity -

The Deaf community helps to train our interpreters ~ and our interpreters volunteer to assist the Deaf community.

Reciprocity engenders cooperation and social capital, which will boost the success of our graduates entering the field.

6. Internships for our graduating interpreters:

We must partner with the Disability Service departments on every local campus to coordinate internship opportunities for our interpreting students - who in turn will provide those departments with a larger pool of interpreters to draw upon.

Interpreters in training need opportunities to shadow more seasoned interpreters. By allowing our graduating seniors a chance to pair up with working interpreters, we will be able to ready them for professional entry.

Live training, or “mock” interpreting settings should be cultivated at The Nevada legislature and/or the UNR judicial college to provide “legal” special settings training. The College of Health Sciences can provide us with mock interpreting opportunities for medical settings.

Our ITP should partner with the ASUN to secure mock interpreting opportunities related to culture, arts, and science events on campus.

Before they graduate, our ITP students will volunteer in the Deaf community as SSPs (specialized service providers) They can assist the community in many ways while gaining language mastery. Community engagement will be integral to the curriculum, meaning our students may be available for:

- Elderly Home visits
- Big brother/sister match ups
- English learning/translation assistance
- Volunteers for Deaf youth activities

7. We must cultivate and maintain a strong working relationship with the Deaf Community in Northern Nevada. Without their support the program cannot succeed, and should not exist. Our mission is to create interpreters that they can use, and they must help us do that. That’s why this isn’t a simple degree curriculum, the ITP we are proposing is a jobs program for a very specific population: the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. While the program itself cannot employ a high number of Deaf, it can provide meaningful, well paid, stable positions to a few qualified Deaf individuals, whose presence on campus will create a locus of opportunity and growth for the Deaf community at large. It can also engage the Deaf community with small piece meal work that will draw them up to campus and involve them in our program. The small price we pay for their time and expertise goes a long way toward building social capital with our most important stakeholders, the community the interpreters will serve, the Deaf Community.

Outcomes -

An Integrated, high quality ITP will:

- Create local jobs for Deaf and hearing alike.
- Engender social capital within and between communities as we work toward a common goal.
- Act as an institution of support for the Deaf community by example, and in practice.
- Relieve the burden of many state institutions that struggle to provide accommodations.

(Andrea Juillerat-Olvera 2016, daerice@yahoo.com 775-313-6154)