Proposal for a New Credit-Bearing Certificate in American Sign Language

I. CERTIFICATE JUSTIFICATION

A. Benefits from Certificate.

  Statement of benefits to the Department(s), School, and University:

  **Benefits to the Department:** Many students across campus have indicated an interest in earning some credential in ASL. The only option available to them is to pursue a topical minor through CSD with a focus on ASL. The review and approval process of the students’ curricular proposals for the topical minor are very time-consuming for faculty in CSD.

  Additionally, many CSD majors study ASL. The topical minor is not a reasonable option for them because there is a limitation to the number of credits earned in their major department that can count toward the topical minor. Since all of the ASL courses are offered through the CSD Department, the ASL Certificate would provide them the opportunity to be recognized for having completed a certain depth of study in the subject.

  **Benefits to the College:** Education majors would be able to have a statement on their transcripts indicating the certificate. It provides an additional credential that may be helpful to students graduating from COEHS to compete for employment and/or graduate study.

  Relationship of this certificate with the mission of the University:

  Students who study ASL are introduced to the culture of that has developed in the Deaf community over the years and the influences upon that culture and their unique social norms. This type of education is transformative as students develop empathy for the struggles and barriers that a deaf individual encounters on a daily basis, and an attitude of inclusivity toward the Deaf. By studying more advanced levels of ASL courses, such as Semantics and Linguistics of ASL, students enhance their critical thinking skills and their ability to communicate with a part of the American community that is often overlooked or ignored.

B. Targeted Audience and Long-Term Need.

  **Students most likely to pursue this certificate/how this certificate will benefit them:** Frequently students comment in their course evaluations that they may have started taking ASL to meet a requirement, but then became “hooked”. They want to continue their studies and to increase fluency. Students majoring in CSD, Education, and Nursing in particular, often comments on the relevancy of ASL to their future careers. The certificate would provide an avenue for recognition on their transcripts of this secondary focus in their academics.

  **Needs expressed by prospective employers, including documentation when possible:** An undergraduate certificate in ASL is not sufficient, in itself, for employment directly in that field. We believe it may be helpful to students pursuing jobs as teachers, nurses, SLPs, etc., to have the additional basic ability to converse with individuals who are deaf and hard of hearing.
The concentration of coursework in ASL can be (and has been) helpful to students who wish to pursue additional study in interpreting or other advanced study at other institutions either during the summer or after graduating from UW-Eau Claire.

Likelihood that student/employer perceived needs for this certificate will be maintained for the foreseeable future, presenting supporting evidence when possible.

According to the Gallaudet Research Institute, there has been no valid study indicating the number of individuals who know and/or use ASL:

“...there has never been a true study of ASL use in the general U.S. population; writers are compelled to come up with something even though no statistics exist. In sum, Schein and Delk (1974) provided evidence that there may have been as many as 500,000 people, regardless of hearing status, who signed at home in 1972; certainly, their estimates suggest that there were more than 250,000 prevocationally deaf persons who were good signers. In the remaining literature reviewed, all of the population size estimates greater than 500,000 appear to result from conflating deafness with ASL use and are based on demography of deafness estimates." -- (Ross E. Mitchell, Travas A. Young, Bellamie Bachleda, and Michael A. Karchmer. Gallaudet Research Institute, Gallaudet University. Draft manuscript accepted for publication in Sign Language Studies, Volume 6, Number 3, 2006)

Regardless, student interest and demand for additional courses in ASL has been consistently strong at UW-Eau Claire and in colleges and universities across the United States. In 2009 on behalf of the CSD Department, UW-Eau Claire Continuing Education distributed a survey to all students who had been enrolled in at least one ASL class within that academic year. The purpose was to gather information on the feasibility of offering a minor in ASL, student preferences for 3 vs. 4 credit courses, and to learn more about the reasons our students were interested in ASL and whether they perceived it to be valuable in their future careers.

A total of 134 students responded to the survey for a response rate of 30%. Results indicated that 73% of respondents planned to continue enrollment in ASL. Over 80% responded that they “probably” or “definitely” would pursue a minor in ASL if one were available, and 80% “probably” or “definitely” would pursue Interpreter Training. Approximately one-third of the respondents at the time were pursuing a topical minor with an emphasis in ASL.

Over 40% of the respondents were confident that ASL would be useful to them in their careers after graduation. Another 7.5% were making plans to enter an interpreter certification program after graduation, and another 27% said they would use their skills avocationally and/or socially.

Present and summarize any recognized industry / professional society / accreditation standard, indicating how this certificate will satisfy the external standard:

This certificate will not satisfy external standards. Interpreters must complete a minimum of an Associate’s degree; teachers of ASL must be licensed to teach ASL or hold Deaf and Hard of Hearing teacher licensure.

C. Identification of Potential Duplication. Will current degree or certificate programs be affected by the proposed certificate? Summarize your contacts with these Departments
or degree programs, and when appropriate, attach letters of support for the certificate proposal from the affected Departments or degree programs.

*There are no duplicative programs offered at UW-Eau Claire.*

II. DESCRIPTION OF ACADEMIC COMPONENT

A. Goals of the Certificate.

- Students will develop a depth of knowledge and skill in the use of ASL.
- Students will appreciate the distinct culture of the Deaf community and behave according to the social norms of the culture.
- Students will apply semantic and/or linguistic elements of ASL in their use of the language.

B. Admission Requirements.

List all prerequisites for admission to the certificate program (if any beyond a cumulative 2.0 gap): *No additional requirements.*

C. All Certificate Requirements.

List all courses required for the certificate: (If elective coursework is included, list the electives and explain their cohesion with required courses).

- **CSD 101 American Sign Language I** 3 cr.
- **CSD 102 American Sign Language II** 3 cr.
- **CSD 103 American Sign Language III** 3 cr.
- **CSD 210 Perspectives of Deaf Culture** 3 cr.

And 2 of the following 3 courses:

- **CSD 201 American Sign Language IV** 3 cr.
- **CSD 301 ASL Semantics** 3 cr.
- **CSD 302 ASL Linguistics** 3 cr.

D. Previously Earned Credits.

State whether previously earned credits may be applied to the certificate:

*Yes. Students currently enrolled at the time the certificate is approved may apply previously-earned credits toward completion of the ASL Certificate.*

Outline the Departmental procedure for accepting non-UWEC credits:

*The ASL faculty review catalog descriptions and/or course syllabi from other institutions to determine equivalency. Our ASL courses are offered using the ASLTA (American Sign Language Teachers Association)-recommended “voices off” teaching method. Students who have taken ASL in a “voiced” curriculum or who have taken ASL in high school can meet with one or more of our instructors for an assessment of skills for the purpose of class placement.*
E. Grade Requirements for Certificate Completion. Grade average in certificate Grade average in certificate required for completion of the certificate. A minimum 2.6 average gpa is required to earn the certificate.

F. Relationship of Certificate Program to Existing Degree Programs. Describe how this certificate relates to existing majors or emphases at UW-Eau Claire. If students enrolled in existing majors/emphases are likely to pursue this certificate, what is the relationship of the certificate course requirements to the students’ degree requirements?

ASL I, II, and III can be used by most students to fulfill the foreign language requirement required for graduation. The other 9 credits required for the certificate would apply toward the minimum credits required for a baccalaureate degree.

III. RESOURCES NEEDED FOR CERTIFICATE

A. Instructor Availability.

We employ 2 full-time Lecturers and 1 Associate Lecturer whose schedule varies from 50-100% employment.

B. Proposed Course Frequency.

ASL I, II, and III are offered each fall and spring semester. ASL I and II are sometimes offered in the summer session as well. ASL IV to the present has been offered once per year in the spring. With increasing demand, we expect to start offering that course each semester within the near future. Perspectives of Deaf Culture and ASL Semantics are offered once per year in the fall, and ASL Linguistics is offered annually in the spring semester.

C. Proposed Courses. List and describe any new courses that are needed to support this certificate. Include a Course Master Form and the supporting documentation for all such courses (see COEHS Instructions for Course Proposals or Changes). Present evidence that there is sufficient fiscal support for any new courses to be created for this certificate program.

We are seeking approval for 2 upper-division courses, ASL Semantics (proposed CSD 301) and ASL Linguistics (proposed CSD 302. Both courses were originally developed and offered under the Directed Studies number, CSD 495. Course Master forms and Comprehensive Course Outlines for both courses are being submitted simultaneously with this Proposal for a Credit-Bearing Certificate.

D. Student Advising/Support. Describe how students already enrolled at UW-Eau Claire will be advised about this certificate program. Describe how students who enroll at UW-Eau Claire solely for the purpose of obtaining this certificate will be adequately advised. Describe any anticipated need for other student support services for students enrolled in the certificate program.

Advising for the certificate program will be provided by the course instructors with support from Professional Academic Staff in Continuing Education. Given the lengthy amount of time the CSD Faculty Chair has devoted to advising students about the Topical Minor, we anticipate that the overall advising load may even be lighter, since many students used the Topical Minor as their only available option for identifying a level of proficiency in ASL.
E. Certificate Administration Unit. Identify which Department or other unit at UW-Eau Claire is primarily responsible for this certificate program. This identification is crucial for all certificates involving more than one academic Department. In most cases, this Department should be in the COEHS if you intend to present this documentation to the CACC.

*Communication Sciences and Disorders, with administrative support from Continuing Education.*

APPROVAL OF CERTIFICATE PROGRAMS

Once a certificate program has been approved by the CACC and the Dean, the proposal is forwarded to the Academic Policies Committee of the University Senate for approval if it is an undergraduate certificate and to the Graduate Council if it is a graduate certificate. The certificate will be enacted following approval by this committee or council.

REVIEW OF CERTIFICATE PROGRAMS

The CACC will review certificate programs within the COEHS as part of the existing program review process; interdisciplinary certificate programs will be reviewed in conjunction with the coordinating department(s) program review.