

The University of North Carolina
Report to the General Assembly
Instruction in American Sign Language

October 2007

A Report Based on Session Law 2007-154

Introduction

Session Law 2007-154 requires a report on the implementation on G.S. 116-11. All campuses have been contacted in the fall of 2007 to determine their practices in the development and use of American Sign Language.

UNC Minimum Course Requirement

American Sign Language is accepted by the University of North Carolina to meet the UNC minimum foreign language (second level) course requirement for all students accepted into a constituent institution.

Campus Practices Regarding American Sign Language

Appalachian State University

Appalachian offers two courses in American Sign Language. They are offered as undergraduate electives through the Department of Language Reading and Exceptionalities and the Program in Communication Disorders. The courses are:

CD 3530 American Sign Language I
CD 3531 American Sign Language II

Both courses have very healthy enrollment. American Sign Language does not meet the foreign language requirement at ASU, and ASU does not plan to offer a licensure or certification program.

East Carolina University

ECU is offering two sections of ASLS 2020 (ASL-1) and one section of ASLS 2030 (ASL-2) during fall 2007 semester. The courses are taught by Disability Support Services, but are offered through the School of Allied Health Sciences. The director of Disability Support Services can offer up to 5 sections of ASL courses per semester. From 1997-2007, ECU's School of Social Work offered a graduate Social Work Practice with the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Certificate. The 17-hour graduate certificate required that students complete two advanced ASL courses, a deaf culture and community course, a health care perspective on deafness course, a law and deaf communities course, and a deaf culture immersion course. The certificate program, which was externally funded by a grant from the Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Abuse Services of the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, graduated its last MSW student in May 2007.

ECU's Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures faculty do not accept ASL courses as satisfying the foreign language requirement for their students. Additionally, while the ASL instructors at ECU are all licensed interpreters with 10+ years of experience, only one or two have completed a master's degree.

Faculty in the Teacher Education/College of Education have discussed the possibility of having ASL licensure since they recently hired a Hearing and Visually Impaired specialist in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction. However, no formal proposal for teacher certification in American Sign Language has been presented to the Office of Academic Programs.

Elizabeth City State University

ECSU currently offers two courses in sign language:

SPPA 250: Sign Language I (3 cr. hrs.)

SPPA 251: Sign Language II (3 cr. hrs.).

These courses are taught by a licensed instructor. They do not now meet the foreign language requirement but some discussion regarding that issue is ongoing. The beginning course has no prerequisites and is open to anyone, teachers included, who desire to learn sign language. At this time ECSU does not offer teacher certification in sign language.

Fayetteville State University

FSU does not offer American Sign Language classes at this time, but has begun discussions about doing so in the future. Since discussing the matter with the department chairs of English and Foreign Languages, FSU has concluded that American Sign Language can meet the foreign language requirement. To begin offering these courses, a new faculty position must be established. Once that is approved, FSU will start offering American Sign Language classes and will also begin working with the FSU School of Education to expand the curriculum to include a teacher certification in American Sign Languages component.

North Carolina A&T State University

The Foreign Language Department does not offer American Sign Language but the Speech Department offers Speech 256: Sign Language. It is offered by the Speech Department for speech and hearing disorders. The Speech-Sign Language course is designed to provide students with a strong basic knowledge of 1500 signs (words) covering the tools of the English language such as nouns, verbs, adverbs, and adjectives in order to ensure signing competency and is offered for three hours of credit. Since the minimum requirement of a language is two consecutive semesters, American Sign Language II will need to be developed to provide foreign language credit. The School of

Education has expressed an interest in developing a program for American Sign Language certification.

North Carolina Central University

The Physical Education and Recreation Department at North Carolina Central University offers one American Sign Language course, PEDU 4510 American Sign Language for Beginners. The course does not satisfy the General Education Curriculum (GEC) language requirement. However, when the GEC was being revised there was some brief discussion in regards to the possibility of Sign Language meeting the language requirement. It was decided that the course or field did not meet the identified objectives. Also, additional courses would have to be developed and there were questions concerning student demand. Currently, there are no plans to offer teacher certification in American Sign Language

North Carolina School of the Arts

NCSA does not offer any courses in American Sign Language.

North Carolina State University

North Carolina State University does not currently offer American Sign Language. NCSU has offered a sign language course in the past but due to difficulty in finding instructors with the appropriate credentials has not offered the course recently.

University of North Carolina at Asheville

UNCA does not offer courses in ASL and does not have any current plans to do so. UNCA has on occasion accepted American Sign Language as a substitute for the FL requirement, but only for students with documented disabilities, and only with extenuating circumstances.

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill does not offer courses in American Sign Language.

University of North Carolina at Charlotte

UNC Charlotte does not offer American Sign Language, but students may take the courses at CPCC or other community colleges and universities and transfer them to UNC Charlotte. American Sign Language is acceptable as meeting the foreign language

requirements for most BA degrees in the College of Arts and Sciences and for majors in Nursing and Social Work.

University of North Carolina at Greensboro

UNCG offers courses in American Sign Language (ASL), Deaf Culture, ASL/Deaf Literature, and Lexical Development in American Sign Language. A proposal to accept ASL as satisfying the foreign language requirement is currently going through the appropriate university channels for approval. From favorable discussion among the department heads of the foreign language departments and the Associate Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, it is anticipated that the proposal will be accepted. UNCG offers programs in Interpreter Preparation, K-12 Hearing impaired Teacher Licensure, Auditory-Oral/Birth-Kindergarten Teacher Licensure, and Community Based Services for the Deaf. A new concentration, ASL Teacher Licensure, will prepare individuals to teach ASL in the public schools. This concentration is currently going through the appropriate university curriculum approval process. It is anticipated that the concentration will be approved so that students can be admitted to the ASL teacher Licensure program effective with the Fall 2008 academic year. As components of the proposed ASL Teacher Licensure program, additional courses will be offered including ASL V and VI, Linguistics of ASL, Discourse Analysis: ASL/English, Methods of Teaching ASL, and Global Perspectives on Deafness. To ensure that UNCG prepares highly qualified professionals, students completing ASL III are required to take the nationally-recognized assessment, Sign Language Proficiency Interview (SCIPI), which is administered by Deaf and hard of hearing staff of the Regional Resource Centers for the Deaf. Students currently enrolled in Interpreter Preparation program are required to pass this receptive and expressive assessment at the Intermediate level before continuing in their studies. The majority of students have achieved an Advanced rating. Students in the ASL Teacher Licensure program will be required to achieve a Superior rating before beginning their student teaching practicum. There have been numerous inquiries about the ASL Teacher Licensure program and each concentration continues to see an increase in the numbers of students. An ASL/Deaf Studies minor is also being proposed so that students in other disciplines can obtain the knowledge and skills to be able to converse with Deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals in their disciplines.

University of North Carolina at Pembroke

UNCP offers three levels of Sign Language (Intro, Sign II and Sign III) through the School of Education as an elective opportunity for future teachers and as a general elective for any student interested. Teachers majoring in Special Education or Exceptional Children's programs are highly encouraged to take the class for sign exposure and there are a large number of education majors in the classes. The Introduction to Sign Language is not an American Sign Languages class because an American Sign Language class would focus on the culture and grammatical structure of ASL as a foreign language and its consumers. The class offered at UNCP lends itself to

focusing on basic vocabulary of Sign Language using an English structure because the class is housed in the School of Education it is primarily aimed at exposing future teachers to mass amounts of vocabulary associated with signing in English word order or Pigeon (which is a go-between the ASL and English) because that is what a future teacher would use in a mainstream classroom when working with a deaf student.

UNCP does not accept ASL for its foreign language requirement nor does it offer teacher licensure.

University of North Carolina at Wilmington

UNCW offers COM 245 Communication with Deaf and Hearing-Impaired Persons. The department has on occasion accepted petitions to allow this course to count as fulfilling the language requirement. If a student comes to us with American Sign Language fluency and evidence of course work we accept this and waive the foreign language requirement.

Recently the chairs of Communication Studies and Foreign Languages discussed ASL. The chair of Communication Studies stated that COM 245 is 70% culture and 30% language, and that he would recommend that if ASL is considered for fulfilling the language requirement, we should develop a new course which is 70% language and 30% culture. He also recommended that the course be taught under the offerings of the Foreign Language Department.

Currently there is not a certification program but this may change if the demand is clear and the course is integral to our School of Education and other UNCW programs.

Western Carolina University

WCU offer two classes (CSD 451 and 452) in American Sign Language through Communication Sciences and Disorders. It is a very popular offering and the campus could probably offer 5 sections and they would all fill up.

WSSU

WSSU offers four courses (beginners-advance, RH 2203, 2303, 2304, and 2305) through its Department Of Human Performance and Sports Science in the Rehabilitation Counseling major. WSSU has a certified professional who offers these courses. The campus has asked the Dean of Arts and Sciences to begin discussion with the chair of the English and Foreign Language Department as well as the Dean of Education and Human performance to explore the possibility of accepting these courses to meet the foreign language requirement. The four courses are:

REH 2302 American Sign Language I Credit: 3 hrs.

REH 2302 American Sign Language II Credit: 3 hrs.
REH 3305 American Sign Language III Credit: 3 hrs.
REH 3306 American Sign Language IV Credit: 3 hrs.

Dissemination

Session Law 2007-154 has been disseminated to the Chief Academic Officer on each campus, as a way of encouraging the campuses to review their approach to the offering of American Sign Language.

Conclusion

Ten of our campuses offer one or more courses in American Sign Language and one while not offering it accepts it when taken at the community college or another university. Some other campuses have the matter under review. Two campuses (UNCG and FSU) are actively planning to offer teacher certification in this area with some other campuses considering that option.

Appendix

SESSION LAW 2007-154

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2007

SESSION LAW 2007-154
HOUSE BILL 915

AN ACT ENCOURAGING THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS, THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEM, AND THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA TO OFFER AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE FOR CREDIT AS A MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGE.

Whereas, American Sign Language is a fully developed, autonomous, natural language with a unique grammar, syntax, vocabulary, and cultural heritage; and

Whereas, the gestures, visual components, and structures of American Sign Language are neither derived from English nor a simplified version of English; and

Whereas, American Sign Language is the predominant language most commonly used by the deaf community in the United States; and

Whereas, there is increasing acceptance of American Sign Language as a foreign language taught in the public schools in the United States; and

Whereas, 33 states currently have legislation recognizing American Sign Language as a foreign language; and

Whereas, there is an increased acceptance of American Sign Language as a foreign language among foreign language faculty at colleges and universities; Now, therefore,

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

SECTION 1.(a) Chapter 115C of the General Statutes is amended by adding a new section to read:

"§ 115C-81.3. Instruction in American Sign Language.

(a) The State Board of Education shall encourage schools to offer American Sign Language classes in high schools as a modern foreign language.

(b) The State Board of Education shall adopt and implement standards for the certification of teachers of American Sign Language and shall set standards for teacher preparation programs that prepare students for certification as American Sign Language teachers."

SECTION 1.(b) The State Board of Education shall report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee by October 1, 2007, on the implementation of this section.

SECTION 2.(a) Chapter 115D-5 of the General Statutes is amended by adding a new subsection to read:

"(r) The State Board of Community Colleges shall develop curriculum and continuing education standards for courses of instruction in American Sign Language and shall encourage community colleges to offer courses in American Sign Language as a modern foreign language."

SECTION 2.(b) The State Board of Community Colleges shall report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee by October 1, 2007, on the implementation of this section.

SECTION 3.(a) G.S. 116-11 is amended by adding a new subdivision to read:

"§ 116-11. Powers and duties generally.

The powers and duties of the Board of Governors shall include the following:

...

(4b) The Board of Governors shall encourage the constituent institutions to offer courses in American Sign Language as a modern foreign language."

SECTION 3.(b) The Board of Governors of The University of North Carolina shall report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee by October 1, 2007, on the implementation of this section.

SECTION 4. This act is effective when it becomes law.

In the General Assembly read three times and ratified this the 25th day of June, 2007.

s/ Marc Basnight
President Pro Tempore of the Senate

s/ Joe Hackney
Speaker of the House of
Representatives

s/ Michael F. Easley
Governor

Approved 2:22 p.m. this 29th day of June, 2007