

TOPIC: APPROVAL OF MASTER OF ARTS IN TEACHING AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN COLORADO

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I. SUMMARY

This consent item requests initial approval for the University of Northern Colorado (UNC) to offer a Master of Arts in Teaching American Sign Language degree along with a teacher education endorsement in Foreign Language (8.10).

II. BACKGROUND

American Sign Language (ASL) is now recognized as a “foreign language,” thus, teachers of American Sign Language are licensed by CDE as “Foreign Language” teachers. The following is summarized from UNC’s proposal with additions by staff to ensure accuracy and clarity.

OVERVIEW OF PROPOSED DEGREE:

Goals of the Program:

1. To blend instruction and field experiences for distance students in the preparation of professionally competent teachers of ASL.
2. To prepare ASL teacher candidates who can confidently approach the national certification system for the field within six to twelve months of graduation.
3. To prepare entry-level teachers who understand and are able to provide competent, autonomous services in compliance with state and national standards.

The UNC Teaching American Sign Language Master of Arts program is designed as a national model program. It serves students from across the United States through distance delivery, and it is based on extensive research in the field to identify effective practices. An external consultant involved in the American Sign Language Teachers Association and its associated certification program was involved in the design of the program concept. Instructional methods are based on the most innovative and contemporary pedagogical practices known in the field.

The program is delivered at a distance by way of multiple technologies, including an online course management software known as Blackboard, video/videophone conferences, courses in a box, printed materials (e.g., textbooks, handouts, course manuals), video mentoring and

internship. Intensive skills development and cultural competence coursework occurs during the month-long, on-campus summer institutes. Field-based experiences are built into each course and two practicums are required. Students seeking licensure in Colorado will be expected to have field based experiences in K-12 and post secondary settings.

FIT WITH INSTITUTION’S ROLE AND MISSION:

Department staff conclude the proposed degree fits UNC’s role and mission:

“The university of northern Colorado shall be the primary institution for undergraduate and graduate degree programs for educational personnel preparation in the state of Colorado. The university shall offer masters and doctoral programs primarily in the field of education.”

EVIDENCE OF NEED:

At least 350 ASL teachers are certified by the national American Sign Language Teachers Association (ASLTA). Many of them do not have a master’s degree.

This discipline-specific curriculum is being proposed as a major, with an option for licensure to work in K-12 settings in Colorado. It is anticipated that the MA in Teaching American Sign Language will attract 10-12 students initially, with the maximum capacity of 20-25 new students each year being reached in three to five years. These students will be recruited throughout the United States as additions to the current UNC base of graduate students, since the program will be delivered via distance technologies.

The Master of Arts in Teaching American Sign Language has great potential to recruit transfer students from multiple institutions throughout the United States. Currently there are approximately a dozen bachelor’s degree programs in the nation and many more two-year ASL/Deaf Studies programs. As a master’s degree is required to teach in many State Education Agencies, and throughout postsecondary institutions, graduates of these undergraduate programs will be seeking an avenue to earn a graduate degree.

SIMILAR PROGRAMS IN THE STATE:

There are no similar programs in the state and few in the nation.

ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS:

1. Applicants must possess a baccalaureate degree from an accredited college or university.
2. A minimum GPA of 3.0 on the last 60 semester hours of coursework.
3. If an applicant does not have a 3.0 GPA, he/she will be required to take the GRE and score at least 900 on the exam and a 3.5 on the written section.

4. International applicants must pass the TOEFL exam with a minimum score of 550 or 80 for the Internet-based exam.
5. As part of the admissions process, each applicant will be required to demonstrate an appropriate level of ASL proficiency.
6. In addition to admission to the program and satisfactory completion of all coursework, each student must pass a written comprehensive examination or thesis before she or he is allowed to graduate.

COURSE OF STUDY:

TASL 501	First & Second Language Acquisition in ASL (3)
TASL 502	ASL Teaching Methods (3)
TASL 503	ASL Assessment & Testing (3)
TASL 504	ASL Curriculum Development & Design (3)
TASL 505	Teaching Deaf Community, Culture & ASL Literature (3)
TASL 506	Contemporary Professional Issues in Teaching ASL (3)
TASL 507	ASL Research Methods (3)
TASL 593	Practicum for ASL Teaching I (3)
TASL 594	Practicum for ASL Teaching II (3)
SRM 600	Introduction to Graduate Research (3)
Total	30 credits

The Master of Arts in Teaching American Sign Language is designed to be completed in five semesters. If a student elects to take coursework for CDE licensure, it is anticipated they can complete this requirement in a total of seven semesters.

ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING, OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION:

The Teaching American Sign Language program faculty will conduct ongoing assessment and advising of students to ensure students are meeting the goals of the program, individual course outcomes, and demonstrating professional teacher behavior including the initiative and likelihood of success as a competent, autonomous practitioner.

Students will meet with their advisor throughout their program. The following are required benchmarks:

1. Completion of program application process;
2. Successful completion of online orientation course;
3. Assessment of student-identified goals of personal learning through individual course evaluations;

4. Annual review, to include the assessment of the iwebfolio portfolio progress, and 3.0 GPA with advisor during summer sessions; and
5. Successful completion of field placements and practica experiences.
6. Successful completion of comprehensive examination.

FACULTY RESOURCES:

Parties directly affected by this proposed change have been notified. A concept paper for this proposal has been shared with the Dean of the College of Education and Behavioral Sciences, the Dean of the Graduate School, the Colorado Department of Education, and the Colorado Department of Higher Education.

FACILITIES, EQUIPMENT AND TECHNOLOGY:

The program will likely increase student enrollment in the School of Teacher Education as some percentage of the students will want to be credentialed to teach in Colorado schools. The distance delivery of the Master of Arts in Teaching American Sign Language will also positively impact the Office of Extended Studies as the fall and spring courses will be offered through its Blackboard delivery system.

OVERALL BUDGET IMPACT/NEED:

The School of Special Education and the College of Education and Behavioral Sciences has included in its budget request a proposal for two full time positions to coordinate and staff this program, the ASL courses currently offered at UNC under the liberal arts core requirements, and a newly proposed minor in ASL/Deaf Studies.

III. STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION APPROVAL

At its meeting on March 11, 2010, the Colorado State Board of Education approved the content of this program proposal. CDE staff transmitted their affirmative recommendation to the Department.

IV. DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION REVIEW

Department staff have reviewed this proposed program and letters of assurances from academic administrators to ensure that the degree program meets the State's performance measures outlined in C.R.S. §23-5-129.6. The program meets all performance measures set forth by the state, including those for teacher preparation in C.R.S. §23-1-121.

V. STAFF RECOMMENDATION

That the Commission approve the Master of Arts in Teaching American Sign Language degree submitted by University of Northern Colorado.

VI. SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION

Copies of all relevant statute, policy, the proposal and the letter of approval from the State Board of Education are on file in the Academic Affairs Office.

VII. STATUTORY AUTHORITY

C.R.S. §23-5-129.6

C.R.S. §23-1-121