WORK THAT SPEAKS VOLUMES
– AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETING

Are you looking for a career in a field where you provide a vital service that can help countless people? Are you interested in a field where the demand for your services shows no signs of slowing? Then a career in American Sign Language (ASL) interpreting may be right for you.

College of the Canyons’ ASL Interpreting Program is a two-year, comprehensive program designed to award students with an Associate of Arts Degree. Upon completion students will be equipped with the necessary skills for entry-level employment as sign language interpreters or in other positions requiring proficient ASL skills and knowledge of the Deaf community, such as classroom signing aides.

ASL is the predominant sign language of Deaf communities in the United States and English-speaking parts of Canada. ASL interpreters must be proficient in both ASL and English, as they serve as communication links between Deaf/hard-of-hearing individuals and those who can hear. Skills required for successful interpreting include linguistic competence, cognitive flexibility (ability to process information rapidly and correctly), physical stamina, and a well-developed general knowledge base.

COC offers both academic and occupational training, and students may also take language courses in the ASL department to satisfy their language requirements for degree or transfer to a university.

A Student’s Perspective
Genavive Esse went through COC’s ASL program from 2006 to 2008, and said it was very beneficial, preparing her for her current job as a full-time interpreter for a high school.

“It gave a strong foundation for my continuing language development in ASL and gave a realistic picture of what work life would be like in the real world of interpreting,” she said.

With the credits she earned through the COC program, Esse was able to transfer to California State University, Northridge, and earn her bachelor’s degree in Deaf Studies, with a focus on ASL/English interpreting.

Broad Opportunities
Deborah Sison, department chair of the ASL department and interpreter training program, stressed that individuals develop language skills at different rates. “What comes more easily for one person may be more challenging for another. An individual can enhance their learning experience and accelerate the process through daily practice. The Deaf community offers many opportunities for ASL students to utilize their skills. The more a student signs, the quicker their proficiency will develop.”

She continued: “I think it is important for students to understand that language takes time to develop, and it doesn’t occur in isolation. Patience and practice are required.”

Sison said she encourages ASL students to become involved in the ASL Club on campus, noting that it is a great way to develop new friendships and practice developing language skills.

“Interpreting is cool,” Sison said. “There are many forms of interpreting, and interpreters can find themselves in a variety of work situations, which can vary from day to day or from hour to hour, depending upon where an individual is employed. Interpreters can work as independent contractors or for an agency or an organization. At some point, most find themselves working in the field of education. Interpreters can work full-time or part-time, (and) they can have flexible schedules or set schedules.”

If you’re looking for a variety of settings to choose from, the following are examples of some of the more common industries requiring the use of ASL interpreters: education, religious, medical, mental health, theatrical, employment, social services, video-relay and legal. Sison added, “There is also a demand for interpreters and/or individuals proficient in ASL to work with special populations such as the Deaf-Blind community.”

Sison said the interpreting profession is experiencing a shortage of interpreters nationwide. That means the profession will always have a need for skilled interpreters.

“Thanks to the Americans with Disabilities Act and other legislation, the demand keeps increasing,” she said, “since more deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals are gaining access to the goods and services they are legally entitled to receive, which had previously been limited or denied to them.”

So, whether you are looking to start down a new career path or add another language to your skill set, learning ASL can be fun and challenging. No matter where or how you decide to use your ASL skills, Sison offers one last piece of advice: “Have fun!”

For more information about this program please contact Deborah Sison, department chair, at Deborah.Sison@Canyons.edu or (661) 362-5009, or Professor Brittany Applen at Brittany.Applen@Canyons.edu or (661) 362-3050.
Deborah Sison, Department Chair, American Sign Language Department and Interpreter Training Program

With 27 years of professional experience and an extensive educational background in the field of deaf education and American Sign Language, Deborah Sison has had many opportunities to develop her skills and academic knowledge of American Sign Language, the Deaf community and its history, causes and incidence of deafness, the interpreting profession, the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Rehabilitation Act, and other related subject matter. She has held several positions, each requiring a higher degree of responsibility, knowledge and expertise, including staff interpreter; interpreter coordinator; coordinator, deaf and academic support services; academic advisor DHH, American Sign Language and Interpreter Training Professor; and department chair (SIGN).

Sison began learning to sign at the age of 14, when she met Deaf individuals and began communicating with them on a regular basis. She calls it her “informal” education in ASL and the Deaf community. On the formal side, her education includes earning an associate of arts degree as Interpreter for the Deaf, a bachelor of arts in Deaf studies and a master of arts in special education-DHH.

Certified by the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, Sison possesses both a certificate of translation and certificate of interpretation. In addition, she has served as a board member of the Southern California Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf.

Sison said when she began college she fell in love with learning.

“I am one of those individuals that decided never to leave once I started,” Sison said. “I love being around people with inquisitive minds and enjoy being involved in the learning process. I started working in higher education in 1986, and I’ve worked at both the community college and university levels ever since.”

Sison continued: “I’ve had the pleasure of working at College of the Canyons since 2005. I truly enjoy my job, but it can be quite challenging waiting for the economy to improve, so that we can keep on growing.”

On the other hand, she said, “The best part of my job is watching students grow and develop. I love seeing them learn. ... I enjoy watching them develop their knowledge and skills and seeing them successfully apply these in the context of the real world.”

ASL STUDENT CLUB

The ASL Club holds a “Deaf Event” at the Valencia Marketplace Starbucks and adjacent amphitheater (25900 The Old Road) from 7 p.m. to closing on the first Friday of every month. Stop by to practice signing and meet new friends!
Courses Offered in American Sign Language Interpreting

American Sign Language I (SIGN 101); American Sign Language II (SIGN 102); American Sign Language III (SIGN 103); American Sign Language IV (SIGN 104); American Deaf Culture (SIGN 110); Fingerspelling (SIGN 111); Interpreting: Principles and Practices (SIGN 112); Creative Uses of Sign (SIGN 113); Specialized Signs and Settings (SIGN 200); Interpreting I (SIGN 201); Transliterating I (SIGN 202); Sign to English Interpreting/Transliterating I (SIGN 203); Interpreting II (SIGN 204); Transliterating II (SIGN 205); Sign to English Interpreting/Transliterating II (SIGN 206); and Cooperative Work Experience Education: Animation Work Environment (CWEE 188).

An internship is required (Cooperative Work Experience Education). Students may find internships on their own or search the COC internship website to find a program at: Canyons.edu/Interns.

Careers on the Go Coming this Spring

Careers on the Go (COG) workshops are designed to help attendees with career exploration, with industry professionals serving as guest speakers. Attendees hear firsthand how our guests got to where they are and the type of training and education they look for in new hires. Events are geared toward individuals who are not quite sure what they want to do, and for those who have chosen that career path and want to learn more about the field. Workshops are free and open to students and the public. Check www.canyons.edu/cog to register.

- Emergency Medical Technician (EMT), April 22
- Land Surveying, April 24
- American Sign Language, May 1
- Medical Lab Technician (MLT), May 8

Internship Opportunities

The American Sign Language (ASL) Interpreting Program includes hands-on training through internships and Cooperative Work Experience Education. Once students complete the required courses in the ASL program, they must complete an additional three units from a variety of courses. Students are encouraged to select at least one unit from an internship, CWE-188. Students may elect to take one to three units of CWE-188, requiring 60 hours for each unit of CWE. You can see why students are encouraged to take at least one unit of CWE, as the time spent in the internship sharpens the students’ interpreting skills.

These internships are a robust part of the ASL program, as practical experience is not only necessary, it is recommended for students to succeed in interpreting. Below are samples of internship host sites where ASL students have enjoyed applying their skills and gaining hands-on experience.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employer</th>
<th>Location</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ARC-Activities, Recreation, and Care</td>
<td>North Hollywood</td>
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<tr>
<td>Braille institute of America</td>
<td>Los Angeles</td>
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<tr>
<td>Burbank High School</td>
<td>Burbank</td>
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<tr>
<td>College of the Canyons</td>
<td>Santa Clarita</td>
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<tr>
<td>George Washington Elementary</td>
<td>Burbank</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hart High School</td>
<td>Santa Clarita</td>
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<tr>
<td>Southern California Renaissance</td>
<td>Irwindale</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pleasure Faire Interpreters</td>
<td>Los Angeles</td>
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<tr>
<td>Valencia High School</td>
<td>Santa Clarita</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conejo Valley Unified School District</td>
<td>Thousand Oaks</td>
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Occupational Profile: American Sign Language Interpreters and Translators

The future is bright for interpreters and translators. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the lower end of the wage scale in California is just slightly ahead that of the national average, while the upper end of the scale lags behind. For example, salaries are currently in the range of $26,800-$84,600 per year in California, compared to $23,600-$91,800 per year nationally.

Employment is on the rise, both locally and nationally. Employment in California is expected to rise by 29 percent between the years 2010 and 2020, compared to the national average of 42 percent.

For more industry and career information and the latest in research news, visit the following resources: O*NET OnLine at ONetOnline.org/, the Bureau of Labor Statistics at BLS.gov/ooh, and the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders (NIDCD) at www.NIDCD.nih.gov.
Accounting | Administration of Justice | Administrative Assistant | American Sign Language Interpreting
Animation Production | Architectural Drafting | Automotive Technology | Commercial Photography
Computer Applications | Computer Networking | Culinary Arts | Customer Service | Early Childhood Education
Electronic Systems Technology | Emergency Medical Technician | Entrepreneurship and Small Business Management
Filmmaking | Fire Technology | Graphic & Multimedia Design | Hotel & Restaurant Management
Human Resources Management | Interior Design | Land Surveying | Manufacturing Technology | Marketing
Medical Laboratory Technician | Medical Office Administrative Assistant | Nursing | Paralegal Studies | Real Estate
Retail Management | Solar Energy Technician | Sound Arts | Sports Medicine | Video Game Animation
Water Systems Technology | Welding Technology | Wine Studies

REAL JOBS NEED REAL SKILL

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