MEMO

To: The UVM Faculty Senate
From: Curricular Affairs Committee of the Faculty Senate, Laura Almstead, Chair
Date: April 5, 2018
Re: Approval of a proposal for a new Minor in American Sign Language submitted by the College of Education and Social Services

At its meeting on April 5, 2018, the Curricular Affairs Committee approved the actions recommended in the following memo.

The Curricular Affairs Committee approved a proposal for a new minor in American Sign Language from the College of Education and Social Services (CESS), Department of Leadership and Developmental Sciences. If approved by the Faculty Senate and Board of Trustees, the program will be offered beginning fall 2018.

Program Description and Rationale
American Sign Language (ASL) is recognized as a complete, complex language akin to languages such as Japanese, Spanish, and Italian by both the Modern Language Association (MLA) and the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages. The goals of the newly proposed minor are to help students increase ASL cultural and language competencies, and to develop a deeper understanding of Deaf experiences through historical, social, and cultural perspectives. In addition to training students in ASL, the interdisciplinary approach of the curriculum allows students to apply their theoretical knowledge to create an understanding that inspires innovative solutions for problems that perpetuate the marginalization of Deaf people.

Justification and Evidence for Demand
According to the MLA, American Sign Language is the third most commonly studied language in the United States. Interest among undergraduates at UVM for opportunities to learn ASL is evidenced by the fact that ASL courses have been fully enrolled, often with waitlists, since they began to be offered in 2010. (Detailed enrollment and waitlist data was provided with the proposal.) Current as well as perspective students have also specifically inquired about an ASL minor, and ASL is the most commonly requested subject area for students looking to pursue Individually Designed Minors (IDMs) in the College of Arts and Sciences (CAS). There are currently nine students in CAS completing IDMs through CAS.

A combination of ASL competency and cultural knowledge will make students completing the proposed minor in ASL strong candidates for graduate studies or employment in education, communication sciences, and deaf-related fields as well as more general fields that employ individuals who are Deaf and/or hearing impaired. The proposal included letters from several non-profit organizations in Vermont indicating a need for professionals with the skills and knowledge the proposed minor will provide. Additionally, the Bureau of Labor Statistics predicts an increased demand (29%) for “interpreters/translators.” Therefore, proposed ASL minor will serve as a valuable complement to a broad range of majors.
Relationship to Existing Programs
The proposers indicate that there are no similar minors offered at UVM. In fact, it is the only language offered at an advanced level that is not available as a minor. The College of Arts and Sciences and Department of Communication Disorders are both involved in and supportive of the proposed minor (see Evidence of Support).

Curriculum
Completion of the newly proposed minor requires 20 credits of coursework including four language courses and two additional courses chosen from a set of three (see table below). With the exception of ASL 102, all courses are conducted in ASL. Through this set of courses, the proposers indicate that students will:

- Develop advanced proficiency in ASL, including all linguistic aspects of ASL (vocabulary, grammar, and semantics) as well as exposure to language registers, linguistic and cultural norms and intuitions, and visual/gestural communication techniques
- Develop understanding of key concepts/theories in Deaf Studies such as Deaf Gain (Deaf individuals have extrinsic and intrinsic values rather than deficits), Deafhood (The essence of being Deaf), Audism/Ableism (systemic oppression on the basis of ability), and Dysconscious Audism (internal oppression)
- Gain multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary perspectives on ASL and Deaf Culture

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<tr>
<th>Required Courses</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ASL 051</td>
<td>Intermediate ASL I</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4 credits</td>
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<tr>
<td>ASL 052</td>
<td>Intermediate ASL II</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4 credits</td>
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<tr>
<td>ASL 101</td>
<td>Advanced ASL I</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3 credits</td>
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<tr>
<td>ASL 102</td>
<td>Advanced ASL II</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3 credits</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Two courses from below:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>ASL 120</td>
<td>Understanding Deaf Culture</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3 credits</td>
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<tr>
<td>ASL 220</td>
<td>ASL Literature</td>
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<td>3 credits</td>
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<tr>
<td>ASL 280</td>
<td>Advanced Seminar</td>
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<td>3 credits</td>
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Two additional courses, ASL 001 and ASL 002, are pre-requisites for the minor as they are required to enroll in ASL 051.

Admission Requirements and Process
All students who have completed the pre-requisite courses noted above will be able to enroll in the proposed minor in ASL. Students will be required to complete a short application available through the CESS website (due November 1 and March 15 each year). A selection committee comprised of at least two faculty involved in the proposed minor will review the applications and notify students of their decisions. The proposers did not indicate a specific number of students expected to enroll if the minor becomes available. However, they indicate that more restrictive criteria will be established (e.g. students must have received a B or better in ASL 002, have a minimum GPA of 3.0, and submit a clearly articulated statement of goals) if demand for the new minor exceeds capacity.
Advising
The ASL program coordinator will meet with newly accepted minors immediately prior to registration periods and discuss/develop a program of study plan. The coordinator will also meet with students each semester to review course requirements and enrollment for the ASL minor and be available to meet periodically when academic concerns arise.

Assessment Plan
The ASL minor will conduct an annual survey of student outcomes. The proposers indicate they will directly assess students enrolled in the minor monitor retention, ASL and cultural competency development, and other relevant outcomes. Students in the ASL minor will also be required to complete an annual survey of student outcomes to share narrative insights regarding their experiences in their coursework. Faculty involved in the minor will use the survey to assist in determining what areas need improvement to maximize students’ learning outcomes. In addition, ASL faculty will meet twice a year to discuss student progress in the current curriculum and make any necessary changes to improve student learning in key areas.

Staffing Plan, Resource Requirements, and Budget
The proposers indicate that thanks to the addition of two new full-time faculty members this fall with significant expertise in the area of ASL, no additional faculty, staff, or other resources are required for the proposed minor.

Evidence of Support
Letters of support were included in the proposal from:

- Jane Okech, Chair of the Department of Leadership and Developmental Sciences
- Jennifer Dickinson, Anthropology Department and Sign Language Researcher
- Abigail McGowan, Associate Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences
- Michael Cannizzaro, Chair of the Department of Communication Sciences
- The UVM ASL Club
- Jaimilee Dresser, a UVM student
- Vermont Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf
- Cory Brunner, an ASL interpreter
- Bridget McBridge, Program Coordinator of the Vermont Interpreter Referral Service
- Emma Nelson, Vermont Sensory Access Project under the Center on Disability and Community Inclusion
- Anne Vernon, Senior Manager, Howard Center

Summary
There is significant evidence of student interest in and demand for an ASL minor at UVM. ASL is also the only language offered at an advanced level for which there is not a minor. Importantly, the thoughtfully designed interdisciplinary curriculum will not only help students develop proficiency in ASL, but also enable them to develop a deeper understanding of Deaf experiences. In addition to evidence of demand from students for a minor in ASL, demand for individuals with the skills and knowledge students completing the proposed minor will have exists in a variety of fields where Deaf and hearing-impaired individuals are employed. Therefore, the newly proposed minor in ASL will be an excellent addition to UVM’s curricular portfolio.