

Announcement of Program Closure

February 2, 2022

The bilingual-bicultural (Bi-Bi) track of our master’s program in Communicative Disorders and Deaf Education has been suspended, as of January 5, 2022. This program trains students to teach Deaf children academic subjects in American Sign Language (ASL). Students currently in the program will be able to finish by spring 2023.

In recent years, the program has graduated about five students annually. The undergraduate ASL curriculum serving hundreds of students will remain in place, and the department will work to strengthen it.

I understand this news is concerning for many, and I want to ensure transparency about why this decision was made and our next steps.

Educational institutions such as Utah State University review academic programs on a continual basis, and many programs are also subject to accreditation reviews, including the Bi-Bi track of the master’s program in Communicative Disorders and Deaf Education. These reviews help us understand if our programs are thriving, whether they need updating, or if they should be dropped or reconfigured.

Because we learned of a lapse in accreditation status that was not reported to my office, we initiated an internal review of the Bi-Bi program. This review showed that the program track was not operationally sound, preventing us from offering the high-quality education expected at Utah State University. Moreover, we learned of some weaknesses in our undergraduate ASL curriculum, which serves a large number of undergraduate students within and outside the Department of Communicative Disorders and Deaf Education.*

In light of this review, the master’s program track has been suspended while the department does two things. First, the department will immediately address weaknesses in the foundational undergraduate program offerings in ASL to ensure the best quality experience for our students. Undergraduate ASL lab experiences should be much more robust moving forward. The focus on this programming is to ensure that our students are well prepared for the full spectrum of employment and graduate education opportunities available to them upon completing their undergraduate degree.

Second, the department will engage in strategic planning that considers future workforce needs and opportunities as well as promising directions for growth. This effort will emphasize the needs of individuals who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing and their families.

Al Smith, Dean
Emma Eccles Jones College of Education and Human Services

**We updated this paragraph on 2/3/22 to clarify that The Council on the Education of the Deaf was not involved in the decision to suspend the program, nor did they make a recommendation to do so.*

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