

M E M O

DATE: May 9, 1990
TO: Department of Therapeutic Sciences Faculty/Staff
FROM: The American Sign Language Coalition
RE: American Sign Language for Health Care Providers-410

As a result of our May 8 meeting with Dean John Palmer, we understand that the full Department of Therapeutic Sciences faculty will take up the issue of the above course cancellation. As individuals interested in maintaining a positive relationship between the University and the Deaf Community, we are offering some background on this matter, hoping you will vote to temporarily reinstate this course.

We find the cancellation of the ASL class both disappointing and untimely. It is disappointing in that it thwarts any University extension of goodwill to the Deaf Community and robs students of an educational opportunity found no other place on campus. This is not an isolated issue, but one with reverberations beyond departmental walls in that the Deaf Community views this as an assault which is contrary to the University's Design for Diversity. Furthermore, it disregards the University's recent legislative support for Senate Bill 336 (passed April, 1990), which allows the teaching of American Sign Language for foreign language credit in Wisconsin secondary schools. Beyond that, Letters and Sciences is currently considering a proposal to accept ASL as a foreign language. Why chance destroying the rapport the University has slowly developed with the Deaf Community in recent years?

We request the reinstatement while acknowledging that the Department of Therapeutic Sciences may not be the most appropriate place for this type of course. Nor do we believe that Communicative Disorders or Nursing are appropriate places because they tend to examine deafness from a pathological viewpoint, thus insulting the integrity of the Deaf Community as a linguistic, cultural, and social minority. Offering this course as a foreign language, or out of a Deaf Studies Program, seems more suitable for the future.

With this in mind, our goal is to convene a committee to study the various options for course placement. This certainly requires time. If the School of Education would agree to offer ASL in the interim, we could move forward with this plan and also maintain some continuity.

Dean Palmer and Dean Jane Ayer can attest to the volume of mail received about this issue. Numerous petitions, one including over 400 names, have been submitted. The petitions and letters are available for your perusal, as is the ASL proposal Letters and Sciences is considering. We would be happy to provide any information you might want, and hope you will consider this promptly to assure timely scheduling. If you cannot attend the meeting, please leave a note with your program coordinator regarding your position on the temporary reinstatement of the ASL course.