

Sign Language Studies • Your Questions Answered

What can I do with a degree in Sign Language?

Since 1975, Sign Language Studies graduates have found employment in various sectors of both private and public enterprise, as well as local and state government. Careers include jobs in vocational rehabilitation, community service agencies, local school districts, ASL/English interpreting, social service agencies, communication facilities, colleges and universities. To prepare for specific environments, students are encouraged to consider an additional major and/or minor in one of the more than 50 programs offered at Madonna University. A double major often enhances a student's employment potential upon graduation.

Is this an Interpreter Training Program?

Yes, The Sign Language Studies (SLS) department at Madonna University offers students an opportunity to develop American Sign Language (ASL) skills while providing an understanding of the language and its community. Through extensive training and practice over four years, students will develop the interpreting skills needed to become a professional sign language interpreter. In addition to our interpreter education program, The SLS program offers two other areas of study:

- Deaf Community Studies
- ASL Education (*for teacher certification as a language teacher*)

Is there a demand for interpreters?

Recent changes in federal and state legislation and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) have increased career opportunities for those who work with the Deaf community. These changes reflect significantly on the need for interpreters. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the demand for Sign

Language interpreters is expected to rise 46% from 2012 to 2022, an increase of 29,300 jobs.

Do I need a degree to interpret?

All working Michigan interpreters are required by law to hold BEI (level I, II, or III) or RID certification. Additionally, endorsements are required for specialized interpreting.

Since 2012, a Bachelor degree is required for new applicants to apply for RID certification.

The Michigan legislature requires an additional qualification for interpreters in the K-12 setting: A score of 4.0 or higher on the Educational Interpreter Performance Assessment (EIPA).

Will I be professionally certified when I finish the program?

Certification of Sign Language interpreters is granted by outside state and national organizations. The Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) grants national certification, while the Michigan department of licensing and regulator affairs grants state certification. Our Sign Language Interpreting Studies degree will lead to the opportunity for professional certification. Our students are encouraged to begin the certification process prior to graduation, and many graduate as certified interpreters.

What is RID? What is RID certification?

RID is a national organization of interpreters which supports Sign Language interpreting and is concerned with conditions affecting employed interpreters. This is your resource for information on national interpreter certification. For more information please visit: www.RID.org

In some cases, interpreter certification is subject to each individual state's policies.

Please refer to your local RID chapter or interpreter agencies in your area.

Where do I find information on state laws?

To obtain information on Michigan laws concerning interpreters and interpreting, it is recommended you contact:

Division on Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing

Cadillac Place, 3054 W. Grand Boulevard, Suite 3-600

Detroit, MI 48202

(313) 437-7035 (Voice/TTY)

(313) 437-7035 (VP)

<http://www.michigan.gov/mdcr/>

What about non-interpreting fields?

Deaf Community Studies:

The Deaf Community Studies degree provides a solid base in American Sign Language (ASL) and related coursework for students pursuing additional studies in areas such as counseling or other human service areas. Students are encouraged to integrate another major or minor based on professional and/or personal academic and career goals.

ASL Education program for Teacher Certification:

This plan of study is intended for current teachers in the K-12 setting, or students who wish to enroll in the teacher education program at Madonna University. The ASL Education program prepares students to teach ASL as a world language in the K-12 setting. See the separate information sheet on ASL Education for more information on the structure of Michigan teaching certificates that can be earned when preparing as a teacher of ASL.



For Admission Information

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Livonia, Michigan 48150-1176
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(800) 852-4951, ext. 5339

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For Program Information

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Madonna University reserves the right to withdraw or modify information in this brochure.

See Advisor/Admission Office for current information.

Madonna University guarantees the right of equal educational opportunity without discrimination because of race, sex, national origin, age, or disabilities.

How long will it take me to learn Sign Language?

The Sign Language Studies program is based on a cohort system, which requires students to follow a specific sequence for their courses. The rate at which a student completes the program varies according to each student's personal situation and individual characteristics, such as motivation and learning styles. Sign Language competence is influenced by student and program variables. Please see Sign Language Studies course descriptions for more details.

What if I already know some Sign Language?

If you feel your signing skills warrant an evaluation for placement, please request an evaluation by emailing sls@madonna.edu. A representative from the SLS department will assist you in scheduling an appointment to have your skills evaluated.

When does the next term begin?

Exact dates for the Fall, Winter, and Summer semesters are posted online in the academic calendar, which can be found at www.madonna.edu under the "Resources" tab. New SLS cohorts begin in the Fall semester.

Once you have been accepted as a student your first two years will be spent experiencing and learning the language in an ASL focused classroom.

Towards the end of your freshman year, while in SLS 2010, students will need to meet with your academic advisor to discuss your academic career.

Each year, the SLS department meets with students in SLS 3010, for an interview and discussion about the student's plans in the department. This discussion may include a determination about the suitability of the student for their specific major, and often includes useful dialogue about the student's aspirations and needs.

What texts do we use?

The Sign Language Studies courses use a unique curriculum developed by the SLS faculty, along with a wide variety of

books, research articles, and guest speakers from the Deaf community.

What is the SLS Department's mission statement?

The Department of Sign Language Studies (SLS) reflects Madonna University's traditions and goals in its promotion of humanistic values, cultivation of intellectual inquiry, respect for diversity, and commitment to serving others. The SLS Department strives to produce graduates who comprehend the rich diversity within the Deaf community, respect Sign Language as a human right, and are able to apply their knowledge to earn a position within the Deaf community.

The Faculty

Daniel McDougall

(B.A., Madonna University; M.A., Oakland University)

Jennifer Berrigan

(B.S., Gallaudet University; M.A., Gallaudet University)

Bretagne Whitford

(B.S., Rochester Institute of Technology; M.S., Rochester Institute of Technology)

Michael Meldrum

(B.S., Eastern Michigan University; M.A., Gallaudet University)

Sharon Meldrum

(B.A., Gallaudet University; M.A., Eastern Michigan University)

Cheryl Airgood

(B.A., Madonna University; M.A., Eastern Michigan University; Ed.S., Wayne State University)

Fr. Michael Depcik

(B.A., Gallaudet University; M. Div., Ss. Cyril and Methodius Seminary; M.A., Gallaudet University)

Bridget Mitchell

(B.A., M.A.T.E.S.O.L., Madonna University)

Mary Ann DeVos

(B.S., Eastern Michigan University; M.Ed., Lewis and Clark College)

Barbara Hinson

(B.A., University of North Florida)

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(B.A., American University; M.A., Gallaudet University)

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