

I am writing to respectfully request that American Sign Language (ASL) courses be reclassified from Area V to Area II in the academic curriculum.

As you are aware, Area II is designated for fine arts and humanities and includes other foreign languages. ASL is a fully developed, natural language with its own grammar, syntax, and cultural context—distinct from English. Contrary to a common misconception, ASL is not simply English conveyed through hand signs. Linguists have long recognized it as a unique language.

The Alabama State Department of Education has already approved ASL as a credit-bearing foreign language at the secondary education level. Furthermore, the University of Alabama recently updated its course catalog to classify ASL under Area II. Many other states have acknowledged ASL as fulfilling the foreign language requirement for a Bachelor of Arts degree for decades, including the state where I grew up.

Personally, learning ASL has profoundly impacted my life. It has helped me secure employment, allowed me to assist others in communication, and even led me to one of my closest friendships. It also inspired my advocacy for the Deaf community and broadened my understanding of Deaf culture.

Motivated by my own experience, I encouraged my college-aged son—currently a student at the University of South Alabama—to take ASL. However, I was surprised to discover that ASL did not fulfill his Area II requirements. Like many students, he could not afford the time or cost of taking additional courses outside of his required curriculum. I suspect this barrier may deter many other students from pursuing ASL, despite interest.

While enrollment numbers may currently be modest, I strongly believe that reclassifying ASL to Area II would increase student participation. When students see that the course fulfills a core requirement, particularly the two-year foreign language requirement, enrollment is likely to grow.

Currently, ASL is listed under Area V for the Troy University Interpreter Training Program. While this classification makes sense for interpreting majors, it overlooks the broader applicability of ASL across various disciplines. Proficiency in ASL is a valuable asset in numerous professional fields, including healthcare, education, social work, counseling, law enforcement, emergency services, business, and customer service. Graduates with ASL skills are more competitive in the job market and are better equipped to serve diverse populations.

For these reasons, I urge you to consider reclassifying ASL courses to Area II to reflect its status as a world language and to increase accessibility and appeal to a broader student population.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration.



Heather Anderson
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