

**Strategic Decisions 2020  
Faculty and Staff  
Sign Communication Expectations Committee**

**FINAL REPORT**

**AUGUST 12, 2012**



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### Charge

This team will be activated fall 2011 to take the lead in addressing a critical area of Strategic Decisions 2020. This Committee will consist of two sub-groups: Staff and Faculty. Both sub-groups will review current communication assessment practices (the SLPI) and communication expectations and requirements for both groups of employees and make recommendations to the NTID Administrative Council (NAC).

More specifically, the Staff sub-group will determine minimal levels of required sign language skills for exempt and non-exempt staff and the required timelines for achieving those levels, and will review the effectiveness of existing incentive policies regarding sign language skills, including the continuation of pay incentives related to SLPI results. With regard to faculty, the sub-group will review and evaluate the appropriateness of existing policies regarding expectations and requirements for sign language communication.

This team will address the following SD 2020 goals:

**C3, Communication, p. 20 of the SD 2020 document, 'Faculty, Staff and Students' Commitment to Continuous Learning'.**

"All faculty, staff and students within the NTID community are expected and encouraged to continuously increase their skill and versatility in communicating with one another in diverse situations. Versatility includes skills and strategies in both ASL and English (written and spoken), and the use of access services and technologies to facilitate communication. The choice of communication strategies will vary depending on the skills of the communicator and the audience. The expectation is that communication skills and flexibility will continue to develop over time, throughout the span of an individual course, a student's college experience, and an faculty or staff member's professional career"

**C6, Communication, p. 21 – 22 of the SD 2020 document, 'Communication Expectations for Faculty and Staff'.**

*Faculty:*

"For tenure and promotion, the expectation regarding sign language competency will continue to be the *Advanced* skill level, with *Intermediate Plus* skill level acceptable only if there is clear evidence of sustained effort and progress towards the Advanced level.

Individuals in lecturer positions will have the same expectations and timelines for sign language proficiency as individuals in tenure-track positions.

*Staff (Non-exempt and Exempt):*

An implementation team will be established immediately to determine:

- Minimal levels of required sign language skills and required timelines for achieving them (determined according to specific job responsibilities);
- Institutional resources required to optimally support staff in achieving these required levels and timelines, and a determination as to how existing support mechanisms and strategies can be improved in this regard;
- Effectiveness of existing incentive policies regarding the development of sign language skills by staff, and if determined to be ineffective, what changes are needed; and
- Implications of this additional requirement regarding sign language skill for NTID staff salary schedules in comparison with RIT-wide staff salary schedules”

The staff and faculty sub-groups of this Committee will perform the following tasks and make recommendations to the NAC:

**A. Staff:**

- Review existing procedures for evaluating sign language communication skills at NTID, including use of the SLPI, and investigate the feasibility of using additional assessment tools as options.
- Clarify and determine minimal levels of required sign language skills, according to the Sign Language Proficiency Interview (SLPI) for various job functions, and the required timelines and resources for achieving them.
- Assess the effectiveness of existing incentive policies regarding sign language skill level according to the SLPI, including the continuation of pay incentives as related to SLPI results.

**B. Faculty:**

- Review and evaluate existing policies regarding expectations and requirements for sign language communication, particularly for tenure and promotion. Use the 1991 NTID Steering Committee on Communication report and recommendations, and the 2011 Final Report of the Communication Task Force Five-Year Review Committee for reference, found online at: <http://www.ntid.rit.edu/president/academic-affairs/communication>

Special consideration should be given to section D: Communication Skill Development, and Section E: Administrative Procedures.

- Review existing procedures for evaluating sign language communication skills at NTID, including use of the SLPI, and investigate the feasibility of using additional assessment tools as options.

**Committee Membership:**

- Two co-chairs; four faculty members; four staff members
- Faculty sub-group: One co-chair and four faculty members
- Staff sub-group: One co-chair and four staff members

**Consultants:**

- Dr. Kim Kurz, Chair, ASLIE
- Geoff Poor, Coordinator, SLPI
- Larry Scott, Chair, Communication Studies
- Dr. Rico Peterson, Assistant Dean, Access Services

**Timeline:**

- Submit a draft of recommendations report to the NAC by March, 2012
- Provide opportunity for faculty/staff review and give feedback by April 2012
- Working with the NTID Student Congress and Student Assembly, establish student focus groups. Work with these groups to: a) understand their expectations of faculty and staff communication skills, and b) review and provide feedback on the draft of the revised communication expectations for faculty and staff.
- Submit recommendations to the NAC by May 2012
- Review by NAC and final decisions by the President of NTID
- Implementation beginning academic year 2012-2013

## COMMITTEE MEMBERS

### STAFF



**Rick Postl, Co-Chair**  
Enrollment Management



**Chris Campbell**  
Access Services



**Melisa DiDomenico**  
Communication Studies  
& Services



**Clare Dygert**  
Educational Design  
Resources

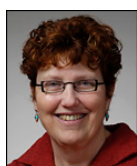


**Rocco Saccente**  
Information Services

### Faculty



**Peter Hauser, Co-Chair**  
American Sign Language  
& Interpreter Education



**Susan Foster**  
Research &  
Teacher Education



**Elissa Olsen**  
Information &  
Computing Studies



**Susan Lane-Outlaw**  
Secondary Education



**Aaron Kelstone**  
Cultural & Creative Studies

## **COMMITTEE PROCESS**

1. Committee met for two hours two times a week for two quarters.
2. Committee decided to work together as a group rather than to split into faculty and staff subgroups as suggested by the charge.
3. Committee met with the following consultants:
  - Cliff Edington, RIT Human Resources
  - Bernard R. Hurwitz, Executive Assistant to the NTID President
  - Kim Brown-Kurz, Chair, American Sign Language and Interpreting Education
  - Richard “Rico” Peterson, Assistant Dean & Director, NTID Access Services
  - Lawrence Scott, Chair, Communication Studies and Services
  - Geoff Poor, Coordinator, Office of Communication Assessment Services
  - Barbara Ray Holcomb and Beldev Kaur Khalsa, Faculty and Staff Sign Language Education Program (FSSLEP) coordinators
4. Committee developed preliminary recommendations and shared them with the following focus groups:
  - Student Leaders
  - Staff Assistants
  - NTID representatives on RIT Staff council
  - NTID Faculty Council
  - FSSLEP Instructors
  - NTID Chairs
  - NTID Managers
5. Committee modified recommendations based on feedback from focus groups and presented the updated recommendations at three open forums.
6. Final report was developed based on feedback from the open forums.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The key aim is for NTID faculty and staff to communicate successfully and appropriately across a variety of settings and events with students, colleagues, and university guests. This is only possible if the Institute values this aim, invests in it, develops communication expectations, fosters evidence-based successful sign language instruction, and evaluates and monitors the communicative climate. The 10 members of this SD2020 Sign Communication Expectations Committee recognized five major tenets that were necessary to realize in order to proceed with the committee's charge:

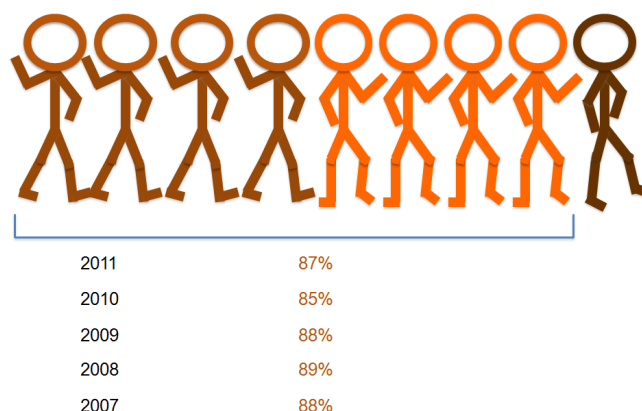
- NTID is a niche institution of higher education. What is standard practice may not always work here.
- NTID faculty and staff are responsible for developing ASL fluency within what is offered by the institution and beyond what is offered by the institution.
- Faculty and staff work across a wide variety of routine and dynamic communication environments. ASL fluency expectations need to be established in accordance with essential work functions while one needs to aim for maximum communication fluency.
- NTID will always be a place of communication negotiations given the wide communication continuum among students, faculty, staff and visitors.
- Deaf, hard of hearing, and hearing people are members of the NTID community and are dependent on each other. Everyone is responsible for the community's communication successes and failures.

The committee adopted the definition of American Sign Language (ASL) as introduced by the 1992 Strategic Plan Committee and recognized in Strategic Decisions 2020 that ASL is a natural language that often presents itself in English-speaking environments in *“the range of form from meaning-based, English-like signing with ASL features to more purely structured American Sign Language.”* Everyone who signs at NTID uses American Sign Language, not, for example, *French* Sign Language (LSQ) or *Mexican* Sign Language (LSM). We are pointing this out because through the committee's interactions with others in focus groups and forums, there appeared to be some misunderstandings that only a small minority of the NTID signers only uses ASL. Here, again, we adopted the NTID definition of ASL and when the term ASL is used in this report, we are referring to the *signed* language used at NTID. Our faculty, staff, and students have different degrees of ASL fluency and know different ASL sign variations and dialects. It is the degree of individual fluency and negotiations in communication (“code-switching”) that enhances the understandability and fluidity of ASL among communicators of ASL.

Over the past five years, the communication demographics of all of NTID's entering students (including cross-registered students) has been mixed with between 85% - 89% of the students using sign according to the NTID Language Communication Background Questionnaire (LCBQ). Of that group, approximately half use sign with speech. While between 11% - 15% use speech alone, it has been reported by a number of NTID community members in the focus groups and forums that most of these



students learn how to sign before they graduate. It can be said that the majority of NTID students use ASL as defined by the 1992 Strategic Planning Committee.



**Figure 1.** Percentage of entering students who use ASL

Sign communication has been an issue at NTID for generations. This committee reviewed prior committee and task force documents related to this topic (see Appendix for a full list of documents reviewed). The committee was impressed with the efforts prior committees placed on trying to improve faculty and staff sign skills to enhance their communication with colleagues and students. This committee found all prior recommendations appropriate. The committee believes that the reason NTID continues to have communication issues is because not all of the recommendations of previous committees and task forces were adopted or followed.

Our charge was to evaluate current faculty and staff sign expectations and make a determination concerning the effectiveness of the SLPI bonus incentive. The committee met with the consultants listed in the Process section, the focus groups, and the NTID community through three different forums. Based on the information gathered, the committee members determined that: (a) *faculty sign expectations needs to be raised*; (b) *a new set of sign expectations for staff needs to be established*; and, (c) *the staff SLPI bonus incentive needs to be discontinued*. Committee members came to the realization that we could not come up with informed recommendations without taking a hard look at the steps required to implement our recommendations. The committee identified what will be necessary to implement a successful oversight process that nurtures everyone's development needs in a supportive atmosphere.

The committee has four main recommendations regarding: (a) new expected ASL skills; (b) new ASL training; (c) new ASL development assessment and monitoring; and, (d) new hiring practices. These recommendations are to be implemented for new hires. The new ASL training program shall be beneficial to both new hires and current employees. Existing employees may begin their "clock" to meet the expectations as if they were just hired, depending on the department chair or manager. All employees who have not met the ASL skill expectations must monitor their skill development and be evaluated annually. All employees who have met ASL skill expectations shall assist the community by serving as mentors, hosting workshops, or informal events to foster others' sign language development.

We believe that by following the main and sub recommendations in this report, NTID's faculty and staff will have better ASL skills by the year 2020. However, the committee *strongly feels* that new sign skill expectations *should not* be implemented until NTID has a way to assist faculty and staff to be able to achieve the desired ASL competency. The committee found that NTID is currently *not* allocating enough resources to help faculty and staff to meet the current sign expectations. Developing and maintaining effective ASL skills is a NTID CORE VALUE that needs to be supported. The committee recognizes that the implementation of these recommendations will not be successful without unified Institute support.

NTID faculty and staff who were hired with No Functional Skills and who are effective signers have reported in the focus groups and forums that the key to their success was the effort they placed *outside of the classroom* interacting with their deaf colleagues. NTID faculty and staff should become aware of opportunities within and beyond the RIT/NTID campus for learning ASL and enhance interactions with deaf and hard of hearing people. This would happen more frequently if developing and maintaining effective ASL skills is a NTID Core Value.

A point from an earlier document bears repeating: "Effort must be made to ensure that every department has a mix of constituencies that are deaf and hearing. This will create daily opportunities to use and improve sign skills at work" (NTID Staff Communication Sub-Group of Steering Committee on Communication, 1997). NTID needs to continue to hire more deaf and hard of hearing employees. The growth of a critical mass of signers at NTID and having ASL skill development a core value will help NTID to become a more comfortable communication environment for deaf individuals, students, colleagues, and visitors, and will further help NTID achieve its primary mission by year 2020.

## RECOMMENDATION A: NEW EXPECTED ASL SKILLS

### Recommendation A1: Raise ASL skill expectations for faculty

Currently, 56% of NTID's tenured faculty have an SLPI rating of at least Advanced. The committee believes that the "Intermediate Plus with effort" was supposed to be used infrequently and only when it appears promising that a faculty member will soon achieve Advanced skills. However, it appears that this level of ASL skills has become an acceptable level. The committee recommends for Advanced to be the expected level for tenure and promotion to Associate Professor or Senior Lecture. New faculty who do not have ASL fluency are given the rank of a lecturer. They must achieve Intermediate skills before they can be promoted to Assistant Professor and to be on the tenure track. We propose for lecturers to have a maximum of two years to achieve Intermediate sign skills. Assistant professors who are hired with Intermediate sign skills should have a maximum of three years to achieve Advanced skills (e.g., total of 5 years from No Functional Sign skills to Advanced). The NTID Faculty and Staff Sign Language Program (FSSLEP) and NTID Office of Communication Assessment Services confirmed that the proposed ASL expectations and timeline are reasonable.

**Table 1**

*Current ASL Skill Expectations and Proposed Expectations*

Professors	Lecturers	CURRENT ASL Expectations	PROPOSED ASL Expectations	PROPOSED Timeline to Achieve
Tenure and Promotion to Associate Professor	Principal Lecturer	Advanced or Intermediate Plus with effort	Advanced	
	Senior Lecturer	Advanced or Intermediate Plus with effort	Advanced	3 Years
Assistant Professor		Intermediate at time of appointment	Advanced	3 Years
	Lecturer	Intermediate	Intermediate	2 Years

### Recommendation A2: New ASL skill expectations for staff

The 1997 NTID Staff Communication Sub-Group of Steering Committee on Communication established communication expectations for staff according to employee type (General Staff, non-teaching Professional Staff, Teaching Professional Staff). We found that these categories for staff were inadequate for describing sign expectations. For example, "General Staff" includes NTID admission counselors and Student Life Team staff while their sign expectations needs to be beyond "Survival Plus" as recommended by the 1997 Committee. The committee agreed that it does not make

sense to have different communication expectations using these classifications therefore we developed new ASL skill expectation categories for staff.

The committee developed a matrix that classified positions by the amount of contact an individual in a position would typically have with deaf colleagues and students, and how “important” that contact would be (see Table 2). For example, a programmer who works by himself, and who has no supervisory responsibilities would be classified as “Low Contact, Low Stakes.” A department chair, who would have frequent contact with students, and deaf colleagues would be considered “High Contact, High Stakes.” The targeted skill levels shown below are minimum levels, with the expectation that one will aim for maximum ASL fluency.

The committee recommends for Department Chairs, Directors, Managers, and the NTID Administrative Council representatives, for example, to be in the Level A staff category. These members of the NTID community make decisions for deaf people and decisions regarding their education and future regularly. It will be important for these employees to be able to communicate with all members of the community. There are deaf Chairs, Directors, Managers, and Administrators (all High Contact/High Stakes). and they need to be able to communicate with each other (deaf and hearing) at ease. Deaf employees need to be able to communicate effectively with these administrators. Other Level A employees would include for example, Admissions Counselors and Student Life Team staff.

The committee recommends Level B expectations for employees such as Audiologists, Speech-Language Pathologists, and Senior Staff Specialists. Level C expectations would be appropriate for employees such as C-Print Captionists, Developers, Engineers, and Technicians. The committee realized that they are not familiar with every NTID position and determined that it would be best for the administrators and immediate supervisors to determine the expected staff category for their employees. As mentioned in the 4<sup>th</sup> recommendation, the staff ASL expectations category for new hires should be determined before the search process.

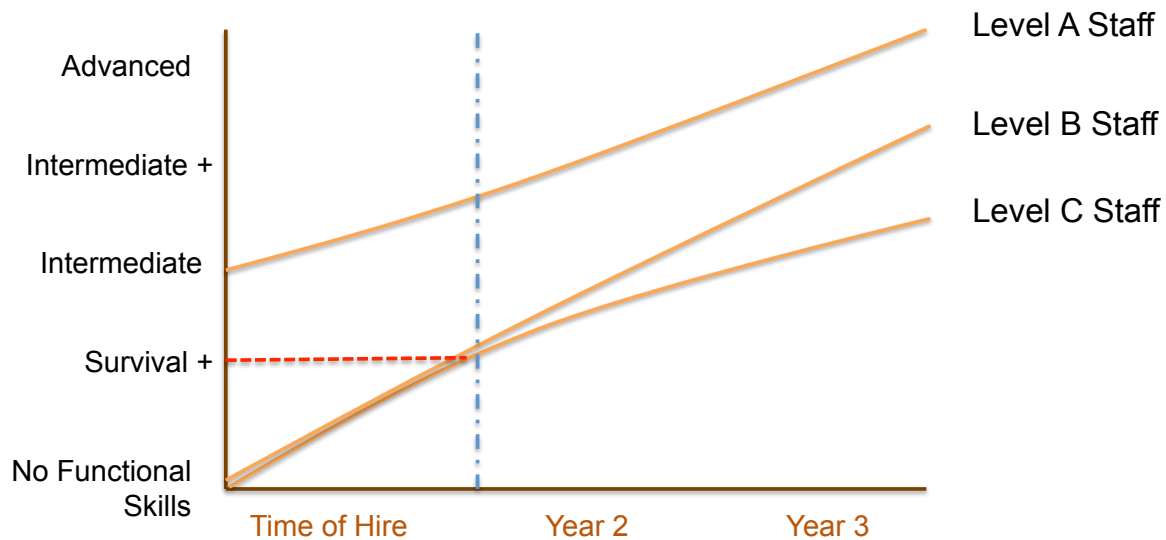
**Table 2**

*Proposed Staff Categories, ASL Expectations, and Timeline*

Staff Category	Definition	PROPOSED ASL Expectations	PROPOSED Timeline to Achieve
Level A	High Contact High Stakes	Advanced (Intermediate required at time of hire)	3 Years
Level B	Moderate Contact Moderate Stakes	Intermediate Plus	3 Years
Level C	Low Contact Low Stakes	Intermediate	3 Years

The Committee has determined that consistent participation in three (3) years of ASL training plans can be a reasonable timeline to achieve mastery within one’s categorical ASL fluency expectations. As mentioned in the next section, FSSLEP will develop separate three-year curriculums for each of the three staff levels. The NTID

Faculty and Staff Sign Language Program (FSSLEP) and NTID Office of Communication Assessment Services confirmed that the proposed ASL expectations and timeline are reasonable.



**Figure 2.** Staff ASL Development Timeline

**Recommendation A3: Survival Plus expected for all new signers after 1 year of hire**

NTID does not have a way to determine if applicants with No Functional Sign skills have the appropriate sign language aptitude. The committee therefore recommends that 1-year contracts to be given to new hires who are lecturers or staff with Level B or C ASL expectations. Contracts should not be renewed if the new hires do not achieve at least Survival Plus by the end of their first year of employment (see Figure 2). OCAS and FSSLEP confirmed to the committee that this expectation is reasonable. Training employees how to sign is an expensive enterprise and requires employees to take time away from their primary duties. NTID should not be expected to continue to support the sign language development of employees who cannot achieve Survival Plus after one year of commitment.

## **RECOMMENDATION B: NEW ASL TRAINING**

The mission of the Faculty and Staff Sign Language Education Program (FSSLEP) is to support the faculty and staff of NTID and RIT in the development of skills and knowledge in American Sign Language (ASL) and Deaf culture. This is accomplished through offering a comprehensive curriculum of courses, seminars, and other learning experiences that lead to competency and ability to communicate and work with Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing students and colleagues. The committee believes that the FSSLEP mission is appropriate. Unfortunately, the FSSLEP coordinators and instructors have reported to the committee that they do not have enough resources to currently support their mission.

### **Recommendation B1: Establish action committee to plan, evaluate and revise FSSLEP**

A committee needs to be formed during AY 2012-2013 to revise FSSLEP and develop curriculums for faculty, Level A staff, Level B staff, and Level C staff. Level C and B staff shall share the same curriculum during the first year. Level A staff and faculty will share some of the same curriculum. More FTE's will be necessary to improve FSSLEP as it has been reported that they do not have enough FTE's to currently achieve FSSLEP's mission. The new FSSLEP curriculums shall be initiated during AY 2013-2014 and evaluated and revised frequently over the next three years. The curriculums shall be finalized by AY 2016-2017.

### **Recommendation B2: Classrooms shall be available for FSSLEP in advance**

FSSLEP personnel reports that some of the struggles are due to availability of classroom, timely announcement of such offerings, for example, a classroom is not confirmed until after the second week of each quarter and may be unavailable necessitating the change of instruction time and resulting into enrollment variance. FSSLEP shall have dedicated or guaranteed classrooms available to be able to meet the needs of different NTID employee's schedules. FSSLEP shall have the classrooms available for the whole quarter or semester.

### **Recommendation B3: Establishment of a faculty and staff sign language learning laboratory and tutoring center**

Not all of the staff who take FSSLEP courses have access to a personal computer at work (or at home). Often, faculty and staff need to miss sign language classes because of conflicting priorities. The establishment of a Sign Language Learning Laboratory and Tutoring Center would solve these two problems. The Center would consist of similar computerized sign language exercises that are available for ASL credit courses. The Center would be available for all NTID employees who would like to invest additional time in their sign language development. This Center could also provide remote web-based sign language exercises that NTID employees could use at their desk if they

have their own computer. The Center could also provide remote tutoring using videoconferencing technologies (e.g., Skype, iChat).

#### **Recommendation B4: Establishment of intensive summer and winter programs**

The RIT Provost offers an intensive summer sign language program for non-NTID employees. A similar program needs to be developed for NTID employees as well as one that could be offered in the Winter between semesters.

#### **Recommendation B5: Discontinue the SLPI bonus incentive and establish “floating” staff to assist departments while their staff attend sign classes**

The funds for the SLPI bonus incentive has been cut by the NTID President during the Fall of 2011. The committee felt that the bonus incentive was not effective and should be discontinued. The committee also felt that learning ASL should be a core value of all NTID employees therefore incentives should not be used. The committee wants to see the remaining funds from the former SLPI bonus incentive to be used in a way that it continues to support staff sign language development. Many of the NTID staff reported during the focus groups and forums that they have difficulty attending FSSLEP classes because they cannot leave their desk. One idea the committee had was for NTID to hire part-time “floaters” who would be recent NTID retirees who have already been trained on Oracle, Kronos, and RIT/NTID policy and procedures. These “floaters” would be familiar with a specific department or departments’ practices. While the use of such “floaters,” would not be the same as having the permanent employee at his or her desk, the use of “floaters” shall make it somewhat easier for staff to attend FSSLEP classes without compromising their department duties.

## **RECOMMENDATION C: NEW ASL DEVELOPMENT ASSESSMENT AND MONITORING**

### **Recommendation C1: Develop a better infrastructure for recruiting, utilizing and maintaining OCAS raters**

OCAS conducts approximately 50 to 90 SLPI evaluations annually. It has been reported by OCAS that it is a challenge to find available interviewers and raters for the SLPI and it is difficult for the office to handle the increasing demand for the evaluations. Many of the SLPI raters are also FSSLEP instructors or ASLIE faculty and are only able to contribute a small percentage of their time to OCAS. OCAS has received requests for Classroom Sign Language Assessment (CLA) and such requests have now been denied as there are no available raters for CLA. It was clear to the committee that OCAS needs to be evaluated to determine how the office can recruit, utilize, and maintain raters more effectively. The committee sees a need for significantly more SLPI (and CLA) evaluations to take place in the near future as the recommendations of this committee are adopted by the institute. It will be important to evaluate and monitor the effectiveness of such recommendations.

### **Recommendation C2: Develop and adopt new ASL competency measures**

The committee believes that the SLPI is probably the most accurate test available nowadays for the evaluation of conversational sign skills. There are other measures of ASL competency that have been developed in laboratories but are not commercially available (see Singleton & Supalla, 2011<sup>1</sup>). The Deaf Studies Laboratory at NTID is currently developing three new ASL assessment instruments. The tests in development are partially funded by the National Science Foundation, National Institute of Health (NIDCD), and the NTID Departments of American Sign Language and Interpreter Education, Research and Teacher Education, and Creative Cultural Studies. Peter Hauser, Joe Bochner, Vince Samar, Cindy Sanders, and JMatt Searls are currently studying the psychometrics of these three tests along with the SLPI as a measure of NTID faculty, staff, and hearing students' sign language skills. The SLPI should be supplemented with additional tests as they become available.

NTID currently has two other forms of sign language evaluations: the Classroom Sign Language Assessment (CLA) and the Group Communication Observation Tool (GCOT). These instruments shall continue to be used. The SLPI and three other tests in development measure ASL competency but not one's ability to communicate in the classroom or in groups. The SLA and GCOT provide this type of information. Both should be utilized as a part of relevant employee's ASL development portfolio.

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<sup>1</sup> Singleton, J. & Supalla, S. J. (2011). Assessing children's proficiency in natural signed languages. In M. Marschark & P. E. Spencer (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Deaf Studies, Language, and Education* (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed, pp. 306-319). New York: Oxford University Press.



### Recommendation C3: Require separate questions about faculty ASL receptive and comprehension skills on the Student Rating Survey

During the student focus group, students discussed how the SRS does not have separate required questions about employees' receptive and comprehension sign skills. The committee therefore recommends for there to be two **required** questions on the SRS, one addressing receptive skills and one addressing comprehension skills.

### Recommendation C4: Require evaluation at time of employment and annually until expected ASL skill level achieved

It is prudent that new hires take the SLPI within the first month of employment to achieve a baseline for future measurements. This expectation will be documented in the hire letter and followed through by the immediate supervisor or department head in the Plan of Work to ensure that the new incumbent is clearly aware of expectations and has a plan in effect as part of the new employee orientation training. Employees' sign evaluations will be centralized and shared with the employee's supervisor. The evaluation results will also become a part of the employee's language development portfolio.



The LinguaFolio is a document in which those who are learning or have learned a language at school or outside of school can record and reflect on their language learning and cultural experiences. It is a tool that should accompany language learning throughout life and is suitable for documenting language abilities for various uses.

#### LinguaFolio consists of three parts:

##### 1) Language Passport

The Passport is an overview of your experiences and ability with different languages. It records formal qualifications and diplomas as well as self assessments and can be updated frequently.

The Passport includes

- a summary of language learning and intercultural experiences or language courses outside of school
- summer study, academies, or camps
- contact with speakers of the language
- a self-assessment grid and global scale
- a linguistic profile

##### 2) Language Biography

The Biography is a record of your personal language learning history that helps to evaluate your learning goals and to reflect on your language learning and cultural experiences.

The Biography includes

- learning goals—why you are learning language(s) and which language skills are most important to you
- language history—list of language learning experiences and dates
- significant language learning and intercultural experiences
- current linguistic priorities including self-assessment checklist

##### 3) Dossier

The Dossier is a collection of samples of work and certificates chosen by you to document and illustrate your language skills, experiences, and achievements. It can be used to demonstrate your language abilities to others.

The Dossier includes

- samples of written work and projects
- certificates that indicate language skills
- video and/or audio recordings
- reports from tutors

#### LinguaFolio is intended to

- encourage the learning of all languages
- emphasize the value of knowing many languages—plurilingualism and pluriculturalism
- contribute to global understanding
- promote autonomous learning and the ability to assess one's skills
- facilitate articulation among language programs based on a clear and commonly accepted description of language proficiency (high school to university, or transfer of students within school districts)
- serve as a tool to assess language learning
- recognize and value heritage languages
- promote language learning as a lifelong endeavor

#### LinguaFolio helps learners

- evaluate and describe their language proficiency in clear and simple terms
- document and reflect on their language learning inside and outside school and on their intercultural experiences
- inform others about their proficiency in different languages (when changing schools, starting a language course, participating in an exchange program, applying for a job)
- set personal language learning objectives and map out ways to achieve them (cultivating community experiences, listening to music, using the Web)

#### LinguaFolio helps educators, schools, and other institutions

- recognize the needs and motivation of learners and to help them set learning goals
- develop programs based on learner strengths and needs
- obtain information about the learners' previous experiences with languages
- evaluate and document performance in a variety of ways
- connect US standards and performance guidelines to the internationally accepted Common European Framework of Reference for Languages
- describe their language programs and produce evidence of language learning experiences

#### LinguaFolio helps businesses and community employers

- acknowledge language proficiency of their employees or job applicants and utilize better their language abilities

**Figure 3.** Description of eLinguaFolio. Source: Virginia Department of Education. (2004, May). *LinguaFolio*.

**Recommendation C5: Require employees to monitor ASL skill development using eLinguaFolio**

The Committee recommends that all faculty and staff, who have not attained their expected ASL skills, develop and maintain language portfolios (also referred to as eLinguaFolios) to demonstrate evidence of progress towards learning ASL (see Figure 3). It is recommended that NTID adopt the use of LinguaFolios and make its employees accountable for keeping their LinguaFolios up to date until they meet their expected ASL communication skill level. There is a free, open-source application called eLinguaFolio that could be used to create and maintain language portfolios. More information could be found here: <http://elinguafolio.sourceforge.net>. Debbie Robinson from the National Council of State Supervisors for Languages (NCSSFL) that operates eLinguaFolio would be happy to assist NTID with the use of eLinguaFolio. She can be reached at 614-863-0973.

**Recommendation C6: Office of Vice President of Academic Affairs made accountable for monitoring all NTID employee's ASL skill development**

Originally, the committee was working with the SD2020 Professional Development Committee, to recommend the establishment of a centralized office for tracking NTID employee's sign language development progress. This office would oversee eLinguaFolio, keep track of SLPI and other test scores, and provide annual reports to supervisors about their employee's progress towards sign expectations. The committee recommends for this effort to be centralized because through the focus groups and forums the committee learned that employees' sign expectations varied depending on their supervisor. Centralizing the monitoring of employee's sign language development will help NTID monitor the progress institute-wide. At the time of this report, it appeared that NTID will not be developing an Office of Professional Development. Therefore, the committee recommends for the Office of the Vice President of Academic Affairs to be accountable for monitoring all NTID employee's ASL skill development. The office shall provide annual reports to supervisors and engage in, for example, Personal Improvement Plans with employees who have not been making appropriate progress towards meeting the sign expectations.

## **RECOMMENDATION D: NEW HIRING PRACTICES**

### **Recommendation D1: Describe ASL skill expectations on all job posts**

Tenure-track faculty positions, for example, should state that Advanced ASL skills are preferred and would be required after 3 years of employment. The administration, department head and/or search committee shall decide staff positions' ASL skill expectations (Level A, B, or C) prior to the posting of the position. Level A staff position applicants will be required to have at least Intermediate ASL skills and Advanced will be preferred and required after 3 years of employment. Level A and B staff positions shall state that Intermediate and Intermediate Plus (respectively) is preferred and required after 3 years of employment and Survival Plus required after 1 year of employment. Expectations of sign language proficiency should continue to be clear at the time of hire and stated in the hire letter.

### **Recommendation D2: Evaluate applicants' ASL skills**

Search committees should consist of both individuals who can evaluate applicants' content knowledge as well as individuals who can evaluate applicants' sign language skills and knowledge about working with deaf individuals. A written evaluation of each candidate's current sign language skill, and potential for future skill development will be a part of the search process. When appropriate, such as for Level A staff positions and tenure-track faculty positions, formal testing should occur during the application process (SLPI or other tests that NTID adopts).

### **Recommendation D3: Balance specialized skills and knowledge with ASL skills**

It is important to find individuals with both subject-matter expertise and communication skills. In practice, these kinds of candidates are difficult to find. Candidates with subject matter expertise, or sign language skill can be located, but seldom both are found. Essentially, both are critically important. Search committees and NTID need to realize that it is an expensive commitment to hire new or non-signers. NTID needs to ensure that it has enough financial resources to invest in new or non-signers' sign language development before offering employment to these individuals.

### **Recommendation D4: Take into consideration ASL skills when determining base pay**

The committee recommends that ASL fluency be among the variables considered in the computation of one's pay at time of hire within the market band continuum of one's pay grade. The committee is not stipulating that a specific pay percentage is assigned to ASL fluency but for ASL fluency to be considered among the marketable values in determining one's pay. It is also believed that annual appraisals offers opportunities for tying pay increases to ASL fluency, among other merit adjustment criterion.

## **FIVE-YEAR PLAN**

### **AY 2012 – 2013**

- Use new ASL assessment tools on trial basis
- Faculty and Staff who have not met the ASL expectations shall include commitment to ASL development in their
- Initiate *LinguaFolio* for new hires, optional for current employees; evaluate feasibility and efficiency
- Implementation Committee for FSSLEP restructure and curricula
- Action Committee for staff position sign categories and hiring practices
- Centralize NTID employees' ASL development monitoring within the Office of Professional Development
- Evaluate all NTID employees ASL skills to establish baselines

### **AY 2013 – 2016**

- Initiate, revise, and evaluate new FSSLEP structure and curriculum
- Initiate use of *E-LinguaFolio* for all employees who have not met expectations
- Adopt new ASL assessment tools that are found to be psychometrically sound

### **AY 2017**

- New Committee to review faculty and staff ASL skill expectations, hiring, training and evaluation. Baseline and growth data will be provided for evaluation.

### **By AY 2020**

- FSSLEP effectively assists NTID faculty and staff achieve their ASL skill development within expected timelines.
- At least 80 percent of all NTID faculty and staff have met the ASL skill expectations for their position.
- Everyone will be happy

**Appendix: Past Works Regarding Communication Expectations at NTID**

Caccamise, Frank. (2005, January). *NTID Faculty/Staff Communication Research Group (F/SCRG) Final Report*. National Technical Institute for the Deaf, Rochester, NY.

Caccamise, Frank & Samar, Vince. (2008, April). *NTID Faculty and Professional Staff, Sign Language Skills Development Study: Steps and Materials*. National Technical Institute for the Deaf, Rochester, NY.

Communication Task Force. (1989, May 15). *Recommendations to the Dean, NTID For Institute Expectations and Guidelines for Faculty Communication Skill Development*. National Technical Institute for the Deaf, Rochester, NY.

Communication Task Force Five-Year Review Committee. (2001, February 16). *Final Report of the Communication Task Force Five-Year Review Committee*. National Technical Institute for the Deaf, Rochester, NY.

Hurwitz, T. Alan. (2003, April 30). *Memo: Working Definition for Effective Communication*. National Technical Institute for the Deaf, Rochester, NY.

Newell, William & Caccamise, Frank. (2007, December). *SLPI Information #2: What is the SLPI Rating Scale?* National Technical Institute for the Deaf, Rochester, NY.

NTID Staff Communication Sub-Group of Steering Committee on Communication. (1997, April 24). *Recommendations to the Dean of NTID for Institute Communication Expectations for General and Professional Staff and Educational Development Faculty*. National Technical Institute for the Deaf, Rochester, NY.