Attachment to the February 23 Graduate Council agenda

Request to Have American Sign Language Used to Satisfy the Second Language Requirement for the MA Degree

Rationale:

■ ASL is a comprehensive linguistic system. The Linguistic Society of American states that “sign languages used by deaf communities are full-fledged languages with all the structural characteristics and range of expression of spoken languages.”

■ According to the Modern Language Association, American Sign Language (ASL) ranks fourth, after Spanish, French and German, in total student enrollments in U.S. institutions of Higher Education.

■ The Oregon State Board of Education passed a recommendation to accept ASL as satisfying the language requirement in Oregon’s public schools. The minutes of the Board meeting of February 20th, 1998 included the following language in the section Admission Policy for 1999-2000 Academic Year:

All Institutions: two years of same high school-level second language or two terms of a college-level second language or acceptable performance on approved assessment options. American Sign Language (ASL) is acceptable in meeting the second language requirement. Second language requirement applies to transfer students graduating from high school in 1997 and thereafter.

■ On April 18, 2003, the Oregon University System approved requirements for the Associate of Science/Oregon Transfer Degree in Business (AS/OT Business). The language is as follows:

Transfer Status
Any student who holds Associate of Science/Oregon Transfer in Business (AS/OT-Bus) conforms to the guidelines set forth herein, and who transfers to any institution in the Oregon University System, will have met the lower-division general education requirements of that institution's baccalaureate degree programs. Students transferring with this degree will have junior standing for registration purposes.
For transfer students graduating from high school in 1997 and thereafter, the Oregon University System has a second language admission requirement: two terms of a college-level second language with an average grade of C- or above, OR two years of the same high school-level second language with an average grade of C- or above, OR satisfactory performance on an approved second language assessment of proficiency. Demonstrated proficiency in American Sign Language meets this second language admission requirement.

■ OSU accepts ASL as satisfying the second language entrance requirement.

■ Over 150 United States universities accept ASL in fulfillment of second language requirements for the Bachelor of Arts degree, including Portland State University, Western Oregon University, and the University of Oregon. Now is the time for Oregon State University to join our sister institutions in recognizing ASL as satisfying the degree requirement for foreign (second) language competence.