Deaf & Hard of Hearing - Letter to Faculty 03-19-2020

Dear Faculty,

The below offers some thoughts on best practices to consider when planning to teach Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH) students now and in the future. SAS advice falls into two primary formats, Synchronous and Asynchronous classes.

Synchronous classes:

Synchronous classes will require Marymount to offer ASL and CART in real time (as the instruction is happening). These services are expensive, and available resources may become less available as the demand for online service provision increases.

Classes occurring in real time have the obvious advantage of allowing students to engage the instructor as the course is happening. If faculty choose to record each of their live classes and download them into the cloud (as in the case of using Zoom), then students will have access to a written transcript. This practice will alleviate the need to assign note-takers for all students, including those with disabilities.

In terms of DHH services, **SAS has already contacted all previously scheduled communication access service providers, both ASL and CART providers, to move forward with the understanding that synchronous classes will continue.** Given the interpreters' time has already been scheduled to support existing class schedules in which ASL or CART services were requested, faculty will only need to ensure that interpreters can access their online format.

Faculty will need to share their course information directly with these ASL and CART providers so that the providers can have access to both video and audio, in their online classes, as they are happening live. The interpreters will then be able to provide real time communication access in either an ASL or CART format for the students who need this service.

**If faculty will *not* be holding classes at the previously scheduled days and times, please share this information with our office (SAS) as soon as possible, so that we can in-turn share the changes with the ASL & CART providers. Ideally, we will need as much advance notice (minimally 48 hours) to avoid paying for services we won't be receiving.

We do not anticipate adding any new ASL services this semester, so we are not detailing the current costs associated with this service. New CART may be requested, so we are sharing the following information. The cost for using CART providers is a minimum of $312.50 up to $720 for a two-hour class, depending on time-of day, how much advance notice was given to schedule, and if the subject matter is considered "specialized." Faculty should keep these costs in mind as they move forward, but should not let this determine how they opt to deliver quality classroom instruction to their students.

Faculty should plan their courses with the provision of ASL and CART services in mind and request needed services as early as possible, while remembering that Marymount does not have ASL or CART providers on staff. All communication access providers are secured through outside contractors and vendors. The availability of these contractors and vendors may decrease in the near future given the sudden increased demand for these services.

Asynchronous classes:

Asynchronous classes will require an accurate transcript to accompany all recorded information. This transcript can be automatically created via speech-to-text software in both Zoom and Panopto.

Faculty members have the ability to close caption their recorded material. Many use Zoom and or Panopto to accomplish this. Faculty can record a lecture on Zoom and save it into the cloud. This will create a delayed automated transcription which can be edited directly by the instructor to assure accuracy. The time for automated transcription typically takes a few hours. No third-party involvement (or expense) is required to support the transcription. Additionally, no need for arranging note takers is necessary since all recorded course sessions will be automatically transcribed, if the selected settings are configured to record.

After the recording and edited transcript are ready, faculty have the option to:

1. Download and place the recorded material into Canvas, or
2. Share the link directly with students.

We advise that students are given a window of time (minimally six hours) to view recorded lectures that are posted online. This will allow for students to view videos within normal waking hours keeping in mind that our students may be located across the country and internationally across various time zones.

We advise that students also be offered the option to submit questions and commentary on the lecture asynchronously. This student commentary could be offered in text or video formats. Alternatively, students could be placed into chat groups as per time their residential time zone, and encouraged to discuss amongst themselves.

Asynchronous classes with accurate transcripts eliminate the need to hire and pay for CART or ASL services. This is critically important because of the impending shortage of ASL and CART services as the entire higher education academic community is transitions into an online environment.

Our DHH population is small. We currently only have eight students who utilize these services. It is important to remember that these students have the option to enroll in any class Marymount offers. Therefore, all future classes should be accessible to all students, including our deaf and hearing-impaired students.

NOTE: Please consider that our disability access compliance obligation to provide accessible communication remains unchanged even in light of the current crisis. All universities and colleges have been expected to meet online compliance standards for many years now. Lack of movement, planning, and coordination to meet this requirement is unlikely to earn flexibility by compliance advocates and enforcers. In other words, faculty decisions going forward will have a significant impact upon how our access planning was taken into account as the entire university moves into an online environment. Please take this information into consideration as you develop online instruction. Thank you!

We are always available to answer your questions: access@marymount.edu.

Sincerely,

Sven Jones and Maureen Dour
Director and Learning Specialist - Access Services