**Stage 1: New Program Preliminary Proposal Review Form**

**Name of Proposed Program: \_\_\_\_\_Ph.D. in ASL and Deaf Studies\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Rationale**:

*Why is a Ph.D. in ASL and Deaf Studies important nationally, internationally, and/or to Gallaudet?*

The field of sign language education is on an important threshold of becoming a major presence in the field of foreign language education within the United States and Canada. While it is the fourth most taught language in colleges and universities, there is not a single Ph.D. program which prepares academics to assume leadership roles within the departments which offer ASL. Currently, most programs are staffed with instructors who possess an MA or with adjuncts who have nothing more than a BA degree. Notoriously, many ASL courses are taught be individuals who are far from possessing native-like skills in ASL. The result is the diminished capacity and quality of ASL programs throughout colleges and universities. This situation is nothing less than a crisis in the field of the fastest growing language in the United States. The single most important event in the history of ASL education is the founding of a Ph.D. program in ASL and Deaf Studies. This would allow for a new generation of academics equipped with the academic knowledge and skills necessary to develop top quality, professional ASL programs.

There is simply no question that this program should be the proud jewel of Gallaudet University. Given Gallaudet’s unique role,it would be natural to assume that the sole flagship institution would include a program devoted to the study of ASL and Deaf Studies at the doctoral level, but this is not yet the case, and Gallaudet has an opportunity to do so now in a “highly competitive, technological and rapidly changing world” (Gallaudet Mission). Finally, the alumni of the Ph.D. program in ASL and Deaf Studies will serve as natural ambassadors for Gallaudet, recruiting of ASL and Deaf Studies students all over the world to Gallaudet.

*The Ph.D. program in ASL and Deaf Studies responds to a need:*

The field of ASL studies is experiencing enormous growth. Currently, ASL is the 4th most taught language in colleges and universities, behind Spanish, French and German, and ahead of Italian, Japanese, Chinese and Arabic. At postsecondary institutions, ASL classes have experienced a 478% increase since 2002, and is very close to surpassing German (Modern Language Association, 2010). Language enrollment declined in French, German, Italian, Japanese and Chinese, however Arabic, ASL and Spanish were the only ones in the top eight languages to experience an increase (Association of American Colleges and Universities, March 2011). In community colleges, ASL is the second most taught language, having experienced a 4674% increase in enrollment from 1990 to 2009. The total enrollment in ASL classes in higher education for the year 2009, is over 91,000 students (Furman N., Goldberg, D., and Lusin, N., 2009) in over 200 ASL programs in the nation.

This enormous growth comes with an urgent demand for professors with advanced and/or terminal degrees.

*The Ph.D. program in ASL and Deaf Studies’ current and potential strengths:*

* The degree will be one of a kind – no other University in the world offers a terminal degree in ASL and Deaf Studies.
* The PhD program would build on two highly successful and reputable MA programs—the MA in Deaf Studies and the MA in Sign Language Teaching. Having these programs already in place demonstrates the Department’s capacity of offering world class graduate education.
* The demand for ASL and Deaf Studies teachers and researchers are at an all-time high – creating a enormous market for this profession, resulting in potentially a very high number of qualified and competitive candidates for the Ph.D. program in ASL and Deaf Studies.
* The dual focus (ASL and Deaf Studies) draws together the world’s most reputable faculty with highly qualified candidates in producing innovative ideas and work that may very well influence how ASL and Deaf people are framed.
* The ASL and Deaf Studies department leads the University in offering online and hybrid courses, undergraduate and graduate degrees. With accumulated departmental experience in the area of developing and offering online and hybrid courses and programs, our strength will contribute to the development and design process involved in creating a hybrid Ph.D. program.

**Goals:**

*The Ph.D. program in ASL and Deaf Studies is directly tied to the University Mission:*

Gallaudet University, federally chartered in 1864, is a bilingual, diverse, multicultural institution of higher education that ensures the intellectual and professional advancement of deaf and hard of hearing individuals through American Sign Language and English. Gallaudet maintains a proud tradition of research and scholarly activity and prepares its graduates for career opportunities in a highly competitive, technological, and rapidly changing world.

The Ph.D. in ASL and Deaf Studies is directly tied to the University Mission specifically in the areas of *advancing deaf and hard of hearing individuals* in the field of ASL and Deaf Studies.

Another section of the University mission is in the area of *research and scholarly activities*. Research and scholarly activities in the field of ASL and Deaf Studies is woefully inadequate, and with this program, we would directly increase the amount of research based studies supporting the University mission.

*What are the long range outcomes for the Ph.D. program in ASL and Deaf Studies?*

1. To bring about a professionalization of the field of ASL education (and of signed language education world wide).
2. Increase research opportunities and publications in the areas of ASL and Deaf Studies
3. Export our alumni nationwide and internationally as professors and researchers in the field of ASL and Deaf Studies
4. Utilize doctoral students to teach within department; undergraduate and graduate courses in ASL and Deaf Studies, including online courses
5. Seek out program candidates from underrepresented and historically marginalized groups.

The establishment of a Ph.D. program in ASL and Deaf studies is commensurate with the following strategic goals: A, increasing enrollment; D, supports University mission; and E, establishing Gallaudet as the epicenter of research.

Specifically, the following goals are directly addressed in the course of developing the PhD program:

A.2.2 Conduct market analysis to identify and design high demand programs for continuing education and outreach

A.2.3 Create infrastructure for a virtual campus to attract tomorrow’s visual learners and serve as a platform for greatly expanded offerings in online and hybrid education

D.1.4 Create process for analyzing viability and cost/benefit of new programs targeted at previously-untapped markets, particularly high growth professions, deaf service professions, and/or those that utilize acute visual, spatial, and kinesthetic aptitudes

D.4.2.a Through the scholarship of teaching and learning, identify ways to optimize classroom and online content and delivery methods.

E.1.1 Formulate no more than five integrated research priorities by assessing compelling needs as well as current and potential strengths in fields such as *visual language and learning*; hearing enhancement; *linguistic and communication access*; genetics; and *ASL/English bilingualism*.

**Evaluation Criteria**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  **Criteria** | **Inadequately** **0**  | **Minimally** **1** | **Adequately** **2**  |
| Provides clear and convincing reasons as to why this program is important nationally, internationally, and/or to Gallaudet.  |  |  |  |
| Convincingly argues that this program responds to a needs and current and potential strengths.  |  |  |  |
| Provides strong supports in support of the argument with references for these supports.  |  |  |  |

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|  **Criteria** | **Inadequately** **0**  | **Minimally** **1** | **Adequately** **2**  |
| Provide an explicit bridge from Gallaudet’s Mission to the program, or an argument that links the two.  |  |  |  |
| Provide a bridge from the Rationale to the program.  |  |  |  |
| Describe long range outcomes of the program.  |  |  |  |