



## Interpreting Alumni Newsletter Spring 2018

### Interpreter Club Conference



*Jasmin  
Porter '18*

In the Bloomsburg University Interpreter club general meetings we discuss interpreting topics, professional development, play games related to American Sign Language, and support each other through the school semester. It's a laid back and fun experience for ASL/English Interpreting students to come and get more involved with our major. We've held events such as a scavenger hunt, a professional Interpreter Q&A, and faculty run workshops. Every two years the Executive Board also holds an interpreter conference. This conference is open to students, alumni, and professional

interpreters. Planning and running the conference this year was an incredible experience. The Executive Board Jasmin Porter, '18 (President), Amanda Fischer, '19 (Vice President), Leah McCartney '20 (Secretary), Jenny Campbell '18 (Treasurer), Danielle Cavanagh '18 (Fundraising), Maya Smith '20 (Fundraising), and Jackie Bristel '20 (Public Relations) worked together under the guidance of Dr. Jessica Bentley-Sassaman (Faculty Advisor) to find presenters, a venue, performers, and process registration. Seeing everything come together that weekend was very rewarding. LaTanya Jones gave an inspiring keynote address about the importance of volunteering and getting involved. Then all of the attendees divided into workshops for the day. We were able to have fun and informational workshops to prepare interpreters for certification exams, to learn about Deaf presenters' experiences, and even learn about how to interpret for a yoga session. The 2018 conference was a success and we hope everyone will

be able to join us again in 2020!



#### **Class of 2018**

Back row: Brinna Fuestel, Jenny Campbell, Denise Cunniff, Emily Gowin, Alyssa Lardi, Levi Meyers and Carl Mallard

Front row: Danielle Cavanagh, Dr. Jessica Bentley-Sassaman (Faculty Advisor, '01), Cynthia Sverha, Brielle Strevig, Jasmin Porter

# ASL Immersion Weekend



*Jennifer  
Campbell '18*

On the first weekend of March the Bloomsburg ASL/English Interpreting class of 2018 went to Gettysburg for a voice-off weekend full of fun, laughter, and learning. When we arrived at the bed and breakfast on Friday afternoon we got settled in our rooms and headed downstairs to meet with Maribel Escarfullery, Katie Noll, and Melissa Hatfield to discuss the expectations of the weekend. Once everyone had arrived that evening, we went on a scavenger hunt and played games with our professors and classmates.

We each signed up for different shifts and all helped prepare meals. I was awake bright and early Saturday morning cooking breakfast with one of our professors. It was fun being able to work together with our classmates and cook, even though I hadn't had my morning coffee yet, I enjoyed every minute of it. After breakfast we had two workshops pertaining to working with a Certified Deaf interpreter (CDI) and what to expect on our practicum. After the workshops we had different practice interpreter scenarios, ranging from geology, to Dungeons and Dragons, to car insurance claims. We interpreted monologues and also practiced interactive interpreting. It was an amazing experience to work with a new group of Deaf and hearing people for the first time and learn how to work with a CDI team. We received great feedback from everyone involved. At night we played game of charades and shared ghost stories; I don't remember that last time I laughed that hard.

The next day a Gettysburg historian came and presented about the history of Gettysburg and the Civil War. We all took turns interpreting with Maribel and Katie as our feed, which was a great opportunity to practice working as a team with a certified interpreter. Bloomsburg University has allowed me to participate in so many meaningful events, and Immersion Weekend was truly one of the best experiences I have had during my four years here.



Class of 2018 with faculty and Katie and Maribel



Gettysburg historian

## Alumni Spotlight: *Kristen Sharpless '12*



*Kristen  
Sharpless '12*

Helen Keller changed my life. At a very young age, I learned about this woman, her trials and tribulations, and how she successfully became one of the twentieth century's most prominent humanitarians despite being both deaf and blind. Helen Keller had a direct influence on my career path, twenty years later.

I received my Bachelor's in American Sign Language/English Interpreting from Bloomsburg in 2012. Post-graduation, I focused on developing a solid understanding of the language and culture of the Deaf community by working as an interpreter, while simultaneously becoming involved in the DeafBlind community. My background in the DeafBlind community, as both a volunteer and a state registered Support Service Provider, in both New Jersey and Pennsylvania has given me the experience, motivation, and ambition necessary to pursue higher education and to fulfill the next step in my career goals.

I'm currently enrolled in the University of Massachusetts, Boston's Masters of Education program for Vision Studies and for my Introduction to Vision Rehabilitation Therapy class, I had an assignment to create an adapted recreational activity or game for somebody who is blind. I saw the Rubik's Cube while out shopping one day, and I knew immediately what to do with it. I had my best friend in mind (she's not blind, she just loves playing with these things), so I thought I would make it tactile and blindfold her to have her try it out! The process to make it was relatively simple. As soon as I had the cube, I headed out to Michael's and looked for different tactile markers I could use. I wanted to keep the colors consistent because it was aesthetically pleasing and it could be used for somebody who is colorblind as well. The most difficult part I had with this was finding textures that were completely different from each other to avoid confusion or mistakes. I had to really think about what I put next to each other - that took the longest part of my trip to Michaels! The project took me about ten minutes to put together and I really love the way it came out.

I wanted to share it with people in case there are any Occupational Therapists, Vision Rehab Therapists, Teachers of the Visually Impaired, friends, and family members who can see how simple it is to make, and that they can make it at home for less than \$15.

And a little background for my passion for all things deafblind: When I was in elementary school, I checked out my first two books from the library. The first book was titled "My First Book of Sign Language;" the second book, unbeknownst to me at the time, would spark a flame that would continue to

burn until this very day, 20+ years later. This book was the autobiography of Helen Keller, a woman born in Alabama who contracted an illness that left her deaf and blind. From the moment I put that book down, Helen Keller was a hero of mine. I read everything I could get my hands on about her.

Seven years ago, I met a DeafBlind man for the first time. The moment I realized that he could understand what I was saying to him by placing his hands on top of mine and without being able to see or hear was a pivotal moment in my life. This was a man who was similar to Helen Keller, my childhood hero.

I began volunteering with the DeafBlind community in 2012. It was in this community that I was able to observe and witness a wide variety of degrees of both vision and hearing loss. Working as a volunteer Support Service Provider (SSP) for this small group not only allowed me to learn a variety of communication methods with DeafBlind individuals, it also allowed me to experience their degree of vision loss in a more personal setting. All of this led me to acquire a better understanding of how to best meet their needs relative to both their hearing and vision loss. In 2012, I reunited with that deafblind man again for the first time since I met him when I attended my Undergraduate Program, and I was elated that I was given the opportunity to show him what I learned from my studies and SSP experience. Along with that man, I have met many other DeafBlind people - each with a unique and inspiring story of their own. I was hooked.

When I graduate, I'll have my Master's in Vision Rehab Therapy and a Certification in Orientation and Mobility, on top of the Bachelor's Degree in American Sign Language / English interpreting I already have because I'm extremely passionate in working with individuals who are DeafBlind. I have spent my entire educational and professional career immersed in the DeafBlind community, and I'm striving for the opportunity to give back to a community that has given me so much.

# Commission on Collegiate Interpreter Education (CCIE)



*Jessica Bentley-Sassaman '01*

Hello alumni! As you may know the ASL/English Interpreting Program is currently in the process of applying for accreditation through the Commission on Collegiate Interpreter Education. We recently completed our self-study review and we will hear back from them in the fall as to if they will come for a site visit and continue on the process of hopefully becoming accredited. The ASL/English Interpreting Program has made some changes to the program which will make it stronger. If you

want to see more you can look at our Stakeholder meeting minutes from our June 2017 and December 2017 meetings <http://intranet.bloomu.edu/asl-stakeholders>. If you would like to be a stakeholder and join us at our next meeting, please contact Dr. Jessica Bentley-Sassaman, the Program Coordinator at [jbentley@bloomu.edu](mailto:jbentley@bloomu.edu).

## CCIE: Alumni Survey

As part of the accreditation process, we collected data on our alumni that we would like to share with our alumni. The ASL/English Interpreting Program conducted a survey of the graduates from 2011 (the first class since coming out of moratorium) to 2017. There have been 112 graduates from 2011 to 2017. The survey was sent to 107 graduates based on email addresses that could be located. Sixty-two (62) of the 107 alumni responded to the survey which is a response rate of 57.9%. Of those who responded to the survey, 11 have passed the RID National Interpreter Certification performance test which is a 17% pass rate. The national average for the RID performance test after retakes in 2017 was 25%. The score of passing is slightly below the national average.

Thirty-seven of the 62 respondents reported their Educational Interpreter Performance Assessment (EIPA). The highest score earned ranged from a 3.0 to a 4.2 with the highest frequency being a 3.5. Of those who self-report to the Program Coordinator, 47 alumni have taken the EIPA, for their highest score, the majority of them scored a 3.5 which is Pennsylvania's minimum requirement for interpreters to work

in the K-12 environment. The next highest score was a 3.7, followed by three scores ranking as the next highest 3.2, 3.6, and 3.9.

Based on the survey data, the majority of the ASL/English Interpreting Program graduates begin working in less than one month after graduation 55.17% of the 62 respondents. The next highest category was working between 1-3 months at 36.21%. Out of the 62 respondents, 58 are currently working as interpreters and 4 are not. The majority (86.21%) of the graduates who responded to the survey are either very satisfied or satisfied working as interpreters. Of the 58 respondents who are working, 60.34% are working full time and 39.66% are working part time. Fifty percent of respondents are very satisfied working as an interpreter and 36.21% are satisfied working as an interpreter.

### **CCIE: Employer Satisfaction Survey**

In addition to data on certification and qualifications, the ASL/English Interpreting Program conducted an employer satisfaction survey. Forty interpreting agencies, Intermediate Units and school districts were contacted who may have hired graduates from Bloomsburg University. Twelve responded to the survey which is a 30% response rate. Of the 12, 11 filled out a questionnaire related to statements that apply to the accreditation standards. Eight out of the 11 strongly agree and the remaining 3 agree that they “are satisfied overall with the graduate(s) I have hired.”

Employers were asked 24 questions and for the questions that all the employers answered all in the “strongly agree” or “agree” categories include that the ASL/English Interpreting graduates:

1. Demonstrate(s) the interpreter’s role, function and responsibilities
2. Demonstrate(s) ethical decision making as an interpreter
3. Demonstrate(s) an ability to meet the linguistic needs of the consumers (Deaf and hearing
  
5. Demonstrate(s) proper protocols in a variety of interpreted settings
6. Adhere(s) to the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf’s Code of Professional Conduct.
7. Demonstrate(s) an understanding and adherence to state and federal laws
8. Demonstrate(s) adequately the ability to interpret the meaning from English to ASL
  
12. Demonstrate(s) the ability to work with consumers who can hear from multicultural backgrounds
  
16. Build(s) professional relationships with colleagues
17. Demonstrate(s) appropriate professional behaviors.

20. Demonstrate(s) professional boundaries when working with consumers
23. Demonstrate(s) the understanding of Deaf culture and application in the interpretation
24. I am satisfied overall with the graduate(s) I have hired.

Ten out of the 11 employers answered in the “strongly agree” or “agree” categories include that the ASL/English Interpreting graduates:

4. Demonstrate(s) the ability to work with a team interpreter
9. Demonstrate(s) adequately the ability to interpret the meaning from ASL to English
10. Demonstrate(s) the ability to assess his or her work
11. Demonstrate(s) the ability to work with Deaf consumers from multicultural backgrounds
14. Demonstrate(s) soft skills when working with consumers
15. Apply(ies) analytical and critical thinking
18. Demonstrate(s) the ability to manage the physical setting
19. Demonstrate(s) linguistic flexibility working with a variety of consumers

The employers identified areas where program needs improvement are:

21. Demonstrate(s) the ability to interpret for Deaf-blind consumers
22. Demonstrate(s) the ability to work with Deaf Interpreters.

We do have an elective Deaf-Blind Populations course, but not all students elect to take this course. Those that do not may struggle in this area. Students are exposed to working with Deaf interpreters in Topics in Interpreting class – which was offered for the first time in 2016. There is a module on working with Deaf interpreters. Practicum Seminar has one class devoted to working with Deaf interpreters. During ASL Immersion weekend, students are exposed to working with Deaf interpreter. However, the Deaf interpreter is not there every year as the workshops vary from year to year.

In closing, I hope that the next alumni newsletter will be sharing some good news related to accreditation. Hopefully the rest of the process goes well and the ASL/English Interpreting Program becomes accredited through CCIE. We will keep you updated.



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INTERPRETER EDUCATION**

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