

October 30 NFC meeting, all present except Jennifer Gravitz (sick) and guests Gary Behm and Peter Hauser.

Sharon Lott (ASLTE Coordinator) was invited to address questions throughout presentation

Topic: discuss the new sign language evaluations being developed and the impact on policy regarding the sign language skill level required for promotion and tenure.

Mark started the meeting by reminding us of the Shared Governance Summit at RIT which will happen all day October 11. There are 12 seats for the college of NTID and encouraged NFC's participation. Go to [Govsummit.rit.edu](http://Govsummit.rit.edu) to register.

1. Gary Behm started with positive comments about NFC, how supportive Gerry Buckley is and thanked us for our work. Gerry is committed to improving the assessment tools that we have for evaluating sign skills. We understand there are concerns and this is not a simple task. The SLPI was established a long time ago, there are new evaluations available and Gerry is interested in raising the bar. Gary noted that we have a wide range of students with the range of communication skills from no sign language/oral to ASL and everywhere in between. Gary wants our evaluation to be relevant for all students and we have to be prepared to handle the range of students we teach. Today's meeting will focus the various assessments available and we will talk about policy next week.
2. Peter Hauser introduced himself and discussed his background as a psychologist and research in the cognitive sciences. He was interested in how to assess language and evaluate sign language. The strategic decision 2020 committee, after one year of planning in 2010, acknowledged that there were some problems with the method of evaluation and that the criteria for faculty and staff was no doubt different. Gerry subsequently set up three different committees, (mentoring, professional development and sign communication expectations). It was clear we needed more tools to evaluate sign language skills and Provost Haefner expressed his concern that having only one evaluation tool could easily be challenged. A battery of tests to choose from was suggested. Due to budget cuts in 2010, efforts to create new evaluations were put aside. Peter discussed how Sharon Lott has researched the SLPI. Peter clarified that he is not involved in establishing policy and sees an individual's sign skills as a broad range of fluency's determined by several different methods of evaluation. Peter worked with his team to look at a variety of assessment tools. Peter attended many department meetings and discussed with faculty and staff their signed evaluation needs and concerns.
3. Evaluations: Peter describe the CSLA, GCOT, ASL – CT, ASL – DT, ASL – OVE, FAN – CT, SRT – L2. (Descriptions of these evaluations will be coming from Peter soon). There are currently four evaluations available to assess sign language skill and one additional test will be available this spring (The ASL – CT). Three more tests are in the process of

*\*This document serves as minutes from the meeting. It is not a detailed record of all points addressed.*

development. The timeframe for various tests readiness will also be forthcoming. Peter encouraged faculty and staff to contact him as he needs subjects to evaluate these instruments. These evaluations will help Peter determine a baseline and what the average scores are for faculty and staff. He explained that his role is that of a test developer and evaluator. Peter stressed that it would take some time to do the statistical analysis to determine the validity of these new instruments.

4. The questions that were previously submitted and highlighted in yellow were shared with Peter prior to the meeting. The first question focused the need to work with a wide range of communication skills in the classroom and what impact this has on the process of evaluating one's ASL skill level. He acknowledged this is a difficult and complicated thing to evaluate, involves the ability to code switch and bilingual knowledge. If an evaluation measures the middle of somebody's skill, doesn't really show what they can truly do and Peter refer to Gary to some of these issues. The other question that was listed as a concern is the impact this evaluation has on tenure-track or staff promotion. As we are currently limiting this to only include tenure-track and tenured faculty, and we will later include an evaluation for lecturers. There was also some discussion about what is the policy for lecturers sign skills when they arrive. Some lectures are hired with no sign skills and the policy does not appear to be consistent across the Institute. Practice appears to be different across departments.
5. There was some discussion about the original intention and motivation to address/change the sign skills of the classroom faculty, mostly related to the student communication protest several years ago. Peter was given the charge from Gerry to investigate other methods of evaluation. In January 2017 Gerry sent out an email regarding the decision to have a higher level of sign language skill for promotion and tenure. (Advanced and not Intermediate Plus). This was also in response to the CEOCA report. Gerry's decision did not involve discussions with governance or other faculty bodies and that is why we are discussing this today. Announcements do not constitute policy, what is currently written is more flexible and now we have an opportunity to clarify things and work with the administration to clarify.

Next week's meeting on November 6 will focus on policy considerations and Gary Beam will lead the discussion.

## Appendix

### Questions from the NTID Constituents: Sign Language Expectations

#### Rationale:

#### 1) Assessment beyond ASL?

##### a. What is the purpose of the new assessment?

**To establish institute norms. To provide faculty with a variety of assessment options to provide evidence as part of a communication portfolio to support promotion and tenure.**

- **Measures multiple areas of ASL proficiency**
- **Detailed assessment of individual linguistic skills**

##### b. Is it to determine if a faculty member has the communication skill to teach the content of the course or the ability to hold an everyday conversation in ASL?

- **Classroom Sign Language Assessment (CSLA) in place to address ability to convey course content**
- **Sign Language Proficiency Interview (SLPI) currently in place to address everyday conversation.**

##### c. Why aren't we addressing the ability to work with the wide range of communication skills in order to address the communication needs of the students who are in our classrooms?

**The CSLA and Group Communication Observation Tool (GCOT) may currently be used to address this**

##### d. Why test faculty on only ASL when many faculty in the classroom use various forms of communication?

**If faculty have strong foundation in ASL and English, code switching (various forms of communication) should be more effective**

#### 2) Has consideration been given on the impact of mandating advanced sign language fluency on TT faculty with heightened research expectations? Is this reasonable? **The same expectation will still be in place. Faculty should be creative with their scholarship with an expectation of student involvement in research (communication is important)**

Assessment

3) What will the assessment look like?

**Table 1. New ASL assessments under development.**

Assessment	Acronym	Test Type
ASL-Comprehension Test	ASL-CT	Receptive
ASL-Discrimination Test	ASL-DT	Receptive
ASL-Online Vocabulary Exam	ASL-OVE	Comprehension
Fingerspelling & Number Comprehension Test	FAN-CT	Comprehension
ASL-Sentence Repetition Task for L2 Signers	SRT-L2	Comprehension & Production

**Most of the new assessments are web-based (ASL-CT, ASL-DT, ASL-OVE, FAN-CT, SRT-L2)**

**CSLA, SLPI and GCOT are observational assessments and already in place at NTID**

- a. How is it measurable?
  - **All of the new assessments are multiple-choice (MC); SRT-L2 task may or may not be (currently in revision)**
- b. Is a range given?
  - **Test faculty, establish range (similar to old SRS)**
- c. What are the skill levels labeled as?
  - **Skill levels under SLPI will remain in place.**
  - **The new assessments are designed to provide a report that shows how a faculty member compares to the NTID faculty as a whole with those skills.**
- d. Is the assessment and evaluation done by a variety of raters? How are they trained?
  - **Because of the MC format, most of the assessments are rater-independent.**
  - **The SRT-L2 task has raters but is the task itself is very controlled to provide very high interrater reliability**
- e. Current SLPI does not assess reception directly. Will the new assessments do that?
  - **Reception is directly assessed in multiple new assessments (4 are completely receptive)**
- f. Will code switching be considered?
  - **CSLA remains in place as the most appropriate tool for looking at this.**
- g. Will communication with Deaf/blind individuals be considered?
  - **Not answered**

## Appendix

4) What procedural safeguards are in place to minimize or eliminate bias on the part of the raters?

- a. **4 of the new assessments are MC**
- b. **The SRT-L2 maintains very high interrater reliability due to its tasks being strictly controlled.**

5) Who is the new assessment designed for? Can staff participate?

- a. **Priority is currently being given to faculty (tenure-track/lecturers). The assessments ought to be part of communication portfolios for:**
  - Mid-tenure review for TT faculty
  - Tenure/promotion review for TT faculty
  - Promotion from lecturer to senior lecturer
- b. **Could have applicability to staff later.**

6) Will the test be administered to faculty or staff more than once?

- a. **ASL-DT and ASL-OVE, every 6 months, possibly more frequently.**

If so, will there be a testing effect? (Does taking the test over and over improve your score rather than your actual skills improving?)

- a) **PH claimed there is no testing effect because the assessments themselves follow item response theory**

7) Is there a new or different definition of what skill levels (linguistics, grammar, vocabulary) are and in what environment (i.e. in a class with a variety of communication modes)?

- a. **No**

8) Do our faculty ASL class curricula match the new expectations and measurements?

- a. **Not answered**

9) How do measurements account for differences in technical signs and different classroom environments?

- a. **CSLA currently addresses this**
- b. **The new ASL-OVE assessment could address this too**

10) Once the ASL assessment tool is developed, who will be administering and promoting it? Who will evaluate its effectiveness? Concerns re: potential conflict of interest if the developers have further roles with the tool once it's released.

- a. **Once the development is finished, Peter Hauser will be handing the tool off to Sharon Lott in FSSL. Her office will manage the assessment moving forward.**