WHAT CAN I DO WITH A MAJOR IN … SIGNED LANGUAGE INTERPRETER

PROFESSION OVERVIEW:
The Collegetoolkit.com (2014) explains, “Signed Language Interpreters facilitate communication between people who are deaf or hard of hearing and people who can hear. Sign language interpreters must be fluent in English and in American Sign Language (ASL), which combines signing, finger spelling, and specific body language. ASL has its own grammatical rules, sentence structure, idioms, historical contexts, and cultural nuances. Sign language interpreting, like foreign language interpreting, involves more than simply replacing a word of spoken English with a sign representing that word.”

WORK ENVIRONMENT:
According to The UNM Signed Language Interpreting website (2014), “Since the Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1964, the Education for all Handicapped Children Act of 1975, and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the job market for qualified interpreters has witnessed tremendous growth. The many interpreter referral centers across the country report an ever-expanding need for signed language interpreters. Many career opportunities await interpreters in public schools and higher education. There is also a demand for professionals with signed skills in other fields — counselors, teachers, linguists, speech and hearing professionals, anthropologists, psychologists, and others. Our students are highly successful in obtaining employment. Graduates for the Signed Language Interpreting Program have found jobs as freelance interpreters, educational interpreters, and as full-time interpreters in the public and private sector. Educational agencies across the country routinely recruit our graduates. A new and exciting market for our interpreters is Video Relay Service (VRS) and Video Relay Interpreting (VRI).”

EMPLOYMENT REQUIREMENTS:
The Bureau of Labor Statistics (2013) explains that a bachelor's degree in Signed Language Interpreting as well as passing the pass Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) and state certification examinations is what is required to work as a Signed Language Interpreter. Consult O*Net for more information on the specific KSAs (Knowledge, Skill, Ability) that are required for this career.

THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO
The UNM Signed Language Interpreting Program (2014) offers a Bachelor of Science Degree in Signed Language Interpreting requires 128 semester hours of course work, including 40 hours in the major. “Admission to the program is made on the basis of the student's previous experiences related to signed language and deaf people, as well as the student's career goals and grade point average. This screening process results in a highly motivated and dedicated group of students. The small size of the program — approximately 15 new students are accepted each year — ensures that each student receives considerable individual attention.”

INDUSTRIES & TARGET EMPLOYERS:
A variety of employers specifically recruit UNM students and alumni. Consult UNM’s Lobo Career Connection for a complete list of employers and current job postings. Speak with a Career Development Facilitator at the UNM Office of Career Services for help with identifying employers or additional resources for your occupation of choice.

K-12 schools, public and private
Pre-schools
Universities/Colleges
Professional language schools
English language institutes
Government
Libraries
Adult education programs
Religious and volunteer organizations
International organizations
Performing Creative Arts
Law enforcement agencies
Social service agencies
Nonprofit organizations
Hospitals
Law/ Court Systems
Public Health
SUGGESTED STRATEGIES:

- Seek certification or accreditation from an interpretation/translation organization.
- Develop aptitude with computers and the Internet.
- Interpreters and translators who have expertise in a particular area such as law or medicine may find more opportunities.
- Develop skills in negotiation.
- Most people who work in this field freelance. Show ability, initiative and motivation as this is a very competitive field.
- Consider specializing your skill set through a double major or minor in another area.
- Gain professional experience in your area of interest through involvement in internships, student employment, Co-ops, and/or volunteer opportunities.
- Shadow professionals in your field of interest to gain a better understanding of their occupation and to build relationships with professional mentors.
- Build your network and get involved on campus through student organizations and campus events.
- Attend career-related campus events such as career fairs, company information sessions, and or career workshops.
- Students who are interested in graduate school should maintain a high undergraduate GPA and develop relationships with faculty and community leaders.
- Speak with mentors and faculty about career opportunities.
- Job leads can be found on your department’s website, list-serv, newsletters, and social media sites.

AVERAGE SALARY:
Adapted from CareerOneStop (2013)

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<th>Location</th>
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INFORMATIONAL WEBSITES:
American Translators Association
American Literary Translators Association
National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators
Registry for Interpreters for the Deaf
American Sign Language Services, INC

http://www.atanet.org/
http://www.literarytranslators.org/
http://www.najit.org/
http://www.rid.org/
http://www.aslservices.com/

http://oneline.org

http://www.bls.gov/oco

REFERENCES:
