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# The good, the bad, and the ugly: Students report on experiences with instructors in interpreter education programs

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**The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly: Students Report on Experiences with Instructors  
in Interpreter Education Programs**

**By  
Ann Adamiak**

A thesis submitted to  
Western Oregon University  
In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of:  
Master of Arts in Interpreting Studies

March 2018



**WE, THE UNDERSIGNED MEMBERS OF THE GRADUATE FACULTY OF  
WESTERN OREGON UNIVERSITY HAVE EXAMINED THE ENCLOSED**

- Thesis  
 Field Study  
 Professional Project

Titled:

The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly: Students Report on Experiences with Instructors in Interpreter Education Programs

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Candidate for the degree of: MA of Interpreting Studies

*and hereby certify that in our opinion it is worthy of acceptance as partial fulfillment  
of the requirements of this master's degree.*

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## ABSTRACT

### **The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly: Students Report on Experiences with Instructors in Interpreter Education Programs**

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This research study was exploratory in nature, seeking to gather and document the experiences and perceptions of current and former students in interpreter education programs with the focus of interpreting between signed language and spoken language in the United States. Data was collected through an online survey for a three-week period, resulting in 514 consenting respondents from 40 states and 126 distinct interpreter education programs. The mixed methods study included quantitative and qualitative questions. The qualitative responses were coded, and emergent themes were identified in a grounded theory approach (Corbin & Strauss, 1990; McMilan & Schumacher, 2009; Strauss & Corbin, 1994, 1998). In this study, the data-driven themes have been limited to two top 10 lists for the most prevalent categories of positive and negative experiences with instructors. The findings show that the top 10 negative categories of student-reported experiences with faculty are: Personality; Feedback/Grading; Classroom

Management; Intolerance for Others; Lack of Current Knowledge and Skills; Unclear or Unreasonable Expectations; Turnover or Institution Incompatibility; “Told Me I Couldn’t Do It”; Playing Favorites; and Too Busy Elsewhere. The top 10 positive categories of student-reported experiences with faculty are: Supportive and Encouraging; Teaching Techniques; Kind, Caring, “Wonderful”; Sharing Real Work Experiences; One-on-One Time; Community Connections and Resources; Content of Class/Curriculum; Desirable Outcome of Education; Passionate and Invested; and Available and Willing to Answer Questions. Each of the categories in the two top 10 lists can be shown to either strengthen or weaken the four motivational conditions of Wlodkowski and Ginsberg’s (1995) Motivational Framework for Culturally Responsive Teaching: establishing inclusion, developing attitude, enhancing meaning, and engendering competence. The data collected from the instrument, as well as the literature reviewed, suggest that faculty play a crucial role in student motivation. With the emergent themes from the data, ASL and interpreting instructors are given the opportunity to consider the national perspective and use it to improve their individual and systemic practice to work with and motivate adult learners. The findings in this research study can be used to formalize and optimize interpreter education.

*Keywords:* motivation theory, interpreter education, instructors, interactions, ASL, Deaf, Interpreter training program, ITP, Interpreter preparation program, IPP

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

### **Background**

As Rhoads (2001) highlighted: “successful teaching requires not only knowledge, but also commitment” (p. 67). The spring semester of 2014 was the first time I taught a course in an interpreter education program. It was a dream come true, an experience that I will never forget. During that semester, I often thought back to my time as a student in an interpreter education program and the several factors that came together to make it what it was: the curriculum, the campus culture, my peers, the faculty, the concurrent things going on in my life, my motivation, my struggles, my growth, and so much more. I wondered what my current students’ experiences were like for them. How did their experiences compare to mine a decade earlier? How did their experiences compare to other students’ experiences across the nation?

Through various events that semester, it was reiterated to me that I wanted to do all that I could to make my students’ experience the best it could be, and I did not always know what that was. What did they need from me? How could I motivate them? How could I best prepare them? I checked in with them frequently about their experiences in their interpreter education program. I also sought out research from the students’ perspective from other programs in the nation, but I did not find much.

This research study was a chance to reach out to current and former students from across the nation and try to learn about their experiences and perspectives in their various programs. My personal goal was to apply the findings to my own practice as I was beginning to learn the passion of motivating each student to gain a greater understanding

and respect of American Sign Language, English, Deaf culture, and the art of interpreting in a “brave space” (Arao & Clemens, 2013, p. 141). It was clear that if I wanted to continue to be an educator, I also needed to be on my own path of seeking greater understanding of how to be an effective teacher. I was motivated to become a student of my students.

### **Statement of the Problem**

At the time the survey was disseminated, the research question was broad: What common experiences do current or former students of interpreting education programs share that I could learn from? The instrument had 13 sections with various quantitative and qualitative questions about themselves, their experiences, and perceptions in interpreting education programs including: their satisfaction, the cost, interactions with faculty, interactions with peers, their perceived ASL fluency, reasons for leaving the program (if they did), perceived strengths and weaknesses of the program, how the program compared to others, whether they would recommend it to others, and more. After analyzing the data from more than 500 responses from 40 states, and 126 different interpreting education programs, I realized I would not be able to share all my findings in this document due to the large volume. Therefore, the research question that was the focus of this thesis was: What are the most common student-reported positive and negative experiences with faculty?

I primarily focused on the open-ended questions that allowed respondents to provide qualitative answers pertaining to faculty and student interactions. I used an open-coding method and grounded theory to analyze the responses by continuously reading and grouping the data until patterns and overarching themes clearly emerged (Corbin &

Strauss, 1990; McMilan & Schumacher, 2009; Strauss & Corbin, 1994, 1998). In this study, I have presented the data-driven themes of the most common student-reported positive and negative experiences with faculty and how this impacts student motivation.

### **Purpose of the Study**

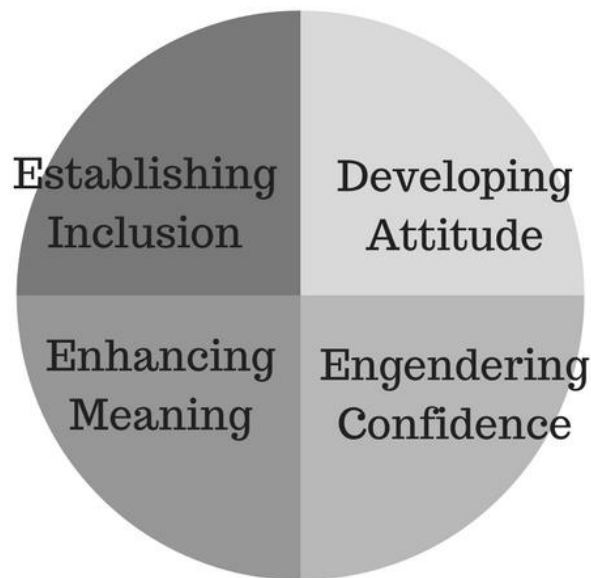
The purpose of the study was to gather and document the experiences and perceptions of current and former students in their interpreter education programs in the United States, so educators can be better informed to refine and optimize formal interpreter education. This study was designed to meet a gap in the literature and to gather and document the students' perspectives. As a routine part of attending college, many institutions ask students to complete teacher evaluations, exit surveys, or other similar evaluations with the intent that the data will be kept within the institution. With interpreter education being a new and growing field, this study provides data from students that can be shared widespread (Ball, 2013). This is an opportunity to learn and discuss the experiences of students in interpreter education across the nation and can serve as a starting point for a national discussion.

### **Theoretical Bases and Organization**

The primary framework for this study was the motivation theory lens of Wlodkowski and Ginsberg's (1995) Motivational Framework for Culturally Responsive Teaching. Merriam and Bierema (2014) defined motivation as "the drive and energy we put into accomplishing something we want to do. We cannot see or touch it, but it is ever present in our thought and action" (p. 147). Classical motivation theory can be applied to how adult students learn and their access to and participation in learning activities (Merriam & Bierema, 2014).

Wlodkowski and Ginsberg's (1995) Motivational Framework for Culturally Responsive Teaching identifies four motivational conditions that the teacher and students continuously create or enhance as seen in Figure 1. They are:

1. Establishing inclusion—creating a learning atmosphere in which students and teachers feel respected by and connected to one another.
2. Developing attitude—creating a favorable disposition toward the learning experience through personal relevance and choice.
3. Enhancing meaning—creating challenging, thoughtful learning experiences that include student perspectives and values.
4. Engendering competence—creating an understanding that students are effective in learning something they value (Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 1995).



*Figure 1.* Four Motivational Conditions for Culturally Responsive Teaching

The research question for this study was: What are the most common student-reported positive and negative experiences with faculty? While analyzing the data from 514 responses from 40 states and 126 different interpreting education programs, I

allowed the data to lead me in a grounded theory approach of open coding (Corbin & Strauss, 1990; McMilan & Schumacher, 2009; Strauss & Corbin, 1994, 1998).

After the patterns of positive and negative experiences with faculty emerged from the data, I limited the number of both the positive and negative categories to the “Top 10.” Mayer (2011) stated that although top 10 lists might have gotten their start on late-night television, they are now seen all over the place from social media articles to oncology nursing journals. In this study, there is one top 10 list for the most prevalent categories of positive experiences with instructors and another top 10 list for the most prevalent categories of negative experiences with instructors. These lists are in descending order of how many respondents mentioned it. Each of the categories in the two top 10 lists can be shown to either strengthen or weaken the four motivational conditions: establishing inclusion, developing attitude, enhancing meaning, and engendering competence (Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 1995).

### **Strengths and Limitations of the Study**

Although there were several strengths and limitations to the study, overall the data provides valuable insights about interpreter education programs. One of the most notable limitations is the vast amount of data that I will not be able to discuss here due to the volume of data I collected.

The open coding of the quantitative and qualitative questions provided several kinds of data that worked together to lead to data-driven themes. In coding negative interactions with faculty, the “Personality” category was by far the largest. This category is described as: ego, mood, lack of caring, unapproachable, intimidating, inflexible, scares students on purpose, pessimistic, among others. In the future, this category could

be divided into subcategories to illustrate specific findings.

A handful of the respondents attended an interpreter education program years ago. Since this study was open to “former and current students,” I decided to combine all the data regardless of how long ago the respondents were students. Perhaps things have changed for better or for worse since then. It could be an interesting study to compare the experiences of students from decades ago to the experiences of current students. Please note, however, that the majority of respondents were recent graduates or current students.

More than 500 people responded from several geographical areas, a variety of backgrounds (including every age between 18 and 63), and 126 different distinct interpreting education programs out of a total estimated number of 150 interpreting programs in the United States (Ball, 2013). These respondents provided a strong set of data. Even though I was pleasantly surprised by the number of respondents, this is still only a small sampling of interpreters who have been in interpreter education programs. For future research, providing the survey instrument to all of the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (2017) membership of more than 15,000 members and seeking out the other interpreters who are not members of RID, could have provided more data. Additionally, I strived to reach people who did not become interpreters after completing the interpreter education programs to learn about their experiences, but they were difficult to find in large numbers.

The survey instrument was anonymous and collected no identifying information. The safety of anonymity allowed respondents to freely share their thoughts (Etchegaray & Fischer, 2010). However, there was no way to verify the answers or ask for clarification. For example, one of the eligibility requirements of taking the survey was



having attended an interpreter education program. Despite listing this in the eligibility and consent form, there were two additional checks to further qualify participants. This led me to wonder what other details and directions the respondents were not carefully reading.

The online platform and snowball sampling encouraged sharing with others and allowed for the survey to reach far outside my sphere of influence and gather data from many programs, some that I did not know existed. The drawback could be that those without access or confidence using technology might not have participated. Furthermore, people who never joined the field after the program, were no longer a working in the field, or were not currently a part of interpreting organizations were unaware of the study.

As always, the researcher can have an impact on the study (Hale & Napier, 2013). The way I coded and interpreted the data was influenced by my lens. Being aware of both the strengths and the limitations of the study, the readers will be granted the most transparent view of the findings.

### **Definition of Terms**

*Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA)*: A landmark piece of legislation that provided a broad scope of protections and provisions for people with disabilities, including language access to Deaf people.

*American Sign Language (ASL)*: The primary language of the Deaf Community in the United States, a visual language with its own distinct structure, grammar, and syntax (Stokoe, 1960, 2005).

*Deaf and Deaf Community*: A linguistic minority based on using visual languages and a cultural minority with shared experiences; a group of people that have an identity

much more broad than the functions of the ear (Ladd, 2003). The Deaf community is usually denoted with a capital letter “D,” while the general deaf population or the audiological functions of the ear are denoted with a lowercase “d” (Holcomb, 2012).

*Developing attitude:* Creating a favorable disposition toward the learning experience through personal relevance and choice; one of the four motivational conditions under the Motivational Framework for Culturally Responsive Teaching (Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 1995).

*Engendering competence:* Creating an understanding that students are effective in learning something they value; one of the four motivational conditions under the Motivational Framework for Culturally Responsive Teaching (Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 1995).

*Enhancing meaning:* Creating challenging, thoughtful learning experiences that include student perspectives and values; one of the four motivational conditions under the Motivational Framework for Culturally Responsive Teaching (Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 1995).

*Establishing inclusion:* Creating a learning atmosphere in which students and teachers feel respected by and connected to one another; one of the four motivational conditions under the Motivational Framework for Culturally Responsive Teaching (Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 1995).

*Hearing person:* Someone from the majority society that physiologically hears and uses their voice to communicate; in other words, not deaf (Ladd, 2003).

*Instructor:* Any instructor, teacher, professor, or faculty member who instructed during the interpreter education program including American Sign Language (ASL)

instructors.

*Interpreter:* A person who conveys meaning between two languages taking into account linguistic and cultural information (Cokely, 1992).

*Interpreter Education Program:* For the purposes of this study, an interpreter education program is the blanket term that includes Interpreter Training Programs (ITP), Interpreter Preparation Programs (IPP), Certificate Programs, and any other formal education of interpreters in the United States with the focus of interpreting between signed language and spoken language.

## CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The review of the literature ultimately demonstrates that faculty represent the most significant aspect in the development of students (Astin, 1993). Built on the history of Deaf Americans, the interpreting field, communication access, legislation, professional organizations, and higher education, interpreter educators are given the task of preparing students for work in the field of interpreting. Instructors in these programs need to recognize their profound influence on students' motivation as modeled through Wlodkowski and Ginsberg's (1995) Motivational Framework for Culturally Responsive Teaching.

### **Interpreting**

Interpreters are used when people from different languages and cultures come together to interact. Obst (2010) explained that interpreting consists of much more than “bilingual people changing words spoken in one language into the same words of another language” (p. xi). Interpreters need to consider more than just the words used; they must consider the implied meaning, power/authority dynamics, intent, communication style, emotions, objectives, tone, mood, cultural and nonlinguistic information, and more (CCIE, 2014; Dean & Pollard, 2013; Mindess, 2006). This study focuses specifically on the education of people involved in or preparing to be involved in the interactions between Deaf people and hearing people in the United States. The Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (2007) explained:

Sign language interpreting makes communication possible between people who are deaf or hard of hearing and people who can hear. Interpreting is a complex

process that requires a high degree of linguistic, cognitive and technical skills in both English and American Sign Language (ASL). Sign language interpreting, like spoken language interpreting, involves more than simply replacing a word of spoken English with a signed representation of that English word. ASL has its own grammatical rules, sentence structure and cultural nuances. (p. 1)

Interpreters work with a diverse population and perform this complex task in a variety of settings, namely “educational, medical field, theatre and legal settings; for conferences and conventions; or at corporations and institutions ... and as video relay interpreters” (RID, 2007, p. 2). Interpreters “must process language quickly and accurately, and they must think about spoken English and sign language simultaneously” (Schick, n.d.).

Indeed, interpreters work to provide communication access for all people involved in the interaction. “Interpreting ... is not merely transposing from one language to another. It is, rather, throwing a semantic bridge between two different cultures, and two different thought worlds” (Namy, 1978, as cited in Dean & Pollard, 2013, p. 6). Interpreting is a complex task perhaps only exceeded in complexity by the task of teaching this process to student interpreters.

### **Early History**

Deaf Americans have an important history and place within the United States. Many people look to the momentous occasion when Gallaudet and Clerc founded the first school for the Deaf in America in 1817 as the beginning of American Sign Language (Ball, 2013). Throughout history, as a natural course of life, occasions would arise when communication needed to happen between people who use signed languages and those who used spoken languages as discussed above. The earliest signed language interpreters

tended to be family members or friends of the deaf person, which allowed the Deaf community to essentially train their own interpreters (Ball, 2013; Cokely, 2015; Humphrey & Alcorn, 2007). Then, as the need arose, formal interpreter training programs came into existence: “The first sign language interpreter education program in the United States began in 1948 at the Central Bible Institute in Springfield, MO” (Ball, 2013, p. 9). Although there was interpreting happening before that, many do not recognize the beginning of interpreting as a profession until 1964 when the professional organization, the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID), was established at Ball State Teachers College in Muncie, Indiana (Ball, 2013).

Several pieces of legislation hastened the need for interpreters. Most notably, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 was a landmark act that provided a broad scope of protections and provisions for people with a broad context of disabilities (ADA, 1990). This resulted in legal regulations to remove communication barriers that would impede individuals from functioning in mainstream society that included providing interpreters for Deaf individuals (ADA, 1990). The ADA defines a “qualified interpreter” for the Deaf as one “who is able to interpret effectively, accurately, and impartially both receptively and expressively, utilizing any necessary specialized vocabulary” (ADA, 1990). The demand for interpreters continued to grow as new legislation mandated that interpreters be provided.

The roles and duties of signed language interpreters have shifted and evolved throughout time (Ball, 2013; Cokely, 2015; Llewellyn-Jones & Lee, 2014; McIntire & Sanderson, 1995). The National Association of the Deaf (NAD) and RID came together in 2005 to collaborate and write the Code of Professional Conduct for sign language

interpreters (RID, 2005, p. 1). The NAD was established in 1880 and is the nation's oldest and largest nonprofit organization that works toward "safeguarding the accessibility and civil rights of the Deaf and hard-of-hearing" (Stuard, 2008, p. 22). The NAD continues to function as the "nation's premier civil rights organization of, by and for deaf and hard of hearing individuals in the United States of America" (NAD, n.d.). RID is a national professional organization that was founded in 1964 and has done many things including establishing a "national standard for qualified sign language interpreters" (RID, n.d.). In the NAD-RID Code of Professional Conduct, the "Philosophy" paragraph reads:

The American Deaf community represents a cultural and linguistic group having the inalienable right to full and equal communication and to participation in all aspects of society. Members of the American Deaf community have the right to informed choice and the highest quality interpreting services. Recognition of the communication rights of America's women, men, and children who are deaf is the foundation of the tenets, principles, and behaviors set forth in this Code of Professional Conduct. (p. 1)

The field of interpreting has come a long way. Most formal education of interpreting students now takes place in a postsecondary setting. Several events have impacted the field of interpreting and its practitioners including the establishment of interpreter education programs, professional organizations, legislation, and other historical events. As Ball (2013) concluded, "Those who have paved the way deserve our respect and appreciation, and we can honor them most by taking what we have learned from them and using it to improve interpreter education" (p. 162).

## **Education in the United States**

Higher education has had an important role in the United States and continues to be a big part of society. Rhoads (2001) suggested that the first university in North America was established in New Towne, Massachusetts in 1636. This would later become Harvard University and was the start of the rise of American universities to global significance (Rhoads, 2001). Rhoads definitively said that “the university is the most significant creation of the second millennium . . . it has become the quiet but decisive catalyst in modern society” (p. xii). Over time, formal education has shifted, and David (1972) argued that “American higher education is both increasingly vocational in purpose and increasingly liberal in content,” but it still serves the purpose to train people for jobs that they desire (p. 15). Students come from around the world to participate in the American higher education experience and to position themselves for the future (Rhoads, 2001).

In 2015, about 4,627 institutions in the United States granted degrees (Chepkemoi, 2017). The Deaf community is also active in higher education as both students and instructors. It is estimated that approximately 10,000 deaf and hard of hearing students utilize interpreters in the classroom in the United States in more than 2,000 two- and four-year universities (Lewis, Farris, & Green, 1994; Stuckless, Ashmore, Schroedel, & Simon, 1997). Currently, deaf students attend colleges all over the nation and will continue to do so into the future. Educational institutions develop the new generation of the nation’s leaders and professional practitioners and scholars is a variety of disciplines (Rhoads, 2001). This large number of Deaf students in higher education increases the demand for qualified sign language interpreters in postsecondary education.



Additionally, interpreters need to prepare to work in settings outside of postsecondary education. Interpreter education programs are growing as more students desire to attend formal education programs to learn the art of interpreting.

### **Role of Faculty**

Although the success of learning is spread among many factors, faculty play a critical role in the education process. Pinnell and Galloway (1987) highlighted that “caring teachers are at the heart of school success for students” (p. 355). Umbach and Wawrzynski (2005) conducted a large-scale study of student and faculty interactions and concluded:

The impact that a faculty member can have on the student experience can be seen in and out of the classroom. We found that faculty behaviors and attitudes affect students profoundly, which suggests that faculty members may play the single-most important role in student learning. (p. 176)

In short, when it comes to student learning and engagement, faculty do matter (Astin, 1993; Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2005).

Faculty play a significant role in higher education, but students are ultimately responsible for their own education. “The student has to be an active participant, not a passive customer” (Rhoads, 2001, p. 65); yet, faculty play a crucial role

to instruct, to befriend, to encourage, and to guide the student on the long voyage of discovery ... No one else can make this voyage for the student, but the student is unlikely to derive the maximum benefit without the help and support of at least one concerned and sensitive faculty mentor. (Rhoads, 2001, p. 66)

Students perceive they are supported when faculty interact with them in positive ways inside and outside of the classroom, which demonstrates that faculty attitudes and behaviors can promote learning (Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2005). Understanding that adult students learn in different ways and approaches, faculty should make it their top priority to teach the students in a way that will make a lasting impact (Merriam & Bierema, 2014; Stage, Muller, Kinzie, & Simmons, 1998). Kiraly (2000) promoted the constructivist approach for translator education, that is bringing students into the driver's seat of their own education and "helping students move toward autonomy from the very beginning" (p. 125). Pinnell and Galloway (1987) reiterated that "educators need to recognize the learner's contribution to the educational process" (p. 353). To establish and maintain intrinsic motivation, Wlodkowski and Ginsberg (1995) suggested that teachers and students continuously create or enhance four conditions as part of the Motivational Framework for Culturally Responsive Teaching: establishing inclusion, developing attitude, enhancing meaning, and engendering competence. This model recognizes culture as "the deeply learned confluence of language, beliefs, values, and behaviors that pervades every aspect of our lives" and ultimately aims to create a common culture that all students can accept despite their differences (Wlodkowski, 2003, p. 1). Students learn in different ways and can benefit by constructivism with instructors to enhance their motivation and ultimately their education.

In summary, "interactions with students in and out of the classroom also can have a profound effect on student learning" (Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2005, p. 176). Student-faculty interaction also has positive correlations with every self-reported area of intellectual and personal growth (Astin, 1993). Ideally, students and instructors can work

together to foster the four motivational conditions. In short, faculty do matter and are essential to student success.

### **Interpreter Education**

Napier (2004) shared that “many look to America as an example of an ideal model of training, registration, and regulation for sign language interpreters, and the majority of the literature and research on sign language interpreting has been produced there” (p. 355). Bontempo and Napier (2007), in a research study, clearly identified gaps in competence among practitioners meaning there is room to improve and progress. There are approximately 150 interpreter education programs in the United States; however, the exact number of programs is hard to pin down with various conflicting reports (Ball, 2013). Interpreter education programs vary greatly in length, standards, prerequisites, and outcomes. Some programs offer Associate, bachelor’s, and master’s degrees, while others offer certificates or other credentials.

Over time, several organizations have aimed to formalize and optimize interpreter education. After a conference at Gallaudet University in Washington DC, the first published curriculum guide of interpreter training was in 1973 (Ball, 2013). In the late 1970s, The Conference of Interpreter Trainers (CIT) was founded by a group of interpreter educators who started a discussion about the need of such an organization at a RID conference (Ball, 2013). CIT is a professional organization that has a mission statement that says in part: “The Conference of Interpreter Trainers is a professional organization dedicated to laying the educational foundations for interpreters to build bridges of understanding” and is “focused primarily on interpreters working between American Sign Language and English” (CIT, n.d.). CIT is an influential force that

continues to hold biannual conferences that bring together interpreter educators from across the nation with the goal of collaborating to improve interpreter education.

The Commission on Collegiate Interpreter Education (CCIE) is an organization that has developed national standards for interpreter education and provides accreditation. The CCIE Standards is a list of 10 standards developed to bring continuity to interpreter education. The CCIE (2014) explained:

The Commission on Collegiate Interpreter Education Standards (CCIE Standards) identifies the knowledge, skills, and perspectives students need to gain in order to enter the field of professional interpreting. The Standards give students, faculty, curriculum developers, administrators, employers, and consumers a common set of expectations about what basic knowledge and competencies interpreting students should acquire. The Standards are to be used for the development, evaluation, and self-analysis of postsecondary professional interpreter education programs. They will guide new programs in defining policies on entry requirements, curricular goals, faculty selection, teaching methods, ongoing assessment, and projected student outcomes. For existing programs, the Standards provide benchmarks for assessing and enhancing student outcomes, evaluating and updating faculty, and improving curricula and related practices. (p. 1)

The fourth standard from the CCIE pertains to faculty and has 10 specific points. For example, one specific faculty standard is “Faculty members (full-time, part-time and adjunct) are qualified and competent to teach their assigned courses” (CCIE, 2014, p. 5).

Not all programs meet the standards of the CCIE. In fact, only 18 colleges have been

accredited by the CCIE: five Associate programs and 13 bachelor-level programs. These ideals are not the reality for most of the programs in the United States.

The National Association of the Deaf and Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf acknowledge the importance of interactions between faculty and students in Tenet 5 of the Code of Professional Conduct: “Interpreters demonstrate respect for colleagues, interns and students of the profession” (RID, 2005, p. 4). Civility, collegiality, and kindness go a long way in a field that has been known to experience “horizontal violence” (Ott, 2012, p. 11). In fact, interpersonal interactions are an area for concentrated development in the field (Hewlett, 2013). Instructors stand at an important gateway where new colleagues are prepared to enter the field.

### **Deaf Students and Deaf Faculty in Interpreting Education**

Deaf students are joining interpreter education programs and Deaf faculty are beginning to teach the interpreting classes more and more (Green, 2017; Rogers, 2016). Historically, formal interpreter education programs have catered to hearing students, being taught by hearing instructors (Ball, 2013). Deaf interpreters are not a new trend and have an important role in the field of interpreting. The RID (1997) explained that use of a Deaf Interpreter can provide “optimal understanding by all parties” (p. 2). Bienvenu (1991, as cited in Forestal, 2005) stated that Deaf people have been interpreting for each other ever since the first Deaf Schools were established as they would “clarify, explain, or reinforce by repetition for each other what was being said” (p. 235). Interpreter education programs must make adjustments as more Deaf students are joining programs to seek a formal education with the goal of working as interpreters in the field (Green,

2017; Rogers, 2016). Also, more Deaf faculty are becoming involved in teaching the interpreting classes in addition to American Sign Language classes.

### **The Task at Hand**

Interpreter education programs have the task of preparing students for work in the field of interpreting. Faculty and students work together with the hope that “students who are accepted into interpreter education programs should graduate with the skills that they need to be effective in their work” (Ball, 2013, p. 162). The instructors in these programs need to recognize their profound influence on the students and the students’ learning and motivation. Faculty make a difference in student learning, development, and motivation (Astin, 1993; Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2005; Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 1995). Instructors and practitioners can honor the past by working together to identify ways to optimize interpreter education for the future, including the findings presented in this thesis.

## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

### **Design of the Instrument**

I developed a survey instrument (See Appendix A) using Google Forms containing 13 lengthy sections. In each section, there were several quantitative and qualitative questions represented as open- and closed-ended questions. Using multiple methods can increase confidence in the results of the study (Hale & Napier, 2013). As part of development, the survey was pilot tested with peers and colleagues. I considered their feedback and made several modifications. Their pilot responses were deleted and not included with the data discussed here.

When the instrument was fully developed, participants responded to anywhere from 46-93 questions, depending on the number of interpreter education programs they attended. Only the first consent question required a response, the rest of the questions were optional and the respondent was able to answer it or leave it blank at their discretion. Sections 1-6 were targeted to those who had been a part of at least one interpreter education program. Sections 7-9 were specifically for those who went to at least two programs, and sections 10-12 were for those who went to three programs. The last section, Section 13, was the concluding page for all respondents and a chance to add any last comments or clarifying information.

Section 1 contained information about the study and the consent form. Eligibility extended to those that were 18 years or older who had attended or were attending an interpreter education program in the United States with the focus of interpreting between signed language and spoken language. Completing the program or working as an

interpreter were not requirements to participate. As part of the consent form, participants were required to click “Yes” to be allowed to continue through the survey. If a participant clicked “No” they were immediately directed out of the survey using jump technology. The consent statement was slightly different than the eligibility description and read: “By clicking ‘Yes’ I acknowledge that I am 18 years or older, have attended one or more interpreter education programs, and I give my consent to participate in a research study.”

Section 2 gathered demographic information such as location, age, ethnicity, gender identity, native language(s), education, hearing/Deaf status, certification(s), and more. In this section, most questions were quantitative with drop-down menus and checkboxes. These questions frequently had an “Other” option where the respondent was able to type a specific answer. Some questions were open-ended, such as “What is your gender identity?” with a text box available to type an answer.

Section 3 was titled “Interpreting Work” and gathered information about the respondents’ working status in the past, present and hopes for the future: how many hours were typically worked in a week, which settings, and whether they had left the field and for what length of time. Finally, in Section 4—Interpreter Education Program Information, Section 5—Program Perceptions, and Section 6—Experiences focused on my research question. Respondents were reminded not to evaluate programs that they might be instructors in, but to focus on the program(s) where they were students. Additionally, if they attended more than one program, they were reminded that there would be an area to discuss each one and to focus on one at a time.

If the respondent indicated that they went to a second program they were directed to Sections 7-9 to share about “Interpreter Education Program Information,” “Program



Perceptions,” and “Experiences” again, but this time focusing on their second program. If the respondent indicated that they went to a third program they were directed to Sections 10-12 to share about “Interpreter Education Program Information,” “Program Perceptions,” and “Experiences” yet again, but this time focusing on their third program. Section 13 was available to every respondent and provided two more questions to make any additional or clarifying comments.

### **Population and Sample**

I was seeking to understand the experiences and perceptions of current and former students in their interpreter education programs and wanted to reach as many as possible from all across the nation. For the purposes of this study, an interpreter education program was the blanket term that included Interpreter Training Programs (ITP), Interpreter Preparation Programs (IPP), Certificate Programs, and any other formal education of interpreters in the United States with the focus of interpreting between signed language and spoken language. This included Associate, bachelor’s, and master’s degrees as well as certificate programs. Participants in this study must have attended or be attending an interpreter education program in the United States. Additionally, the survey was open to those who did not complete their program and to those who never ended up working as an interpreter or worked for a time and left the field. In short, anyone who was a student for any length of time in an interpreter education program in the United States who was 18 years or older at the time of the survey was encouraged to participate in this study.

## **Data Collection**

After receiving approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Western Oregon University (WOU) to conduct a research study with human participants, the survey was shared and made available for three weeks from October 11-31, 2017. I sent the survey out to a list of program coordinators that I found on [discoverinterpreting.org](http://discoverinterpreting.org) (NCIEC, n.d.). Additionally, I posted the link with a description on social media and encouraged sharing. Furthermore, I sent the survey to different interpreting groups such as interpreting agencies, RID affiliate chapters, student groups, and so on. In all cases, I encouraged others to share the link with anyone who had attended any type of interpreter education program regardless of whether they completed the program or were working as an interpreter. This nonprobability sampling method is called snowball sampling (Hale & Napier, 2013). There was no way to contact every person who was currently an interpreting student or was a former student. I found it especially challenging to contact those who have left the field of interpreting. However, a large and diverse group of people responded to the survey.

## **Data Analysis and Treatment**

The eligibility to participate in the study was to be 18 years or older, have attended one or more interpreter education programs in the United States, and give consent to participate in the research study. Besides the initial consent question about being a former or current student, I had two later questions to further qualify participants (See Figure 2).

### Which best describes you currently?

- I completed one or more Interpreter Education Programs
- I am currently a student in my first Interpreter Education Program
- I started an Interpreter Education Program and did not finish
- I was never a student of an Interpreter Education Program
- Other...

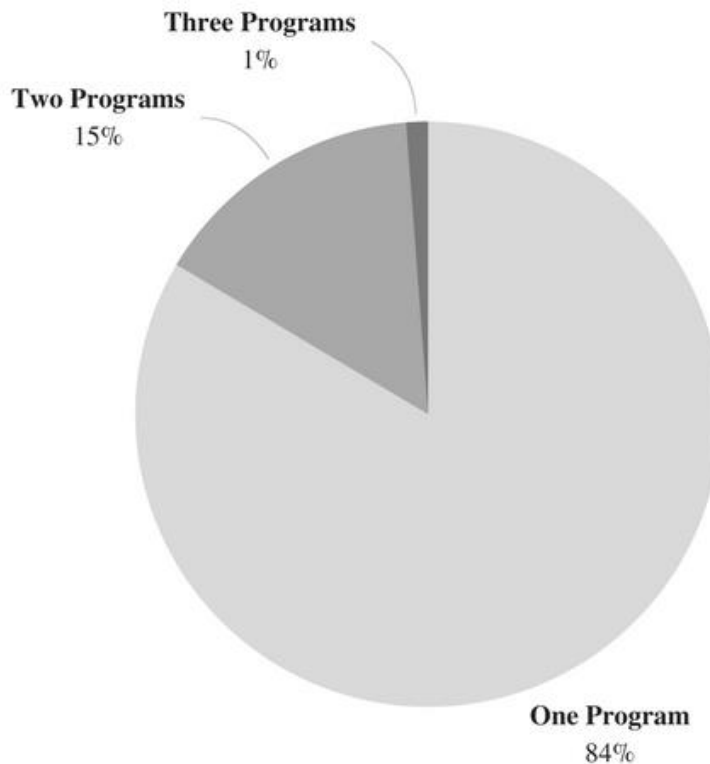
*Figure 2. Survey Question - Which best describes you currently?*

In response to this question, four people selected “I was never a student of an Interpreter Education Program” and were directed out of the survey. At the beginning of Section 4: Interpreter Education Program Information, the first question asked, “Do/did you attend an Interpreter Education Program?” Seven people responded “No.” Even though they had filled out Section 1-3, their responses have been scrubbed from the data. Additionally, three respondents went to international interpreter training programs and reported on their experiences there. This study focuses on the United States and their responses were scrubbed from the findings.

After using Google Forms to develop and disseminate the instrument, the platform keeps track of all the responses and automatically analyzes some of the data, specifically the quantitative data. Google Forms automatically creates graphs, charts, and percentages. I went through these charts to check for accuracy. All the data seamlessly imported from Google Forms to Google Sheets. I used Google Sheets to further analyze the data.

## Binding of the Study

As mentioned earlier, respondents were asked to answer anywhere from 46 to 93 questions depending on the number of interpreter education programs they attended. I gathered a significant amount of data; therefore, I decided to bind my study to the comments specifically about students' positive and negative experiences with instructors in the interpreter education programs across the nation in the first program that the respondents reported on. The majority of respondents only attended one program. When asked, "How many Interpreter Education Programs have you been a student in?" Of the responses, 416 of the 498 (84%) selected "One"; 76 (15%) selected "Two"; and 6 (1%) selected "Three" as shown in Figure 3. None of the respondents reported attending more than 3 programs.



*Figure 3.* How many Interpreter Education Programs have you been a student in?

Not counting the demographic information, essentially only six questions were analyzed:

- In your opinion, what are the program's weaknesses?
- In your opinion, what are the program's strengths?
- Did you have one or more negative experiences during this interpreter program as a result of the instructors? (Yes, No, Other)
- Please explain.
- Did you have one or more positive experiences during this interpreter program as a result of the instructors? (Yes, No, Other)
- Please explain.

### **Coding of Qualitative Data**

When it came to the qualitative data about positive and negative experiences with faculty, I used an open-coding method using Google Sheets. Open coding is the process of grouping together similar themes as they emerge from the data (Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Strauss & Corbin, 1994, 1998). I labeled specific categories with broader descriptions and created distinct columns representing each category. Every time a certain category was mentioned in a comment, I would mark it in the distinct column. One comment could be coded into multiple categories. For example, Respondent 312 said "The instructor could not control the talking in the class and overtly had favourites who got opportunities the rest of the class didn't get."<sup>1</sup> This was coded as both "Classroom Management" and "Playing Favorites." Another example, Respondent 360 said, "Some instructors are hard to get along with, some are disorganized or have too much on their

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<sup>1</sup> All respondents quotes are direct quotes left in their original form with irregularities in grammar and punctuation left as they were entered.

plate” was coded in three areas: “Personality Issue,” “Classroom Management,” and “Too Busy Elsewhere.”

When the positive and negative top 10 lists emerged, each of the categories were placed into Wlodkowski and Ginsberg’s (1995) four motivational conditions, to demonstrate strengthening or weakening, of the Motivational Framework for Culturally Responsive Teaching: establishing inclusion, developing attitude, enhancing meaning, and engendering competence. This data shows that instructors in interpreting education programs have profound influence on the students and the students’ learning and motivation. In short, faculty represent the most significant aspect in the development of students (Astin, 1993).

## CHAPTER 4: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of the study was to gather and document the experiences and perceptions of current and former students in interpreter education programs in the United States. Data was collected through an online survey for a three-week period and produced 514 consenting respondents from 40 states, representing 126 distinct interpreter education programs (out of a total estimated number of 150 interpreting programs in the United States; Ball, 2013). In this study, the data-driven themes have been limited to a top 10 list for the most prevalent categories of positive experiences with instructors and another top 10 list for the most prevalent categories of negative experiences with instructors. Each of the categories in the two top 10 lists can be shown to either strengthen or weaken the four motivational conditions: establishing inclusion, developing attitude, enhancing meaning, and engendering competence (Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 1995). The data collected from the instrument, as well as the literature reviewed, suggest that faculty play a crucial role in student motivation and outline the specific categories of positive and negative experiences with faculty.

### **Presentation of the Findings**

In all, 514 people consented to take the survey. By clicking “Yes” they agreed that they were at least 18 years old, attended one or more interpreter education program, and gave their consent to participate in the research study. Based on the length of instrument and the high volume of respondents, there was much more data than can reasonably be shared in this document. For the purposes of this thesis, the focus will be

on the positive and negative experiences between faculty and students from the students' perspective in their first interpreter training program.

After gathering demographic and interpreting work information, the instrument had two double-check questions. One asked, "Do/did you attend an Interpreter Education Program?" Seven respondents answered "No" to this question and their surveys were instantly submitted and flagged using jump technology. Their answers were not considered as part of the data of positive and negative interactions with faculty. On the second question (See Figure 2), four people selected "I was never a student of an Interpreter Education Program"; these responses were also not considered as part of the data of positive and negative interactions with faculty.

### **Demographics**

The online survey instrument was completed by 514 people from 40 states. One respondent indicated living in Canada but previously attended an interpreter education program in the United States. In total, respondents from 126 distinct interpreter training programs contributed to the data out of a total estimated number of 150 interpreting programs in the United States (Ball, 2013). This was more than expected but still only a small sampling of signed language interpreters in the United States. For future research, providing the survey instrument to all of the RID (2017) membership of more than 15,000 members and seeking out the other interpreters who are not members of RID, could have provided more data.

Respondents reported their exact age from a dropdown menu and there was at least one respondent every age from 18 years old to 63 years old. Additionally, there was one respondent who was 65 years old. The largest group of respondents was from ages



20-29 constituting 52.6% of the respondents as shown in Figure 4 and Table 1. When asked “What year did/will you graduate or complete this program?” The earliest was reported as 1982 all the way through currently enrolled students. Please note that some students left their programs before completion.

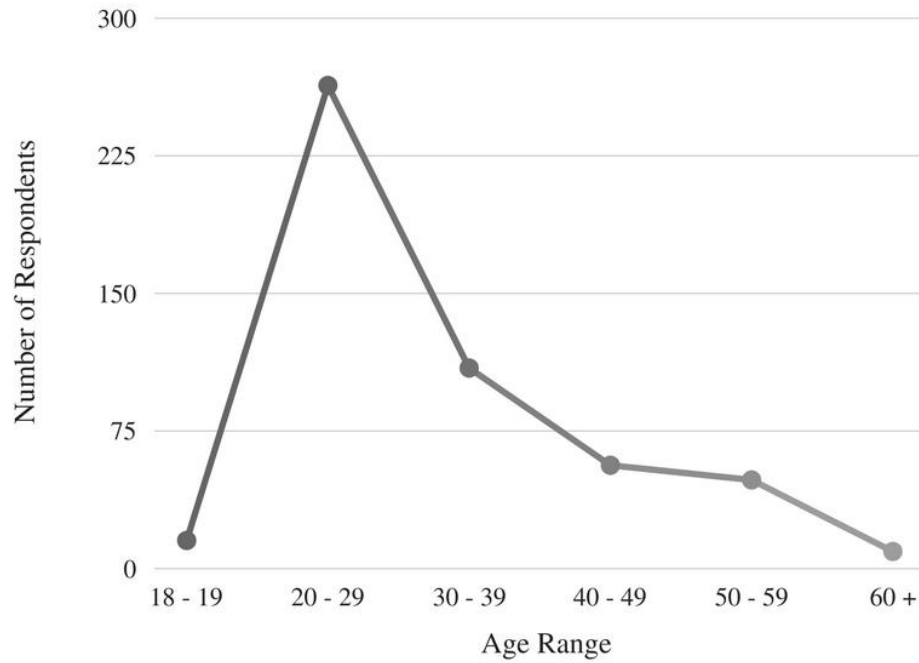


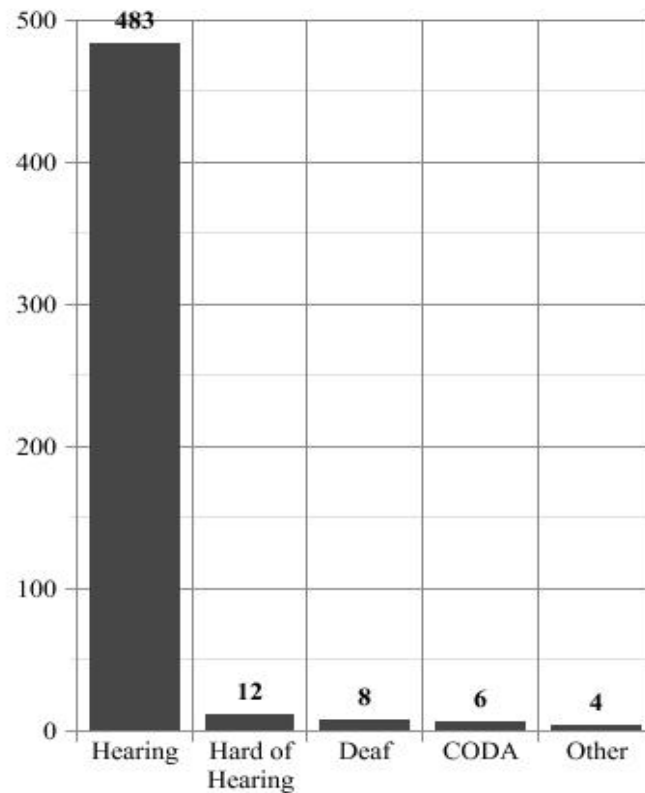
Figure 4. Distribution of Ages of Respondents

Table 1

*Distribution of Ages of Respondents*

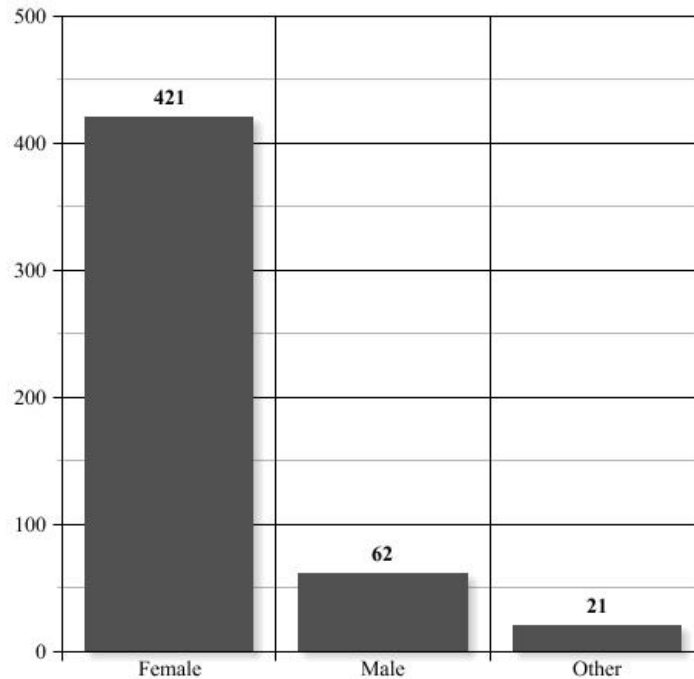
<u>Age Range</u>	<u>Number of Respondents</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
18 - 19	15	3%
20 - 29	263	52.6%
30 - 39	109	21.8%
40 - 49	56	11.2%
50 - 59	48	9.6%
60+	9	1.8%

A large majority of the respondents, 483, identified as Hearing. Additionally, 12 identified as Hard of Hearing, 8 as Deaf, 6 as CODAs or Children of Deaf Adults (rather than as “hearing” or another status), and 4 as Other as shown in Figure 5.



*Figure 5. Hearing and Deaf Status*

The respondents were asked “What is your gender identity?” with a text box available to type an answer. The responses were 421 “Female,” 62 “Male,” and 21 who were coded as “Other” as shown in Figure 6. Some of the specific typed-in responses were: Transgender, FTM, Nonbinary, Genderqueer, Agender, Gender Fluid, and more. The open-ended question allowed for each respondent to type a response that fit their own identification.



*Figure 6. Gender Identity of Respondents*

The fifth question was “Which category best describes you?” and allowed respondents to selected multiple categories relating to race, ethnicity, and background, and the results are shown in Figure 7. Additionally, there was a text box to type in a specific response. Out of 510 responses to this question, 427 selected “White, Caucasian,” 49 selected “Hispanic, Latino, Latinx, Spanish origin,” 24 selected “Black, African American,” 11 selected “Asian, Asian American,” 10 selected “Native American, Indian, Alaska Native.” There were 11 respondents who selected “Prefer not to answer.” There were 17 respondents coded under “Other” in Figure 7 who included: Middle Eastern, North African, Native Hawaiian, Other Pacific Islander, Ashkenazi Jew, Swedish, and Human. The respondents were able to select multiple boxes to indicate their native language(s): English was selected by 496 respondents, ASL was selected by 31 respondents, Spanish was selected by 17 respondents. Respondents typed in the following

other languages as their native language(s): Arabic, Cantonese, French, Vietnamese, Russian, Japanese, Swedish and Swedish Sign Language, SEE and PSE.

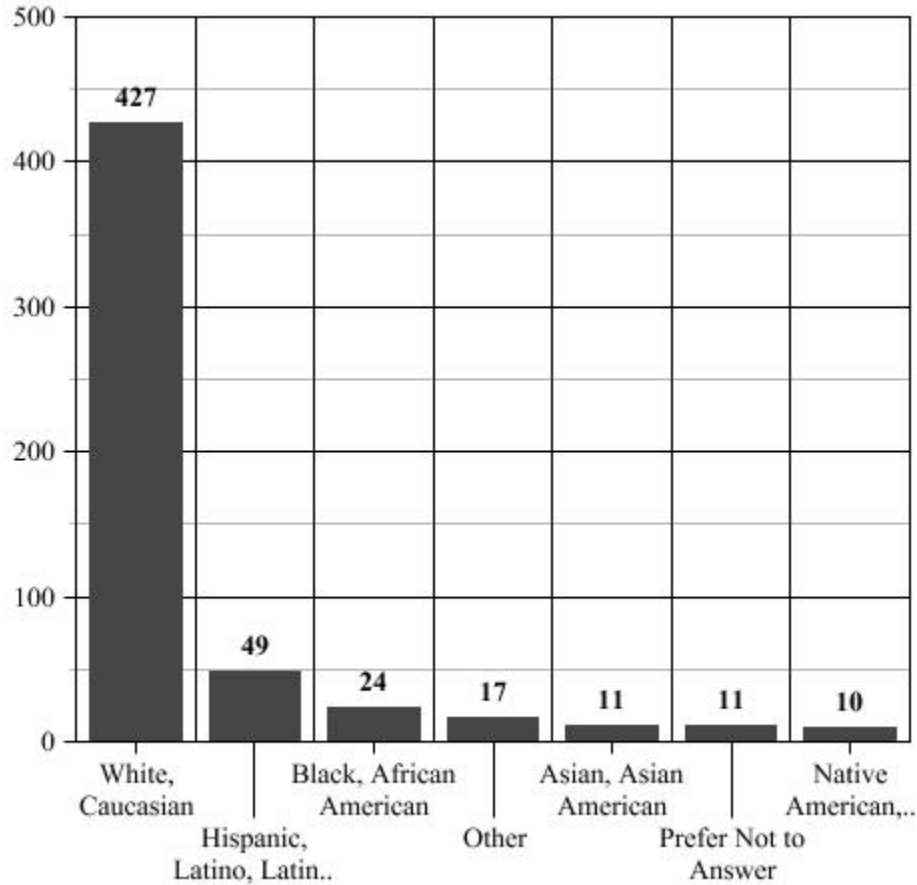


Figure 7. Survey Responses - Which Categories Best Describe You?

At the time of data collection, 28.2% of respondents included current college students working toward their first degree. Of the 514 respondents, 145 selected “I am currently a student in my first Interpreter Education Program.” The largest group was those 327 that selected “I completed one of more interpreter education programs.” Twenty-five stated “I started an Interpreter Education Program and did not finish.” Others clarified specific situations, such as they had completed one program and then moved on to another program. As shown in Figure 3, the majority of the respondents attended only one program. When asked “What is the highest level of education you have

completed?,” 188 respondents indicated a bachelor’s degree, 121 have an Associate degree, and 98 have or are in the process of a getting a master’s degree. Seven people have a doctorate, with nine working toward a doctorate. It is not uncommon for people to attend interpreter training programs after they have earned a degree in a different discipline.

When asked “Which best describes you currently?,” 53.9% selected “I am working as an interpreter”; 31.8% selected “I have the goal of working as an interpreter in the future”; 6.1% selected “I am not working as an interpreter but I used to”; and 3.7% selected “I am not working as an interpreter and I never have.” The remaining 4.5% typed in a unique response. The majority of respondents, 300 (59.4%) hold no certifications. Respondents who are certified hold the following qualifications: NIC, CI, CT, EIPA, BEI, NAD III-V, and several others.

When all the data was synthesized from the demographic information in this study, the following emerged as the profile for the typical respondent which closely mirrored the current demographics of the organization Registry of Interpreter for the Deaf (RID, 2017):

- Hearing
- Female
- White/Caucasian
- English as a native language
- 20-29 years of age
- Associate degree or higher
- Completed one interpreter training program

- Currently working as an interpreter
- No certification

In this research study, there was great diversity represented but in smaller numbers. As time goes on, it is likely and welcome that with a concentrated effort to recruit and retain students of diverse backgrounds that the typical profile will shift and enrich the field. Respondents cannot be understood with individual labels, rather with how these complex realities work together. Crenshaw and Harris (2009) discussed the idea of individuals’ “intersectionality” and that “disadvantage or exclusion can be based on the interaction of multiple factors rather than just one” (p. 3). Figure 8 shows the diversity of respondents in this study in regard to areas of age, gender identity, ethnicity, native language(s), education, hearing/Deaf status, certification(s), number of programs, working status, and more.



Figure 8. Diversity of Respondents’ Demographics (made with www.wordclouds.com)

## **Interpreter Education Programs**

The survey instrument asked respondents to identify their interpreter education program with its name, city, and state. After coding the data, it was evident that current or former students from 126 interpreter education programs across the nation responded to the instrument encompassing 40 states. Table 2 shows the most commonly listed interpreter education programs and the number of respondents. Please note that a small number (4.1%) of the respondents reported that—to the best of their knowledge—the program they evaluated in this survey is no longer in existence. Seven respondents (1.3%) indicated that their programs have or will go in to dormancy or close due to low enrollment. The large majority (94.7%) of the respondents indicated that—to the best of their knowledge—the program still exists. Whether the program is still running or not, the students' perceptions of their interactions with instructors are still valid.

Since I used snowball sampling approach, I was surprised to see that the schools that I was affiliated with were not a source for greater amounts of respondents. I attended the interpreter education program at California State University Northridge as a student, taught at Mt. San Antonio College, and was a student of Western Oregon University. All of these institutions were represented but not with as many respondents as I would have guessed as the primary researcher. Conversely, I have no affiliation with the top responding college nor any of the remaining institutions listed in Table 2. This is evidence that the snowball sampling of the online survey instrument reached out of my sphere of influence.

Table 2

*List of Top Responding Interpreter Education Programs*

<u>Name of Interpreter Education Program</u>	<u>Number of Respondents</u>
Community College of Baltimore County - Catonsville, Catonsville, MD	36
California State University Northridge, Northridge, CA	30
RIT/NTID, Rochester, NY	26
St. Catherine University, St. Paul, MN	25
Ohlone College, Fremont, CA	18
Portland Community College, Portland, OR	18
University of South Florida, Tampa, FL	15
American River College, Sacramento, CA	14
Western Oregon University, Monmouth, OR	14
Mt San Antonio College, Walnut, CA	13
Gallaudet University, Washington DC	13
San Antonio College, San Antonio, TX	13
Palomar College, San Marcos, CA	13
Salt Lake Community College, Taylorsville, UT	10
University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ	10
Pierce College, Woodland Hills, CA	9
Goshen College, Goshen, IN	9
University of North Carolina Greensboro, Greensboro, NC	9

**Strengths and Weaknesses of the Program**

Section 5 of the instrument asked, “In your opinion, what are the program’s weaknesses?” This open-ended question led to 427 responses of qualitative data (not counting the 13 of the responses that were “N/A” or something similar). This question did not have checkboxes, drop down menus, examples, or suggestions; it was simply an open-ended question. Among these responses, 153 indicated something about the faculty, which was the largest category. The next two largest categories were lack of language



acquisition before the start of the interpreting program and that the program was overall too short. The next question asked “In your opinion, what are the program’s strengths?” Of the 451 people who responded to the open-ended question (not counting the six who responded with “N/A” or something similar, 248 respondents (54.9%) directly mentioned something about the faculty, making it the largest category.

### **ASL Instructors**

While designing the study, I assumed that the instrument would elicit information strictly about the interpreting instructors who taught interpreting classes whether they were Deaf or hearing teachers. In the directions, this distinction was never mentioned or clarified beyond “in your interpreter education program.” When the data were analyzed, there were many comments and evaluations about ASL teachers. It is clear that respondents were considering interactions with their ASL teachers as part of their evaluation of their interpreter education program. Students often learn ASL at the same institution where they take interpreting classes, so it is easy to see the overlap. There were several comments about ASL teachers in both positive and negative areas. For example, Respondent 217 wrote “A few of the ASL professors is TERRIBLE at posting feedback and grades,” and Respondent 102 shared that the “First ASL instructor said ‘You will never learn ASL.’” On a positive note, Respondent 428 shared “All of my ASL Language instructors have been incredible and wonderful,” and Respondent 304 shared “Great ASL teachers.” It was impossible to separate which data pertained to interactions with ASL instructors and which data pertained to interactions with interpreting instructors. For the purposes of this study, “instructors” refers to both ASL and interpreting instructors.

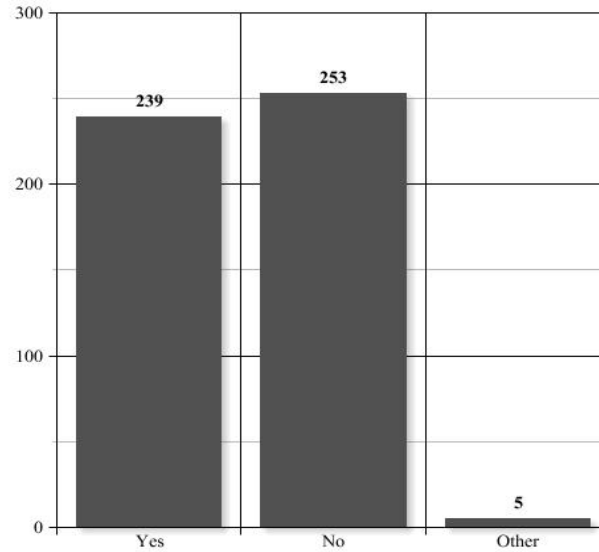
## Negative Experiences with ASL and Interpreting Instructors

One question specifically asked “Did you have one or more negative experiences during this interpreter program as a result of the instructors?” The options for response were “Yes,” “No,” or “Other” with a space available to type. Out of 497 responses, 237 selected “Yes,” and two others filled in an “Other” response that were coded as “Yes.” Conversely, 250 selected “No” and three others filled in an “Other” response that were coded as “No.” Five others chose “Other” and were coded as “Other.” The data and codes for negative interactions with instructors are represented in Table 3 and Figure 9 shows how the yes, no, and other responses compare in volume to each other.

Table 3

*Coding for “Did you have one or more negative experiences as a result of the instructors?”*

<u>Code</u>	<u>Details of Response</u>	<u>Detailed Totals</u>	<u>Code Total</u>
No	“No”	250	253
	“I haven’t. But have seen with other students”	1	
	“not yet”	1	
	“too soon to tell”	1	
Yes	“Yes”	237	239
	“Just one negative experience”	1	
	“Collegr of Education instructor, not interpreter instructor.”	1	
Other	“Experienced different instructors”	1	5
	“Do not wish to say”	1	
	“More ‘instruction’ than instructors”	1	
	“program too competitive”	1	
	“yes/no”	1	



*Figure 9. One or More Negative Experiences as a Result of the Instructors*

There were 255 responses to the open-ended question of “Please Explain” related to the question “Did you have one or more negative experiences during this interpreter program as a result of the instructors?” Eighteen responses were not actually negative experiences; for example, Respondent 216 said, “Decline to explain” and Respondent 432 said, “I didn’t but I know others who did.” This left 237 respondents who provided specifics about their negative interactions. Seventeen people responded “Yes” but did not provide any further information. Conversely, eight respondents answered “No” but still gave detailed answers about their negative experiences with instructors. After reading through and coding the qualitative data, several patterns began to emerge. The top 10 most frequently mentioned negative experiences, the descriptions, and number of respondents in the ranking order are outlined in Table 4 and explained in detail below.

Table 4

*The Top 10 Student Reported Negative Experiences with Instructors*

<u>Rank</u>	<u>Category</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Number of Respondents</u>
1	Personality	Ego, mood, lack of caring, unapproachable, intimidating, inflexible, scares students on purpose, pessimistic, etc.	69
2	Feedback/ Grading	Not enough, mostly negative, too late or never at all, inconsistent among students, too harsh, etc.	56
3	Classroom Management	Unorganized, struggles with technology, going off topic, frequently cancels class, late to class, not taking questions, talking too much about personal life, etc.	40
4	Intolerance for Others	Microaggressions, biases, belittling minorities, not open to different ideology, not safe, not accommodating special needs including with Deaf students, etc.	40
5	Lack of Current Knowledge and Skills	Not a current practitioner, outdated information, good interpreter but not a teacher, poor ASL skills, out of touch with the Deaf Community, etc.	28
6	Unclear or Unreasonable Expectations	Unclear syllabus, changing the assignment multiple times, requirements unattainable, high pressure, etc.	24
7	Turnover or Institution Incompatibility	New instructors every semester, speaking bad about other faculty, lack of variety of instructors, leaving mid semester, etc.	16
8	“Told Me I Couldn’t Do It”	A specific time when an instructor told the student that they would not make a good interpreter	15
9	Playing Favorites	Teachers showing favoritism towards certain students	15
10	Too Busy Elsewhere	No time for students, obligations elsewhere, not invested in class, being pulled from class for other duties, etc.	13

**Personality.** Personality issues were the most frequently mentioned negative interaction with instructors with 69 respondents mentioning something about it. The main complaints could be grouped into subcategories of ego, mood, lack of caring, unapproachable, intimidating, inflexible, scares students on purpose, pessimistic, and more.

Respondent 96 said, “I got an answer wrong to a question and when explaining the instructor made me feel like I was stupid for not knowing the answer.” Respondent 449 shared, “My instructor was a very demanding person who would treat you like your work was never good enough and never improving. This caused me to feel extremely inadequate and felt like dropping out due to the feeling that I would never succeed.” Some students shared very specific stories. For example, one instructor threatened students that they would never work out in the community if they crossed her. Another instructor talked about how unfair it was that the students would be able to undercut her rate when they graduated thereby stealing her work.

One common complaint was instructors’ inflexibility with things that happened outside of the program. For example, Respondent 369 had to get a surgery and was accused of making it up to get out of work. Respondent 136 shared “I was also told to quit my job or fail the program. No options, no alternatives, just an ultimatum.” Students shared several other stories of inflexibility when things arose such as death of a loved one, work, families, and medical issues.

Several times, students shared instances when they were intentionally scared or given negative, pessimistic attitudes. Respondent 122 shared:

A big theme of this program, with exceptions of a couple professors, was to scare

students from interpreting. The intention of this was to make sure we didn't take jobs we weren't prepared for. And I think this negatively impacted students as a result. Students leaving this program feel like they can't actually go interpret anywhere after having completed a training program.

Furthermore, Respondent 136 was put off when "A teacher bragged about her fail rate." Respondent 505 shared that based on these negative interactions, it "took a lot of mentoring to get rid of their voice in my head." Students had several negative experiences with being intentionally scared or intimidated. In short, the most commonly reported negative interaction with faculty had to do with personality issues of instructors who were "plain rude" (Respondent 204).

**Feedback/Grading.** The second most frequent theme to emerge from students' negative interactions with faculty was regarding feedback and grading, mentioned by 56 respondents. The main complaints could be grouped into subcategories of: not enough feedback, the feedback was mostly negative, the feedback came too late or never at all, feedback and grades were inconsistent among students, and/or the feedback was too harsh. For example, Respondent 464 said, "There is hardly any feedback - feedback that is helpful, other than 'good job.'" Respondent 327 shared "Students are held to and graded based on different standards," and a similar frustration was shared by Respondent 3 that the instructor "graded students on totally separate systems that were inconsistent with previously established rubrics on class discourse." Respondent 39 lamented that there is "very little feedback." Respondent 230 had a softer tone, sharing "My instructors were wonderful. However, there was a definite lack of feedback for many of the classes. I feel that I could have benefited from more feedback." Respondent 11 shared that "We

never got enough feedback.” Respondent 6 shared that “most feedback is negative feedback.” It is clear that the respondents had several negative experiences based on grading and feedback, including the lack thereof.

**Classroom management.** Students recognized a lack of classroom management skills as the third leading negative interaction with instructors, with 40 respondents mentioning it. This category is explained as: unorganized, struggles with technology, going off topic, frequently cancels class, late to class, not taking questions, talking too much about personal life, and so on. Several respondents brought up that instructors talked too much about their personal lives. Respondent 381 shared “One instructor talked about themselves a lot, [it] was enjoyable but felt [like] a lot of wasted time.” Respondent 201 summed it up by saying the “Instructor talked too much about her personal life in class.” Respondent 5 added, “Instructors that waste class time and go off topic.” Finally, Respondent 415 shared that the instructors were “too personal about their own life.”

The inability to ask questions was a common negative experience with instructors. Respondent 289 shared “Questions were not encouraged, in fact squashed, and in turn curiosity for learning.” Additionally, Respondent 227 stated, “One instructor refused to help students when they had questions.” Respondent 166 was irked by “Asking for more info and giving inadequate answers.” Lastly, Respondent 425 grieved that the instructors were “Unwilling to answer questions.”

Students felt discouraged when instructors did not try and build cohort unity or take the time to learn names. Even though the class was small, one instructor “took multiple semesters ... to learn my name” (Respondent 436). Students also struggled with instructors being unorganized. Respondent 464 shared “Some teachers were extremely

unorganized” and Respondent 423 shared the instructor was “disorganized and has no plan so we don’t know what to study.” There were several complaints about instructors being late or canceling class, such as Respondent 351 who shared “Some professors wouldn't show up to class some days, or would show up late.” Respondent 312 was frustrated that “The instructor could not control the talking in the class.” In summary, Respondent 86 stated, “I felt that an instructor was not yet proficient in classroom management skills.”

**Intolerance for others.** The fourth most common theme to emerge from the data was brought up by 40 respondents mentioning experiences with their instructor demonstrating intolerance for them in their diversity. This category is described as “Microaggressions, biases, belittling minorities, not open to different ideology, not safe, not accommodating special needs including with Deaf students, etc.” Respondent 384 shared “Frequent microaggressions by instructors,” which was a common sentiment among many respondents.

Deaf interpreting students struggled with instructors in their interpreter education programs. Respondent 110 shared “As a deaf interpreting student, it is often forgotten to provide communication access to video recordings, guest speakers who don’t know ASL, etc.” and “Hearing professors sometimes use their voices, forgetting to sign during lectures.” Respondent 393 shared “they are clueless about deaf interpreting/interpreters.” Lastly, Respondent 361 shared “Sometimes I felt like the program could ... make more of an effort to be DI [Deaf interpreter] friendly.” Deaf interpreting students often face extra barriers even in interpreting education programs.



Race was brought up by several respondents. Specifically, Respondent 357 shared “A dilemma involving race and racism where a outside mediator was brought in,” and in a similar vein, Respondent 379 shared “A problem came up regarding racism and exclusion for one of the students, the mediation was not handled well and became traumatic to some of the students.” Respondent 406 shared that instructors have an “Overall lack of awareness of strengths and weaknesses of students of color” and Respondent 101 shared “there was a particular instructor who had a tendency to look down on POC and behave negatively towards them.” Race is one of the ways that students felt intolerance directed at them.

Two respondents shared intolerance about their vision abilities. Respondent 198 shared that instructors “weren’t willing to accommodate me” until the disability office had to step in and advocate for the student. The same respondent also shared that “Several instructors also regularly supported ableist views such as charging more per hour for DeafBlind consumers which made me feel very marginalized.” Lastly, Respondent 448 shared that the “instructor wasn’t familiar with working with a visually impaired student” and the student “struggled for weeks in that class.”

Respondents shared several other unique instances of intolerance. For example, Respondent 203 shared “One teacher told me I didn’t have a learning disability; I just needed to go to therapy.” Respondent 512 shared “As an individual with mental illnesses, it was hard for professors to understand my experience and perspectives.” Respondent 209 did not appreciate “being singled out in front of the class for my different beliefs and having to interpret things that they ‘knew’ I disagreed with to see how I would react.” Respondent 151 felt “belittled due to being from a minority area/rural vs the city.”

Respondent 358 noted that “Deaf people do not like hearing people.” Respondent 252 shared “Discriminated due to my country of origin. My prior experience was not good enough because it was not American.” These are a variety of the ways that people felt not tolerated in their diversity.

Ideology and thought worlds were reported as an area for negative interactions. Respondent 181 shared “There were times I felt instructors were more concerned about students believing the same as the instructor, rather than developing their own understanding and opinions.” Additionally, Respondent 145 added, “One teacher likes to pick on students who [do] not have the same ideology as her. It frustrated students and really took a blow to their self esteem.” To sum it up, Respondent 218 shared “I have had instructors too cocky to realize there is more than one way to do something right.”

Several respondents felt intolerance based on their language background or abilities. Respondent 67 shared “I was asked to leave because English wasn’t my first language.” A Deaf respondent reported, “High criticism by hearing professors for my English grammar in research papers (and they didn’t mark on my hearing classmates who are English-as-L2 learners like me).” Another issue was not respecting different kinds of signed languages. Respondent 142 shared “I am a CODA and felt my parents were judged for not being ‘Deaf enough’/more oral. Not enough respect for all Deaf people across the continuum of language.” A few respondents felt like they were targeted for being native signers and were picked on by the teachers (Respondents 403, 87, and 183). The respondents reported experiences with intolerance that was varied among several reasons including race, country or origin, hearing or Deaf status, language abilities, vision abilities, mental health, personal beliefs, and many more.

**Lack of current knowledge and skills.** The fifth highest reported category of negative interaction emerged when 28 respondents mentioned the faculty's lack of current knowledge and skills. Several respondents noted that they had no doubt that the instructors could interpret, but this did not speak to their ability to teach. For example, Respondent 435 said, "Some teaching staff were very experienced in the field of interpreting, but not with education." In the same vein, "People who are great interpreters in the field but have limited teaching experience," "An interpreter was our interpreting instructor, but was not qualified to teach it ... the instructor was highly qualified to interpret, however," and "One teacher in particular that does not have a background in teaching but is a skilled interpreter is not equipped to handle a class" (Respondents 211, 208, and 416). Being a skilled interpreter was not enough in the students' minds.

Several respondents brought up the issue of being taught outdated or conflicting information. Respondent 100 observed that "there was a lot of conflicting information between instructors and different Interpreting styles. I knew which instructors were still working as interpreters and put more weight on what they had to say." Furthermore, Respondent 376 shared "He was teaching extremely outdated information," and Respondent 444 said, "When taking more than one class at a time the education I was receiving was often conflicting." Lastly, Respondent 83 shared "An instructor was unknowledgable of content and frequently said they did not know what things ... that were written on their course materials." Conflicting and outdated information was a common complaint, and students put more weight on what current practitioners were teaching.

Some respondents had to adjust to novice teachers. Respondent 396 shared “One of the teachers was not qualified to be teaching (not enough experience as an interpreter, no experience as a teacher) and was a waste of a semester.” Respondent 202 shared that “a few professors are new and are still getting the hang of teaching, so we have to be patient with them.” Respondent 276 noticed that several qualified teachers moved on to other venues: “The Deaf were mostly new to teaching. Qualified deaf teachers moved to better ventures. Interpreter teachers weren’t really teachers.” Respondent 269 said, “A recent oncoming instructor was new, and I was concerned about the lack of learning in her classroom. She is a fantastic person, however many students complain about the lack of learning opportunity in her classes.” Several students felt that they paid the price for new teachers taking the time to learn the ropes of teaching.

Several other topics arose including lack of technology, languages models, and not being an example. Respondent 121 shared “the instructor still utilizes tape recorders to play source material for interpretation - would become aggressively defensive when approached with using more hosted materials.” Furthermore, this same instructor had not been a practitioner in years: “This particular teacher ... Had no hands up working time in multiple years but still taught.” Respondent 410 shared about a “Deaf instructor who teaches ethics but [does] not walk the walk. She does not have enough experiences to pull from.” Also, several respondents brought up languages issues, such as Respondent 5 who shared “Instructors that sign English when we’re supposed to be learning ASL.” It was clear that students were wary of instructors that were not current practitioners and the several other factors that demonstrated their lack of current knowledge and skills.

**Unclear or unreasonable expectations.** The sixth most frequent theme to emerge from students' negative interactions with faculty was regarding feedback and grading, with 24 of the respondents mentioning it. This category is defined as “unclear syllabus, changing the assignment multiple times, requirements unattainable, high pressure, etc.” Respondents made comments such as “Unclear syllabus, unclear grading,” “some of the instructors were not clear in their expectations,” and “didn't explain assignments well” (Respondents 2, 296, and 415). Respondent 139 shared a little more:

I have had a few instructors where the class wasn't structured in a way that made sense to me. I would miss assignments or the requirements of assignments would change multiple times after I'd started working on them ... I try to avoid taking classes with those professors if I can.

Several others shared times they asked for clarification. Respondent 454 shared that “when asking for clarification the teacher looked at us like we were dumb—but kindly clarified. However, the assignment seemed to change, or be added to.” Additionally, Respondent 348 shared “There have been a couple of times where I struggled with the homework, and when I asked for clarification, it was not very helpful.”

Sometimes the issue was unreasonable expectations such as getting enough hours, busy-work, tough assignments, and more. Respondent 51 was shocked and underprepared to meet the requirement of interpreting a feature length film in an ASL 1 class.

Respondent 415 summed it up by mentioning that faculty can be “Very demanding and not clear on explaining things.” Students struggled with unclear or unreasonable expectations.

**Turnover or institution incompatibility.** The seventh most frequent complaint was both the high and low turnover rates of instructors and the perceived incompatibility with the various institutions. It was more common to complain about the high rate of instructor turnover. For example, a common theme was “There was a lot of turn over during my education,” “not consistent professors,” and “they switched the professors each semester” (Respondents 320, 271, and 11). Respondent 347 was frustrated by the lack of continuity between the classes: “Instructors often assumed we were taught things the semester before when in fact we were not. This happened EVERY semester.” Respondent 453 concluded, “Having consistent instruction (among the teachers) throughout would be a benefit to all of the students.” Students struggled with the frequent changing of instructors.

Conversely, a few respondents wished that they would have had more variety and selection in their instructors and complained about there not being any variety. Namely, Respondent 97 shared the frustration that sometimes the instructor is “the only professor that teaches their subject matter ... you WILL have to take them again.” Respondent 442 noticed that “these teachers were burned out and neither one teaches there any longer” and suggested that “it should be a rotation of teachers.” Students struggled with not having variety among instructors.

There were several comments about how the instructors were new to the school or had to step up after someone had left. Students reported such things as the “Professor wasn’t a good fit for the school” or “that took some getting used to” (Respondents 8 and 447). Also, students did not appreciate a lack of collegiality like when Respondent 234 noted, “One instructor always complained about the other,” while another noted a horrific

team-teaching experience. Students perceived times when instructors were incompatible with the institution or had conflict with others and were frustrated by both high and low turnover of professors.

**“Told me I couldn’t do it.”** The eighth most common negative interaction that students brought up referred to the times when the instructors specifically told an individual that they could not, or should not, be an interpreter. As respondent 467 put it: “One instructor told me that I was not cut out for the job.” Additionally, respondent 205 shared “A new instructor who taught my Interp 1 class told me at the final meeting that I should maybe think about another career. Basically deflating any sense of confidence I had.” Respondent 102 shared that an ASL instructor said, “You will never learn ASL” and later a different interpreting instructor said, “You will never become an interpreter.” There were several other stories shared. Interestingly, at least seven of these respondents are now working interpreters and several more are still students.

**Playing favorites.** The issue of instructors “playing favorites” was reported 15 times and was the ninth most common concern. The term showed up repeatedly in the data, and it was surprising to find that it did not rank higher. Below are some exact words of half of the respondents in this category:

- “My professor clearly shows favorites and it seems like it’s reflected in feedback during class” (Respondent 369)
- “Some students get special treatment, don’t get docked points if a project or assignment is late” (Respondent 6)
- “The instructor ... overtly had favourites who got opportunities the rest of the class didn’t get (Respondent 312)

- “There was some favoritism on the part of one instructor though the negative impact was more targeted at a fellow classmate” (Respondent 233)
- “Don’t like how instructors ‘play favorites’” (Respondent 194)
- “Instructors played favorites and gave special assignments to more skilled students who didn’t complete class work” (Respondent 99)
- “Teacher favored the better students or more skilled” (Respondent 419)

Students do not respond well to the negative experience of favoritism towards certain students from faculty.

**Too busy elsewhere.** The tenth highest pattern that emerged from the data is the frustration students felt with the busy schedules and lives of their instructors. As Respondent 351 shared, “Some professors wouldn’t show up to class some days, or would show up late. They were involved in so many other things that it seemed being a professor didn’t matter as much.” Similarly, Respondent 34 shared “This teacher had too many obligations and other roles in the deaf community and it seemed as though he did not have much interest in the classes he taught.” Several others mentioned things as they “have too much on their plate,” “Our instructors are overworked,” and “the instructor was frequently called out of class to attend to something else” (Respondents 360, 259, and 273). Students notice when teachers have other obligations that take away from teaching.

### **Positive Experiences with ASL and Interpreting Instructors**

As discussed above, 451 people responded to the open-ended question “In your opinion, what are the program’s strengths?” In total, 248 respondents (55%,) directly mentioned something about the faculty, making it the largest category when respondents



evaluated program strengths. This question did not have check boxes, drop down menus, examples, or suggestions; it was simply an open-ended question.

More specifically, one question asked, “Did you have one or more positive experiences during this interpreter program as a result of the instructors?” Out of 495 responses, 472 plainly picked “Yes”; 22 plainly picked “No.” One other typed “No comments” and was coded as “Other.” The data and codes for positive interactions with instructors (represented in Table 5) show how the yes, no, and other responses compare to each other. Of all those who responded to the question, 83 answered “Yes” but provided no further data. Conversely, one answered “No” but then added the positive benefit of “An ability to socialize with Deaf people” (Respondent 425).

Table 5

*Coding for “Did you have positive experiences as a result of the instructors?”*

<u>Code</u>	<u>Details of Response</u>	<u>Detailed Totals</u>	<u>Code Total</u>
Yes	“Yes”	472	472
No	“No”	22	22
Other	“no comments”	1	1

There were 390 responses to the open-ended question of “Please Explain” following the question “Did you have one or more positive experiences during this interpreter program as a result of the instructors?” After reading through and coding the qualitative data, patterns began to emerge. The top 10 most frequently mentioned positive categories, descriptions, and number of respondents in the ranking order are outlined in Table 6 and explained in detail below.

Table 6

*The Top 10 Student Reported Positive Experiences with Instructors*

<u>Rank</u>	<u>Category</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Number of Respondents</u>
1	Supportive and Encouraging	Instructor was supportive and encouraging both inside and outside of class and/or was encouraging after the program.	114
2	Teaching Techniques	Beneficial feedback, classroom activities, homework, use of technology, promoting unity, specific memorable activities, etc.	112
3	Kind, Caring, “Wonderful”	Showed kindness and care, approachable, welcoming, helpful, described as “wonderful” and “great,” etc.	56
4	Sharing Real Work Experiences	The instructors were current practitioners in the field of interpreting or native signers; very knowledgeable and shared their experiences to benefit the students.	51
5	One-on-One Time	The instructor spent individual time with the student whether it was in class, after class, in office hours, or somewhere else.	49
6	Community Connections and Resources	Connected the student to internships, real world experiences, the Deaf Community, working interpreters, and/or jobs.	45
7	Content of Class/Curriculum	The content of the classes was beneficial and useful in learning ASL and becoming an interpreter.	43
8	Desirable Outcome of Education	Student was able to interpret, pass certification, get a job, or gained another desirable outcome	32
9	Passionate and Invested	The instructors were perceived as passionate and invested in their work or about the Deaf Community and the field of interpreting	27
10	Available and Willing to Answer Questions	Available during office hours, would take time to answer questions in class, would stay late to answer questions, open door policy, etc.	20

**Supportive and encouraging.** Supportive and encouraging instructors were the most frequently mentioned positive interaction with instructors with 114 respondents mentioning something related to it. This category is defined as: The instructor was supportive and encouraging both inside and outside of class and/or was encouraging after the program. In the responses for just this one question the word “support” and its variations showed up 67 times. The word “encourage” and its variations showed up 49 times. The two words commonly showed up together in the same comment. For example, Respondent 122 said, “I felt supported and encouraged by my professors” and Respondent 69 shared “All the instructors were very supportive and encouraging.”

Students were willing to work hard as long as they felt supported. Respondent 298 shared “It is a rigorous program,” yet “teachers build you up as you go. I always felt supported even when my work was not on par with other students.” Respondent 161 shared “The teachers are supportive and push students to strive to be their best” and Respondent 47 shared “The professors provide constant support and constructive criticism.” Students appreciated when the support continued even after the program. Respondent 164 noted, “I had lots of instructors who were very supportive both during and after my time in the program.” Students and teachers often become colleagues not long after graduation. Respondent 377 shared “They were very supportive and are now colleagues of mine today.” Respondent 24 said, “Many encouraging teachers who supported, built up, and just gave encouragement while we struggled to figure out what it means to interpret. Those ‘little’ comments kept me going.”

**Teaching techniques.** The second most frequent positive theme to emerge from students was teaching techniques, with 112 respondents mentioning it. The main praises

could be clumped into subcategories of: beneficial feedback, classroom activities, homework, use of technology, promoting unity, and specific memorable activities.

Respondent 347 wrote about one “instructor that was incredibly motivated and creative in her teaching approach. She incorporated games and other activities that helped us learn while also setting a more relaxed, communal, supportive classroom environment.”

A common specific theme that was brought up was valuable feedback.

Respondent 195 said the instructor “provides effective feedback that can be used immediately.” Students appreciated when teachers were open with their strengths and weaknesses. Respondent 140 shared “Even after a test that was not passed, the instructor sat down and gave one on one feedback about everything that was done well, everything that wasn’t, and what needs to happen to improve.” Additionally, Respondent 159 shared “The professors were very hands on and honest. If I was doing well they’d talk to me. If I was doing poorly, they would talk to me.” Respondent 239 shared “feedback from both instructors was specific and useful, not ‘good job.’” Feedback and Grading was a leading negative interaction with faculty and a contributor to a top category of positive interactions with instructors.

Several respondents specifically pinpointed humor as a valued element.

Respondent 448 said “My ASL professor ... [is] hilarious and very welcoming.”

Additionally, Respondent 7 shared the instructor was “very funny and educational.”

Another valued technique was teaching students to become independent thinkers as

Respondent 110 shared the “Professor asked me questions to my questions; Encouraged me to find the answer from within; Made me think further ... I won’t have anybody

giving me the answers in life as an interpreter.” Several teaching techniques made an impact on students.

Many students appreciated when the instructor made an effort to build unity among the students. Respondent 206 shared “We developed a sense of family among our graduating class, we had the support of each other and our teachers, and created safe environments in which to be vulnerable.” Comments like these showed up several times: The instructor “made us a close group. Even to this day we all stay in contact” and “They have helped to facilitate a very close-knit community with all levels of interpreting students (Respondents 71 and 88). Students noticed when teachers fostered unity in the classroom and among students.

The words of the professors can turn into the students’ inner voice. Respondent 369 shared “My professor stressed how important positive self-talk is and that over time we will gain more confidence and skill as we participate in professional development.” Furthermore, Respondent 111 shared that “the instructors overall were knowledgeable and creative teachers. I still hear their voices sometimes. :)” That reflection brought forth enough positive feelings to elicit a smiley face.

Students appreciate when they feel comfortable in the classroom and know what to expect. Respondent 12 said, “They make you feel comfortable in our classroom.” Respondent 306 appreciated when they “had their syllabus together and we knew what to expect. They pushed us just enough ... It was difficult, but good-difficult.” Teaching techniques emerged as the second ranking category for positive interactions with instructors, yet it was close to first showing its important place with the students.

**Kind, caring, “wonderful.”** The third highest reported category of positive experiences with faculty emerged when 56 respondents mentioned something about the instructor being kind, caring, wonderful, or something similar. This category is defined as: showed kindness and care, approachable, welcoming, helpful, described as “wonderful” and “great,” and so on. For example, Respondent 46 shared “The professors really care about the students and see them as a student rather than a number.” Respondent 428 said, “All of my ASL Language instructors have been incredible and wonderful.”

Not many subcategories emerged in this theme beyond kindness. Other responses to the questions included “my instructors have been ceaselessly caring,” “All of the other instructors have been extremely kind and helpful,” and “All of the instructors ... care about each student” (Respondents 86, 143, and 417). Interesting, not many respondents shared detailed information about what it means to be caring or kind. Some connected the caring to the desire for the student to succeed, such as: “Some instructors truly care about you as a person and your ability to become a better interpreter” and “Most instructors really cared about all the students, wanted to make sure they not only succeed in the program but were prepared for life after the program” (Respondents 364 and 484). Students value when instructors demonstrate kindness and care.

**Sharing real work experiences.** The fourth highest pattern that emerged from the data is that students appreciated when instructors were competent practitioners and shared their real-life experiences of working as an interpreter or knowing ASL. This category is described as “the instructors were current practitioners in the field of interpreting or native signers; very knowledgeable and shared their experiences to benefit

the students.” Respondent 37 shared “Teachers were highly skilled and had a strong knowledge base. Very experienced.” Respondent 225 was impressed that the “professor had over 20 yrs experience and was honest and helpful.”

Many students commented about how beneficial it was when instructors shared their real interpreting experiences. Respondent 441 shared that the instructor “shares her experiences and is honest with us about the real world of interpreting.” Respondent 290 noted that “one of the instructors brought real life interpreter experiences in to the classroom.” Respondent 39 “learned a lot from the personal experiences of my instructors. Students value when instructors share real life experiences.

Respondent 230 shared “The Deaf faculty were wonderful in that we could approach them about any questions about ASL and how to interpret certain things and they would take the time to discuss it and give suggestions.” Also, Respondent 26 shared “I have had the privilege of having a Black CODA professor who is a skilled interpreter and also well-educated in how microaggressions affect our work as interpreters.”

Respondent 411 summed up the category nicely by saying: “Instructors are all experienced interpreters who were generous with their insights, experiences, and skills. Having practitioner-scholars as instructors makes this program authentic and valuable.”

**One-on-one time.** The fifth most common theme from the data was the instructors’ willingness to work with the students one-on-one and give individual time. This category is defined as: “The instructor spent individual time with the student whether it was in class, after class, in office hours, or somewhere else.” Respondent 344 appreciated when the instructors “took time with me individually,” and Respondent 166 phrased it as “They took time to help answer questions one on one.” Respondent 480

shared:

I had one instructor who offered tutoring hours. I spent hours in this instructor's office and received an amazing amount of guidance and mentoring. As a result of this, I felt so much better prepared when I entered the field of interpreting.

This individual support happened before, after, and during class. Respondent 472 shared that "they made classes personal. We got one on one attention." Additionally, this support was there even when the student was not enrolled in the class or had already graduated. Respondent 299 shared "All of my instructors took personal time to help me advance in my skill, even if I wasn't currently taking one of their classes." Respondent 417 shared that "all have given extremely beneficial advice and continue to even after graduation." Students take note when the faculty is available to them.

Teachers expanded this individual time beyond feedback of interpreting work and into building the students' confidence, outside life, and future goals. Respondent 178 shared "There is one-on-one opportunity for both academic and personal needs. Respondent 509 shared "My teacher saw potential in me when I had no confidence in myself. She raised the bar and was my biggest support system as I achieved goals I never thought I could. She gave me undivided attention when I spoke to her." The respondents used other words and phrases in their responses such as "attentive," "targeted feedback," and "seen" (Respondents 440, 372, and 160). Students appreciated when they were given one-on-one attention.

**Community connections and resources.** The sixth highest reported category of positive experiences with faculty emerged when 45 respondents mentioned something related to instructor's community connections and resources. This category is defined as:



“connected the student to internships, real world experiences, the Deaf Community, working interpreters, or jobs.” Respondent 340 shared “I was given opportunities within this program that I wouldn’t have been able to experience otherwise. The professors at this institution provide you with the resources to be as successful as you chose to be.” On campus, instructors were involved in sponsoring clubs and seeking opportunities for students to get hands-up experience (Respondent 57). Respondent 351 was encouraged to be the TA for the interpreting class one year after completing the course and reported, “I got to work side by side with a professor and basically take the course again myself.”

Instructors connected students to other interpreters and interpreter organizations. Respondent 481 shared that one “instructor invited me to get involved with the state’s RID chapter.” Respondent 94 valued the “network to other interpreters,” and Respondent 21 appreciated the connections that “evolved into some valuable mentoring opportunities.” Students value when faculty connect them to working professionals.

Students noted several instances of faculty being able to connect them to internships and employment. Respondent 412 shared:

I had one professor that helped me set up an amazing internship experience based on knowledge of my background and interests. It felt nice to know that someone cared enough to know these personal details of me and make connections.

Respondent 187 noted that “the instructors used their connections to provide copious internship opportunities.” Respondent 449 shared “I had one specifically that stuck her neck out for me and helped me to secure opportunities for me to get hands on work.” Respondent 182 appreciated that “she always made sure to put in a good word for me.” Students value when teachers connect them to internships or employment.

Several students felt their connections to the Deaf community tighten. Respondent 484 captured the sentiment: “Two instructors helped make solid connections between the Deaf Community and students,” and Respondent 455 valued that the instructors provided “social opportunities” for the students. In summary of the whole category, Respondent 391 put it well: The instructor “did everything within his power and resources to help better your skills.”

**Content of class/curriculum.** The seventh most frequent theme to emerge from students’ positive interactions with faculty was regarding the content of class and curriculum, with 43 of the respondents mentioning it. This category is defined as: The content of the classes was beneficial and useful in becoming an interpreter. Respondents commented that the program was “Thorough,” had “Good information,” and “Good solid content” (Respondents 388, 330, and 171).

Respondents pointed out specific content and curriculum that they appreciated. Respondent 346 shared “We studied so many different topics including how to interpret medical terms, legal terms, sex terms, drug use terms. VERY USEFUL!!!” Respondent 125 appreciated “learning about legislation, such as the ADA and others that affect the Deaf community.” Respondent 73 noted the program had “rigorous pedagogy of skill development, social justice, equity, consumer empowerment, and interpreters role-space.” Respondent 438 was in a program that encouraged student to “deep dive into Deaf culture, history, and ASL.” Several respondents would agree with Respondent 194’s appreciation of a “well rounded program” and curriculum as a main contributor to a positive experience.

**Desirable outcome of education.** The eighth highest reported category of positive interactions emerged when 32 respondents reported they gained some type of desirable outcome from their education based on interactions with professors. This category is defined as: The student was able to interpret, pass certification, get a job, or gained another desirable outcome. Respondent 275 shared “I had one teacher who molded me mentally and skill wise to be ready to step into the field.” Respondent 487 “was able to complete the written portion of the national exam,” and Respondent 431 appreciated the instructor “helping students prepare for state testing.” Respondent 510 “felt ready to get certified and interpret.” The main subcategories of desirable outcomes included being able to interpret and become certified.

Students noted several other desirable outcomes. Some students noticed a personal change within themselves such as Respondent 228 who recounted that an “instructor helped me open my eyes to my personal biases and work through them to become a more open minded person.” Several students appreciated a deeper connection to the Deaf Community. Respondent 285 noticed that they “became involved in Deaf community because of support of other instructors.” Respondent 270 appreciated the time “to grow and build my relationship with my local Deaf community.” Respondents reported several specific things that they gained. Respondent 252 shared “It gave me a solid education and opened a new world of research and encouraged my motivation to seek more knowledge. It also helped me to begin my doctorate program in interpretation.” Respondent 225 remembers that the professor “assisted us in making a professional web site.” Respondent 434 shared “I was able to interpret at an event that I saw interpreted for many years as a young girl. It was a dream come true.” Respondent

122 summed it up: “So many learning opportunities were afforded to me as a result of this program.” Respondents recalled several positive experiences with gaining a desirable outcome as a result of their instructors and their education.

**Passionate and invested.** Instructors who were passionate and invested were reported 27 times, and it was the ninth most common theme. This category can be described as: The instructors were perceived as passionate and invested in their work or about the Deaf community and the field of interpreting. Respondent 473 shared “I’ve never had instructors so invested in their students success.” Respondent 15 noted, “Their investment in myself, my colleagues, and this program is extremely apparent and it makes me more excited to learn everyday with them.” Respondent 19 appreciated that “the instructors were very passionate about the field and always pushed us to succeed and excel.” Respondent 486 commented on the contagiousness and said, “They are amazingly passionate about what they do, and I myself love to learn from someone who has passion.” Students noted when instructors love the work they do, “it’s evident they love their jobs” and “the 2 instructors I have love what they do and it shows (Respondents 383 and 445).

**Available and willing to answer questions.** The tenth highest pattern that emerged from the data is that students appreciated when instructors were available and willing to answer questions. This category is defined as: Available during office hours, would take time to answer questions in class, would stay late to answer questions, open door policy, etc. This category is distinct from the category about one-on-one time, because it is specifically about being open to and encouraging of questions, whether it was in class or individually. Additionally, this category is about being available; whether

or not the students utilized the time, they appreciated knowing that they had that option available for support. Respondent 3 shared “They are open for questions, concerns, and anything we have questions on.” Respondent 64 “felt comfortable asking them questions.” Respondent 230 shared that “the faculty were very personable and willing to answer any questions” and “the Deaf faculty were wonderful in that we could approach them about any questions about ASL and how to interpret certain things and they would take the time to discuss it and give suggestions.” Respondent 179 appreciated when her individual needs as an older student were met, especially the ability to ask more questions. Respondent 441 appreciated that the instructor “has an open door policy with us.” In summary, “Instructors were helpful encouraging and available,” “Professors are always available,” and “The instructors have been more than available to help me prepare” (Respondents 99, 20, and 259).

### **Discussion of the Findings**

At the time the survey was disseminated, the research question was broad: What common experiences do current or former students of interpreting education programs share that I could learn from? While analyzing the data from more than 500 responses from 40 states and 126 different interpreting education programs, I used an open-coding approach that followed grounded theory (Corbin & Strauss, 1990; McMillan & Schumacher, 2009; Strauss & Corbin, 1994, 1998). The research question that was the focus of this thesis was: What are the most common student-reported positive and negative experiences with faculty?

**More positive than negative experiences.** Students reported much more satisfaction than dissatisfaction when evaluating experiences with faculty. When asked

“Did you have one or more negative experiences during this interpreter program as a result of the instructors?” out of 497 responses, 239 were coded as “Yes,” 253 were coded as “No,” and five responses were coded as “Other.” This translates to 48.1% of respondents having a negative interaction with faculty. Conversely, when asked, “Did you have one or more positive experiences during this interpreter program as a result of the instructors?” out of 495 responses, 472 were coded as “Yes,” 22 were coded as “No,” and one was coded as “Other.” This translates to 95.4% of respondents reported having a positive interaction with faculty. In the qualitative questions of “Please Explain,” respondents were much more likely to answer when it came to positive experiences. There were 390 responses explaining the positive experiences compared to only 237 responses explaining the negative experiences with faculty.

**Top 10 lists.** In this study, the data-driven themes have been limited to a top 10 list for the most prevalent categories of positive experiences with instructors and another top 10 list for the most prevalent categories of negative experiences with instructors. Top 10 lists are seen in various disciplines and platforms (Mayer, 2011).

The data-driven themes of the top 10 most common student-reported negative experiences with faculty are as follows: Personality; Feedback/Grading; Classroom Management; Intolerance for Others; Lack of Current Knowledge and Skills; Unclear or Unreasonable Expectations; Turnover or Institution Incompatibility; “Told Me I Couldn’t Do It”; Playing Favorites; and Too Busy Elsewhere. The top 10 positive categories of student-reported experiences with faculty are: Supportive and Encouraging; Teaching Techniques; Kind, Caring, “Wonderful”; Sharing Real Work Experiences; One-on-One Time; Community Connections and Resources; Content of Class/Curriculum; Desirable

Outcome of Education; Passionate and Invested; and Available and Willing to Answer Questions. Each of the categories in the two top 10 lists can be shown to either strengthen or weaken the four motivational conditions of Wlodkowski and Ginsberg's (1995) Motivational Framework for Culturally Responsive Teaching (See Table 7): establishing inclusion, developing attitude, enhancing meaning, and engendering competence.

**Students comments about motivation.** Merriam and Bierema (2014) said that “Adult motivation to learn is affected by many variables and contexts” (p. 162). Wlodkowski and Ginsberg (1995) emphasized that students and teachers need to continuously work together to create or enhance the motivational conditions. Several of the respondents pointed out times when they were motivated by instructors. Respondent 18 shared that instructors “are extremely motivating and realistic about discussing students’ progress.” Respondent 131 shared “Every instructor has been positive, encouraging, and helped to motivate their students.” Respondent 165 shared “I felt one instructor in particular was extremely helpful and motivated to help me succeed.” Students also commented on their own motivation. Respondent 252 ultimately went on to get a doctorate but shared that the first program “gave me a solid education and opened a new world of research and encouraged my motivation to seek more knowledge.” Respondent 185 shared “most professors were very supportive when I was going through personal issues that affected my motivation.” Respondents noted their own levels of motivation as well as that of their instructors.

**Framework.** The primary framework for this study was the motivation theory lens of Wlodkowski and Ginsberg's (1995) Motivational Framework for Culturally Responsive Teaching. Merriam and Bierema (2014) defined motivation as “the drive and

energy we put into accomplishing something we want to do. We cannot see or touch it, but it is ever present in our thought and action” (p. 147). “Engagement in learning is the visible outcome of motivation, the natural capacity to direct energy in the pursuit of a goal” (Wlodkowski, 2003, p. 1). Classical motivation theory can be applied to how adult students learn and their access to and participation in learning activities (Merriam & Bierema, 2014).

Wlodkowski and Ginsberg’s (1995) Motivational Framework for Culturally Responsive Teaching names four motivational conditions that the teacher and students continuously create or enhance (as seen in Figure 1). They are:

1. Establishing inclusion—creating a learning atmosphere in which students and teachers feel respected by and connected to one another.
2. Developing attitude—creating a favorable disposition toward the learning experience through personal relevance and choice.
3. Enhancing meaning—creating challenging, thoughtful learning experiences that include student perspectives and values.
4. Engendering competence—creating an understanding that students are effective in learning something they value (Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 1995).

Each of the categories in the two top 10 lists can be shown to either strengthen or weaken the four motivational conditions of Wlodkowski and Ginsberg’s (1995) Motivational Framework for Culturally Responsive Teaching (See Table 7). Although several of the top categories could have been classified under multiple conditions, they have been placed in the most fitting condition of the framework. For example, negative “Personality” can weaken each condition but has the most profound affect upon the



motivational condition of “developing attitude.” Wlodkowski (2003) stated that the four “conditions are essential for developing intrinsic motivation among all participants” (p. 2).

The first motivational condition is “establishing inclusion,” defined as “creating a learning atmosphere in which students and teachers feel respected by and connected to one another” (Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 1995, p. 2). The negative categories that weaken this condition are: Intolerance for Others, Playing Favorites, Too Busy Elsewhere, and Turnover or Institution Incompatibility. The positive categories that strengthen this condition are: One-on-One Time and Available and Willing to Answer Questions.

The second motivational condition is “developing attitude,” defined as “creating a favorable disposition toward the learning experience through personal relevance and choice” (Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 1995, p. 2). The negative categories that weaken this condition are: Unclear or Unreasonable Expectations and Personality. The positive categories that strengthen this condition are: Supportive and Encouraging; Kind, Caring, “Wonderful”; and Passionate and Invested.

The third motivational condition is “enhancing meaning,” defined as “creating challenging, thoughtful learning experiences that include student perspectives and values” (Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 1995, p. 2). The negative categories that weaken this condition are: Classroom Management and Lack of Current Knowledge and Skills. The positive categories that strengthen this condition are: Sharing Real Work Experiences; Community Connections and Resources; Content of Class, Curriculum; and Teaching Techniques.

The fourth motivational condition is “engendering competence,” defined as “creating an understanding that students are effective in learning something they value” (Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 1995, p. 2). The negative categories that weaken this condition are: Feedback/Grading and “Told Me I Couldn’t Do It.” The positive category that strengthens this condition is Desirable Outcome of Education.

Wlodkowski (2008) suggested that instructors conduct a self-assessment for applying the motivational framework. These are the three issues to reflect on: “(1) your perception of your role as instructor; (2) your assumptions about the motivation of the adults you teach or train; and (3) your perceptions of your instructional situation” (Wlodkowski, 2008, p. 379). The data collected from the instrument, as well as the literature reviewed, suggest that faculty play a crucial role in student motivation and outline the specific categories of positive and negative experiences with faculty.

Table 7

*Categories That Strengthen or Weaken the Four Motivational Conditions of Wlodkowski and Ginsberg’s Motivational Framework for Culturally Responsive Teaching*

<u>Motivational Conditions for Culturally Responsive Teaching</u>	<u>Negative Categories from Top 10 List That Weaken Motivational Conditions</u>	<u>Positive Categories from Top 10 List That Strengthen Motivational Conditions</u>
Establishing Inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intolerance for Others</li> <li>• Playing Favorites</li> <li>• Too Busy Elsewhere</li> <li>• Turnover or Institution Incompatibility</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One-on-One Time</li> <li>• Available and Willing to Answer Questions</li> </ul>
Developing Attitude	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unclear or Unreasonable Expectations</li> <li>• Personality</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supportive and Encouraging</li> <li>• Kind, Caring, “Wonderful”</li> <li>• Passionate and Invested</li> </ul>
Enhancing Meaning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of Current Knowledge and Skills</li> <li>• Classroom Management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sharing Real Work Experiences</li> <li>• Community Connections and Resources</li> <li>• Content of Class, Curriculum</li> <li>• Teaching Techniques</li> </ul>
Engendering Competence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feedback/Grading</li> <li>• “Told Me I Couldn’t Do It”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Desirable Outcome of Education</li> </ul>

**More Specific in Negative Comments.** It was clear that the respondents made more targeted comments at the instructors when recounting negative experiences. The students spoke with passion and clarity about specific negative experiences, going into detail and sometimes even including the names of the professors. When it came to positive experiences, the respondents were more likely to talk in pleasant generalizations often blurring the lines between instructor, program, curriculum, peers, and more. For example, two of the positive categories were “Class Content/Curriculum” and “Desirable

Outcome of Education,” which seemed less under the power of the instructor but in the students’ comments were still credited to the instructor. Some respondents did not give such specific information when asked to explain about the positive experience(s) with the instructor(s). For example, Respondent 471 said, “The entire program was a very positive experience,” and Respondent 489 shared “They’re my best memories of my life.” It was clear the negative experiences were more specific while the positive experiences were more general and not always about the instructors.

**Practitioner versus teacher.** Students were frustrated when skilled interpreters became instructors but could not teach effectively, which weakened the motivational condition of “enhancing meaning.” The fifth highest category on the negative experiences list is the “Lack of Current Knowledge and Skills” of faculty. Nord (2005) shared the experience of becoming a teacher: “At first I tried to imitate the teachers I had liked best in my own training, but then I felt this was not enough ... I presume that most novice translator trainers are still working along these lines today” (p. 209). Several respondents, as detailed above, complained about skilled interpreters not having skills of knowledge on interpreter education. Kiraly (2000) stated, “Instead of doing to our students what was done to us, we need to develop a true educational culture of our own, a culture of permanent innovation” (p. 195). It is important to have a balance of teaching in the classroom with being a current practitioner. Sainz (1994) stated that “the most adequate and competent teachers at university are those who, apart from their teaching positions, are also practicing professionals in the subject they are teaching” (as cited in Gabr, 2001, p. 1). This can be compared to a person who no longer uses ASL but continues to teach classes. Roy (2000) highlighted the importance of the “knowledge of how to teach

interpreting that comes from both theory and practice” (p. 12).

**Data comparisons.** Several interesting comparisons can be made in the data. Feedback was a topic that showed up in both the positive and negative lists. Feedback and grading was the second highest negative experience and also the second highest on the positive list under the category of “Teaching Techniques.” Students crave detailed, beneficial feedback about both negative and positive parts of their work delivered in a timely and sensitive manner that is consistent among students. The way an instructor gives feedback will strengthen or weaken nearly every condition or motivation.

Under the motivational condition of “enhancing meaning,” students did not appreciate when instructors wasted time by going off topic and sharing too much about their personal lives; however, students found it very valuable when instructors shared their real work experiences in the interpreting field. As an instructor, this can be a reminder to share about beneficial things relating to preparing future interpreters while being respectful of the students’ class time.

The respondents struggled when instructors seemed uninterested or too busy elsewhere, while they made note to praise instructors who had time to work with them one-on-one and were available and willing to answer questions. Both of these contribute to the first condition of a motivational environment, “establishing inclusion.” “Wlodkowski advocates taking the fear out of learning by being available ... to partner with learners in ways that make it okay for them to ask for help” (Merriam & Bierema, 2014, p. 156). Feedback, telling stories from life, and balancing time for students are just a few of the interesting comparisons between the student reported positive and negative experiences that weaken or support the conditions of a motivational environment.

**Individual Application.** The way these data are applied will be individualized based on each instructor and the individual interpreter education program. It is clear that faculty make a difference in student learning, development, and motivation (Astin, 1993; Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2005; Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 1995). With the emergent themes from this data, ASL and interpreting instructors are given the opportunity to consider the data from across the nation and use it to improve their individual and systemic practice. Wlodkowski (2008) shared that the value of the Motivational Framework for Culturally Responsive Teaching is in providing both a model of motivation and an aid for instructional design. The four conditions can be designed into each lesson plan.

Faculty can intentionally work toward motivating students. As Umbach and Wawrzynski (2005) suggested:

Campuses where faculty emphasize best practices have students who are engaged, perceive they are supported, and gain from their college experiences. This suggests that faculty attitudes and beliefs and behaviors can play a role in creating a culture that fosters student learning. (p. 174)

Additionally, administrators can work toward supporting instructors as key components to student success: “Because faculty play a critical component of the collegiate experience, colleges and universities need to find ways (perhaps new ways) to support and reward faculty in their teaching role” (Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2005, p. 176). In summary, this research study aims to be a contributing force to formalize and optimize interpreter education.

## CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

Interpreting is a complex task and teaching this process to student interpreters is even more complex. Although the success of learning is spread among many factors, faculty play a critical role cultivating students' intrinsic motivation and the education process. As Pinell and Galloway (n.d.) stated: "Caring teachers are at the heart of school success for students" (p. 355). In short, when it comes to student learning, engagement, and motivation, faculty do matter (Astin, 1993; Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2005; Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 1995).

The purpose of the study was to gather and document the experiences and perceptions of current and former students in their interpreter education programs in the United States, so educators can be better informed to refine and optimize formal interpreter education. For the purposes of this study, an interpreter education program was the blanket term that includes Interpreter Training Programs (ITP), Interpreter Preparation Programs (IPP), Certificate Programs, and any other formal education of interpreters in the United States with the focus of interpreting between signed language and spoken language. This included Associate, bachelor's, and master's degrees as well as certificate programs. Participants in this study must have attended or be attending an Interpreter Education Program in the United States. Additionally, the survey was open to those who did not complete their program and to those who never ended up working as an interpreter or worked for a time and left the field. In short, anyone who was a student for any length of time in an interpreter education program in the United States was eligible to participate in the study.

At the time the survey was disseminated, the research question was broad: What common experiences do current or former students of interpreting education programs share that I could learn from? I developed an online survey instrument that had 13 sections with various quantitative and qualitative questions about themselves and their experiences and perceptions in interpreting education programs including: their satisfaction, the cost, interactions with faculty, interactions with peers, their perceived ASL fluency, reasons for leaving the program (if they did), perceived strengths and weaknesses of the program, how the program compared to others, if they would recommend it to others, and more. The instrument was available for three weeks in October of 2017 and elicited a large number of responses.

In all, 514 people consented to take the survey. By clicking “Yes” they agreed that they were at least 18 years old, attended one or more interpreter education programs, and gave their consent to participate in the research study. Based on the length of instrument, and the high volume of respondents, there was much more data than can be shared in this forum. To analyze the data, I used an open-coding approach that followed grounded theory (Corbin & Strauss, 1990; McMillan & Schumacher, 2009; Strauss & Corbin, 1994, 1998). The research question that was the focus of this thesis was: What are the most common student-reported positive and negative experiences with faculty? For the purposes of this thesis, the focus will be on the positive and negative experiences between faculty and students from the students’ perspective in their first interpreter training program.

The 514 respondents were from 40 states and 126 distinct interpreting education programs from an estimated total of 150 total programs (Ball, 2013). Although there were



hundreds of respondents, this was only a small sampling of interpreters that have been in interpreter education programs. For future research, providing the survey instrument to all of the RID (2017) membership of more than 15,000 members and seeking out the other interpreters who are not members of RID, could have provided more data. When all the data were synthesized from the demographic information in this study, the following emerged as the profile for the typical respondent: hearing, female, White/Caucasian, English as a native language, 20-29 years of age, an Associate degree or higher, completed one interpreter training program, currently working as an interpreter, and no certification. The profile reflects the majority of the field, yet the field is dynamic and changing to reflect greater diversity.

Although the majority of the respondents fit the profile detailed above, there were many respondents who did not. Every age was represented from 18 to 63, as well as one 65-year-old. Besides female, there were 62 males and 21 gender-variant respondents. Other ethnicities included: Hispanic, Latino, Latinx, Spanish origin; Black, African American; Asian, Asian American; Native American, Indian, Alaska Native; Middle Eastern, North African, Native Hawaiian, Other Pacific Islander; Ashkenazi Jew; Swedish; and more. Other native languages included: ASL, Spanish, Arabic, Cantonese, French, Vietnamese, Russian, Japanese, Swedish and Swedish Sign Language, SEE and PSE. There were those who did not identify as hearing, instead identified as Deaf, Hard of Hearing, CODAs and more. The education diversity spread from high school graduates to doctoral degrees. There was great diversity represented in this study but in smaller numbers. Educators can make a concentrated effort to recruit and retain students that will intentionally shift and enrich the typical profile of interpreting students and practitioners

in the field. Today's students become tomorrow's professionals.

In reviewing the literature, it became clear that signed language interpreter education has been evolving even before its formalization in the mid-20th century (Ball, 2013). Currently, there are several groups working toward the improvement and optimization of formal interpreter education. Additionally, on the broad scene of higher education in America, faculty play a significant role in the motivation and success of students (Astin, 1993; Rhoads, 2001; Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2005; Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 1995).

When students evaluated their experiences with ASL instructors and interpreting instructors, they expressed much more satisfaction than dissatisfaction when it came to experiences with faculty. When asked, "Did you have one or more negative experiences during this interpreter program as a result of the instructors?," out of 497 responses, 239 (48.1%) were coded as "Yes." Conversely, when asked, "Did you have one or more positive experiences during this interpreter program as a result of the instructors?," out of 495 responses, 472 (95.4%) were coded as "Yes." In the qualitative questions of "Please Explain," respondents were much more likely to answer when it came to positive experiences. There were 390 responses to explain the positive experiences compared to only 237 responses to explain the negative experiences with faculty. The data collected from the instrument, as well as the literature reviewed, suggest that faculty play a crucial role in cultivating students' intrinsic motivation.

The data-driven themes of the top 10 most common, student-reported, negative experiences with faculty are as follows: Personality; Feedback/Grading; Classroom Management; Intolerance for Others; Lack of Current Knowledge and Skills; Unclear or

Unreasonable Expectations; Turnover or Institution Incompatibility; “Told Me I Couldn’t Do It”; Playing Favorites; and Too Busy Elsewhere. The top 10 positive categories of student-reported experiences with faculty are: Supportive and Encouraging; Teaching Techniques; Kind, Caring, “Wonderful”; Sharing Real Work Experiences; One-on-One Time; Community Connections and Resources; Content of Class/Curriculum; Desirable Outcome of Education; Passionate and Invested; and Available and Willing to Answer Questions. Each of the categories in the two top 10 lists can be shown to either strengthen or weaken the four motivational conditions of Wlodkowski and Ginsberg’s (1995) Motivational Framework for Culturally Responsive Teaching (See Table 7): establishing inclusion, developing attitude, enhancing meaning, and engendering competence.

Faculty make a difference in student learning, development, and motivation (Astin, 1993; Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2005; Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 1995). With the emergent themes from the data, ASL and interpreting instructors are given the opportunity to consider the data from across the nation and use it to improve their individual and systemic practice. Wlodkowski (2008) shared that the value of the Motivational Framework for Culturally Responsive Teaching is that it provides both a model of motivation and an aid for instructional design. The four conditions can be designed into each lesson plan. Individual interpreter education programs can self-examine and make sure instructors are supported in their quest to support and motivate students. In summary, this research study aims to be a contributing force to formalize and optimize interpreter education.

In the future, I would like to explore and present more of the data that the instrument gathered, specifically about positive and negative interactions with peers.

Other data include: student satisfaction, program cost, the students' perceived ASL fluency, reasons for leaving the program (if they did), how the program compared to others, if they would recommend it to others, and more. I look forward to allowing more themes to emerge from the data for future application to interpreter education programs.

On a personal note, this research study was a chance to reach out to current and former students from across the nation and try to learn about their experiences and perspectives about various programs, with the goal of applying it to my own practice. I identified experiences that have a direct effect on student motivation. I can see myself in both the positive and negative student-reported experiences with instructors. I am determined to enhance my focus on the positive list and eliminate the things from the negative list through reflective practice (Schön, 1987). I plan to work collaboratively with students to strengthen the four motivational conditions of Wlodkowski and Ginsberg's (1995) Motivational Framework for Culturally Responsive Teaching, in a "brave space" (Arao & Clemens, 2013, p. 141).

It is my passion to motivate each student to gain a greater understanding and respect of American Sign Language, English, Deaf Culture, and the art of Interpreting. I also desire to be on my own path of seeking greater understanding and learning through self-motivation. In the pursuit of becoming a student of my students, I ended up being a student of hundreds of students from around the nation. Bain (2004) highlighted that "learning has little meaning unless it produces a sustained and substantial influence on the way people think, act, and feel" (p.17).

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## APPENDIX A: CONSENT FORM AND INSTRUMENT

(Note the instrument has been reformatted from Google Forms to Word.)

Perceptions of Interpreter Education Programs from Former or Current Students

### **Section 1: Information and Consent**

Dear Colleague,

Please take the time to participate in this anonymous online survey.

My name is Ann Adamiak and I am a graduate student at Western Oregon University (WOU) in the College of Education working toward a MA degree in Interpreting Studies. I am researching under the supervision of Dr. Elisa Maroney, maronee@wou.edu. The results of this study will lead to a graduate thesis that is a partial graduation requirement. This study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board.

I am conducting a research study seeking to understand the experiences and perceptions of current and former students in their Interpreter Education Programs. For the purposes of this study, an Interpreter Education Program is the blanket term that includes Interpreter Training Programs (ITP), Interpreter Preparation Programs (IPP), Certificate Programs, and any other formal education of interpreters in the United States with the focus of interpreting between signed language and spoken language.

Who is eligible?

Participants in this study must be 18 years or older. They must have attended or be attending an Interpreter Education Program in the United States with the focus of interpreting between signed language and spoken language. Completing the program or working as an interpreter are not requirements to participate.

The survey should take you approximately 15 minutes to complete. Your participation is voluntary. Your responses will be kept confidential but the data may be published and/or used in presentations. Names and identifying information will not be collected. You may choose not to answer or opt out of the survey at any point without consequence. There are no discomforts or risks expected during this survey. Participation in this survey will add to the body of knowledge in the field of sign language interpreting and increase understanding. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the Chair of the Institutional Review Board at (503) 838-9200 or irb@wou.edu.

I encourage you to share this link with anyone that meets the eligibility:  
<https://goo.gl/forms/fm1mWRILgbU60OT01>

Please contact me or my adviser with any inquiries. Thank you,

Ann Adamiak  
Western Oregon University  
aadamiak16@wou.edu

\* Required

By clicking "Yes" I acknowledge that I am 18 years or older, have attended one or more interpreter education programs, and I give my consent to participate in a research study.

## **Section 2: Demographics**

Where do you live? (Drop down menu of States)

What is your age? (Drop down menu of numbers)

You are:

Deaf

Hearing

Hard-of-Hearing

Other:

What is your gender identity? (Text box available to type answer)

Which categories best describe you? Check all that apply.

Native American, Indian, Alaska Native

Asian, Asian American

Hispanic, Latino, Latinx, Spanish origin

Black, African American

Middle Eastern, North African

Native Hawaiian, Other Pacific Islander

White, Caucasian

Prefer not to answer

Other:

What is the highest level of education you have completed? Mark only one oval.

Some high school

High school graduate, diploma, GED

Some college Trade/technical/vocational training

Associate Degree

Bachelor's Degree

Some graduate school

Master's Degree

Some professional or doctoral school

Professional Degree

Doctorate Degree

Other:

Which of the following would you consider your native language(s)? Check all that apply.

American Sign Language

English

Spanish

Arabic

Cantonese

French

German

Korean

Mandarin

Tagalog

Vietnamese

Other:

Currently, which of the following languages do you use fluently? Check all that apply.

American Sign Language

English

Spanish

Arabic

Cantonese

French

German

Korean

Mandarin

Tagalog

Vietnamese

Other:

Which certifications do you hold? Check all that apply.

No certifications

NIC

CDI

SC:L

SC:PA

Ed:K-12

NIC Advanced

NIC Master

CI

CT

NAD III

NAD IV

NAD V

BEI 1, 2, or 3  
CSC  
MCSC  
OTC  
Other:

Which best describes you currently? Mark only one oval.  
I am working as an interpreter  
I have the goal of working as an interpreter in the future  
I am not working as an interpreter but I used to  
I am not working as an interpreter and never have  
Other:

Which best describes you currently? Mark only one oval.  
I completed one or more Interpreter Education Programs  
I am currently a student in my first Interpreter Education Program  
I started an Interpreter Education Program and did not finish  
I was never a student of an Interpreter Education Program  
Other:

### **Section 3: Interpreting Work**

On average over the past year, how many hours do you work as an interpreter per week?  
Mark only one oval.  
None  
1 - 10 hours a week  
11 - 20 hours a week  
21 - 30 hours a week  
31 - 40 hours a week  
More than 40 hours a week

Currently, what settings are you working as an interpreter? Check all that apply.  
Freelance  
Post-Secondary  
VRS/VRI  
K-12  
Legal  
Medical  
Religious  
N/A  
Other:

Previously, what settings have you worked as an interpreter? Check all that apply.  
Freelance  
Post-Secondary  
VRS/VRI

K-12  
Legal  
Medical  
Religious  
N/A  
Other:

In the future, what settings do you anticipate you will work in as an interpreter? Check all that apply. Freelance

Post-Secondary  
VRS/VRI  
K-12  
Legal  
Medical  
Religious  
N/A  
Other:

If you completed an Interpreter Education Program, has there been a time that you have left the field of interpreting? Mark only one oval.

I haven't completed a program  
Yes, I left and I returned  
Yes, I left and I do not plan on returning  
No, I have worked in the field consistently  
I never really got started in the interpreting field.  
Other:

If yes, was leaving the field a result of your program, instructor(s), and/or a peer? Mark only one oval. Yes

No  
Other:

If yes, why did you leave the field and for what length of time?

#### **Section 4: Interpreter Education Program Information**

Reminder: Do not fill this out about an Interpreter Education Program you may teach in, focus on the one(s) when you were a student. If you attended more than one program, there will be an area to discuss each one. Please focus on one at a time.

First Interpreter Education Program:

Do/did you attend an Interpreter Education Program? Mark only one oval.

Yes  
No

Name of the Interpreter Education Program:



Where is the program located? (City/State)

To the best of your knowledge, does the program still exist? Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No
- Not sure
- Other:

Did you complete this Interpreter Education Program? Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No
- I'm currently a student
- Other

At the end of the program what is awarded to those that finish? Mark only one oval.

- An Associate's Degree
- A Bachelor's Degree
- A Master's Degree
- A Certificate
- Other:

How fluent did you feel in American Sign Language at the BEGINNING of the Interpreter Education Program? Mark only one oval.

Not fluent 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Very fluent

How fluent did you feel in American Sign Language at the END of the Interpreter Education Program? Mark only one oval.

Not fluent 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Very fluent

Did you leave this program before completion? Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No
- Other:

If yes, why did you leave?

What year did/will you graduate or complete this program?

How many Interpreter Education Programs have you been a student in? Mark only one oval.

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- Other

## Section 5: Program Perceptions

Evaluate the Interpreter Education Program that you named on the previous page: Mark only one oval per row.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	N/A
Overall, I am satisfied with the Interpreter Education Program	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am satisfied with the quality of the education	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am satisfied with the quality of the instructors	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The program is worth what it costs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The content of the program was thorough	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The instructors took time with me individually	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
As a result of my program, I was prepared to interpret professionally	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

In your opinion, how does this program compare to other programs in your area? Mark only one oval.

- Superior to other programs
- Slightly superior to other programs
- Comparable to other programs
- Slightly inferior to other programs
- Inferior to other programs
- Decline to answer

In your opinion, how does this program compare to other programs in the nation? Mark only one oval.

- Superior to other programs
- Slightly superior to other programs
- Comparable to other programs
- Slightly inferior to other programs
- Inferior to other programs
- Decline to answer

In your opinion, what are the program's weaknesses?

In your opinion, what are the program's strengths?

How likely is it that you would recommend this program to a friend or colleague? Mark only one oval.

Not likely to Recommend 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Extremely likely to Recommend

### **Section 6: Experiences**

Did you have one or more negative experiences during this interpreter program as a result of the instructors? Mark only one oval.

Yes

No

Other

Please explain:

Did you have one or more positive experiences during this interpreter program as a result of the instructors? Mark only one oval.

Yes

No

Other:

Please explain:

Did you have one or more negative experiences during this interpreter program as a result of your peers? Mark only one oval.

Yes

No

Other:

Please explain:

Did you have one or more positive experiences during this interpreter program as a result of your peers? Mark only one oval.

Yes

No

Other:

Please explain:

Did you attend a second Interpreter Education Program?

For example: You received an AA in interpreting then went to a BA program in interpreting. You received a BA in interpreting and went to a MA program in interpreting. You left one AA program in interpreting and started another AA program interpreting. You did more than one certificate program in interpreting. Or any other situation where you were a part of more than one interpreting program. Mark only one

oval.  
Yes  
No

### **Section 7: 2nd Interpreter Education Program Information**

(The respondent was redirected to sections 4, 5, and 6 to answer the same questions again, this time focusing on their second interpreter education program. Please note, the sections were titled sections 7, 8, and 9)

Did you attend a third Interpreter Education Program?

For example: You received an AA in interpreting then a BA in interpreting and moved on to a MA in interpreting? You did a certificate program, a AA, and then went to a BA? Or any other situation where you were a student in more than two interpreting programs.

Mark only one oval.

Yes  
No

### **Section 10: 3rd Interpreter Education Program Information**

(The respondent was redirected to sections 4, 5, and 6 to answer the same questions again, this time focusing on their third interpreter education program. Please note, the sections were titles sections 10, 11, and 12)

Did you attend more than three Interpreter Education Programs? Mark only one oval.

Yes  
No

Please explain:

### **Section 13: Comments**

What would you like to clarify about your answers in this survey?

What else you would like to add?