2019-20 University of Minnesota Courses for Interpreters Working in Special Education

The following courses will be offered in 2019-20 through the Program on Translation and Interpreting (PTI) at the University of Minnesota.

- **Online content course**: The first course in the sequence is offered online and emphasizes in-depth understanding of disabilities, special education, and professional ethics and practices. The fall semester begins on September 16, 2019, and ends in mid-December. The course may be taken with or without credit. Dates for the spring semester are not yet established but the course generally runs from mid-January through mid-May. This online course is a prerequisite for the Summer Institute course described below.

- **Skill-building summer institute**: This course emphasizes the development of interpreting skills through hands-on practice in multilingual environments. In the past, the skill development course has only been taught as an evening class that met once a week on the University campus. In 2018 and 2019, the skill-building course was taught on the University campus in Minneapolis as an intensive summer institute over a total of eight days during the last two weeks of June for a total of 45 hours of instruction. Housing in dorms was provided for participants from outside of the metro area. Because of the success of the summer institute in prior years, the skill-building course will be offered in this format again in 2020. Interpreters that are interested in the summer skill development course must complete the online content course in the fall or spring semester.

**Online technology requirements for the online course**: Students need reliable internet service along with a camera and microphone for your computer. Students will also need to utilize Google and YouTube. An on-campus orientation will also be available for students that need help with the online learning platform.

**Online coursework**: There will be regular opportunities to interact with classmates and the instructor via creative, practical activities designed to improve your understanding of special education, regular education, first and second language acquisition, standardized and informal assessment concepts, interpreters’ roles, ethics and professional practices. While there are weekly due dates, students may complete course assignments at their convenience during the week and do not need to log into the class at any specific time. Students should expect to spend between three and five hours a week on coursework.

**Skill-building course activities**: During the summer institute, students practice a number of simulated activities such as Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings, parent interviews, sight translation of evaluation reports and similar activities. They also practice note-taking while listening to complex information, which is an essential for consecutive interpreting. Students record themselves and practice self-analysis and correction of errors but are also evaluated by experienced interpreters. In addition, students complete readings and assignments to further expand their knowledge of disabilities and special education.

**Cost**: If taken for University of Minnesota credit, the cost of tuition and fees is approximately $1,500 for each course depending on whether individuals are already enrolled at the University. If taken without credit, the
cost is $600 per course. All students are required to purchase textbooks and course materials. For the online course, the cost is approximately $80.

_Tuition support:_ The Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) will provide up to 10 partial tuition scholarships of $500 per course for school district interpreters which will be paid directly to the University of Minnesota. Students and their school district supervisor are required to sign an agreement that describes course objectives and expectations in order to receive a scholarship. School districts are also asked to contribute $100 toward the cost of each course.

_For further information:_ For more information about the course, contact Dr. Scott Homler, director of the Program on Translation and Interpreting, at homle003@umn.edu, 612-626-4898 or the instructor, Betty Tapias-Heinrich, hein0310@umn.edu. For assistance with registration, contact Dr. Homler or contact Diego Sanchez-Chavarria at sanc0104@umn.edu. As noted above, students and their school district supervisor are required to sign an agreement that outlines course objectives and expectations as a condition of receiving a tuition scholarship. This agreement can be obtained by contacting Dr. Homler.
Interpreting is a fairly new field in Minnesota but it has been rapidly growing and developing in recent years. The state and federal court system has had a certification exam in place for some time. In 2010, the medical field developed two national certification exams. In January 2015 the Departments of Justice and Education issued joint guidelines outlining necessary interpreting skills and training. The University of Minnesota courses meet these requirements. More and more interpreters in the education field are also raising the level of professionalism by taking university courses. These interpreters have discovered what trained professionals know and can do.

What people often do not know or readily realize is that accurate interpreting is not a skill that comes naturally like speaking. It requires integrated skills which are learned and internalized over a period of time, similar to the way that reading is learned. Professional training will enable the interpreter to apply core skills smoothly and consistently:

- Interpret consecutively and simultaneously.
- Interpret in the first person.
- Interpret for children.
- Increase memory.
- Actively listen on a continual basis.
- Avoid code-switching.

Interpreters also need to learn how to manage communication during an encounter:

- Request a repetition or clarification.
- Properly pause the speaker.
- Ask for clarification appropriately.
- Know when a mistake is made and how to make corrections in a professional manner.
- Skillfully help the situation so it appears that everyone is speaking the same language.
- Take notes to aid memory and avoid needless interruptions of the speaker.
- Professionally manage the flow and speed of conversation without interfering.
- How to conduct pre-meetings and post-meetings to debrief.
- Be transparent in all that is said.

Study of interpreting can also raise awareness of professional issues:

- The need to learn terminology used in different fields.
- Ethics and standards of practice.
- How to prepare for an interpreting encounter.
- How to professionally handle an encounter if you are not prepared.
- Translation and sight translation.
- Awareness of whether language skills are highly developed enough in both languages and what to do if they are not.
- How to professionally step out of the interpreting role in an emergency.
- How to know when your limits are reached.
- Development of a professional network.

Successful special education encounters depend upon communication between families and school personnel who are trained and licensed in various specialties. When families are not fluent in English, interactions require interpreters who facilitate communication. It does not matter if the licensed staff are prepared and well-trained if the interpreters with whom they work are not.