

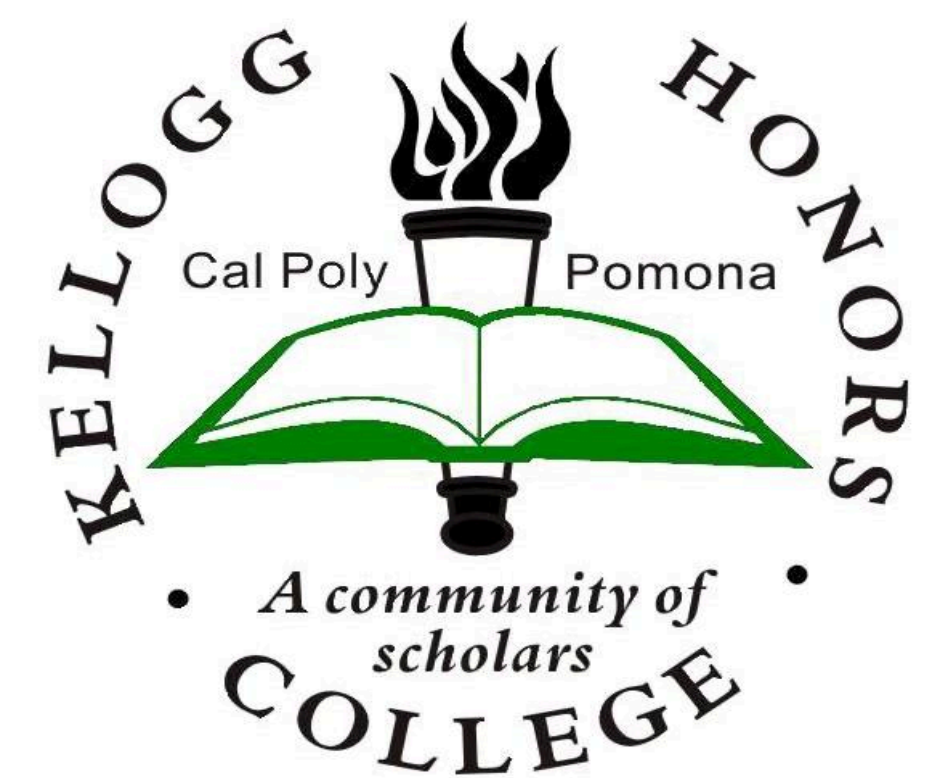
Resources, Visibility, and Experiences of the Deaf Community at Cal Poly Pomona



Micayla Anderson, Communication

Mentor: Dr. Sunny Lie

Kellogg Honors College Capstone Project



1. Introduction & Lit Review

Cal Poly Pomona's values: diversity, inclusion, and community, according to its Mission Statement and Values. It also has fantastic resources and visibility for many cultural groups, such as cultural centers, ally training, and events. However, I noticed this is not the same on campus for the deaf and hard of hearing community.

Accordingly, I wanted to assure Cal Poly Pomona is doing all they can to be supportive to the deaf and hard-of-hearing community on campus in terms of the resources, visibility, and positive experiences for those students.

Thus, I researched Cal Poly Pomona's class history and found no record of ASL classes being offered at the school, despite the other diverse languages being taught here. Should the university offer these classes, and maybe even a deaf culture class? I also researched the Disabilities Resource Center (DRC), which provides school-funded services to students with disabilities through an online data base system. I observed their website and concluded they meet the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) guidelines for equal access for the deaf community. However there was a lack of information about being deaf/ hard-of hearing, terminology, what accessibility means, being an ally (other than the generic disability training), events, clubs, etc. Could this be information the DRC helps provide to the university? Furthermore, I looked into the Office of Student Life and Cultural Centers (OSLCC) and noticed there was a lack of a center for the deaf community. Could a center be implemented on campus that provides these types of resources, visibility, and support to this community mentioned above, and maybe even puts on celebratory events like other cultural center do? Lastly, I wondered how the experience was for deaf and hard-of-hearing students on campus. With all these ideas running through my head, I decided to look further into these questions.

2. Methodology

- Preliminary qualitative research study
- IRB protocol # [18-51]
- 4 face to face interviews with employees at the DRC and OSLCC
- 1 phone interview with a student who is hearing impaired
- All interviews 30-45 minutes and recorded on iPhone



Abstract

At Cal Poly Pomona there are students who identify as deaf, hard-of-hearing, or hearing impaired. Cal Poly Pomona values diversity and inclusion, so I was compelled to study whether this student population was fairly included in this via their legal rights to equal access and their campus experience as a whole. Thus I completed a preliminary qualitative research study on the resources, visibility, and experience of the deaf community here at Cal Poly Pomona. I completed four face-to-face interviews with individuals who work in various campus departments, including the Disabilities Resource Center (DRC) and Office of Student Life and Cultural Centers (OSLCC). I also completed one video-phone interview with a student who is hearing impaired. Through the interviews and online research, I gathered data on the ADA legal accommodations provided, campus resources and accessibility, and the deaf community's experience and visibility on campus. Additionally, I sought the opinions of those interviewed on which areas require improvement on campus to better serve the needs of the deaf community. The interviews suggested that Cal Poly Pomona provides excellent accommodation resources with some improvements needed in terms of staffing, campus accessibility services, and deaf visibility. Moreover, the deaf experience was found to be mostly positive for that one individual. Further research is needed to have a deeper understanding of the deaf community's experience on campus (i.e., interviews/surveys with more students) and to better understand how Cal Poly Pomona compares to other CSU campuses.

4. Limitations

- Limited timing for research
- Limited scope (i.e., small range of Cal Poly Pomona departments studied, no comparison to other CSUs, etc.)
- Low quantity of interviews (14 best for qualitative research)
- Not enough deaf and hard-of-hearing student interviewed
- Was unable to interview ASL club on campus, deaf allies, professors, administration, or other relative campus departments

5. Future Directions

My future research plans are to improve on these limitations by:

- Interviewing more deaf and hard-of-hearing students
- Interviewing more relative departments, people, clubs, etc.
- Designing an adjacent study to carefully compare Cal Poly Pomona to other CSUs in terms of deaf resources, visibility, and experiences

And, looking into how to actually implement ASL classes and a Disability Cultural Center at Cal Poly Pomona in the future.

6. Conclusion

- Cal Poly Pomona is in line with ADA guidelines for equal access
- The DRC provides excellent accommodations and resources
- Improvements needed on campus in terms of student, staff, and faculty understanding and support of deaf and hard-of-hearing needs---and implementation of those needs (culture change)
- Campus improvements needed (better wifi, elevator maintenance)
- More full-time captioners/interpreters be ideal and improve service
- Better visibility and celebration of this community would be ideal
- Added ASL classes and Disabilities Cultural Center be ideal
- Implementing these changes has many barriers, but not impossible

3. Key Findings

Current Conditions

Summarizes the resources, visibility, and experiences of the deaf community on campus right now. Based on interview data.

Demographics and Services

- 33 students currently registered with the DRC who may be deaf, heard-of-hearing, or hearing impaired
- ~5 Students who utilize interpreting services this year
- ~10-12 students who utilize live captioning services this year
- Other possible services for this community include testing accommodations, note-taking, etc.

Staffing

- Two full time captioning coordinators and one full time interpreting coordinator at DRC
- Full time staff also interpret and caption accordingly, if need be (thus they're all extremely busy)
- Pool of on-call, part-time staff for interpreting and captioning to meet needs of students
- Competition for staffing from Mt. Sac (community college usually easier to caption/interpret for)
- Most CSUs only have one full time coordinator compared to three for Cal Poly Pomona

Campus Culture

- Based on interviews, Cal Poly Pomona and Campus President on same page with DRC about importance of excellent equal access and accommodation services for deaf community
- New staff training and Ability Ally Training
- Currently no cultural center for deaf community, or for students with disabilities at OSLCC
- Closed Caption (CC) required by law: CPP Commencement will have on-screen CC this year
- There is a brand new ASL club
- DRC is unable to advertise cultural events, clubs, etc. on DRC website, but they do email students often about topics/events of interest and keep a close relationship with those students

Experience of Student who is Hearing Impaired

- Student loves Cal Poly Pomona and feels DRC has exceeded expectations
- Great relationship with staff; feels interpreting services are timely and efficient

Future Recommendations

Summarizes what Cal Poly Pomona can improve on in terms of resources, visibility, and experiences of the deaf community, plus the plausibility and timing of implementing these changes. Based on interview data.

Improvements Desired with DRC

- More full time interpreters (ideally one coordinator, two staff)
- More full time captioners (ideally two coordinators, two staff)
- More funding
- More up-to-date captioning technology to give students options

Improvements Desired with Campus Culture

- DRC can't enforce captioning law (except when DRC student present), so increased understanding and implementation of captioning via faculty and staff needed
- Campus Visibility of Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Community could be increased
- Disabilities Cultural Center at OSLCC highly needed, but very hard to implement without major campus support, funding, right timing, and proper resources
- ASL classes be great to have, but again issues with staffing, funding, resources, etc.

Improvements Desired with Campus Accessibility Services

- Better maintenance of elevators (effects captioning services----equipment heavy)
- Increased wifi strength and range (effects captioning services)
- More video phones needed on campus for safety and equal access (ideally at Police Station and near Library, at minimum)

Improvements Desired from Student who is Hearing Impaired

- Student would love to have a Disabilities Cultural Center on campus
- Student would love to see ASL classes on campus----the more allies the better
- Student wants more people to know about the ASL club on campus (the student occasionally teaches ASL at the club meetings)
- Student wants more hearing impaired students to come to Cal Poly Pomona