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Moving Interpreter Education Online: A Conversation With Sherry Shaw

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Bowen-Bailey & Shaw

Moving Interpreter Education Online: A Conversation With Sherry Shaw

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Abstract

In this Open Forum conversation between Doug Bowen-Bailey, a signed language interpreter educator and resource developer, and Sherry Shaw, a signed-language-interpreter educator, Sherry shares her experience of establishing and teaching an online master's program in interpreting at the University of North Florida. The conversation shares insights into the structure of the online program, as well as the benefits and challenges of teaching in an online environment. These include issues of time management for both students and faculty, faculty recruitment and retention, choices in technology, and establishing a program within an institutional environment.

Keywords: online education, technology, time management, master's degree

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Moving Interpreter Education Online: A Conversation With Sherry Shaw

1. Beginning the Conversation

At the 2010 CIT conference, I attended a session entitled “Connecting Our World of Interpreter Education Through Research and Publication: What, How, and Why,” by Dr. Jemina Napier, the editor of this journal. Dr. Napier challenged those in attendance to find creative ways to share our own learning and research with the profession.

I do not necessarily see myself as a researcher; my work mostly takes place outside of the context of academia. Yet, I appreciate the research and publications of others and how they inform my own work such that I realized that I needed to find ways to contribute to efforts such as the IJIE.

Fortunately, I was sitting in close proximity to Dr. Sherry Shaw from the University of North Florida. I was the webmaster for CIT and had met Sherry through her work as a co-editor for the CIT Conference Proceedings, and I knew that Sherry was involved in establishing a master’s program for interpreters using an online format. As I work in the online realm, I was curious to know what Sherry had learned in that process, so I invited her to take part in a conversation with the intent of sharing it through this Open Forum.

I later learned that Sherry has been an interpreter educator for 23 years and is currently Program Director and Associate Professor in the BS and MEd ASL/English Interpreting programs at the University of North Florida. Her research focuses on spoken and signed language students’ cognitive flexibility, visual and verbal memory, attention shift, and processing speed. Additional research interests include service-learning in interpreter education, social connectedness of deaf children and senior citizens, and interpreting student aptitude. Dr. Shaw is co-editor of the Journal of Interpretation and serves as a reviewer for the Journal of Community Engagement and Scholarship.

With that experience, I knew the conversation would be a good one.

In terms of process, I drafted a set of questions that I sent in advance and then we scheduled a time to meet online for a conversation using the online meeting software Adobe Connect Pro. Using this technology, I recorded our conversation and then transcribed it. Sherry and I then collaborated to edit the conversation into a format that was more suitable for written publication, but that still retained the nature of our dialogue. We also made some changes to account for developments in the program that took place after our conversation but prior to publication. This process proved to be enjoyable and educational for both of us. We hope the same will be true for the readers of this journal.

Doug Bowen-Bailey

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2. The Conversation

Doug: Could you start by describing your interpreter education program?

Sherry: Sure. Let me clarify that we're talking about only the online master's program. The program was started because of demand. I had some prospective students approach me in August 2008 about starting an online master's degree at the University of North Florida (UNF). Although that was in the long-term plan, I was not prepared to deliver anything online at that time because we had just started the 2+2 bachelor's degree.

Yet, I had a department chair, Dr. Len Roberson, an interpreter and a real visionary, who said, "We should really think this through and see what we can do." So, after some deliberation, we decided to start a master's concentration under an existing degree. By doing that, we did not need to go through the long process of establishing a new degree and receiving approval from the Board of Trustees and Board of Governors. This allowed us to pilot a program to see if it was sustainable before establishing a stand-alone degree.

Those initial students were from Florida, so we planned to use a hybrid delivery model where students attended class online and then came to Jacksonville for three long weekends a semester. That was a very successful model for in-state students. It didn't have the inherent difficulties with a totally online program, because, first of all, these people already knew each other. We had students from Miami and Tampa, and even though the distance was up to 6 hours away, it was workable for them.

That delivery model was very short-lived because once the word got out that there was a master's degree, I started getting so many inquiries that I had to reconsider how to deliver the program. Florida is part of the 16-state Southern Regional Education Board's Academic Common Market Consortium, and once our program was approved, graduate students in the region could attend for in-state tuition. With this development, the program needed to adjust to people living in distant states. I really couldn't expect that they would come to Florida for three weekends a semester.

Doug: In terms of the timing of those weekends, how did they fit into the structure of the overall semester?

Sherry: When there were three weekends, we started off with the first on-site meeting a couple of weeks into the semester after students had completed preliminary readings and activities. Then, they had to come in around mid-term and about one week before the end of the semester. The weekends were intermittent throughout the semester.

Now, we have an on-site component of one weekend per semester, usually toward the end of the semester. We spend the semester working on units and completing all the preliminary work that students will need to apply in the long weekend of our on-site class. That's how the program is structured at this time. Last semester, the students came to Jacksonville in Week 14 of a 16-week semester. They arrived on a Thursday for an evening meeting and had class Friday, Saturday, and part of the day on Sunday.

We guarantee that students will not have to come to Jacksonville for more than one long weekend a semester, which is typically a Thursday night, all day Friday, all day Saturday, and Sunday until noon (it varies by professor). So, the challenge for me as the program director is to organize their courses so two courses that have an on-site component do not coincide. Some semesters, the students do not come on-site at all.

That's a rough description of how the program works currently. This is our fourth year of the program, and we have grown rapidly. We are in the process now of changing it from a concentration under an existing degree to a stand-alone degree, and that's a year-long process for the institution; we expect that change to become official in Fall 2012. The reason for submitting the proposal to change the current program from an MEd concentration in ASL/English interpreting to an MS in interpreting is that we want to be distinguished from education and no longer require the two core education courses—which total 6 graduate credit hours. So, when we are independent, the students will not have to take those core courses and can totally devote themselves to advanced interpreting coursework. Another advantage is that we will be able to add concentrations under the new major for specialty areas such as CDI, health care, trilingual interpreting, and pedagogy. For example, we currently admit deaf

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interpreters who aspire to become CDIs and/or interpreter educators, but we do not yet have a full program of study to prepare CDIs. This will be possible if the program structure is right and the market demands it.

Doug: The program's focus isn't about interpreter educators; it's about practitioners, is that right?

Sherry: We started as a practitioner-based program and recently branched out to create an option in interpreting pedagogy. We have partnered with Video Relay Service Interpreting Institute (VRSII) to pilot the interpreting pedagogy emphasis and gauge demand for a concentration once the new MS is in place. The 15 students who are selected to pilot the project, beginning in May 2012, will enter under the MEd and transition over into the MS seamlessly once the change is official. The UNF-VRSII partnership is structured a bit differently than the general program. It will consist of 3-week summer sessions in two summers with online courses during the fall and spring semesters. It is designed for students to receive the master's degree within 18 months if they have prior teaching experience and 24 if they need an additional internship to provide more teaching experience prior to graduation.

Students who are currently in the general program take one teaching course, Interpreting Process Pedagogy. Otherwise, they are focused on becoming more highly qualified practitioners. The ideas for expanding the program are pretty unlimited, but of course, we are restricted by resource limitations, such as faculty. However, the structure will be much better for expanding the program into specializations once we are a stand-alone degree.

Doug: So you're currently in an institutional box that you have to break out of in order to have those choices?

Sherry: Right. We started on a trial basis and the program's growth is allowing us to expand our thinking. We have gone from five students in 2009 to 38 students in 11 states in 2012. Thus far, we have graduated 12 students, with six more expected this summer. We've demonstrated to the institution that the potential for growth is there, and we're in the position now to move forward with that.

Doug: That's great. You've talked some about the institutional issues you've faced in finding a home for this. What are some of the other institutional barriers you've encountered in creating an online program?

Sherry: Originally, we had a barrier with out-of-state tuition and fees for students outside of our 16-state Academic Common Market region. However, the university instituted a special tuition reduction for our program for all out-of-state students, regardless of their state of origin. This was a huge development in 2011 and is tentative while the university evaluates program growth because of this discount. While it is not the in-state rate, it is much lower than the out-of-state rate. When this was approved last year, UNF made a strong statement about its support for this program. As a result, we now have students in areas outside our region, including Illinois, Colorado, Utah, Minnesota, and Arizona, who benefit from this tuition break.

Doug: Dealing with out-of-state tuition was one challenge you faced. What have you seen as the advantages of going to a more online program?

Sherry: It would not have been our first option to have an online master's degree because I'm very much a face-to-face person. I'm a little bit "old school," and this has all been quite a learning experience for me. That said, we work really hard at it because this is the only way possible to offer people the interpreting degree they want, in a reasonable amount of time, without requiring them to uproot and move to Jacksonville. If you were to look at our student population, most students are full-time interpreters and interpreter educators, and 75% of them are already certified interpreters. They need advanced degrees, and they come into the program knowing specifically why they want the degree. There would be no way for us to meet their needs if we didn't do something online.

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Doug: That flexibility is really a key component. It sounds like your target audience is people who are working professionals already.

Sherry: Yes. However, one of the goals of the program is to assist precertified interpreters in achieving national certification. Those students who do not achieve national certification by their last semester are required to participate in a 6-credit-hour capstone internship. If a student is already certified, then that person is exempt from the 6-hour internship, which translates into a hefty savings of graduate credit tuition. That's very, very motivating for people to self-regulate their learning while they are in our program so that they can get their certification to avoid the added expense.

Doug: That's great to have an incentive like that built in. It does make a difference.

Sherry: I would like to require everyone to participate in an internship, but there are some logistical barriers, especially in the workload, in placing so many distance-learning students. The certification requirement adds an incentive because it motivates students to apply what they are learning in classes to their preparation for national certification. Of course, because ours is such a young program, I don't have data on graduates yet, but it will be very interesting to look at graduation-to-certification time spans for those students who come in without certification.

Doug : What would you say are the challenges of online learning?

Sherry: Time is a big one. I have found that it's much more labor intensive and time consuming to teach online than face-to-face, primarily because of the need to develop a "presence" in the online platform. The reasons are complex in that these students are all working individuals, and faculty have to make themselves available in typical off-hours so that students have a sense of connectedness. I have evening office hours, weekend meetings, and Saturday recording sessions. Students have my cell phone number and my commitment is that I will respond to emails within 24–48 hours. I'm almost always online to be available to students, so they don't feel like they are enrolled in independent studies. The students are committed to online learning, so our faculty members are challenged to maintain "community" with the students. I think this has been a key to the program's success. Keeping this schedule is practically life consuming, but I want the students to feel engaged. That's a summary of my biggest challenge, at least in the early stages of program development.

Our faculty members are challenged with staying current on the technology to deliver the highest quality program we can, and our advances in this area result in an improved experience for the students. In 2012, our program was selected by the university to receive online instructional designers to help us improve our delivery techniques. We were given budgets to receive Online Teaching Certification training, which five of us are involved in this year. In 2011, the university purchased ooVoo licenses to increase our capabilities in video conferencing with our students. Probably one of my greatest frustrations is just when I think I've mastered a technology, something new arrives, and there's very little time to rest.

Doug: So what have been your strategies to make it sustainable? Because there's more to your life than just this part of it. At least, I hope so. What are some of the things that you've been able to do as an instructor to both maintain that commitment, but also to balance things out so that it's doable for you?

Sherry: One of the strategies for sustainability is developing peer partnerships and groups so students can learn to depend on each other. We try to teach them how to use each other as resources. In our developmental phase, students were relying on my support for technology, among other things. We've become better at orienting students to online learning and the technology they require and directing them to UNF's excellent tech support (which their tuition dollars support). At first, I tried to answer all the technology questions, but I'm not the best person to field technology questions, so I learned quickly to instill in students the resourcefulness they need to get help from the right person. Certainly, the teamwork of the faculty is key to sustainability.

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Doug: It's the same thing, I think, as interpreters working with students in classrooms. The tendency is for the students to ask the interpreter, because it's the direct access to someone they know. Yet the goal is to have the interpreter interpret the question to the teacher or other resource provider. People will go to whom they're most comfortable with, so redirection is sometimes necessary.

Sherry: Yes, and although I often just redirect them to other resources, I encourage students to “check in” when they are frustrated about something or have questions. The worst thing we can do is to appear too busy for students. Without them actually being on campus, there are no opportunities for them to drop in to the office and chat about their concerns, so when they reach out for help, it's important that we give them the support they need. I have found that most students struggle for quite a while to resolve a problem or answer their own questions before they contact me. This semester, in the Applied Research course, I sent a message to students asking them to contact me with an “SOS” in the subject line of an email if they needed immediate assistance. I guaranteed immediate response to an SOS. Within 10 minutes, I had five SOS messages, which tells me if we don't make an effort to stay engaged with students, we can't maximize their learning.

Doug: You mentioned developing that peer-to-peer relationship. What are some other strategies that you have used to develop that sense of community, so that there's more cohesion online between the students and they're able to learn from each other and also have that sense of respect for each other?

Sherry: Last year, we developed a Blackboard course called Boot Camp, and all incoming students participate in it the summer prior to admission. Boot Camp gives students practice with the online environment and experience with submitting assignments, participating in discussions, developing wikis (group projects), taking exams, and undertaking many other tasks that are part of their coursework. They also develop a website where they can post personal information and photos if they want. We are hopeful this will give students a head start on developing those peer relationships and prepare them to begin their courses without worrying about technology considerations. Once courses begin, students are involved in online discussions to develop a teamwork mentality. We orient them to the etiquette of online learning and the value of community building within an online environment so they can interact with respect and tolerance for differences.

The other aspect of community building is that students come to campus once every semester. Working together in groups when they're here seems to sustain them from semester to semester because they know each other. When we started the program, we admitted year-round, and it was more challenging because students might enter mid-year and miss the fall on-site course. We now admit only in the fall to avoid this, but it was necessary in the beginning for program-building reasons to maintain open enrollment. If students are able to participate in the short-term study abroad option, which we call a “transformational learning opportunity,” they develop lifelong friendships with each other.

Coming to campus once a semester, working through Boot Camp, and participating in online discussions, video conferencing, and study abroad are the main ways that students build a sense of camaraderie in the whole graduate school experience.

Doug: Does UNF have a pretty strong program in online learning for other departments, so that there's wide support for it?

Sherry: UNF is committed to expanding distance-learning opportunities for its students. I am on the Distance Learning Committee, which is chaired by one of our faculty members, Dr. Len Roberson (who was the department chair responsible for establishing interpreter education at UNF and is also the Assistant Vice President of Academic Technology). The Interpreting Program is a forerunner at the institution, so administrators look to us to set the pace for more programs to transition to online delivery. They have their eye on us all the time, and that's a good thing! It definitely helps when the department chair, college dean, graduate school dean, provost, and president know about your program and understand its uniqueness. They want it to succeed, and that's what sets

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this university apart, in my view. UNF's administration embraces innovation even when dealing with economic issues. With administrative support, I feel there is so much potential for expansion as we try to meet market demand for online graduate programming.

Doug: It's nice to have allies within the structure of an institution. That really does make a difference.

Sherry: If the administration does not have a true understanding about what you do, it can be like beating your head against the wall. I've been amazed by UNF's perspective on interpreter education and the value that it places on it. First of all, having some flexibility built into governance and the curricular process allows for the "wiggle room" I need to try new ideas. Just being able to try a new course as an experiment, before going through the entire curricular process of changing or adding a course, has been liberating. That allowed me to rapidly build a program. My immediate administrators have put a lot of trust in me to do it and it has worked. I'm very, very happy with the way the institution has worked with the program.

Doug: That's great. You've talked about the program growing and you've talked about your role as one of the faculty members, but are there other faculty involved? Also, what are some of the challenges of recruiting and finding qualified faculty to be a part of the program?

Sherry: Our master's program requires a tenure-track faculty member to have an earned doctorate, and it's a huge challenge in our profession, which until recently, did not have a terminal degree in interpreting. You can count all the people in our profession who have doctorates, and those people tend to be entrenched in coordinating or teaching in interpreting programs, researching, consulting, and doing other things. Even though we deliver the program primarily online, we still have a BS degree program that is on-site, and we teach in both programs. It's not so easy to recruit doctorate-level people, especially when it means moving, even if it is to beautiful Florida! When we were given another full-time, tenure-track position, it took us a while to locate the right person. Now, we have Dr. Janice Humphrey on board, and she brings a wealth of experience to our students. Jan moved to Florida in December 2011 and started teaching in spring 2011. Part-time faculty members include Drs. Len Roberson, Eileen Forestal, Carolyn Ball, Marty Taylor, Carol Patrie, and Debra Russell. One challenge we face regarding part-time faculty is the relatively low wage, especially when they live at a distance and money is limited for their travel for a class with an on-site component.

Doug: So then the part-time faculty may be not able to be a part of the community building when it happens?

Sherry: That's right. At least not in classes that require an on-site component.

Doug: That's a challenge.

Sherry: I need to figure out a way to fund part-time faculty travel and expenses, perhaps by applying for grants and finding foundation support. We're exploring a couple of foundations right now to help us with this dilemma of acquiring high-quality part-time faculty members who can be paid to come and teach their on-site component.

We are fortunate to have local part-time faculty like Len Roberson, who teaches Interpreting in Legal Settings, along with Sharon Caserta who's an SC:L and a legal aid attorney in Jacksonville. We also have deaf faculty members who are resident ASL experts and are authorized to teach with master's degrees as an exception to policy.

Doug: That's the reality that I often face in terms of needing to pull bits and pieces together, but it seems like it's an added pressure that you are in some ways the model for the university about how this should go forward.

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So, maintaining the level of standard is important from the quality standpoint, but also in that this will have a ripple effect with other programs.

I'm curious to know about some of the structure of your courses, and what sort of activities you do and resources you include. Because obviously interpreting as a visual medium requires working in signed language and some of those visual modes, and face-to-face interaction makes most sense to lots of people, so when you talk about doing online signed language things, people go, "How do you do that?" So, what are some of the things that you've found successful in integrating into your online courses?

Sherry: The beauty of the times is that we have so many resources for students available to us online. Whereas we used to rely on our labs with 800+ videotapes, we've discovered that the Internet is our best tool as far as resources go. We use MIT's OpenCourseWare where their lectures are online, many with video material connected to the lectures. That's been a great resource for source text English materials. OIC Movies is one of several great sites for ASL source materials. Purchasing streaming rights to commercially produced materials can be exorbitant, so we produce many source materials in-house. Another resource for curriculum modification and enhancement is the National Interpreter Education Center, funded in 5-year grant cycles by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services. In the current grant cycle (2010–2015), Northeastern University presently is administering the grant and taking steps to extend the way programs share effective methods, technologies, innovations, and materials with each other. The initiatives in this grant cycle include exploring the feasibility of using MIT's OpenCourseWare model in interpreter education. Open online access to entire courses is a new concept for interpreter education, but it has "come of age" and holds great promise for increasing access to good source materials online.

I can see where prospective students might be resistant and think that an online program translates into a lower-quality program, but that's really not the case. In an on-site program, I would require students to submit videos or DVDs of their work, but now, even on-site programs are using sites like YouTube for private performance submissions that are only viewable by the professor. UNF has a software license for Blackboard Collaborate that provides an online classroom via video. We now use ooVoo for videoconferencing with multiple students at a time, thanks to the university's new license.

The students who take the plunge into online learning typically are very tech savvy. They are also very patient because glitches happen, and they have to have the flexibility to work through those. If I feel that the student is developing a negative attitude or becoming overly frustrated, then I'll pick up the phone and call that person to see if I can make that personal touch readily available. I've learned over the years that if I let the problem escalate, one student's frustration starts to affect the other students. So, we keep our eyes on disposition in the online environment and offer support when we can.

Doug: From my experience, that is very important. Most of the work I have done is hosted outside the context of institutions, so I've been the one who has really been the tech support. What has seemed to be the most important thing is not necessarily having the answers, but having a rapid response to people's sense of frustration. I always tell people that I may not have the answer but I will always have sympathy. A sense of a human connection allows them to tolerate the glitches that will be there. Sometimes it is having to pick up the phone and say, "Okay, let's talk about this," to avoid having more frustration through the technology. To me, that is a key to having people hooked in because I think it seems to be easier for people to drop out of online programs than other ones.

Sherry: We had one student drop out of the program because of a rural location without frequent access to high-speed Internet. Otherwise, the students who start are prepared with the technology and access they need to persist.

Human connection is very important. Last year, I started conducting individual phone advising appointments over 1 week per semester. Previously, I advised via email. I was able to learn a lot about student satisfaction with the program through these personal conversations, and I think it was a good way for us to get to know each other better. I think that was really helpful. I'm not much of a phone person because I can do things much more quickly online and in email, but I find myself not always being as polite as I would like to be online. I just get straight to

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the point, so I have to make an extra effort to be congenial in my messages to students (or anybody, for that matter). Next term, I will hold advising sessions individually and in small groups using ooVoo for better “visual identity.”

Doug: I know exactly what you're talking about. That's how I write all my emails. I leave a space to go back to the top and put in all the niceties.

Sherry: Instead of email, which can appear abrupt if I am rushed, the phone helps me connect better and learn more in the advising process.

Doug: I just heard David Brooks, who's a columnist for the New York Times talk about his best-selling book called The Social Animal (2011). One of the things he brings out is that in all the discussion about school reform, the thing that people forget and the thing that's actually most important is that kids, and students, learn from teachers that they like and who they feel care about them. And what I'm hearing you talk about is how you impart that to students. That they have the sense that you're really in it for them. That sense of connection really goes way beyond the technology.

Sherry: Yes, absolutely. I was quite excited on the Thursday night of our on-site weekend, when all of these students were flying in, some of whom I had never met because they started last fall when I wasn't teaching the on-site course. I made an appearance in the class, but I really didn't get to know them. So, that was the highlight of my semester!

Doug: One question I'm really curious about, because I've been really trying to think through this in my own work, is about Bloom's taxonomy and the higher order of skills in terms of application and synthesis and evaluation. How are you able to structure activities in an online setting that really move towards those higher-order skills? Because it seems to me in my experience that it is much easier to create online activities toward the understanding, comprehension, and knowledge levels at the base of the taxonomy. And it's easier to evaluate those skills. So, I'm curious to know what you have found to be successful in terms of working toward those higher order skills.

Sherry: I try to move quickly beyond the knowledge piece. I give online quizzes for knowledge-based material. I know that students can do their readings and take a quiz, but that's really a small part of their coursework. Our courses are skills-based, and because we're a skills-based program, we really need to move the courses beyond those basic levels of learning. Students need to be able to apply knowledge, so one class might take that application piece and require students to develop a wiki resource, either in a group or individually. For example, in our health care interpreting course, students are divided into groups around a topic and create a wiki webpage. They pull together resources and interview deaf people or family members who have direct or indirect experience with a particular condition. The students have to take what they learned about that situation and demonstrate application of the material. Then, at the end of the semester, students can export those wikis from Blackboard and everybody ends up with these wonderful resources. That's just one example of application.

When I taught Interpreting Process Pedagogy, the students read Gile's (2002) *Basic Models and Concepts* book. We talked about it throughout the semester, but when they came on-site, they were involved in role play and project development that demonstrated their ability to develop lessons, create rubrics, conduct evaluations, and teach models such as the Gravitational Model of Language Availability. When you have a class with an on-site component, that makes it a bit easier to pull in that application piece because students are able to interact around the material. Even if it is an online class, there is still group work on projects. For example, students might have to develop a module and present it in Elluminate to their classmates. The “Service-Learning” course is an example of totally applying and synthesizing what the students learn, and hopefully when they leave our program, becoming allies of the deaf community as part of their professional identity. We're very aware of Bloom's taxonomy and we want to make sure students have tools they can use beyond their formal education.

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Higher-order thinking is also critical for students to become self-monitors and self-regulated learners. It is critical that they leave UNF with those abilities because they're not going to have us always there giving feedback. They need to learn how to monitor for themselves and regulate their professional growth through setting goals, enlisting mentors, and following through with personal development plans. I'd say, and I think the students also would say, that the program is very rigorous. I hope when they graduate they are able to apply the critical thinking skills they acquired here to their future as practitioners and educators.

Doug: Do you have any perspective to share on the challenge of time management for students?

Sherry: With the additional faculty position, we can provide every graduate student with the opportunity to take a full load each semester, which is 9 credit hours. In the fall, we offered 12 credit hours. Those students who wanted to take four courses had to talk to me first about their time management before I would give them permission to enroll in that many hours. We have conversations about the limitations of their current situations. "Okay, so you're pregnant and you're going to have a baby mid-term? How can we say how that will affect your semester? What do you realistically think you can do?" That's an advising issue, but it also draws attention to their need to pace themselves so that they can do well in the program.

Students may attend part-time or full-time. We don't have a restriction on that (except for the pedagogy option), and I encourage students to gauge what they can do successfully. That's their call as much as it is mine. Some of them come in very ambitious, and I commend that, but if I notice within the first couple of weeks that students are getting a slow start or are becoming frustrated, that's when I pick up the phone and talk to them about possibly dropping down to a more reasonable number of credit hours where they can function successfully.

Doug: It is interesting for me to hear this from the institutional standpoint. I don't know if it is a unique spot or not, but I'm in that realm where I'm outside of some of those restrictions but also without some of those supports. I hear you talking about them, and I think "Oh, I'm glad I don't have to deal with that." And there's other parts I hear and say, "Oh, that'd be really nice to have." And just recognizing the contradictions that some of what we miss comes with costs and what we get comes with costs, too.

Do you have any final thoughts to share about being involved in online education?

Sherry: Last thoughts on online learning. . . . Students are learning a lot more than content by the simple fact that they're involved in online learning. Technology is very much a part of their future. I think we are traditionally very face-to-face and social people as interpreters and interpreter educators, but the time is now for us to embrace the technology that is available to us to prepare interpreters. I've experienced dramatic change, both personally and professionally, since I started teaching online. I've learned so much from the students because I'm constantly engaged with them . . . even much more than I was in a traditional face-to-face delivery mode. I'm finding great advantages to online teaching. I think it's made me contemporary. It's forced me, and I like that, because I like to keep learning and growing. It takes me right back to the comment about students' patience. Many of the students know a lot more about technology than I do, and they give me ideas so that we grow together. As professionals of interpreter education, we need to focus our efforts and take advantage of all these opportunities. I realize that many people are resistant to even the idea that we could have an online program. Until you are in the technology trenches yourself and experimenting with all these different things, you can't really embrace the beauty of it. I've had the privilege of doing this, thanks to those five students who originally came to me and asked me for it. I never would have initiated it on my own.

Doug: I think that's a really great summary thought. Thanks so much for taking the time to be part of this conversation

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3. References

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