
Issue Brief – Services for Hearing Impaired Students

NUMBER USHE-09

SUMMARY

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires accommodations for people with disabilities. For students with hearing impairments, the accommodation is often an interpreter who goes with the student to the classes. When an interpreter is not provided, students have sought legal recourse. The USHE institutions that are providing interpreters are incurring, on average, a cost of over \$10,000 per FTE student.

OBJECTIVE

To provide the State Board of Regents with a central pool designated specifically for reimbursing institutions' expenses associated with providing interpreters for students requesting this service.

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

In 2001-2002, there were 87 reported students who needed the services of an interpreter. That figure has grown steadily over the past five years. In 2005-2006, there were 152 students. Costs for interpreters range from \$9,000 per FTE student to over \$22,000 – depending on the institution, the coursework, and the availability of trained, certified interpreters.

Because the number of students requiring the services of interpreters is growing as well as the costs of providing those interpreters, and in an effort to prevent future legal action against the institutions, the Analyst recommends funding in the amount of \$1 million. The Analyst recommends that the funding be appropriated to a new line item within the State Board of Regents' budget designated specifically for the reimbursement of expenses incurred by the institutions related to providing interpreters for hearing impaired students.

