

Interpreter Training at North Carolina Colleges

By Georgia Betcher



According to the mission statement of the community colleges in North Carolina, it is our mission to train the workforce. To that end, community colleges offer a wide variety of curriculum programs to serve the student's goal of obtaining an academic degree, certificate, or diploma. The academic degree and certificate programs in the field of interpretation will be the focus of this article, which specifically highlights those community colleges that offer a two-year Associate in Arts Degree and/or Certificate programs under the program title "Community Spanish Interpreter."

North Carolina has 58 community colleges in its community college system. Approximately 15% of these colleges offer a degree and/or certificate in "Community Spanish Interpreter" in their curriculum programs.¹

Although there may be some variations in the list of courses required for the Associate in Arts Degree for the Community Spanish Interpreter program, typically the five-semester (two-year) program includes general education requirements as well as courses in the Spanish language, Spanish phonetics, Hispanic/Latino culture, an introductory and an advanced interpretation course, and a translation course.

Program Benefits

Students attending community college curriculum programs obtain college credit and often go on to public four-year institutions to obtain a higher degree. The more training in the field of translation and interpretation, the more opportunities are available. Graduates of the Community Spanish Interpreter program can put their training to work in staff interpreter positions and/or enjoy freelance work in myriad community settings.

Programs at Fayetteville Technical Community College

Note: This section includes many references to the Community Spanish Interpreter program at Fayetteville Technical Community College because that is where the author teaches interpretation and translation as well as Spanish language courses.

The Associate Degree Program

Community Spanish Interpreter: Associate in Applied Science – Community Spanish Interpreter (A55370)

At Fayetteville Technical Community College, for example, the [list of courses](#) in the Community Spanish Interpreter program includes 24 hours of general education and other required courses, such as Public Speaking and Professional Research and Reporting. Core courses consist of 48 hours of language, interpretation, and translation courses, for a total of 72 semester hours. An important element in the program is the Co-op Work Experience, where students benefit from an internship.

To get an idea of the content of a typical interpretation course and a translation course, here are the course descriptions for Introduction to Spanish Interpreting and Introduction to Translation. (These courses are ideally taught by instructors who have been trained in the field of translation and interpretation.)

SPI 113 Introduction to Spanish Interpreting

This course introduces the field of interpreting, interpretation models, cognitive processes associated with interpretation, professional ethical standards, employment opportunities, and working conditions. Topics include specialized jargon, code of ethics, interpreter assessments/qualifications, and protocol associated with various settings. Upon completion, students should be able to explain the rationale for placement of interpreters and apply ethical standards to a variety of working situations.

SPI 114 Introduction to Translation

This course is designed to improve the quality of Spanish-to-English and English-to-Spanish translation. It emphasizes the practice of Spanish-to-English and English-to-Spanish translation in a variety of prose styles. Upon completion, students should be able to demonstrate the usage and understanding of the processes involved in translating.

The Certificate Programs

Community Spanish Interpreter: Facilitator Certificate (C55370C1)

This two-semester (one-year) certificate² offers training in interpreting techniques, specialized vocabulary acquisition, introductory translation skills, and the use of professional ethics for work as a community interpreter.^{3>}

Major Courses

SPA-215 Spanish Phonetics/Structure
SPA-231 Reading and Composition
SPI-113 Introduction to Spanish Interpreting
SPI-114 Analytical Skills for Spanish Interpreting
SPI-213 Review of Grammar
SPI-214 Introduction to Translation

Total Credit Hours: 18

Community Spanish Interpreter: Spanish Language Certificate (C55370C2)

This two-semester (one-year) certificate² focuses on the acquisition of Spanish grammar, structure, sociolinguistic properties, and phonetics, Hispanic/Latino culture and civilization, and practice in the use of the language with the goal of gaining sufficient proficiency to obtain a job where bilingual skills are required. It does not include training in interpretation.

Major Courses

SPA-141 Culture and Civilization
SPA-212 Intermediate Spanish II
SPA-215 Spanish Phonetics/Structure
SPA-221 Spanish Conversation
SPA-231 Reading and Composition
SPA-281 Spanish Lab 3
SPA-282 Spanish Lab 4

Total Credit Hours: 17

These two certificate programs are gaining in popularity, as is the idea that one can graduate with a degree and one or more certificates. There is interest in obtaining multiple degrees in different programs or multiple certificates, or a combination, for example, a degree in Hotel and Restaurant Management and a certificate in the Spanish Language.

Programs at Durham Technical Community College

Durham Technical Community College now offers a **Medical Spanish Facilitator Certificate**, a 15-credit hour certificate that prepares students to work as para-professional, medical Spanish interpreters whose goal it is to facilitate oral communication between individuals in medical settings. For more information about this programs, see www.durhamech.edu/html/prospective/programsofstudy/spip.htm#medical.

Durham Technical Community College has also offered the **Community Spanish Facilitator Certificate Program** since 2003.

Community Colleges Offering the Community Spanish Interpreter Program

Here is a list of community colleges in North Carolina that offer the Community Spanish Interpreter Program:

Alamance Community College, Graham, NC

www.alamancecc.edu/curriculum_courses_programs/courses_programs/index.php

Certificate: Community Spanish Interpreter (C55370) -
Emphasis in Native Spanish Speaker
Certificate: Community Spanish Interpreter (C55370) -
Emphasis in Native English Speaker
Certificate: Community Spanish Interpreter (C55370) -
Emphasis in Spanish Language

Beaufort County Community College, Washington, NC

www.beaufortccc.edu/progrm/arts&sc/spanish.htm

Certificate: Spanish Facilitator (Interpreter) (C55370)

Blue Ridge Community College, Flat Rock, NC

Degree: Community Spanish Interpreter (A55370)

www.blueridge.edu/Files/POSRecord.php?POSID=108

Cape Fear Community College, Wilmington, NC

<http://cfcc.edu/academicPrograms.html>

Degree: Community Spanish Interpreter (A55370)

Cleveland Community College, Shelby, NC

www.clevelandcommunitycollege.edu/academic/academic_frames.html

Degree: Community Spanish Interpreter (A55370)

Davidson County Community College, Lexington, NC

www.davidsonccc.edu/pdfs/Arts&SciencesSequenceSheets/Community%20Spanish%20Checklist_2006_2007.pdf

Degree: Community Spanish Interpreter (A55370)

Fayetteville Technical Community College, Fayetteville, NC

www.faytechcc.edu/EdProg/Curr/General%20Programs%20PDF/A55370Community%20Spanish%20Interpreter.pdf

Degree: Community Spanish Interpreter (A55370)
Certificate: Spanish Facilitator (Interpreter) (C553701)
Certificate: Spanish Language (C553702)

Johnston Community College, Smithfield, NC
www.johnstoncc.edu/academics/csi/course.htm

Degree: Community Spanish Interpreter (A55370)
Surry Community College, Dobson, NC

www.surry.edu/programs/#c

Degree: Community Spanish Interpreter (A55370)
Certificate: Native Spanish Speaker (C55370)
Certificate: Native English Speaker (C55370)

Wilson Community College, Wilson, NC

www.wilsontech.edu/page_currprog.cfm?PageName=spanishint_main

Degree: Community Spanish Interpreter (A55370)

Georgia Betcher is a state-certified court interpreter (California) and an ATA-certified translator. This is Georgia's third year as a full-time Spanish Language /Spanish Interpreting Instructor at Fayetteville Technical Community College, Fayetteville, NC. She is currently serving as Secretary on the CATI board.

¹ Community colleges in North Carolina typically offer curriculum programs as well as continuing education programs.

² The community interpreter interprets primarily for local providers of medical, social, government and legal services and their LEP (Limited English Proficient) clients.

³ Students must demonstrate language proficiency to the satisfaction of the Department Chair either through the appropriate course work or the appropriate level CLEP test. Students are expected to have computer knowledge and Internet Skills.