



# 'Deaf Space' presents other view of life

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as personal space is necessary to be able to communicate with sign language.

Bienvenu also presented a brief history of deaf culture related to light. "Deaf people are naturally attracted to the light," said Bienvenu. Shadow may become intrusive for the deaf. Before the invention of electricity, deaf people would always gravitate toward windows because light creates a sense of flexibility for the deaf. In addition, deaf people prefer open doors for visual access. In the audible world, people can knock or speak through a door. Conversely, audible people would consider a window to be a barrier and gesture for someone on the other side to move to a door to speak. Deaf people, on the other hand, can communicate comfortably through windows.

Moreover, windows were a concern during the designing of the James Lee Sorenson Language and Communication Center (SLCC) for Gallaudet University. The SLCC committee was created to advise the architects hired to design the building. The committee was composed of Bienvenu, Thomas Allen, Catherine Sweet-Windham, Jane Fernandes, Paul Kelly and Hansel Bauman. Until recently, buildings had always been designed for the audible world. There is a need for deaf architects, said Bienvenu. The committee knew what they didn't want, but were uncertain of what they wanted, she explained. The SLCC created the concept of a visual-centric design for the



Photo by Michael Aburas

**Gallaudet ASL and Deaf Studies Professor MJ Bienvenu explains the finer points of deaf space and visual-centric design with her projected presentation.**

building.

The visual-centric concept was a set of aesthetic principles that would provide a comfortable environment for the deaf while inside the SLCC. Visual permeability was the goal, said Bienvenu. Additionally, windows are critical to the culture and views to different areas of the building were needed. Because of a lack of buildings designed by the deaf, the entire physical environment was important to the com-

mittee. They wanted the campus to foster social interaction and not remind the students that they are deaf. Every detail was important, even the cement, which can become intrusive to ASL users when it is reflective enough to create glare. Bienvenu discovered that there were 11 different shades of cement before choosing which one to use for the construction. Moreover, the SLCC will be coated with zinc for reduced glare.

Funding was another obstacle during the construction of the SLCC. The glass elevator was of paramount significance to the building and was the first thing the architects wanted to cut when the budget became an issue. The committee believed that the building needed the glass elevator to create a deaf friendly visual-centric environment and decided to argue their point with the audible architects, through their interpreter, to keep it in the design.

Bienvenu convinced the architects of the necessity and not to forgo the glass elevator when she told them about a deaf woman in Maryland and her experience with a glass elevator.

The woman in Maryland was stuck in a glass elevator for hours when it broke down. What would normally be a very stressful situation for an audible person was fairly comfortable for her because she was able to communicate with the outside world with no real problem. Regular elevators do not provide the flexibility and freedom that a glass elevator can for deaf people.

Psychology major Isidore Nyongabo said, "It was excellent [the presentation] to me. I wish that the architecture world would respond to the needs of deaf people, especially on visibility."

Deaf Ohlone student Jag Meet Singh Hans stated, "I learned that hearing space is very different from deaf space."

Dee Glaim, who is currently enrolled in the ASL interpreter program, thought it was great knowing what's happening across the country with the deaf community. "MJ is a prominent figure within the deaf community," said Glaim.

Because of the committee's efforts, the Sorenson Language and Communication Center will have its glass elevator and visual-centric feel when construction is completed in 2008.

After the presentation Bienvenu said, "I would hope my presentation is a model for future projects."

# LAPSI: Students help each other learn

By ERIC DORMAN  
Staff writer

Ohlone has a brand-new program to help students get ahead in their classes, and keep them there, all without tutors or technology. Moreover, it is gaining popularity quickly, from just seven students at the beginning of the semester to 51 students last week.

"[This program] is about teaching students how to learn," said Math Professor Ilene Katz, "and it has proven to be very successful."

The program, called Learning Assistance Program/Supplemental Instruction (LAPSI), helps students teach themselves rather than be taught. Instead of conventional one-on-one tutoring, LAPSI participating students of one class form a group where they help each other and receive extra instruction that

runs parallel to the class.

This is the first semester a program of this kind has been tried at Ohlone. It was put into action here by a group of four faculty members: Katz, English Professor Shirin Maskatia, Student Technology and Tutoring Instructional Assistant Wendy Lin and Learning Disabilities Specialist Paula Shoecker. Katz and Maskatia both teach classes with LAPSI sessions running along with them.

Katz stressed the difference between LAPSI and one-on-one tutoring. In LAPSI, she said, interested students in one of nine participating classes form a group beneath a student instructor, or LAPSI leader, who has already taken the course successfully. The leader, who attends the same class he or she is instructing, will discuss the most important (or most difficult

to understand) concept in that day's lecture in an effort to help students understand the idea better. The leader will encourage students to interact during sessions and will prompt discussions on the topic.

Another big difference between conventional tutoring and LAPSI, Katz noted, is that unlike tutoring LAPSI is not necessarily geared toward failing students. It can just as easily help an "A" student maintain their average as help a "C" or "D" student raise their grade.

There are currently nine classes that have LAPSI sessions along with them, everything from Math and English to Science and Spanish. The classes chosen to have LAPSI accompaniment were simply the courses that students viewed as most challenging, said Katz.

"There are particular courses in every major which students think of

as 'hard,'" said Katz. "LAPSI is intended to address those courses."

The sizes of the LAPSI groups vary anywhere from as few as two students to as many as fifteen, often depending on the relative proximity to an exam. Prior to a test, LAPSI session times are sometimes extended to give students extra time to study specific concepts that they need help with.

While LAPSI is new to Ohlone, it is quite popular in colleges around the country, where it is commonly known as "SI". Dr. Deanna Martin developed the concept in the 1970s at the University of Missouri at Kansas City. Since that time, the program has expanded to hundreds of colleges and universities nationwide and is even starting to be accepted on an international scale.

Although it's too early to tell if the LAPSI program at Ohlone

is helping students improve their grades, said Lin, it is clear from the data of other colleges that LAPSI considerably raised the grades of students who attended it, anywhere from a half to a full grade higher. Research data also showed that students who attended LAPSI sessions had higher graduation rates.

Though the program is completely voluntary, Lin said that it has a high retention rate.

"When people come [to LAPSI], they keep coming back," she said. "It's a very helpful program."

Hussain Ali, who attends the Algebra 1 LAPSI session weekly, agreed. He believes that LAPSI and the college's more conventional tutoring programs complement each other well. "Both are helpful," said Ali, who said he liked the one-on-one tutoring to help him with English, his third language and that he liked LAPSI for math. "They both help me achieve my goals."

The formation of LAPSI is part of a larger push to revamp Ohlone's tutoring program, which has been encouraged by College President Doug Treadway, said Katz.

Last spring, for the first time, the college began offering courses specifically to train tutors. Students who completed the course successfully could become certified, and would be eligible for pay raises.

Does Katz think the program will expand? "Oh, definitely," said Katz. "Remember, this is just the pilot year. We would love to see LAPSI expand."

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