



# Posthumous Degree Request Form

Request Initiator: Andrea Pierson Contact: piersona@unm.edu

Relationship to student or UNM: Student Eligibility Specialist - UNM Lobo Center for Student-Athlete Success

Would you like the Dean of Students to contact the family regarding this request?  Yes  No

Dean of Students Notification: Andrea is in contact with the family

Student Name:	Nahje Flowers		
Student ID:	101754666		
College:	Arts & Sciences	Degree:	B.S.
Major(s):	Signed Language Interpreting		
Concentration(s):	N/A		
Minor(s):	Psychology		

The University of New Mexico recognizes that earning an academic degree is a matter of legitimate pride in achievement not only for students themselves but also for the family members and friends who provide students with vitally important support and encouragement during the course of their studies. UNM also recognizes that not only the degree, but also significant progress in an academic program is, under certain circumstances, an achievement which warrants special recognition.

Accordingly, the University of New Mexico will make available "posthumous degrees" of appropriate type and level to be bestowed upon a student who dies before s/he is able to complete his/her program.

These degrees may be granted under the following circumstances and terms:

1. The student must be in degree status and either currently enrolled or enrolled in the academic year previous to his/her death;
2. The student must have completed a minimum of half of the credits required for the degree;
3. Requests for posthumous degrees may be initiated by the student's family, the faculty of the department and/or college, or a UNM administrator;
4. The department, the college and the Faculty Senate must approve requests for posthumous degrees. The Senate Graduate Committee must also review and provide recommendation on requests for graduate level posthumous degrees;
5. The degree will be noted as "posthumous" on both the diploma and the transcript.

Approvals	Name	Signature	Date
Department :	Linguistics	<i>Julie Morford</i> <i>Bob Fry</i>	02/24/2020
College :	Arts & Sciences	<i>Stephanie Harms</i>	2/25/2020
Grad. Committee (if necessary):	N/A		
Faculty Senate:			



# UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO

February 18, 2020

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing this letter on behalf of the late Nahje Flowers in support of him being awarded his posthumous degree from the University of New Mexico. At the time of his death, he was in a different degree-seeking program due to additional requirements he was required to meet as a student-athlete competing in an NCAA sponsored sport. He was not able to be in pre-major status because of these additional requirements but was working towards meeting the admission requirements to be moved into the program after the Spring 2020 semester. Though he was not yet listed as a BS in Signed Language Interpreting major, it is my request that his degree be awarded in the Signed Language Interpreting program and allow him to reach his goal and honor him in the way he deserves.

When Nahje discovered the Signed Language Interpreting program in the Spring 2018 semester, it was like a new light was found in his life. Nahje endured an immense amount of adversity in his short life which made it difficult for him to prioritize his academics at times. However, when Nahje talked about leaving the University of New Mexico with his Bachelor of Science in Signed Language Interpreting, it was almost as if there was a new person standing in front of me who could finally see the potential in himself that so many of us around him had seen since the first moment he walked into our lives.

In order to paint a better picture of what this degree will mean to his loved ones and greatest supporters, I have also included his letter of intent and letters of recommendation that he had compiled for the Signed Language Interpreting program, along with a letter of support from one of the lecturers from the program that he worked with closely. Through these different perspectives, it is more obvious to see the large and lasting impact that Nahje left on all of those around him – the same impact that he would have been able to achieve after earning his Bachelor of Science from the University of New Mexico.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please feel free to contact me regarding any further questions.

Sincerely,

Andrea Pierson  
**Student Eligibility Specialist**  
*Football, Softball*  
Lobo Center for Student-Athlete Success  
University of New Mexico  
piersona@unm.edu  
(505) 277-8963

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Signed Language Interpreting Program  
Department of Linguistics

February 10, 2020

To Whom It May Concern:

Nahje Flowers was a student in my Fingerspelling course in the Spring of 2019. Although he didn't have the chance to apply to the Signed Language Interpreting Program before his death, he expressed to me on two different occasions that he planned to finish the pre-requisite courses so that he could apply to the program. He told me that he hadn't found much that he was interested in for a career until he took our Introduction to Signed Language course. I know from several conversations with him that our courses inspired him and offered him hope. He told me he wanted to major in signed language interpreting because he wanted to do meaningful work after graduation. He also mentioned that he wished that football didn't consume so much of his time, so that he could get more involved in the Deaf community instead, but he also expressed that football was his only way to get an education. He wanted to pursue interpreting full-time in the future and seek opportunities to interpret for Deaf People of Color and in athletic settings.

Nahje had the opportunity to meet some Deaf students and teachers from the New Mexico School for the Deaf and had an immediate connection with the students who looked up to him as a starting linebacker for the UNM Football team. Nahje invited those students to one of his football games and was nice enough to give a tour of the locker room facilities in American Sign Language (ASL) after the game. He even signed to them from the field between plays during the game to help them feel included as fans in the stands. This exemplified his commitment to the Deaf community and his understanding of how important it is for Deaf people to have access to information through their language, ASL. Although he was a beginner and only started learning ASL the year before, he was not shy about using what he knew. I was told by Deaf community members who knew Nahje that he never let communication barriers get in the way of him connecting to them. He was also skilled at instinctually improvising in Deaf friendly ways to figure out how to communicate and be understood by native ASL users.

Although Nahje struggled academically in some of his classes, he was highly intelligent and had a natural way of interacting with members of the Deaf community. He showed care, compassion, and respect that cannot be taught in the classroom and because of this, I believe he would have offered unique skill sets making him a great candidate for the Signed Language Interpreting Program. With these factors in mind, I



May 1, 2019

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to you to express my interest in the Signed Language Interpreting program. I am a junior here at the University of New Mexico and play on the football team. My first couple of years here I have had a lot of trouble trying to figure out what I wanted to get my degree in or what I wanted to do in my future.

In spring 2018, I took SIGN 201 as an elective class and that was when I felt like I had finally found what I wanted to do with my life. It wasn't easy, but I felt like it was something I was finally interested in and wanted to go to class for. I have always enjoyed working with kids and helping others that I didn't think had the same chances and opportunities that I did. By pursuing a degree in Signed Language Interpreting, I felt like I could do that.

Being a young African American male athlete, I think that I am different than a lot of other people in the Interpreting field. After I finish my degree, I want to be able to work with young kids that are interested in sports. I think that I will be able to make a difference in the athletic deaf community as a coach with my experiences as a student-athlete. I know I still have a lot to learn but I am ready to continue on in the program and help to make a difference in the world in a field that I am passionate about.

Please let me know if you have any further questions or need anything else.

Thanks,



Nahje Flowers



# UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO

April 30, 2019

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing this letter on behalf of Nahje Flowers, a student I have tutored and worked with during my time as a Learning Strategist and Student Success Specialist at the Lobo Center for Student-Athlete Success at the University of New Mexico. I have been working with Nahje for the past two years, helping him work through class work and discussing life plans with him as he navigates UNM and all of the challenges that have arisen during his time here. It is my pleasure to fully recommend Nahje for acceptance into the Signed Language Interpreting Program at the University of New Mexico.

Nahje is one of the most dynamic young people I have ever met, and his compassion for humanity is unmatched by the other young people I know. His maturity level when it comes to various topics such as the patriarchy, people with disabilities and in general being a good human being are parts of his character that are hard to quantify, so I am glad I have the privilege to write this letter to highlight some of the amazing things he has done that do not show up on a transcript or a piece of paper.

For instance, during Nahje's first semester taking sign language classes, his teacher put him in contact with a few students who played on the football team at the School for the Deaf in Santa Fe. He corresponded with both the students and parents, showing them that it was possible for these young kids to find role models in a something that normally is off limits to people who primarily use ASL to communicate. The whole experience cumulated with the students coming to one of Nahje's football games where he signed to them from the field and came up to the parents and kids during half time to sign with them.

That experience alone will change the trajectory of those student's lives forever, but for Nahje, it was second nature. When we talked about it during one of our tutoring sessions, he almost forgot to mention it happened to me. As I kept questioning, he told me more and more and I was so moved by his compassion for these kids and how easy it was to take a little bit of time out of his life to impact someone so profoundly. The parents were so moved by what Nahje did, and I still think he does not quite understand how impactful his interaction with those kids was, but this is just a small example of the compassion he feels for all humans.

This was not an isolated occurrence, on a final for one of Nahje's business classes, he had to create a business plan about a company he would want to start. We talked for many hours trying to pinpoint what he would be most passionate about and it always came back to helping people. The company he created was a camp for kids with disabilities where they were able to come and do a sports camp while also having any accommodations they might need. While this is just a project, his desire to constantly think about how to help others is never far from the surface of his conscious and at any opportunity he gets, he tries to figure out how to incorporate that passion into whatever he is doing.

It is rare that a young person today understands their place in the world so profoundly, but Nahje realizes his public image and ability to impact the community of Albuquerque, and specifically the Deaf community of the state of New Mexico and this is something that not a lot of people in his position have. His passion for learning ASL is unmatched and his ability to memorize signs and in turn interact with someone using ASL shows his innate ability to progress quickly.

Nahje will be a unique and important addition to the 2019 cohort for the Sign Language Interpreting Program because not only will he bring his talent as a signer and his knowledge of ASL, but he also brings an attitude that this profession needs, an attitude of compassion and empathy that not everyone is born with. His desire to help and impact people is what makes Nahje so special and what would make him such a valuable addition to your program.

**DEPARTMENT OF ATHLETICS - LOBO CENTER FOR STUDENT-ATHLETE SUCCESS**  
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# UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO

I could not recommend a better person to be a part of a cohort like this and I want as many people in this world to be impacted by him. This program puts him one step closer to being able to live those goals he has and better many lives in a way that will change the course of life for countless individuals.

Please feel free to contact me regarding any further questions.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joe DeBonis".

Joe DeBonis  
**Student Success Specialist**  
Lobo Center for Student-Athlete Success  
University of New Mexico  
(505) 277-6538

To Whom It May Concern;

Nahje Flowers asked us if we could write a letter of recommendation.

We have met him only twice, both at different settings. Our first meet was when we were asked to attend a fingerspelling class and present in front of a class. Nahje was one of the 20 students in this class. During our presentation, we were playing a specific game where we had to fingerspell several words. Nahje was one of the few students who stood out. He took the time to initiate a conversation with us. In addition, it is obvious that American Sign Language is not his native language, however we could see the burning desire inside of him, wanting to improve his signing skills. This left an impression on us.

Our second meet was when we were invited by Nahje to attend to one of his football game. After the game, we were able to meet up with him. He took the time to give us a tour of the locker room. There were times when he was explaining to us the features of the locker room, he was hoping the interpreter would interpret but the interpreter would not. Knowing how exhausted he was after a game, he did not give up and gave us a nice brief tour and he tried his best to communicate though ASL. Although he has not mastered ASL but again, we saw the same desire that encouraged him to carry on our conversation in ASL. We could not be any happier with his effort.

With this said, we can see Nahje wants to continue to hone his signing skills and hopefully he will be given the opportunity to pursue into this so he can be an interpreter in the future. We hope you will take this into consideration and allow Nahje build his confidence and become perhaps one of New Mexico's top notch interpreter through this program.

If you wish to discuss this further with us, feel free to send us an email at [khand16@gmail.com](mailto:khand16@gmail.com) .

Thank you,

Kimberly Hand

Gary Hand

Dustin Hand

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# UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO

April 28, 2019

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing this letter on behalf of Nahje Flowers, one of the students I have advised during my time at the Lobo Center for Student-Athlete Success at the University of New Mexico. I have been working with Nahje for the past two years, helping guide him through his undergraduate career here at UNM. Without hesitation, I fully recommend that Nahje be considered for acceptance into the Signed Language Interpreting Program.

In my role as an academic advisor in athletics, I hold a unique position that allows me to spend a lot of time with my students. From the first day I met Nahje, I knew he was different from the rest of my students. He has overcome extreme adversity in his life to get to where he is today – but he would never let the challenges he is facing keep him from smiling, laughing, and being one of the most charismatic people in the room.

During my first semester working with Nahje, he didn't perform to the level he was capable of academically. When working with Nahje, I was able to tell how intelligent he was – but something wasn't clicking for him on the academic side. There seemed to be some sort of disconnect. Because of how he performed academically, he got himself into a place where he had to meet some extra requirements to be academically eligible for the next football season. Though it was a rough situation to go through, that is when everything finally clicked.

In order to be eligible, Nahje had to find a semester's worth of classes that there was a guarantee he would pass. At this point in his undergraduate career, Nahje had already fulfilled his Second Language requirement for his core curriculum – but after looking through all of the options of classes, Nahje was adamant about attempting SIGN 201. It was the first time I had seen a glimpse of passion about academics, so I encouraged him to pursue it – and to this day, I think it has been one of the most incredible transformations I have seen in my time working with students. Nahje turns into a different person when he is talking about the Signed Language Interpreting program. As an academic advisor, it is the most amazing thing to see. In my role, I hope to be able to help guide and direct students to find the path that is going to make them excited about their education and future – and that is what we have found with Nahje. He came in every day after class attempting to teach me different things he had learned in class and was constantly helping other students enrolled in SIGN 201 study for tests. It was like there had been some piece of the puzzle missing for Nahje and he had finally found it.

When looking at Nahje's academic transcript, you don't get the full picture of what he is capable of – or how I truly believe he will perform in your program. Nahje's story has not been picture perfect. He has had so much adversity in his life in the two years that I have known him that have made it hard for him to truly show what he is capable of. I believe that his admission into the Signed Language Interpreting Program is the turning point that he is waiting for. He has finally found his place in education and a passion that is going to take him far in life.

It is without reservation that I recommend Nahje for acceptance into your Signed Language Interpreting program. He has all of the qualities that will allow him to succeed in the program: passionate, determined, and resilient. I believe that his story and his unique perspective on life will be an asset to your program. I am excited to see him continue to grow and finally thrive in his undergraduate journey.

Please feel free to contact me regarding any further questions.

Thank you,

Andrea Pierson  
Student Success Specialist  
Lobo Center for Student-Athlete Success  
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(505) 277-8963

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