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**Madonna University is awarded the SANS  
2005 Sony Virtuoso™ System Education Grant**

*...North Branford, Connecticut...* SANS Inc., the developer and exclusive licensor of Sony language learning software solutions, has awarded the 2005 Sony Virtuoso™ Education Grant to Madonna University in Livonia, Michigan.

The grant award is a Sony Virtuoso Digital Language Learning System with an ASL (American Sign Language) component valued at over \$50,000. Sony Virtuoso Instructional Control Software, when coupled with Sony Soloist® Digital Comparative Recorder Software is an all-digital, multi-media, software-based language learning system that is easily installed on a school's existing PC network. With the new ASL component, SANS has taken the fundamental real-time audio communication functions inherent to all Sony Language Learning Systems, including Student Monitoring, All Call, Student Modeling, and Intercom, and developed real-time video communication functionality based on the same basic interactive teaching modalities for use in ASL Programs, Interpreter Programs, and other courses of study using use "visual image" or "gesture" for communication.

Madonna University is one of a few private schools in the country offering a four-year ASL program. Their four-year undergraduate degree program in Sign Language Studies was established in 1975 and consists of two majors: a comprehensive major in Sign Language Studies and a more advanced program in American Sign Language (ASL) interpreting. About 250 to 350 students enroll each semester in ASL classes, and approximately 130 majors are currently pursuing the four-year degree. Madonna University also offers an undergraduate degree in Spanish and a large academic and adult ESL program, resulting from their diverse student population.

“After reviewing the many grant applications received, we chose Madonna University because they presented a clear vision to incorporate our technology in the instructional classroom for their language programs and for their students to digitally document their skill development and proficiency.” stated Stella Derum, National Marketing Manager of SANS Inc.

Upon hearing they had been awarded the grant, Ken Rust, Chair of Sign Language Studies at Madonna University, was both surprised and ecstatic. “We are walking on air,” he said. “The president, Chief Information Technology officer, and administrative council are giving us full support – even to the extent of purchasing a new, updated server and computers for the software system. Everyone is pushing for us. This language lab will be top notch...’just right’ from the get-go.”

“The classroom lab experience with the video proponent is just what we need,” explained Rust. “Real-time audio and video communications will allow the instructors to review students’ work and give immediate feedback, facilitating language instruction and response. It will be a useful tool for student self-evaluation and as an assessment tool for faculty.” He added, “The new Virtuoso lab will replace the current method of recording and playing back students’ work

on VHS tape, which is a time-consuming, out-dated mode of learning. The key is that ASL students will be able to see the link between what they do and how they do it.”

The Sony Virtuoso lab will also help Madonna University achieve its goal of creating a digitized portfolio for graduating ASL students. “The lab will allow students to put their best work on DVD – their sign language skills, resume, term papers, etc. – to create a complete portfolio on DVD that they can distribute to prospective employers and graduate schools,” stated Rust.

Although intended primarily for use in the ASL program, the Virtuoso language lab will also be used in the FL and the ESL programs. “It’s all a matter of scheduling,” stated Rust.

Madonna University is a Catholic school founded by the Felician Sisters with the mission of providing services to the underprivileged in the community. “This grant is right in line with our mission,” stated Rust. “It provides even more opportunities for students to improve their interpreter skills, fulfill credentials, and provide more services for deaf – and hearing people. As a result of this grant, ASL students will gain more skills going into the workforce and in serving the community. It’s a multi-purpose event.”

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*To learn more about SANS Inc. and Sony Language Learning Systems, contact a SANS representative at [info@sansinc.com](mailto:info@sansinc.com) or go to [www.sansinc.com](http://www.sansinc.com)*

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