

Education— Excellence Can't Wait!

By Doris Gordon

Education is the lifeblood of a profession and, at its highest level, must reflect the best scholarship and practice of that profession. Audiology, now at a doctoral level, must embrace the rigors of excellence and strive regularly to maintain and improve upon them. Thomas Friedman, the New York Times journalist, recently discussed the value and importance of education in numerous op-ed articles. In one, “Average is Over, Part II,” (*New York Times*, August 8, 2012), he writes about an interesting trend among CEOs—that “for more and more jobs, the average is over.” He points out that, because of our access to people around the globe, there is “cheaper and easier access to above-average software, automation, robotics, cheap labor, and cheap genius.” Thus, doing a job in an average way will no longer be sufficient.

The lesson here is that the job of the future, yes, the audiology job, “requires more and better education to get it, hold it, and advance in it.”

We are all aware of the scientific advancements that have been made in universities and the research and development

departments of recognized hearing industries. This compels us to realize that audiologists must be educated at a continually evolving level, just to keep pace. If commitment to—and excellence in—all audiology programs existed, the competent graduate would readily be able to dialogue meaningfully with scientists about what the consumer needs. This intellectual and practical professional relationship would be a powerful means of enhancing the profession's reputation within the public's mind.

The Accreditation Commission for Audiology Education (ACAE) is committed to ensuring that excellence is achieved in the academic setting through its rigorous requirement of compliance with its educational standards. The ACAE also seeks to begin regular conversations on the subject, and started the ball rolling at AudiologyNOW! in Boston this past spring. Four program directors participated in a panel presentation titled, “Excellence in Education.” Jerry Church, Central Michigan University, Mt. Pleasant, MI; Erica Friedland, Nova Southeastern University, Ft. Lauderdale, FL; Martha Mundy, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, NC; and Maureen Valente, Washington University, St. Louis, MO. Each presenter responded to questions about excellence in audiology programs. Lisa Hunter, chair of ACAE, moderated the panel and

Sarah Neumann, chair of the 2012 SAA Education Committee, posed the questions.

Below are results from the presentation for your review. ACAE will be holding more forums/presentations/seminars on this subject, and looks forward to engaging in the near future with the many stakeholders concerned about excellence.

Question #1—Excellence in Education

What is “excellence in education,” and what is your vision of excellence for future generations?

Overall Response

To pursue life-long learning, and to master the highest level of didactic and clinical performance in audiology.

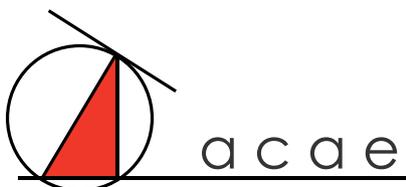
Question #2—Didactic Teaching

What are the best quality indicators for effective didactic coursework, and what are the barriers?

Overall Response

Quality Indicators

- Dynamic curriculum
- Responsiveness to new science and technology
- Advancing theory to practice
- Assuming responsibility for excellence in education



Barriers

- Spoon-feeding and cookbook curriculum

Question #3—Clinical Learning

Are students prepared to problem-solve the variety of clinical situations they encounter in their clinical careers?

Overall Response

Only if clinical preparation in a variety of settings:

- Demands effective preceptors who demonstrate/teach master skills
- Uses more simulated experiences
- Uses problem-solving methods in teaching
- Is presented in conjunction with didactic teaching

Question #4—Student Preparation and Diversity

What are some ideas for ensuring a balanced, diverse, and well-prepared applicant pool?

Overall Response

- Recruit students from diverse backgrounds
- Enlist Academy assistance to recruit balanced, diverse, and well-prepared applicant pool
- Look for students with background in science

Question #5—Research and Evidence-based Knowledge

What is an appropriate goal for research requirements? Participation in research projects, or capstone projects? Knowledge to evaluate research?

Overall Response

- Know fundamentals of research, enabling one to read literature, and critically evaluate concepts related to evidence-based practice
- Require capstone project or, if applicable, dissertation

Question #6—Leadership

What is the role of leadership in AuD student development, and how can that be fostered?

Overall Response

There are several roles:

- Create effective opportunities for leadership in classes or via student organizations (such as Student Academy of Audiology)
- Leadership with a lowercase “l” can provide students with many effective opportunities

Question #7—Challenges and Solutions

What are the greatest challenges to developing AuD programs that have high standards and facilitate quality programs?

Overall Response

- Tendency to rest on one's laurels
- Lack of initiative and commitment to developing true doctoral-level programs (not modified master's degrees)

Question #8—Challenges and Solutions

What can students do to improve the quality of AuD programs? To what degree is variation among programs acceptable?

Overall Response

- Students should be integral to the evaluation and program-planning at universities
- Variation is important as long as competencies are achieved ¹⁰

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