

Audiology from the Student's Perspective—Listen Up!

By Erica B. Friedland

In the previous ACAE Corner, we heard from nine students in various stages of their respective AuD programs. They offered remarkable insight into why they chose audiology as a career and the factors they deemed most important in choosing a program. In addition, we learned their thoughts in terms of the biggest challenges facing AuD students.

In this month's issue, 10 students again give us their viewpoint on four additional questions. Read on to see what they have to say.

Q: How important do you think it is that AuD programs meet rigorous and consistent education standards?

A: The importance of maintaining rigorous and consistent education standards cannot be overstated. The direct, measurable effect of rigorous education standards is efficacious patient care. The health and well-being of consumers of audiology services depend upon audiologists possessing specific competencies. In this, maintaining high standards is a consumer protection issue. Additionally, the preparation of outstanding audiologists promotes the profession and lends itself increased autonomy.

Molly Krygowski, The Ohio State University (OSU), Class of 2016

A: I believe it is extremely important that AuD programs meet these standards. Audiology is a small field, and if certain programs are not meeting standards and are graduating clinicians who do not provide quality care, the field as a whole might lose respect, and the value of choosing an audiologist over a hearing aid dealer won't be evident. AuD students are receiving a doctorate. Their education should reflect that high degree.

Sarah Webster, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC-CH), Class of 2017

A: This is a health-care profession, and if we want to give people the quality health care they deserve, our AuD programs must be top-notch, in order to properly train students who will one day be leaders in the field. As a student, I want my university to hold my program to the highest standards possible in order for them to give me the best education possible. Not only does it benefit the university if their program is meeting standards, but it benefits the students, which, in return, will one day benefit their patients.

Adam Voss, Washington University in St. Louis (WUSTL), Class of 2017



Q: What do you think is the purpose of education standards or accreditation?

A: I think that the purpose of education standards and accreditation is to hold schools and students responsible for the knowledge they are required to obtain to join the profession. No one should be practicing audiology without a certain knowledge level and skill set, and these standards work to make sure that that does not happen.

Shannon McCormick, Nova Southeastern University (NSU), Class of 2017

A: I believe that the purpose of education standards is to keep all programs on the same page, ensuring that we are all becoming the most advanced and knowledgeable

audiologists that we can be. Accreditation ensures that a program is providing appropriate resources and education to its students. Programs that go through rigorous verification processes to obtain the accreditation will produce high-quality audiology students upon graduation. Developing a platform to separate the good programs from the great programs is an essential tool that will only improve the future professionals that will enter this field.

Alyssa Pursely, WUSTL, Class of 2016

A: Accreditation recognizes programs that are committed to providing the highest quality of education. Accreditation assures my classmates and me that we are gaining the skills we need to be competent in all areas of audiology. Accreditation also assures patients that their audiologist has proven

himself or herself competent in the areas of diagnosing, treating, and managing auditory and vestibular disorders. They know that they are getting the very best in hearing health care.

Keri Low, OSU, Class of 2015

Q: How can audiology “stay ahead of the curve” when preparing students for their careers?

A: I think that the professors and instructors in the programs should be practicing clinically as often as possible. The AuD degree is a clinical one, and the professors and coursework should reflect that.

Danielle Verrilli, UNC-CH, Class of 2014

A: Offer as many diverse clinical opportunities as possible. Students that are well versed and experienced in a variety of areas will be better prepared for their careers. Additionally, I think the Academy reducing the student fee to attend AudiologyNOW! was a tremendous leap. AudiologyNOW! is such a great opportunity for students to learn, network, and meet some of the leading contributors to our profession. Allowing students to attend at a more “student-friendly” rate allows students to mingle, network, and make connections that will certainly benefit them in the long run.

Diana Russell, NSU, Class of 2014

A: I think one of the most important things audiology professors and preceptors can do to help students prepare for their careers is instill in them a commitment to continuing education and a deep desire



for life-long learning. Encourage students to attend conferences and workshops, even if it means they miss a class or clinic. If an interesting case comes up in clinic, help students develop a grand rounds presentation to present locally or nationally. Incorporate current research into every course, and inspire audiology students to conduct and present their own research. The more that students are encouraged to participate in these activities, the more they will prosper as audiologists, and the more the profession will thrive.

Keri Low, OSU, Class of 2015

A: As the profession progresses, AuD programs need to update courses and the curriculum regularly. I believe that it is important for AuD programs to take a “beyond-the-basic-clinical-doctorate” approach by incorporating research opportunities and research-based practices as a foundation for clinical practicum and coursework.

Kaitlyn Toner, WUSTL, Class of 2018

A: AuD programs can educate students on the evolving health-care laws. Schools can provide a well-rounded education that prepares students to become independent and competent in necessary skills. Most importantly, AuD programs can prepare students to integrate both professional and educational components when serving patients.

Sara Garbo, WUSTL, Class of 2015

Q: As a student, what difference do you think you can make in strengthening the audiology profession?

A: This is going to sound like a plug, but I really believe that the most effective and direct way for students to help strengthen the profession of audiology is by donating time and money to the Academy and Student Academy. Extra time and money is not easy for AuD students to come by, I know, but you do what you can because every little bit helps. Every student should find a way to attend a presentation on advocacy—you’ll quickly understand why it is so important!

Keri Low, OSU, Class of 2015

A: As a student, I have the ability to become involved in national, regional, and local organizations. These organizations provide advocacy, humanitarian, and educational opportunities that allow students to become directly involved in strengthening the audiology profession. These opportunities have allowed me to grow as a leader, and I intend to translate these leadership skills into the profession after I graduate.

Alyssa Pursley, WUSTL, Class of 2016

A: Students can promote and improve the profession of audiology through legislative advocacy. I believe that establishing lasting relationships with legislators is critical to the advancement of the profession. It is our responsibility, as experts in audiology, to educate policy-makers in order for them to make fair and informed decisions on our behalf.

Molly Krygowski, OSU, Class of 2016

A: I think, as students, we need to get involved in community outreach to raise awareness of the profession.

We also need to be apprised of current legislation being introduced and actively contact our representatives to let them know where we stand on certain issues, so that they can, in turn, better advocate for us.


Shannon McCormick, NSU, Class of 2017

A: As a student, I can make a difference by getting involved now. This life doesn’t begin once I graduate; it began once I said “yes” to my acceptance letter. The profession is always evolving, so if I want to strengthen it, now is the time to do so. Students can have a big impact on decisions. We are the future of the profession, and so we must shape it the way we see fit.

Adam Voss, WUSTL, Class of 2017

Conclusion

This is an impressive group of students who are well-informed, clearly engaged, and truly wish to be held to the highest standard for their own benefit and for the sake of the profession. This is realized through rigorous accreditation standards and, as the students point out, anything less is unacceptable.

As one student said, “This life doesn’t begin once I graduate; it began once I said ‘yes’ to my acceptance letter.” Beginning on day one of each AuD student’s education, we should not only begin the teaching process, but also encourage them to be a part of this profession and take on the responsibility of its enrichment. 

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