

# Top 10 Benefits of ACAE Accreditation

By Maureen Valente

In an effort to convey information in a novel way and complementary to the format of any previous article, I have decided to compose a “top 10” list of the numerous positive aspects of experiencing the ACAE accreditation process. Many endeavors touched upon are “works in progress,” and ACAE is continually undergoing self-assessment so that additional benefits may be enjoyed by its programs.

## 10 Unique Web-Based Technology

When I was hired in 2005 as the director of audiology studies within Washington University in the St. Louis School of Medicine’s Program in Audiology and Communication Sciences, our program had already agreed to serve as an ACAE beta site. I appreciated that much program data had already been uploaded into the unique Web site format, through Phase I of the process. At the time, I found this technology and concept to be quite impressive, and the many highly skilled professionals involved with ACAE have invested much time and effort in further advancing its development.

## 9 Capability for Virtual Site Visit

Phase II of the beta site process involved the assignment of a three-five person site visit team (SVT), members of whom dedicated countless hours toward synthesizing the many tables, forms, and data provided during Phase I. Our Phase II process took place during an entire summer, and I enjoyed receiving correspondences from SVT members, asking for clarification and additional information. Phone calls and conference calls took place, as needed, with administrative personnel and team members readily available. In no way meant to replace the personal touch, Phase II organized materials and prepared all parties for the actual site visit.

## 8 No Last-Minute Cramming for Site Visits

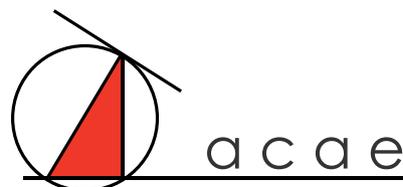
How many of us have felt pangs of angst when a site visit is looming and seven-eight years of data must be collected within a short time? With ACAE’s unique Web site in place, many forms of program data may be stored, retrieved, and updated from year to year. There are future plans for additionally reaping benefits of computer technology, such as creation of professional databases and sharing of materials among professionals and programs.

## 7 Site Visit Is Supportive

During Phase III (the final phase) members of the SVT visited our program for two and half days. The ACAE was very well organized in thoroughly communicating with us regarding all aspects of planning and preparation. We knew well in advance what to expect and what the SVT expected of us. Most of all, everyone involved in this process approached this visit with positivity and enthusiasm. Although we knew standards were rigorous—as well they should be—the lenses through which Phase III was viewed were of support and constructive improvement through facilitation of self-assessment. There was an aura of collaboration and collegiality created.

## 6 Thorough Assessment of AuD Education

Many of these important areas are interwoven. ACAE Accreditation processes were created as a result of much careful thought and planning,



such that they are structured of, by, and for audiologists and our doctoral profession of audiology. Standards and competencies are not “cookie cutter” replicas of those developed by previous accreditation bodies; rather, they thoroughly address our entire *Scope of Practice*, the lifespan of hearing-impaired patients we serve, and evidence-based practice. The SVT met with all involved in the educational process, including the dean, program director, faculty, preceptors, alumni, and students. The visit reflected team spirit and professionalism leading to shared goals: provision of the highest possible quality of education to future leaders of the profession.

### 5 Focus on Outcomes

This area and the self-assessment facet that I have listed in #4 go hand-in-hand. Much professional emphasis has been placed upon “learning outcomes,” and ACAE effectively incorporates these concepts in a qualitative way. As only one small example, does it really matter if a student gains X number of hours in adult hearing aid selection, verification, and fitting? Or is the key that the student efficiently demonstrates skill and knowledge related to this area upon progression to the subsequent year of study and upon graduation? As educators, we are motivated toward instilling pride in life-long learning, graduating the most competent and compassionate audiologists possible.

### 4 Focus on Self-Assessment

Of all aspects of our ACAE accreditation process, discussion of self-assessment is perhaps the most vivid and one that provided a great deal of benefit for me on professional and personal levels. Simply, AuD programs are complex, and it is imperative that we routinely engage in ongoing assessment of all pieces. We should use aggregate principles whereby we approach any one area (research project, coursework, practicum experience, or other area) from a variety of measurable means. Measures should be valid and reliable, and it is critical to initiate constructive improvement as a result of any feedback that is collected.

### 3 Ongoing Assessment of Standards

In the spirit of practicing what one is preaching, the ACAE board has continued to guarantee continual updating of its processes, standards, requirements, Web site, and other crucial aspects. As a natural outcome of serving as a beta site, we were in a position (and were encouraged) to provide feedback so that the process would be more streamlined and of the highest quality. We consistently found ACAE to be willing to listen to our feedback and to be open to suggested changes, verifying the collaborative nature previously described.

### 2 Of, By, and For Audiology

This phrase speaks for itself. It is imperative for the sake of our profession's autonomy and further growth that we hold in high regard and support our own governing bodies and

accrediting organization. ACAE was founded as such a body, formed of, by, and for members of the profession of audiology. On a more concrete and realistic level, it is very refreshing to communicate with an ACAE administrator or SVT member. We speak the same language, and team members thoroughly understand even the smallest detail related to professional concepts we are discussing and implementing within our program. It's not only refreshing; however, it's a necessity.

### 1 Present and Future Views of the Profession

Relatively speaking, our profession is still quite new and our clinical doctoral degree is in the process of further development. ACAE's founders, administrators, and board members demonstrate passion, caring, and dedication toward their mission of achieving success. As this new entity takes greater hold and as transition occurs, it is important to view the current state of the profession and also to look to the future.

### Conclusion

Audiology has made great strides in transitioning to a doctoral-level entry profession and the profession is now undergoing exciting additional transformations. Further accreditation advances and support are vital as audiologists continue to look toward an autonomous future, educate future leaders, and ensure the highest quality of practitioners and patient care. 

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