

Request to Establish a Doctoral Program in Audiology at East Carolina University

Introduction

Following a recommendation from the Graduate Council and from the Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs, the Committee on Educational Planning, Policies, and Programs approved on January 12, 2007 the request from East Carolina University to plan a doctoral program in Audiology. East Carolina University now seeks approval to establish a doctoral program in Audiology (AuD) (CIP: 51.0202) effective August 2008.

Program Description

The doctor of audiology (AuD) is a comprehensive clinical degree program that requires a minimum of 125 SCH beyond the baccalaureate degree. The US Department of Labor has indicated that the clinical doctoral degree is expected to become the new standard in the field. This program is being developed to meet that need, providing a recognized professional doctorate designation that may be required for traineeships and fellowships.

Currently ECU offers the PhD in Communication Sciences and Disorders (CSDI). The implementation of this AuD program will create a unique opportunity for students to earn a joint AuD/PhD. The philosophy of the faculty in the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders is that the clinical doctorate degree should not be awarded without the PhD research component. Therefore, the proposed program will be administered and offered only as a joint program with the existing PhD in CSDI. A student will not be able to achieve an AuD degree until they have completed all requirements of the PhD degree. This coordinated AuD/PhD program will create professionals who are prepared to apply a scientific knowledge base to the clinical setting, teach in higher education, and contribute to the science and research of audiology.

Students admitted to this program will be those interested in a career in the study and clinical application of audition/hearing science. Admission into this program will be consistent with the admission requirements for the PhD program.

The joint offering of the AuD/PhD is designed as a five-year program consisting of clinical and research areas of audiology and communication sciences. The AuD curriculum consists of didactic and clinical requirements. Students will complete the statistics core (9 SCH), science core (12 SCH), support core (12 SCH), research and dissertation (24 SCH), as in the PhD program. In addition, they will be required to complete a clinical core of courses (30 SCH), and the clinical practicum/residency requirement (24 SCH) in addition to elective courses.

Throughout this program students will participate in community engagement through clinical service training activities in the ECU Speech Language and Hearing Clinic as well as other community clinical programs where available. These students will

participate in clinical activities at the Bernstein Center for Rural Health, which is located north of Greenville and serves the surrounding rural communities, as well as other health care clinics.

AuD/PhD graduates will apply their clinical knowledge toward assisting the hearing impaired citizens of North Carolina and the nation. However, this program is unique in that our graduates will have the research skills of a PhD along with the expertise of a clinical doctorate. To obtain national recognition, we will graduate students who are self-motivated, independent researchers with publications (our current doctoral students graduate with an average of four refereed research manuscripts) and passing scores on the national board examination. ECU is recognized nationally for the high quality of doctoral graduates in this field as measured by the demand for our students at universities across the country. Currently our PhD recipients hold tenurable faculty positions at the University of Tennessee, University of South Alabama, East Tennessee State, University of North Dakota, Hampton University, Seaton Hall, and Southwest Missouri State University.

The AuD program will

1. Serve the region by providing citizens with
 - a. Hearing health care, including the assessment of hearing and hearing-related learning disabilities.
 - b. Treatment of hearing disorders, including the programming of cochlear implants and other assistive listening devices.
2. Graduate doctoral-trained professionals who
 - a. Possess knowledge in areas germinal to hearing and balance, disorders of hearing and balance, as well as related areas.
 - b. Demonstrate clinical knowledge and competency in the assessment and treatment of hearing and balance disorders.
 - c. Contribute to clinical research and its design.
 - d. Apply statistical knowledge to data-based study.
 - e. Use scientific inquiry in the clinical setting.

The existing PhD in CSDI includes a concentration in clinical audiology, which will be eliminated upon the establishment of the AuD degree. Additional courses will be added to complete the requirements for the AuD program, although most of the coursework is in place for the AuD. The course work taken during this program consists of no new courses, therefore the instructional burden will be negligible until the first class arrives at the third year which will require additional hours of clinical and research mentorship.

This new degree program is consistent with the institution's mission for education, research and creative activity, and community partnership and service. Students in this program will achieve an advanced degree at the doctorate level, expand and develop clinical services in the surrounding communities to improve the hearing health of citizens of eastern North Carolina, and partner with other institutions throughout North Carolina and the nation. Presently our doctoral students develop clinical skills at the following

offices: Pitt County Memorial Hospital, Pitt County Schools, Doctor's Hearing Care, Eastern Head and Neck Surgeons-Greenville; Coastal ENT – New Bern; Durham VAMC – Durham; Eastern ENT & Sinus Allergy – Goldsboro; Eastern North Carolina School for the deaf – Wilson; Fayetteville Veterans Administration Medical Center – Fayetteville; and, additional efforts are in process to develop audiology in the new Veterans Administration satellite clinic located in Greenville which will serve eastern North Carolina.

Program Review

The review process is designed to surface strengths and weaknesses in proposed new degree programs. Proposals to establish new doctoral programs are reviewed internally and externally. The concerns from the two review processes were summarized in a letter to the Chancellor prior to the presentation to the Graduate Council. That summary follows:

The reviewers, while providing many positive comments about the ECU program, its faculty, and the programs standing in the professions, do raise some issues that need to be addressed. Many of the usual concerns such as student interest and job opportunities both in clinical settings and in the academy are answered positively for this proposed program. Since the Ph. D. in Communication Sciences and Disorders is a current program, some of the feature of the overall initiative may not have been as evident to the reviewers.

One issues does seem to concern both reviewers and that is the joining of the programs so that all students interested in a clinical practice option must pursue both an AuD and a Ph.D. As I understand the proposal, a student may pursue a Ph.D. in Communication Sciences and Disorders without having to also do the AuD but not the other way around. One reviewer focused on both the time and the nature of the program that would results. The other reviewer is concerned about the time this program will take, based on experiences in their program. Both reviewers and authors of letters of support agree that this is the only program of its kind nationally, that is, one that requires a Ph.D. in addition to an AuD. While this makes the program unique both in NC and nationally it might also give us pause as well. The other reviewer recounts how his or her program underestimated how much time students would need to add a Ph.D. on top of an AuD. As the reviewer says, "Our plan was for the PhD to take an additional two years which includes coursework in statistics and research design as well as the dissertation experience. We have found, however that students need more time—not only to complete the program but to learn how to think like a PhD student..." Granted that if the programs are planned together and integrated then this may not be as much of an issue, but the time the program will take is still a cause for concern.

One option is to have multiple options. That is, candidates could pursue the current Ph.D. program, or an AuD program, or a joint program to get both degrees. This would give students more options and really test out where the field is heading and what student interests are. It seems that you have two highly defensible goals—graduate more people who will become faculty members in a field that that has had a shortage and the evidence

suggests it will continue to have shortages, and prepare more clinicians to serve a growing and aging population. It certainly appears that a case has been made for the need for the AuD degree that does not require a unique designation in order to satisfy the no unnecessary duplication requirement. The positive comments about the balance in the faculty should serve the multiple option direction as well as the required combination of the AuD and the PhD. Starting off with multiple options would also be compatible with deciding over time whether the combination best served the field.

Many of the concerns expressed by the first reviewer would likely be address with multiple options, since those concerns seem to relate mostly to being able to fit all the features of a Ph.D. and an AuD program into joint degree program with a five-year horizon and the second review has doubts that the joint program can be done in five years. Since the field is just moving to a doctorate for practice and having a doctorate will first be mandatory for licensure applicants in 2012, it seems a forced combination of two doctorates might be better implemented after more experience with what is needed for clinical practice.

Graduate Council

The Graduate Council had, as a basis for its consideration, the proposal to plan the program, copies of the outside reviews of the program, the summary letter to the Chancellor, and a presentation to the Council by representatives of the program. In addition to the issues raised previously, the following concerns were expressed by Council members: Whether there would be a need for additional faculty, and whether the stipends for graduate students were high enough to be competitive for outstanding graduate students as well as further discussion of the joint model for the AuD program.

Response

A representative recounted the program faculty's review of the external reviews and the suggestions from GA. While they made some changes and increased the research component in response to one reviewer's comments, after careful reflection the program wants to maintain the combined AuD/PhD program as proposed. The program is highly research oriented and holds more than \$3 million in external funding. The department was ranked 9th in a recent Chronicle of Higher Education report on research in their field. It was pointed out that the summers will be utilized in this program and one of the years will be a paid internship, since in the field a candidate can get a temporary license to practice during an internship.

Graduate stipends have been increased from \$18,000 to \$24,000 and the campus has committed to providing one additional faculty within the next three years. The program will not need additional faculty until students get to the clinical internship and dissertation stage, which would likely be at the completion of the third year of the program.

Need for the Program

There is a shortage of both faculty for audiology programs and audiologists which is a part of the overall shortages in Communication Sciences and Disorders. It should be

noted that the University of Florida is licensed to offer a Doctor of Audiology in North Carolina. There are 28 million Americans with some degree of hearing impairment.

While this program will produce students who will have the choice whether to be a faculty member or a practitioner many may find opportunities to do both. It is a little hard to predict which route students are more likely to go, but given the shortages either route will be a helpful choice. Producing more faculty candidates will enhance programs' capacity to produce more clinical audiologist.

ECU had the first audiology program in North Carolina and the program is recognized as a leader in the nation. While what they have proposed may be the first of its kind in the nation, they are gaining support from professional associations and accrediting agencies to pursue this option. It does appear to build strength on strength and produce audiologists who can engage in clinical practice but who will be highly skilled researchers who can also engage in clinical research to improve the provision of clinical services. While time to degree and the uniqueness of the program raise some questions about the program, the proposal also has the potential to produce real leaders in the profession, a stated goal of the program.

UNC Tomorrow Initiative

This proposal fits well with at least three themes of UNC Tomorrow—addressing health needs, expanding applied research to benefit citizens, and outreach and engagement. With the entry degree for clinical practice in audiology moving to the doctoral level and with only one audiology doctorate within UNC, it does appear to be a needed step to better meet the health care needs of the citizens of NC. Their plan to develop highly skilled clinical researcher does offer a model of getting research results that can benefit patients more quickly, and the increase number of students who will be doing internships in the region and beyond at the many facilities described in their proposal will expand ECU's strong engagement in the region. More audiologists will also make it more likely that the well know impact of hearing problems on school success in young children can be better addressed.

Resources

Almost everything is in place for the program. As the number of students in the program expand there will need to be additional faculty. While one faculty member has been committed, depending on the number and demands of students in the joint program, enrollment funding will be the source of any additional faculty or resources needed in the future. As indicted in the proposal, the faculty is adept at drawing in external resources and with the added emphasis on clinical research and clinical trials they can expect increased support from external sources.

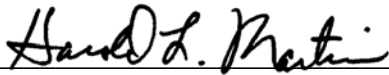
Recommendation by the Graduate Council

After consideration of the issues raised by reviewers and Council members, the Graduate Council voted, without dissent, to recommend approval for East Carolina to establish a doctoral program in Audiology (AuD).

Recommendation

The staff of the General Administration recommends that the Board of Governors approve the request from East Carolina to establish a doctoral program in Audiology (AuD) effective August 2008 with the proviso that within seven years of starting the program there be an evaluation of graduate students' time to degree and the overall feasibility of the joint PhD/AuD mode and that the results of that evaluation be shared with General Administration.

Approved to be Recommended for Establishment to the Committee on Educational Planning, Policies, and Programs



Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs

June 5, 2008