

Request to Plan a Doctor of Audiology at East Carolina University

Introduction

East Carolina University requests approval to plan a Doctor of Audiology program (CIP: 51.0202).

Program Description

It has become increasingly evident that the field of audiology has grown in a variety of directions and will continue to do so. This growth, fueled by technology and scientific advances, has caused concern regarding the training of audiologists for the future. This concern led the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) to put forth new standards for the accreditation of graduate education programs. The Council of Academic Accreditation (CAA) conducts accreditation review of training programs in audiology. The CAA is recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation and the U.S. Department of Education as the accrediting agency for graduate educational programs that provide entry-level professional preparation with emphasis in audiology. The new accreditation requirement is to apply after December of 2006. Requirement of a doctoral degree applies to all graduates after December of 2011.

The American Academy of Audiology has embraced the clinical doctorate (AuD) as the entry-level for audiology clinical practice. The Academy believes (Report of Task Force, Audiology Today, 1990) that the doctoral level of training is necessary “to ensure the provision of the highest standards of service delivery to individuals with auditory and other related communication disorders.” The Doctor of Audiology (AuD) degree has become the preferred professional degree designator nationally. This degree has grown out of the recognized need for doctoral-level clinical audiology training.

However, the recognized need for a new clinical doctoral degree does not satisfy all the needs in the field of audiology. Audiology, like other disciplines, is currently experiencing a critical shortage in PhD-level scholars to fill faculty vacancies and continue to expand the research base of the profession. (Karr, 1999) Given these needs the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders at East Carolina University is uniquely positioned to offer a joint degree program (AuD/PhD) that addresses both areas of need, research and clinic. The graduate program in audiology at East Carolina University is the oldest accredited program in the state of North Carolina. East Carolina University’s audiology program was the first to have a doctoral program, and continues to have the largest number of full-time audiology doctoral faculty (seven) in a Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders in the state of North Carolina.

The AuD degree is customarily a four-year degree designed to provide a comprehensive graduate program in the area of clinical audiology. This equivalent curriculum currently exists at East Carolina University in the form of the clinical track within the PhD program. The establishment of an AuD degree at East Carolina University will result in the elimination of the current clinical track within the PhD program. The creation of an

AuD degree at East Carolina University will allow the establishment of a joint AuD/PhD program. The philosophy of the faculty in the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders is that a clinical doctorate degree must not be awarded without a research component. Therefore, the AuD degree program will only be offered as a coordinated clinical degree (AuD) and research degree (PhD) program. This coordinated AuD/PhD joint program will create professionals with a scientific knowledge base that is applied to the clinical setting as well as professionals who are prepared to teach in higher education and contribute to the science and research of audiology.

Program Review

The review process for requests to plan is designed to determine if the proposal is developed to the stage appropriate for taking to the Graduate Council and if so what are the issues that may need further attention. Proposals to plan doctoral programs are reviewed internally. The concerns from the reviewers were summarized in a letter to the Chancellor prior to the presentation to the Graduate Council. That summary follows:

Since this is redistributing the resources and students in the Ph.D. program to add an applied track, the reviewers did see any issues to raise at this point.

Graduate Council

The Graduate Council had, as a basis for its consideration, the proposal to plan the program, the summary letter to the Chancellor, and a presentation to the Council by representatives of the program. The Council did not raise any significant concerns with the proposed program.

Response

The representatives of the program presented the overall plan for the program and explained that this would be a unique program since it was combining the practitioner preparation with research preparation and graduates of the program would receive both a Doctor of Audiology and a Ph. D. in Communication Sciences and Disorders. This would allow them to serve as faculty members and researcher and be practitioners. Prior to the changes in accreditation someone with a Ph.D. would likely already have a master's degree in the field which would have allowed them to practice.

Need for the Program

The Occupational Outlook Handbook of the U.S. Department of Labor states, "Employment of audiologists is expected to grow rapidly because of the expanding population in older age groups is prone to medical conditions that result in hearing problems...a clinical doctorate is expected to become the new standard."

We might also note that the University of Florida is licensed to offer a Doctor of Audiology in North Carolina, an indicator that another university sees the demand for more graduate opportunity in this field in North Carolina.

It is also a field that will need to expand the faculty for audiology programs as the demand for audiologist expands. This proposed program combined with the existing doctoral program can prepare both practitioners and faculty.

Recommendation by the Graduate Council

After consideration of the issues raised by previous reviewers and Council members, the Graduate Council voted, without dissent, to recommend approval for East Carolina University to plan a Doctor of Audiology program.

Issues to Address in Planning

None beyond those required by the planning process.

Recommendation

The staff of the General Administration recommends that the Board of Governors approve the request from East Carolina University to plan a doctoral program in Doctor of Audiology.

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



Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs Harold Martin

January 3, 2007