Hearing the Writing on the Wall

It takes a lot of work to be an audiologist. Fortunately for students in the Northeast, options are available in a 4-year program that combines faculty expertise from three universities—the Long Island Doctor of Audiology (AuD) Consortium of Adelphi, Hofstra, and St John’s. It is one of the only major consortia in which three universities have come together as one.

The idea to combine students and work together first took shape more than a decade ago when national standards changed. Donna Geffner, PhD, CCC-SLP/A, sat on the Standards Council at the time, while serving as Vice-President for Academic Affairs of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA).

“To enter the profession of audiology, the standards changed from master’s degree to doctoral degree,” explains Geffner, Audiology Program Director and Director of the Speech and Hearing Center at St John’s University, Queens, NY. “At that time, the writing was on the wall. We had to take our students to the doctoral level.”

A decade after the change in standards, it became clear that exceptional teaching talent could be found in the relatively close geographic space of the New York metropolitan area. For professors and students alike, it ultimately made sense to join forces and offer a bona fide 4-year program that now leverages the considerable knowledge base of clinical and academic faculty.

It is routinely recognized as a “best-of-the-best” audiology program, with students taking classes and conducting clinical practicum at each university and throughout the greater metropolitan area. Students have the benefit of access to all three universities under a single program.

“All three campuses are about a half-hour to 45 minutes away,” says Yula C. Serpanos, PhD, CCC-A, AuD Program Coordinator and Professor in the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders at Adelphi University in New York City. “Students get the experience of working in each of our Speech and Hearing Centers. They go through a rigorous academic curriculum, and I’m proud that when our students graduate they’ve got 4 years of didactic instruction and experience.”

“We have an excellent cadre of audiologists in hospital-based centers and medical facilities who are quite willing to provide our students with the supervision and experience they need,” adds Geffner. “It’s voluntary, and they have assumed this responsibility because of their professionalism.”

The program is currently exploring new initiatives to provide unique clinical opportunities such as services to underserved clinical populations. This effort to “globalize” the program is currently in the initial stages, with organizers looking to expand services and bring students abroad to underserved populations. “The idea is to have students learn about the culture and provide service through humanitarian efforts to children and adults with hearing impairment,” says Ianthe Murad, ScD, CCC-A, AuD Clinical Program Coordinator of the Consortium.

Ultimately, the mission of the Long Island Doctor of Audiology Consortium of Adelphi, Hofstra, and St. John’s Universities is to prepare students to be professional, knowledgeable, competent, and compassionate clinicians who are able to use evidence-based principles by integrating research methods and findings into their professional practice. “There is theory and science behind everything we do,” Serpanos states. “We can administer tests so easily through computerized systems, but we also want to show students how to work with patients on a human level.”

Courses are taught by faculty, and by academic and clinical adjunct faculty, who are experts in their field. The faculty in this combined program are researchers, published authors, and award recipients, and present worldwide at professional conferences. “Any educator who is a good educator must continue the learning process,” says Serpanos. “The faculty in this combined program keep up with the latest research and attend conferences and workshops. They are committed to excellence in education.”

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