

Department of Communicative Disorders and Deaf Education  
USU Departmental Teaching Excellence Award  
Pre-proposal 2008

Section 1. The Department of Communication Disorders and Deaf Education (COMD-DE) is committed to facilitating the development of speech-language pathologists, audiologists, and deaf educators by scaffolding course content, encouraging student questioning, linking information to students' meaningful experiences, and integrating evidence-based practice. The ultimate goal is to develop clinical scientists and educators who use critical thinking skills and a creative theoretical compass in their professional practice.

COMD-DE instructors believe that learning is a social activity and all encourage active participation in their courses. Case studies, problem-solving assignments, and interactive dialogue have been integrated into classes to encourage active participation. Discussion is often linked to students' experiences and students are encouraged to build on each other's comments and perspectives. Moreover, student questioning is facilitated to help learners make connections to personal experiences, knowledge, and beliefs with the ultimate goal of developing new links among ideas.

The COMD-DE department has a strong belief in helping students become clinicians and educators who use research as a foundation for implementing sound evidence-based practice. Students at all levels are taught to actively review and critique research. A formal decision-making protocol and process for critiquing and integrating research has been developed, taught, and incorporated across academic and clinical settings as a scaffold in applying evidence-based practice.

The COMD-DE department has a strong commitment to recruiting a diverse study body. Innovative programs involving elementary and secondary students are helping to build a pipeline for the future. Faculty and students go to great lengths to support different learning styles and world views.

Section 2. All students are actively involved in research and clinical experiences as well as service-learning projects. Both our undergraduates and graduates have participated in Posters on the Hill, the URCO program, the UTF program, and the Honors program. They have thousands of hours cumulatively in service learning projects, and they sponsor over 50 community-wide events each year. These programs include math tutoring, reading multicultural literature to students in schools, Deaf theater, and a production of the Messiah in ASL, Spanish and English. They also sponsor an ASL-themed floor in the dormitories and Silent Weekends. In addition, our faculty and students spend several weeks in Mexico on a humanitarian project at an orphanage of severely disabled children. 80% of our students

participate in community and service based learning activities sponsored by their 3 student groups, NSSLHA, NAFDA and DESA.

We are a department where teaching excellence and active learning is fostered and celebrated. Among an eligible faculty of 14, we have 7 Teachers of the Year for the College of Education and Human Services, 3 Robins Awards for the University, 1 Carnegie Teacher of the Year for the State of Utah, and 1 Trustee Professor. Of the 20 faculty eligible to be recognized for teaching excellence by the Mortar Board Honor Society, 90% have received awards. Faculty have also received awards from the USU Ambassador program, the LDS Institute Teacher of the Year Program, the Alumni Association, and the First Year Student Transition program, Both Advisors have won Advisor of the Year for the CEHS numerous times. Students have won the UTF of the Year for the CEHS, the Scholar of the Year, Valedictorian, Distinguished Alumni, Outstanding Teacher, and a host of other recognitions for academic excellence, clinical excellence, and outstanding service.

This close relationship between students and faculty is reflected in the evaluation of instructors, courses and clinical experiences. 100% of the Instructor Effectiveness average scores for COMD-DE have exceeded the university average over the past decade. 100% of the Course Quality average scores for COMD-DE have exceeded the university average over the past decade. For the same time period COMD-DEDE average instructor effectiveness and course quality evaluations have exceeded the college averages 80% of the time. Clinical Supervisors received an average score of 4.6/5.0 over 36 evaluation periods in the past decade.

100% of graduate students who are licensed and actively seeking employment are employed. Our department places students in hospitals, medical clinics, schools for the deaf and blind, nursing and rehabilitation centers, community service agencies, university speech and hearing clinics, corporate and private practices, preschool and school programs, and clinics for the developmentally disabled.

Employers are pleased with the training of our students and request that more are trained each year. To meet the “critical shortage” of COMD-DE specialists, the department has created innovative and successful web-based and distance-education programs. A Second Bachelor’s degree is offered over Blackboard to students from all over the world. This program began in the summer of 2006, and has 200 students moving through the pipeline at this time. A Graduate Outreach Distance Education program in SLP was begun in 1991 to reach students in remote areas. Since that time we have graduated 180 students from all regions of the state. Award winning courses from the SKI\*HI (Sensory Impaired Home Intervention) Institute, both web-based and distance education, have reached thousands of clients all over the world since 1971, and these courses are fully accessible to students who are Deaf or blind. State-of-the-art training and education for children

with cochlear implants is being offered through the Sound Beginnings early intervention program.

Section 3. The curriculum is regularly reviewed and revised in a systematic way, reflecting the changing patterns of knowledge, skills, technology, scope of practice, and the diversity of society. Internal reviews occur each year in all three areas of the department. Standing committees meet monthly.

Because we work tirelessly to retain the students that we recruit, we have a 92% pass rate on graduate Praxis exams over past 10 years. The Department of COMD-DE has an intensive evaluation process in place that involves all faculty, staff, clinical personnel and students. Each academic course and clinical placement is mapped to a Knowledge and Skills Acquisition grid. This grid is generated for each student. After completion of a class, clinical or research experience, the grid is filled out with information regarding competencies for that experience. Students meet with advisors each semester to review the grid and discuss the need for remediation or augmentation plans to fill in competency gaps. Remediation plans allow students to make up for deficiencies in their knowledge and skills, and regular meetings with small groups of faculty and advisors help to proactively keep students out of academic trouble. 100% of our Master's degree students completed their programs in the years 2003-2007. COMD-DE students rank the advising system as excellent. Students are given comprehensive course and clinical placement schedules at the beginning of their undergraduate and graduate careers. They met with their advisor and a team of faculty every semester to review progress. In addition all advisors have an open door policy for drop-ins. The graduate SLP program uses an innovative web-based, no-credit class to help students keep on track with forms, procedures, committees and deadlines. Our students have the unique advantage of working for "consumers" very early in their training. 100% of parents or guardians of clients or adult clients are satisfied or very satisfied with the services and outcomes of clinical intervention received from student clinicians at the USU Speech Language Hearing Center. In the last decade, on a scale of 1-4, the clinic received an overall 3.7 average rating.

Overall, we feel that we have created a culture of teaching excellence in our department across the divisions of Speech-Language Pathology, Audiology, and Deaf Education. We appreciate being considered for a Teaching Excellence award.