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UWNSSTHA newsletter

The insider's guide to UW graduate school: What you missed at the Nov. 1 forum

It's true that we have a unique advantage as undergraduates at a school with top-ranked graduate programs in speech pathology and audiology. It's also true that it can be really, freakishly intimidating.

On Nov. 1, advisers from both the SLP and Au.D. programs helped quell our fears by outlining everything we need to know as UW grad school hopefuls. Here are the answers to some of our FAQs:

Okay, I've read the description on the department website. How do the two SLP programs really differ?

The two Master's programs, Core speech-language pathology and Medical speech-language pathology, have a lot in common. They provide many of the same classes, both UW and offsite clinical rotations, and a degree that will qualify you to work in any setting. However, the Med track will be more appealing to a self-advocating student who wants real-world medical experience and is prepared to be thrust into multiple offsite placements. The Core program, on the other hand, provides a better comprehensive, foundational skillset from the multiple UW clinical rotations preceding one offsite internship.

Let's not forget the money. The Med track is a fixed fee of \$28,048/yr. If you are a WA resident, Core will be

cheaper at \$18,705/yr. If you are from out of state, Core is a whopping \$35,406/yr.

What can I expect from the Au.D. program?

With the recent shift to a four-year audiology degree, UW splits an Au.D. student's time between foundational knowledge, clinical rotations, and mandatory research (during the 3rd year). The SPHSC Ph.D. program, which is also open to students with a Bachelor's or Master's, can actually be done concurrently with Au.D.

Five tips for increasing my chances of acceptance?

1. *Choose your letter-writers well.* Your goal should be to have 3 letters that show 3 distinct aspects of yourself. Definitely choose at least 1 professor, but try to find someone who can also speak to your clinical potential and your character.
2. *Don't waste your personal statement.* The board gets, well, bored of seeing resumes regurgitated. Your statement is your one chance to show what's unique about yourself.
3. *Extra-curriculars can be that extra "something."* Either hands-on or administrative experience can make your application shine next to a similarly qualified candidate's.
4. *Make your presence known in the department.* There are a lot of people on the admissions board, and the better they



know you, the more confident they can feel in selecting you.

5. *Have a vision.* While it's not necessary, if you can demonstrate (or describe in your statement) a career focus, you will show an impressive sense of ambition.



Student involvement:

Spotlight on ABA therapy

Who: Nicole Bowns, Junior

What: Helping a 3-year-old boy with special needs. Using ABA therapy to encourage communication and involvement in his mainstream preschool, along with a team of other caregivers.

How: Nicole found this job through an ad in the UW Daily. The parents were searching for students interested in special needs childcare.

What has this experience taught you? "I have had the opportunity to observe his Speech-language Pathologist, Special Educator and Occupational Therapists in sessions with him.

It is definitely challenging to work with a child who requires extra sensitivity and patience, but watching him progress under the diligent work of everyone in our care team has been such a proud accomplishment. It is beyond rewarding to see him gain a sense of self, and to slowly begin communicating with us. Every

small step feels like a leap when I think back to where we began."

How can I do the same thing? Parents privately hire childcare helpers through a variety of means. Try browsing classified ads, like Nicole did, or checking out postings on the Eagleson bulletin boards or on childcare websites. HuskyJobs is also a great online resource for locating and applying to jobs, including childcare jobs.

Faculty highlight: Dr. Truman Coggins



Lessons on research, collaboration, and making the most out of your education from Eagleson's own coffee-loving Professor.

the world. I learned how to systematically think about my ideas.”

He takes a moment and then describes, yet more fervently, what was perhaps the biggest lesson he took from University of Wisconsin. “It had an interdisciplinary center much like the CHDD here. At the time, interdisciplinary service was really a completely novel concept. The real impetus for interdisciplinary thinking was, as it was called at the time, mental retardation, because it really became clear that no one person or one discipline had the key to this issue.

“When you have these clinical experiences, say, talking to this brain damaged guy, or doing therapy with this adolescent stuttrer, it really argues for trying to integrate those systems, because each of those individuals brings their own complex history and their own issues. It’s like this great lyric by George Strait, *always never the same*. And that’s how it is. If you are interested in a challenge and thinking about things in punishingly difficult ways, this is really an unbelievable discipline to be in. That also scares the crap out of people. My colleague Lesley Olswang says, ‘being a speech-language pathologist ain’t for sissies.’ It always demands your A-Game, and you can’t cruise on it because the stakes are just too high.”

Aside from not being a sissy, Dr. Coggins emphasizes that a speech-language pathologist, and indeed every scientist, must have a deep sense of curiosity. “We are curious, we want to know things, we want to improve the quality of life. A lot of philosophers would say that, fundamentally, what science is is a way to improve quality of

life. And I think that’s very true.

“Thinking ahead, it’s hard for me to believe that communication sciences wouldn’t be in the cutting edge of the next wave of research. Certainly some of the research coming out of our program here on genetics is very exciting, and on the relationship between the brain and behavior. But what we are poised to do next is to take those discoveries and make them a fundamental part of people’s lives. To make our discoveries as much a part of your life as those other great advancements—as important as your cell phone!”

Finally, and with shameless self-interest, I ask Dr. Coggins to offer some words of advice to students. “The UW is an environment that provides an unbelievable number of opportunities to go to colloquia with some of the best and brightest. There are also opportunities at whatever level to be engaged in the process of discovery. Every lab has ongoing studies.

“A little reading is going to be important, too. I’d say you should find something that intrigues you, read about it, and try to find some time to talk about it with someone. Don’t come to us wasting our time. But if someone comes to me and says, you know, ‘I am this fundamentally curious person. I read this paper and I’d like to talk about it over coffee,’ or ‘is there something more I can read about that?’ Man, that’s the person I’d like to talk to.”

Dr. Coggins is nothing if not passionate about his work. “It’s been not only a terrific career but, as I look back, also a pretty fast one. The years just kind of zip by. I guess that’s what happens when you’re having a good time.”

Just to the right of the booming grandfather clock lives an equally familiar part of the Eagleson landscape, the office of Dr. Truman Coggins. Dr. Coggins, who studies language in social contexts and how it is impacted by developmental impairment, shares with me how his own education influenced his approach to viewing disability, and the “fundamental curiosity” he encourages us all to develop.

After having a unique offering of clinical experience studying at the University of Redlands, Coggins was inspired to pursue his Ph.D. by a guest Professor from University of Wisconsin-Madison. After all, he had less than concrete plans for post-Master’s life. “Suddenly I had this opportunity. I wasn’t married, I had no commitments. I thought, why not? I was at a small school, and I just thought I knew everything I needed to know. I epitomized a big fish in a little pond. But going back there for the Ph.D. program was like getting cold water thrown on your face. Now, like in our graduate program here I believe, I was involved with abundantly bright and motivated people from all over the country, if not

GETTING THE MOST BANG FOR YOUR WA STATE RESIDENCY



Did you know that several Western state universities have made an agreement that allows residents of one of those states to pay in-state tuition at the others? You just need to designate yourself as a “WICHE” applicant when applying. Here’s where you can go without paying hefty out-of-state prices:

Au.D. programs:

- U of Colorado, Boulder
- Idaho State U
- U of Utah
- Utah State U

SLP programs:

- U of Colorado, Boulder
- U of Northern Colorado
- Idaho State U



To contact UW NSSLHA with general questions or comments, please email NSSLHA00@uw.edu. For questions or requests specific to our newsletter, email tmentzer@uw.edu.

NSSLHA EVENTS & INVOLVEMENT

- ❖ NSSLHA is hosting a **FOOD DRIVE** to benefit the University District Food Bank. Please bring a canned item or two to the boxes in EGL 211. The food drive will end when Fall quarter classes end, so hurry!
- ❖ The **UW CLINIC** needs our help! They have created a “wish list” of items they are lacking, and you can help us by donating one of these items. Check out the holiday tree in EGL 211. Each item on the wish list is written on one of the holiday lights.
- ❖ Get the latest updates on NSSLHA events – like our November 29th Happy Hour at Finn’s! – through the official **FACEBOOK PAGE**. Search for “University of Washington (NSSLHA)” and press the *Like* button.
- ❖ NSSLHA meetings are held **EVERY OTHER THURSDAY** in EGL 211 at 12:30 (the next meeting is Dec. 13). Join us to have a say in events, fundraising, and merchandise, and to ask any questions about NSSLHA or the department.

