

Thinking About a PhD?

Deciding to Pursue a Research PhD

This presentation has been compiled and adapted from Schuele and Bacon (2001) and several presentations at the ASHA Convention from 1999 to 2003. Appreciation is expressed to all who have participated in the ASHA sessions. Permission is granted to individuals to use or adapt this presentation in their recruiting efforts.

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PURPOSE

- Do I want to get a PhD? This presentation provides some background information on research/academic careers in communication sciences and disorders (CSD). This information may be particularly useful to someone thinking about a career in research/academia.
- The accompanying presentation, *Thinking about a PhD? Finding a Research Doctoral Program* provides more specific information for those students looking for a PhD program.

Shortage of PhDs in CSD

- There is a documented shortage of persons with PhD degrees to assume academic and research positions in CSD. This shortage is likely a result of growth within the professions and anticipated faculty retirements in the years ahead.
- Thus, there are currently (and are anticipated to be in the future) many opportunities available for persons with PhD training in CSD.

ACADEMIC AND RESEARCH CAREERS IN CSD

- Persons who have academic and research careers in CSD typically have their PhD training in speech-language pathology, audiology, or speech, language, or hearing science.
- However, it is not uncommon for CSD faculty members to have their PhD in related fields such as linguistics or psychology, or to have an interdisciplinary degree. Thus, you may wish to explore PhD training programs in related disciplines as well as CSD.

ACADEMIC AND RESEARCH CAREERS IN CSD

- An academic and research career typically entails three dimensions of activity. Faculty positions at various universities emphasize these activities in varying proportions:
 - Research and scholarly activity
 - Teaching
 - Service

Activity: RESEARCH & SCHOLARLY ACTIVITY: Ask questions, answer questions

- Faculty members conduct research that answers basic and applied questions in CSD. They disseminate their research findings at conferences and in scholarly publications (e.g., journal articles, book chapters).
- Faculty members also mentor undergraduate and graduate students in research.
- Scholarly activities can include writing book chapters in an area of expertise, providing continuing education, and so on.

Activity: TEACH: Undergraduate and graduate students

- Faculty members engage in teaching activities that include classroom instruction, clinical instruction and supervision, and research mentorship. The types of instruction that a faculty member engages in vary by institution.

Activity: SERVICE

- Faculty members are expected to provide service to the department, to the university, and to the community. Activities can include, for example, student advising, curricular revisions, providing continuing education to practicing professionals, and peer review for journals.
- The types of service that faculty members are expected to participate in vary according to the type of university in which they are employed.

Research & Scholarly Activity – Teaching – Service

- Prospective doctoral students will want to identify PhD programs that will prepare them to engage in these three activities:
 - Research and scholarly activity
 - Teaching
 - Service

PhD: A RESEARCH DEGREE

- PhD training involves research training that leads to a research degree. PhD trained persons engage in generation and dissemination of knowledge.
- This stands in contrast to the role of clinicians, who primarily engage in the application of clinical knowledge to meet the communication needs of individuals with communication disorders.

PhD: A RESEARCH DEGREE

- A PhD prepares you for...
 - An academic career where you engage in teaching and research.
 - A research career where you engage in research.
 - A clinical research career where you engage in research alongside clinical practice.
- A research PhD is *not* a degree that prepares you for clinical practice. The clinical doctorate or master's degree prepares you for clinical practice.

The PhD is not merely a 4-year master's program or AuD program

- Conture (2003) defined the difference between the work of a PhD and the work of clinical practitioner (master's or AuD).
- This dichotomy differentiates clinical training from research PhD training as well.

○ ***Knowledge Production and Dissemination***

Individuals with a PhD: produce (research) and disseminate (teach) knowledge. Their pursuit of either may be mainly for the sake of (a) understanding, (b) use, or (c) a combination of (a) and (b).

- Whatever the case, they are the knowledge producers of our profession; they are expected to live and work on the cutting edge, the frontiers of our knowledge.

○ ***Knowledge Application***

Individuals with an MA/MS or AuD: apply the knowledge from the above individuals, clinical experience, etc., to the assessment and treatment of people with speech, voice, language, and hearing disorders.

- Although they also may disseminate information/knowledge, and some may engage in knowledge production, the vast majority apply knowledge to assess and treat people.

Source: Presented as part of the *Thinking About a PhD?* panel. ASHA Convention, 2003



Which universities offer the PhD?

- The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (www.carnegiefoundation.org) classifies universities into categories based on the mission of the university. This classification is relevant when choosing an institution in which to pursue a PhD and when choosing an employment setting. On their Web site you can find the classification for each institution. For category definitions:
www.carnegiefoundation.org/Classification/CIHE2000/defNotes/Definitions.htm
- See the ASHA Web site for CSD departments that award PhD degrees.
 - www.asha.org/students/academic/doctoral/doctoral_programs.htm

Universities and Colleges: Differentiating Types



Doctoral/Research

Universities - Extensive:

Research PhD education is integral to the mission of the university with 50 or more doctoral degrees awarded per year across at least 15 disciplines.

Doctoral/Research

Universities - Intensive:

Research PhD education is integral to the mission of the university with at least 10 doctoral degrees awarded per year across at least 3 disciplines or a total of 20 doctoral degrees per year.

Master's Colleges and Universities, Baccalaureate Colleges, Associate's Colleges:

Primary focus is teaching, with minimal expectation of research productivity.

Source: Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching

Universities and Colleges:

Graduate and undergraduate programs in CSD can be found at many types of universities. It is helpful to understand this classification for choosing a doctoral program and for thinking about the type of university/college in which you want to work after your PhD.

- **Doctoral/Research Universities – Extensive**
 - Universities in this classification typically have bachelor's, master's, and doctoral programs.
- **Doctoral/Research Universities – Intensive**
 - Departments of CSD in universities in this classification may or may not have a doctoral program. They may focus on undergraduate and master's/AuD level preparation.
- **Master's Colleges and Universities**
 - CSD departments in universities in this classification have undergraduate and master's programs.
- **Baccalaureate Colleges**
 - There are many colleges that only have undergraduate programs in CSD. (Find more information on the ASHA Web site.) Faculty at these colleges are focused solely on undergraduate education.

All kinds of CSD programs

- There are career opportunities at many different types of universities and colleges. A career at a large research university can be vastly different than a career at an undergraduate college. But, importantly, both careers can be equally rewarding! With the doctoral shortage in CSD there are likely to be many different faculty positions to choose from when you begin to look for a job. One size definitely does not fit all.
- Visit the *Academic and Research Career Profiles*, where faculty share insights about their academic/research careers.

DO I WANT A PhD?

Am I interested in an academic and/or research career?

- Choosing to complete a research PhD is a big commitment. The typical doctoral student will take 3 to 5 years beyond the master's program to complete the PhD. The time to complete a PhD beyond an AuD is variable. It is a commitment of time and resources. Years spent in a PhD program are years not spent in employment.



DO I WANT A PhD?

Am I interested in an academic and/or research career?

- Typically, PhD students receive funding to cover their tuition and expenses, but if those years were spent working, much higher financial remuneration would result.
- Thus, one should be clear about what a PhD will lead to. A PhD prepares a person for a career in teaching and research. Teaching and research can be a very rewarding career, but it is a very different career path than clinical practice.

DO I WANT A PhD?

Do I want to do research? Do I want to teach?



- Most college and graduate students in CSD have a fairly good idea of what the teaching part of a research career entails. You have been on the receiving end of education for quite some time. Also, you may have gotten a hint of what teaching may be like for you if you have been asked to lead a discussion in class or present part of a lecture. But few students have the opportunity to experience the research side of an academic career.



DO I WANT A PhD?

Do I want to do research? Do I want to teach?

- If you are in school, you might volunteer to do some research with a faculty member. You might think about doing a thesis or a small research project. Although faculty members may not be advertising for students to do research, you might find a wealth of opportunities if you volunteer.
- Whether you are in school or not, interview faculty members about their research and scholarly activities. Most faculty love the opportunity to share their experiences and history.

DO I WANT A PhD?

Am I interested in WHY?

- Faculty members spend a lot of time asking and answering WHY, whether they are preparing a class lecture, designing a research study, collecting and analyzing data, or writing a journal article.
- If you have a burning desire to know more about WHY, you may find an academic/research career fulfilling!

DO I WANT A PhD?

Do I enjoy working independently?

Do I enjoy mentoring others?



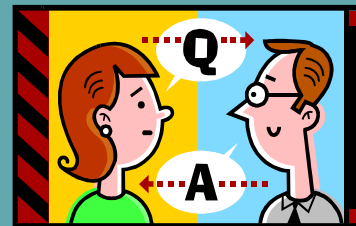
- Faculty members work independently and collaboratively. They set their own agendas – deciding what and how to teach in their classes and deciding what studies they will conduct. They typically collaborate with colleagues but must be motivated, independent individuals in order to succeed.



- Faculty members mentor students in class, in clinic, and in research. Successful mentors are capable guides, knowing when to provide support and how to provide such support.

How do I decide if a PhD is for me?

- This is a question only you can answer. But you can gather helpful information from others to help you answer the question. Talking to current doctoral students and faculty members can give you a better idea of what their careers entail. There are as many paths to a PhD as there are persons with PhDs. Thus, you will want to gather information from a variety of people.



Some questions to ponder ...



- If I am currently a practicing clinician, am I ready to make a career shift to an academic/research career?
- Do I have an idea of the type of academic/research career that will provide a good fit for me?
- Have I talked to people to get an idea of the range of academic/research careers in CSD?



Am I like other people who get a PhD?

- There are no typical candidates.
 - Some doctoral students go straight from a BA or MA program into a PhD program. Some doctoral students practice as clinicians for one or several years and then return to school.
 - Some doctoral students have a background in CSD; other doctoral students come to CSD from other fields of undergraduate or graduate study (e.g., psychology, linguistics, premedicine).



Am I like other people who get a PhD?

- Do I have what it takes to get *into* a PhD program? This usually takes the form of a person asking if they are smart enough.
- A more important question is *Do you have the interest, the motivation, and the dedication to pursue the intellectual challenge of a PhD program and career in academe/research?*
 - Have you done your research so that you have an idea of what you are getting into?

Am I like other people who get a PhD?

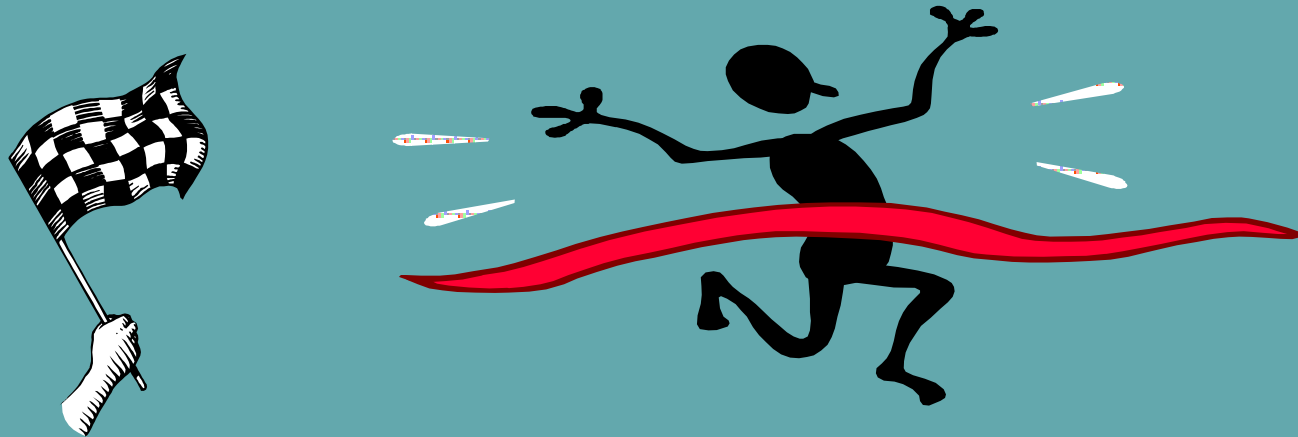
- Do I have what it takes to get *out* of a PhD program? This is perhaps a more important question. It is probably fair to say that it is easier to get into a doctoral program than to get out of a doctoral program.

Am I like other people who get a PhD?

- Getting through the years of a doctoral program relies on your personal drive and your perseverance. In the master's program or AuD program, completion is a matter of completing a number of clinical and academic requirements. You are typically moving through those requirements with a peer group of 15 or 30 students.

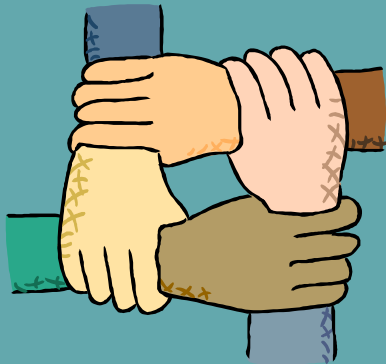
Am I like other people who get a PhD?

- In the PhD program, progression is much more individualized. Some people finish in 3 years, some people finish in 5 years. Both people work really hard the whole time. YOU have to complete the doctoral program.



DIVERSITY IN CSD

- In the current climate of the doctoral shortage, our field will be enhanced by a pool of doctoral applicants who are diverse in a number of ways.



DIVERSITY IN CSD

- GENDER: We need men and women.
- RACE: We need persons of all racial origins.
- ETHNICITY: We need persons who represent a range of majority and minority ethnicities.

DIVERSITY IN CSD

- CULTURAL: We need persons from minority and mainstream cultures.
- LINGUISTIC: We need persons who are monolingual and bilingual and dialect speakers.
- SOCIOECONOMIC: We need persons who come from a range of socioeconomic backgrounds.

DIVERSITY IN CSD

- LIFE EXPERIENCES: We need people with a background in CSD and those with a background in other fields. We need young people and not so young people. We need people who practiced as clinicians and people who went straight through.

Conclusion: Is a PhD for Me?

- Consider your own motivations for wanting a PhD.
- Explore career options in CSD by talking to faculty members and current doctoral students.
- Explore career options at various types of universities and colleges.