

## **APPENDIX B**

### **ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS OF A SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGY EDUCATION**

#### **ADMISSION, RETENTION AND GRADUATION STANDARDS**

A graduate degree in Speech Pathology is recognized as a broad degree requiring the acquisition of general knowledge and basic skills in all applicable domains of speech and hearing sciences. The education of speech-language pathologists requires assimilation of knowledge, acquisition of skills and development of judgment through patient care experience in preparation for independent and appropriate decisions required in practice. The current practices of speech-language pathology emphasize collaboration among speech-language pathologists, audiologists, other health care and education professionals, the patient/client, and the patient/client's family.

#### **MISSION**

The mission of the M.S. program in Speech Pathology at The University of Rhode Island is to prepare students for the vocation of Speech-Language Pathology within the Department of Communicative Disorders' vision and mission. We specifically seek to provide an academically rigorous program that educates our students to have the essential academic knowledge, clinical skills, and reflective ethical practices that enable them to enter the profession, to become lifelong learners, to persistently improve service to others, to be intentional advocates for individuals who have communicative disorders, to know, appreciate and respect cultural and linguistic traditions in a diverse world, and to become successful leaders within the profession of speech-language pathology.

#### **POLICY**

As a program that adheres to the standards and guidelines of the Council on Academic Accreditation in Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology, our program has the responsibility for selecting and evaluating its students; designing, implementing, and evaluating its curriculum; and determining who should be awarded a degree and/or be recommended for graduate work at other institutions. Admission and retention decisions are based not only on satisfactory academic achievement but also on other academic factors, which serve to ensure that the candidate can complete the essential functions of the program required for graduation.

Our program has a responsibility to the public that its graduates can become fully competent and caring speech-language pathologists, capable of doing benefit and not harm. Thus, it is important that persons admitted possess the intelligence, integrity, compassion, humanitarian concern, and physical and emotional capacity necessary to practice speech-language pathology.

#### **ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS**

In order to acquire the knowledge and skills requisite to the practice of speech-language pathology, to function in a broad variety of clinical situations, and to render a wide spectrum of patient care, individuals must have essential skills and attributes in five areas: communication,

motor, intellectual-cognitive, sensory-observational, and behavioral-social. These skills enable a student to meet graduate and professional requirements as measured by state and national credentialing agencies. Many of these skills can be learned and developed during the graduate program through coursework and clinical experience. Failure to meet or maintain the Essential Functions may result in action, including, but not limited to a student's dismissal from the program.

#### **A. COMMUNICATION**

A student must possess adequate communication skills in the following areas:

- Communicate proficiently in both oral and written English language.
- Possess reading and writing skills sufficient to meet curricular and clinical demands.
- Perceive and demonstrate appropriate non-verbal communication for culture and context. Modify communication style to meet the communication needs of clients, caregivers, and other persons served.
- Communicate professionally and intelligibly with patients, colleagues, other healthcare professionals, and community or professional groups.
- Communicate professionally, effectively, and legibly on patient documentation, reports, and scholarly papers required as a part of course work and professional practice.
- Convey information accurately with relevance and cultural sensitivity.

#### **B. MOTOR**

A student must possess adequate motor skills to:

- Sustain necessary physical activity level in required classroom and clinical activities.
- Respond quickly to provide a safe environment for clients in emergency situations including fire, choking, etc.
- Access transportation to clinical and academic placements
- Participate in classroom and clinical activities for a defined workday.
- Efficiently manipulate testing and treatment environment and materials without violation of testing protocol and with best therapeutic practice.
- Manipulate patient-utilized equipment (e.g., durable medical equipment to include AAC devices, hearing aids, etc.) in a safe manner.
- Access technology for clinical management (i.e., billing, charting, therapy programs, etc.).

#### **C. INTELLECTUAL/COGNITIVE**

A student must possess adequate intellectual and cognitive skills to:

- Comprehend, retain, integrate, synthesize, infer, evaluate and apply written and verbal information sufficient to meet curricular and clinical demands.
- Identify significant findings from history, evaluation, and data to formulate a diagnosis and develop a treatment plan.

- Solve problems, reason, and make sound clinical judgments in patient assessment, diagnostic and therapeutic plan and implementation.
- Self evaluate, identify, and communicate limits of one's own knowledge and skill to an appropriate professional level and be able to identify and utilize resources in order to increase knowledge.
- Utilize detailed written and verbal instruction in order to make unique and dependent decisions.

#### **D. SENSORY/OBSERVATIONAL**

A student must possess adequate sensory skills to:

- Visually and auditorily identify normal and disordered (fluency, articulation, voice, resonance, respiration characteristics, oral and written language in the areas of semantics, pragmatics, syntax, morphology and phonology, hearing and balance disorders, swallowing cognition, social interaction related to communication).
- Identify the need for alternative modalities of communication.
- Visualize and identify anatomic structures.
- Visualize and discriminate imaging findings.
- Identify and discriminate findings on imaging studies.
- Discriminate text, numbers, tables, and graphs associated with diagnostic instruments and tests.
- Recognize and adjust when a client and/or client's family does or does not understand the clinician's written and/or verbal communication.
- Identify and discriminate a client's spoken responses.
- Accurately monitor through both visual and auditory modalities, equipment displays and controls, including those of hearing instruments, used for assessment and treatment of patients.

#### **E. BEHAVIORAL/SOCIAL**

A student must possess adequate behavioral and social attributes to:

- Display mature, empathetic and effective professional relationships by exhibiting compassion, integrity, and concern for others.
- Recognize and show respect for individuals with disabilities and for individuals of different ages, genders, race, religions, sexual orientation, and cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds.
- Conduct oneself in an ethical and legal manner, upholding the ASHA Code of Ethics and university and federal privacy policies.
- Maintain general good physical and mental health and self care in order not to jeopardize the health and safety of self and others in the academic and clinical setting.
- Adapt to changing and demanding environments (which includes maintaining both professional demeanor and emotional health).

- Manage the use of time effectively to complete professional and technical tasks within realistic time constraints.
- Accept appropriate suggestions and constructive criticism and respond by modification of behaviors.
- Dress appropriately and professionally.

The University of Rhode Island is committed to providing access, equal opportunity, and reasonable accommodation in its services, programs, activities, education, and employment for individuals with disabilities. Our goal is to ensure that every student who has a disability is provided with access to the needed services that will ensure equity of opportunity. We provide assistance to students with visual impairments, learning disabilities, mobility impairments, hearing impairments, chronic health conditions (including allergies), psychological disabilities, and temporary disabilities so they may enjoy a complete range of academic and non-academic opportunities. More information may be found at: <http://www.uri.edu/disability/dss>.

By signing this, I certify that I have read and understand the “Essential Functions of Speech-Language Pathology Education” and I understand that should I fail to meet and/or maintain the Essential Functions, I may be subject to action by the Department of Communicative Disorders, including but not limited to dismissal.

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Print Name

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Signature of Applicant

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Date

Return this document to:

CMD Program Director  
 Department of Communicative Disorders  
 University of Rhode Island  
 Independence Square II  
 25 West Independence Way, Suite I  
 Kingston, RI 02881

This document was adapted from the  
 Calvin College SPAUD Academic & Clinical Handbook (2012)