FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:
APPLICATION AND ADMISSION TO THE GRADUATE PROGRAM IN COMMUNICATION SCIENCES AND DISORDERS

Question #1: What are your minimum GPA and GRE requirements for admission?
Answer: The Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders utilizes the Graduate School’s minimum undergraduate GPA for admission (3.0 on a 4.0 scale). The mean GPA for students admitted into the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders master’s programs across the last three years was 3.79. The Graduate School and the Department do not have a required GRE score for admittance. Across the past three years, for students admitted into the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders master’s programs, the mean Verbal GRE score was 155 (67th percentile) and the mean Quantitative GRE score was 153 (52nd percentile). The Educational Testing Service (http://www.ets.org/gre/) has a lot of information to prepare you for the test. We are no longer permitted to accept applicants with substandard GREs, regardless of how high their GPAs are. Thus, our advice regarding the GRE is: prepare, practice, and if necessary re-take the exam.

Question #2: I did not do well my first two years of college. However, my grades in my major and during my junior and senior years are excellent. How much consideration will the Admissions Committee give to this? Also, I have taken several courses in speech-language pathology since graduating and have received an “A” in each course. Will this enhance my application?
Answer: As a minimum, applicants must have a four-year GPA of 3.00 (on a 4.00 scale) to be considered. However, as previously mentioned, those admitted to the program typically have a four-year GPA of 3.70. Thus, applicants should not expect to gain acceptance simply because they have a 3.00 GPA. Should an applicant have one particularly poor semester (or year, for that matter) they should explain the situation leading to this performance in their “Statement of Intentions.” The problem the Admissions Committee faces today is very different than in years past. In those days, we would evaluate applications on the basis of who had proven they deserved a chance. Students who were questionable could be admitted provisionally. More recently, however, the high quality and the vast number of applications have changed the approach entirely. Because enrollments are limited by the number of graduate students a faculty our size can adequately educate, the Admissions Committee’s charge is to select the 30 to 35 most qualified students from the pool of 350+ applicants per degree program (MSP and MCD). Thus, it will be challenging for an applicant with a four-year GPA of 3.2, but who received “A’s” in three or four courses after graduation, to be admitted in lieu of an applicant with a four-year GPA of 3.80.

Question #3: Can you tell me more about obtaining clinical observation hours? Do I need to have at least 25 hours completed prior to applying to or enrolling in your master’s program? Also, if I shadow a speech-language pathologist can that time be counted towards my observation hours?
Answer: The answer is no to both questions. Whether or not you have accrued 25 or more supervised observation hours only determines when you begin the program, not if you are admitted. However, there are only two situations in which we will give you credit for the observation hours obtained prior to enrollment in our program: they must have been obtained as either 1)
part of the requirements of a course in speech-language pathology or 2) a requirement for an undergraduate major in speech-language pathology. If the 25 minimum observation hours were not obtained as part of a course, the mechanism by which they were obtained and guided must be specified on departmental letterhead stationary and signed by a faculty member who was responsible for monitoring student observation. All observation hours must be both guided and supervised. Observation hours that students obtain on their own (e.g., while doing volunteer work or “shadowing” a speech-language pathologist) do not count towards meeting this requirement. Again, 25 observation hours are not required for admission. They only determine when the student begins the master’s program (June or August).

Question #4: Do two of the three letters of recommendations really have to come from current or former professors?
Answer: YES! The Admissions Committee is looking for evidence that you will be successful in graduate school. Although letters from your employers, your minister, elected officials, or professional colleagues may attest to your character and work ethic as an employee, none of these individuals has had you as a student in the classroom or clinical setting. If you wish, a third letter may come from an employer, so long as it is in a professionally related area. Letters from individuals other than your professors, provide little insight as to what type of graduate student you would be and, consequently, are not given much or any weight.

Question #5: What determines whether I begin my graduate studies in June or August?
Answer: To begin your graduate program in August, you must have accumulated a minimum of 25 clock hours of supervised clinical observation (see information under #4 above) plus completed the following coursework (each for 3 semester hours credit):

- Anatomy of the Speech & Hearing Mechanism
- Phonetics
- Normal Language Development
- Articulation Disorders

The Admissions Committee will look specifically for these four courses on your transcript. If you believe you have taken these courses, but under a different title, you may be asked to supply a course syllabus and/or letter from your course instructor describing the course content. An undergraduate course that includes information on one or more of these subjects along with other topics does not satisfy the requirement. For example, some universities offer courses entitled “Disorders of Speech”, which includes articulation, stuttering, voice, etc. This is not the equivalent of a 3-hour course that deals solely with disorders of articulation. Do not be alarmed if you have not taken all of these courses. It will have no bearing on whether or not you are admitted into the program; only when you will begin.

Question #6: Does the Admissions Committee give preference to students who have majored in speech-language pathology as undergraduates?
Answer: No. The Admissions Committee is seeking to select the 35 most outstanding applicants per degree program (MSP and MCD). Not everyone knows their ultimate career choice when they
first enroll in college and many students change majors while in school. In fact, most colleges do not even have an undergraduate major in speech-language pathology. Having said that, however, what you have done to prepare yourself for this career choice is important. A major in speech-language pathology certainly helps you make an informed decision and prepares you for what lies ahead as both a graduate student and future professional. There are, nonetheless, numerous avenues for non-speech-language pathology majors to show evidence they have investigated the profession thoroughly and educated themselves about graduate programs. Each year, as many as half of applicants admitted to our master’s program majored in something other than speech-language pathology as undergraduates.

Question #7: Once the Admissions Committee has completed its review of all applications, what happens next?

Answer: The members of the Admissions Committee independently (i.e., without input or discussion from other faculty or members of the committee) assign each applicant a rating. Applicants are then ranked, based on their mean rating. Starting with the highest ranked applicant, acceptance letters are systematically sent out until we have received commitments from the 35 students who will comprise the incoming class per degree program (MSP and MCD). Once all slots have been filled, denial letters are sent out to the remaining applicants. The acceptance process (the time between when the first and last student is admitted) can take one to two months.

If you are admitted to the master’s degree program, you will receive a letter so stating along with a specific set of instructions. You will be given until April 15th to send us a signed “Letter of Intent” (included in your acceptance materials) along with a non-refundable check for $1,000. Your check reserves your slot in the entering class and is applied to the $1,400 Graduate Enrichment Fee (required of all incoming students). The remaining $400 is added to your first semester’s tuition (summer or fall, depending on when you begin your program). Receipt of these checks lets us know who is definitely planning to enroll and, therefore, how many more applicants we are able to admit. Because so many applicants are waiting to hear from us regarding their disposition, we are unable to grant additional time for receipt of your check.

Question #8: What final advice can you offer regarding the application?

Answer: The Admissions Committee considers several criteria when reviewing an application, one of which is your ability to follow directions when completing the application. Each application is individually reviewed, and the Committee aims to gain an integrated view of the candidate. Each candidate’s academic credentials, performance on standardized tests, and unique skills and experiences are considered during this process. Based on feedback from past applicants, the Committee suggests that each applicant adhere to the following:

• Explore the COMD website to familiarize yourself with the unique aspects of our program (research, opportunities for specialized training, diverse clinical experiences, focus on developing clinical scientists, etc.).

• Read and review instructions, adhering to stated guidelines. Note deadlines and make a plan prior to beginning the application process.
• Start early, allowing time to revise as needed. Because the application deadline for completed applications is January 1st, it is our recommendation that prospective students begin their application as soon as the CSDCAS Portal (https://portal.csdcas.org/) opens. University offices are typically closed from early December through the first or second week of January. Thus, it is unlikely that students who wait until December to start the application process will meet the January 1st deadline. The Committee will not review any application that is incomplete by January 1st.

• Have several people provide feedback on your application. Request feedback on the content, as well as the organization and conventions of writing (grammar, spelling, etc.).

• Be yourself rather than trying to present what you think the Committee would like to hear; We value applicants’ authenticity and diversity.