

## M.C.D. DEGREE THROUGH DISTANCE EDUCATION

Although the Master in Speech Pathology (M.S.P.) degree requires full-time, on-campus participation over a two year period, the Masters in Communication Disorders (M.C.D.) degree is offered only on a part-time basis through distance learning. Both degrees are rigorous, have structured curriculum sequences and require significant academic and personal commitment to successfully complete. The application and admission process is highly competitive and the graduate program itself is challenging for students. There are several things you must know and understand if you are planning to apply to the MCD degree to train graduate students in speech-language pathology and communication sciences and disorders.

Requirements for application include the following:

- GRE scores
  - ❑ Since your performance on the GRE is such an important component of the application process, you should consider specific preparation before taking the GRE.
  - ❑ GRE prep program materials are available for you to purchase and GRE preparatory training programs in which you can participate to maximize your test performance.
  - ❑ Check the GRE web site at [www.ets.org/gre/](http://www.ets.org/gre/) for test information and test dates.
- Three (3) letters of recommendation **from academic professors and clinical instructors** who are familiar with your academic and/or clinical abilities as a student
  - ❑ If you have been out of school for several years, you should update your vita, write each instructor from whom you are requesting a reference, remind them of the courses you took with them (including the grade you earned) and provide them with a copy of your updated vita. This will help them provide the best recommendation on your behalf. The more information you can provide potential references the easier it is for them to write a recommendation on your behalf.
  - ❑ Although coworkers, ministers, friends and family are able to provide a character reference, they **do not** have knowledge of your academic abilities and classroom performance as a student and **should not** be asked to serve as academic references.
- College transcript credit in each of the following areas:
  - ❑ Statistics (College Math)
  - ❑ Social/Behavioral Science (Psychology, Sociology, Anthropology, etc)
  - ❑ Biological Science (Biology, Human Anatomy, Zoology, Ecology, etc); and
  - ❑ Physical Science (Physics or Chemistry)
- GPAs from all undergraduate and graduate degree programs in which applicants have been enrolled are considered in the competitive application process.

Note: GPAs, GRE scores, letters of recommendation, statement of intent and resume are very important factors in each student's application and are given significant consideration by the admissions committee in the application review process.

### **MCD Applicants WITH a Speech Background**

For students who have an undergraduate degree in speech-language pathology (or a communication sciences and disorders discipline), the MCD degree curriculum begins summer semester, requires three-years (10 semesters), 68 semester hours and is offered only as part-time degree. Students must

progress through the curriculum sequence as scheduled. Students are **not allowed** to modify the MCD curriculum for the purpose of expediting graduation.

### **MCD Applicants WITHOUT a Speech Background**

For students who do not have an undergraduate degree in speech-language pathology (or a communication sciences and disorders discipline) but have a bachelor's degree in another discipline, the MCD degree curriculum begins fall semester, requires four-years (12 semesters), 83 semester hours and is offered only as a part-time degree program. However, due to the necessity of adding clinical observation and prerequisite/leveling courses to the program of study, the part-time degree for students without a background in speech extends to a four-year program. It is **not possible** to modify the MCD curriculum for the purpose of expediting graduation.

### **Distance Learning in COMD at U.S.C.**

Courses offered in the MCD degree curriculum are delivered via distance learning and are supplemented with web based instruction. The COMD courses offered through distance education are delivered in hybrid formats. Most courses incorporate streaming video but are heavily supplemented with both web-based instructional supports as well as with direct communication from, and with your course instructors. Although classes may be viewed and accessed at home or at a location you choose for viewing via streaming video through web-based programs such as Blackboard and Adobe Connect, live audio and audio/video class meetings and/or conferencing may also be utilized to enhance class participation opportunities with course instructors. Of course, you should always be available and reachable by e-mail and phone for individual communication with COMD faculty and staff at all times. There may also be a Saturday class meeting planned by an instructor while you are in the program but attempts are always made to coordinate the class meeting with on-campus advisement.

Please understand that this is **NOT an on-line degree** program and it is **NOT self-paced**. In addition to the academic requirements, there are four (4) semesters of required clinical practicum during which MCD graduate clinicians complete a MINIMUM of 400 clinical hours of supervised patient treatment experiences. MCD students are closely tracked throughout the time they are in the program. They also follow the same academic calendar as on-campus MSP students in Communication Sciences and Disorders follow each semester. This is the academic calendar of the University of South Carolina.

MCD students are not "free" to schedule family vacations, personal trips, and weddings with 5-day honeymoons during the academic semester. These should always be scheduled between semesters. In addition to online quizzes and/or tests, courses **may** also have physically proctored tests or exams scheduled and being away from a proctored test site (*if needed for that exam*) would make completing the physically proctored assessment unavailable. Of course, your weekends (except for advisement Saturdays twice a year) are yours. You just have to remember to keep up with course requirements, study, readings, assignments, projects, and managing time, etc.

### **Clinical Practicum**

Clinical practicum experiences are obtained primarily during the summer months. The first summer clinical practicum experience takes place at one of several pediatric practicum sites at different locations in South Carolina. The second summer clinical practicum and final clinical internship are arranged at an approved site closer to where the student lives. Supervision, authorization and documentation of all clinical observation and practicum experiences must be provided by ASHA (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association) certified speech-language pathologists who hold the Certificate of Clinical Competence in Speech-Language Pathology (CCC-SLP).

For students without a background in speech-language pathology, clinical observation requirements are incorporated into the program through the year until the first summer practicum at the end of the second year. Approximate time-lines for required practicum experiences are:

- 1st summer of clinical practicum                      5-6 weeks (*must take place in South Carolina*)
- 2<sup>nd</sup> summer of clinical practicum                      6-8 weeks
- 3<sup>rd</sup> spring semester    1 semester hour
- 3<sup>rd</sup> summer of clinical practicum                      8-10 weeks

➤ NOTE: Additional optional practicum may be necessary to obtain the required hours of clinical practicum experience. However, the 5-6 weeks of the first summer practicum in South Carolina is required for all MCD students. We have had students from other states throughout the United States and other countries who have already completed this experience in South Carolina. Remember, this is only for the first of three summers of clinical practicum while you are in the program.

**Financial Aid.**

You are encouraged to search online for available scholarship opportunities. There are many web sites on which you may register and set up a profile to receive timely notices of scholarship offerings. Additionally, if you visit the U.S.C. Financial Aid and Scholarships web page at [www.sc.edu/financialaid](http://www.sc.edu/financialaid) you will find other links to scholarship opportunities. Current tuition and fee information, specific to the Arnold School of Public Health, is available at <http://www.sph.sc.edu/currentstudents/fees.htm>

You may ask, "What are the advantages and benefits of a graduate program in speech-language pathology offered through distance education?" Included next are the advantages of a part-time degree program through distance learning.

**ADVANTAGES OF MCD DEGREE PROGRAM**

- MCD students can be employed while obtaining the MCD degree
- MCD students, if certified to teach in South Carolina public schools, are eligible for reduced tuition (based on South Carolina residency and currently working in a South Carolina school district).
- MCD students can participate in MCD courses, synchronous "live" class meetings, etc. in the comfort of their home environment, at the office or on-the-go via streaming video, classes and asynchronous class meetings via Adobe Connect, etc. on laptop computer with web cam and high speed internet connection.
- MCD students may take quizzes and tests online, or may take some proctored exams in regional testing sites located near their home area of the state in which they live.
- MCD students graduate with a "Masters plus 30 semester hour equivalent" being eligible for this designation on the SC Department of Education teaching certification/educator licensure credential. The benefit includes eligibility for additional salary in South Carolina's (and some other state's) public schools and agencies that recognize the "plus 30" status.
- MCD students are eligible to become members of the National Student Speech-Language-Hearing Association (NSSLHA) and receive online access to ASHA professional journals, in addition to other benefits. Student membership also qualifies graduates for reduced fees when they apply for certification and membership in ASHA after graduation (*if they have maintained continuous membership for at least two years prior to graduation and application*).

- MCD graduates are eligible for the Certificate of Clinical Competence in Speech-Language Pathology (CCC-SLP) from the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) upon completion of the Clinical Fellowship (CF) and after passing the PRAXIS examination.
- MCD graduates should be eligible for state license in Speech-Language Pathology in states whose requirements are based on meeting the criteria for the ASHA CCC-SLP (*after successfully passing the national PRAXIS II exam for speech-language pathology*).
- MCD students significantly increase their knowledge base and achieve clinical competencies in all aspects of speech-language pathology in the following "Big Nine" areas:
  - Articulation
  - Fluency
  - Voice and resonance, including respiration and phonation
  - Receptive and expressive language (phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, pragmatics, pre-linguistic communication and paralinguistic communication) in speaking, listening, reading, writing
  - Hearing, including the impact on speech and language
  - Swallowing (oral, pharyngeal, esophageal, and related functions, including oral function for feeding, orofacial myology)
  - Cognitive aspects of communication (attention, memory, sequencing, problem solving, executive functioning)
  - Social aspects of communication (including challenging behavior, ineffective social skills, and lack of communication opportunities)
  - Augmentative and alternative communication modalities

Applications for the master's program as an MCD degree candidate in Communication Sciences and Disorders at the University of South Carolina are **only** accepted through the CSDCAS centralized application system (<https://portal.csdcas.org>). You **must** apply online through this system. All information about the process and the deadline (January 1st) are available at the site (<https://portal.csdcas.org>). Please note there are two listings, so you must carefully choose whether you are applying for the MSP **OR** the MCD degree program. **You may not apply to both programs.**

- When you apply, please ask that your GRE scores be sent using the following code that is specific to our program: **DI Code 5821**. Using this code will assure your score is sent to CSDCAS.
- The application deadline is January 1<sup>st</sup> and all application requirements must be complete at this time.

If you would like to receive information about the MCD program, please contact:

Teresa Boyett  
[tboyett@mailbox.sc.edu](mailto:tboyett@mailbox.sc.edu)  
 (803) 777-3080

If you have additional questions about the MCD degree, please contact:

Crystal Murphree-Holden  
[cmholden@mailbox.sc.edu](mailto:cmholden@mailbox.sc.edu)  
 (803) 777-1170

For additional information about the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders, please go to the web site at [www.sph.sc.edu/comd](http://www.sph.sc.edu/comd).