Speech Pathology and Audiology

Department of Speech Pathology & Audiology, College of Fine Arts & Communication

What Is SPA?

The field of speech pathology and audiology (SPA) focuses on understanding the anatomy, physiology, and cognitive and linguistic skills needed for successful communication as well as the assessment and treatment of communication disorders. Students interested in SPA are usually planning for careers as speech-language pathologists or audiologists.

Speech-language pathologists (SLPs) assess and treat communication and swallowing difficulties across the lifespan from newborns to the elderly. An SLP might work in a public school with children who have language disorders due to Down syndrome or autism. SLPs also work in hospitals with adults who have had strokes and need treatment to improve their speech and swallowing abilities.

Audiologists assess and treat hearing and balance disorders. Like SLPs, audiologists work with clients across the lifespan from providing treatment to young children who have received a cochlear implant to older adults who use hearing aids to assist with age-related hearing loss.

Certification as a speech-language pathologist or audiologist requires a graduate degree. An undergraduate degree in SPA at Western is the first step in this career path. Due to an increasing elderly population and an emphasis on providing services to children with special needs, speech-language pathology and audiology are consistently rated as fast growing professions with high job satisfaction.

Program of Study

A major in SPA leads to a Bachelor of Science degree. Within the major, students take classes in American Sign Language; the scientific bases of speech, language, and hearing; phonetics; child language development; and the assessment and treatment of speech, language, and hearing disorders. Across classes, students develop the critical thinking and communication skills needed to be successful professionals.

During the senior year, students who have at least a 3.0 grade point average in the major have the opportunity to complete clinical practica in both speech-language pathology and audiology in our on-campus WIU Speech-Language-Hearing Clinic. While clinical experiences at most universities are reserved for graduate students, Western prides itself in providing undergraduate students the opportunity to gain hands-on clinical experience.

In addition to the major, students complete a minor of their choice. Many students choose to minor in a field that relates to their future career plans such as psychology or gerontology. Some students who aim to become bilingual speech-language pathologists minor or double major in a foreign language such as Spanish. Other students choose to minor in a field for personal growth such as music. Undergraduate majors in SPA must also complete 43 semester hours of general education requirements, including classes in psychology, biology, statistics, and either chemistry or physics.

Faculty

Faculty members have extensive clinical experience across a wide range of professional settings. All faculty who supervise clinical experiences hold certification from the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association and Illinois state licensure. In addition to teaching courses and supervising practica, faculty are engaged in research, serve in professional organizations, present at professional meetings, and publish in scholarly journals.

The education I received as an undergraduate created a basic foundation of knowledge in speech pathology and audiology. The clinical experiences provide a broad knowledge that will guarantee success in any clinical setting. The small class sizes create a hands-on learning experience, and creates personal relationships with the faculty and your classmates. SPA faculty provide the highest level of professionalism and education to their students. The opportunity to work as a student clinician in the speech and hearing clinic was amazing and has set me up to succeed in the graduate program! These are just a few reasons why I chose to continue my education at WIU! **–Gracen Giordano, B.S. 2018, will begin in M.S. program as first-year grad student in the fall and expected graduation is 2020**

My education in the Speech Pathology and Audiology (SPA) Department not only provided an education that enhanced me personally and professionally, but also offered a thriving social network of career opportunities. SPA made me feel at home, as the professors and staff are welcoming and eager to provide a dynamic, challenging education. I am honored to join the ranks of WIU SPA alumni because the department provides the skills necessary to lead and succeed. **–Natalyn Rood, B.S. 2017, currently a second year graduate student and expected graduation is 2019**

One of the best parts of earning a bachelor's degree in speech pathology and audiology at Western Illinois University is the opportunity to work in the clinic. My clinical experiences helped reaffirm that I was on the right path and taught me valuable skills that will help me to be successful in graduate school and beyond. **–Heather Davidsmeyer, B.S. 2018, expected M.S. 2020**

Facilities

The SPA department is located on the second floor of Memorial Hall. SPA classes are held in one of two electronic classrooms, and students have access to a student lounge and an undergraduate computer lab and workroom for individual or group study. The WIU Speech-Language-Hearing Clinic, also located on the second floor of Memorial Hall, has seven therapy rooms with adjacent observation rooms, a sensory room, a group therapy room, and two audiology booths.

Student Organizations

Students in SPA can join the Western Illinois University Student Speech-Language-Hearing Association (WIUSSLHA) and the National Student Speech-Language-Hearing Association (NSSLHA). WIUSSLHA members engage in volunteer, fundraising, and social activities, all of which help develop leadership skills.

Graduate Program

The SPA department offers a graduate program in speech-language pathology leading to a Master of Science degree. The graduate program is accredited by the Council on Academic Accreditation in Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2200 Research Boulevard #310, Rockville, MD 20850, (800) 498-2071.

For More Information

If you would like more information, contact SPA Department Chair Amanda Silberer at (309) 298-1955, or e-mail spa@wiu.edu. Additional information can be found at wiu.edu/spa, or you can follow us on Twitter @WIUSPA or Instagram #WIUSPA1899.

Campus Visits

The Admissions Reception Center (Sherman Hall 115) is open most weekdays from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. when the University is in session. Group information sessions are available on Mondays and Fridays at 10 a.m. and 1 p.m., and individual appointments can be made on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday. Campus tours are conducted at 11 a.m. and 2 p.m., Monday through Friday. Appointments with advisers, faculty, or a financial aid adviser may be arranged separately during the week. The Admissions Reception Center is open from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. most Saturdays when the University is in session. A group information session is available at 10 a.m., and a campus tour is conducted at 11 a.m. You may schedule your visit or tour online at wiu.edu/admissions by selecting "Visit Campus." You may also schedule a visit, tour, or individual appointment by calling toll free (877) PICKWIU (742-5948) or (309) 298-3157, or by e-mailing admissions@wiu.edu.

wiu.edu/spa

Department of Speech Pathology and Audiology
Memorial Hall 230A • Western Illinois University
1 University Circle • Macomb, IL 61455-1390
Phone: (309) 298-1955

Updated June 2018

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