

June 7, 2008

Board of Trustees
State of Tennessee
Nashville, TN

Dear Sir or Madam:

The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association is the professional, scientific, and credentialing association for more than 130,000 members and affiliates who are audiologists, speech-language pathologists and speech-language and hearing scientists. These professionals are vital to the education of children and the rehabilitation of individuals who experience communication disorders and they provide services ranging from prevention to assessment to treatment across the life span.

I understand that closure of Department of Audiology and Speech Pathology at the University of Tennessee is being recommended to the Tennessee Board of Trustees. Such action would exacerbate the shortage of speech-language pathologists and audiologists to competently meet the demands of individuals with communication disorders in the state of Tennessee. In addition the closure of this program would reduce the number of Ph.D. level graduates in speech-language pathology and speech-language and hearing science and further exacerbate the existing Ph.D. level shortage in communication sciences and disorders in the state of Tennessee as well as the nation. The graduate program in audiology and speech-language pathology is accredited by the Council of Academic Accreditation in audiology and speech-language pathology ; as such, its graduates are eligible for the Certificate of Clinical Competence in audiology and speech-language pathology which is a nationally recognized credential and one that is often required by regulatory bodies in order to practice.

The Department of Audiology and Speech Pathology at the University of Tennessee is the largest in the state and awards six different degrees within the discipline of communication sciences and disorders. Current enrollment includes 59 Master's degree students, 40 Doctor of Audiology students, 16 Ph.D. students, and 110 undergraduates. Notably, the University of Tennessee offers the only specialty training in aural rehabilitation for graduate students in audiology and speech-language pathology at a public university in the state. This training is supported by a \$250,000 grant from the Department of Education and helps meet the state's personnel needs to serve its children who are deaf or hard of hearing.

The Department of Audiology and Speech Pathology is nationally ranked in both audiology and speech-language pathology. Its faculty and students provide cutting edge research that guides practice in both fields. As a result, its faculty have received numerous awards for outstanding research and publication; in fact, one entire issue of a major national journal was devoted to research conducted at the university. This nationally recognized faculty is routinely invited to serve as editors, peer reviewers for their colleague's research, grant reviewers, and they successfully compete for external funding to support their own research.

The University of Tennessee reports approximately 200 applications for admission each year and fills complete classes in both speech-language pathology and audiology as does each of the other training programs in the state. There is no duplication of effort across programs and I believe it is accurate to say that the other training programs in the state (e.g., Vanderbilt, East Tennessee State, Memphis) would not be able to accommodate students who might not have access to the program at the university if were to close. This would effectively result in a net loss of opportunities for students to pursue education and training in both speech-language pathology and audiology in the state.

Most importantly, the Department of Audiology and Speech Pathology at the University of Tennessee provides significant levels of service to individuals and their families in the eastern region of the state whose lives are impacted by communication disorders. The department's clinics actively participate in the TENNCARE program which serves citizens who have no private insurance in east Tennessee. The department is a referral source for many physicians and public schools in the region and its closure would create gaps in both the quantity and quality of service available in a 25 county area of the state. Respectfully, I ask that the department not be closed. Its contribution to the state of Tennessee and the well-being of its citizens cannot be duplicated elsewhere.

Catherine H. Gottfred

President

American Speech-Language-Hearing Association