

>===== Original Message From "Steckol, Karen" <ksteckol@as.ua.edu>

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Governor, Mr. President, Chancellor, Dean and members of the Board of Trustees at The University of Tennessee.

The 14 faculty members at the University of Alabama, Department of Communicative Disorders would like you to read and consider the following before deciding to terminate our counterpart in Knoxville:

Our Department of Communicative Disorders at the University of Alabama was shocked when we were informed that the University of Tennessee program was up for termination. The Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology Program at the University of Tennessee is one of the oldest programs in the country, and offers degrees from Bachelor's to Doctorate. The UT program has had considerable impact on other programs, ours included. We have two faculty from UT currently serving on our faculty.

There is a 20% vacancy rate in the fields of speech-language pathology and audiology across the country. Tennessee is no different. We need master's prepared professionals to staff out schools and clinics and doctorally prepared professionals to help with the severe shortage of faculty in our academic programs across the country. Closing your program does not make sense given the cry for professionals in this field by every government agency both federal and state.

Our department also has a clinical component to it as does the one at UT. Our clinic here services over 2000 patients a year. If we were to stop, the impact on the communicatively impaired in the west Alabama area would be devastating. I can only assume that the same would be true for Knoxville, East Tennessee and beyond. Speech-language and hearing programs are far reaching and have economic and humanistic impacts on the people and areas they serve.

We know that all institutions of higher education are feeling the impact of the downturn in the economy and the rising fuel costs. However, investigating other ways of addressing the problem rather than a wholesale dismissal of a very viable program that has considerable impact on the community should be the order of the day. Please reconsider your decision to eliminate this program of national stature and such high importance to the communicatively impaired.