

Doctoral Training Opportunities at The University of Iowa



Today, opportunities are at their peak for talented individuals interested in careers in communication disorders. The need for new PhD trained individuals – coupled with technologic advancements in research – encouraged The University of Iowa’s Department of Speech Pathology and Audiology to develop an enhanced training program for doctoral students in two specific areas. The National Institutes of Health provides funding for traineeships in two areas identified as particular needs in speech and hearing: molecular biology and genetics of speech and hearing, and evaluation of cochlear implants and other auditory prostheses. Students will be accepted into these programs as part of the normal application procedure for the PhD program. Tuition waivers and stipend support will be awarded to two qualified doctoral students each year for a period of two years in their programs of study.

Generally, this funding will support the first two years of the individual’s doctoral program to allow students to take appropriate coursework, participate in research rotations in different labs, and to use those experiences to develop more concrete plans for dissertation research. Funding for subsequent years of study will be provided through the department or through the mentor’s research grant.

NIH Funding available in two research areas

Doctoral students supported by this program will receive both academic training and laboratory experience equipping them to address research questions from a broad perspective. Ideally, by the end of their doctoral programs, the students will have not only expertise in speech and hearing, but will be also conversant with issues of molecular biology, genetics and projects in hearing impairment. This will prepare them for career-long collaborations with other scientists in the fields of molecular biology, genetics and neuroscience.

Molecular biology and genetics of speech and hearing

Advances in molecular biology and genetics now provide tools that allow researchers to investigate mechanisms underlying behavior in both normal and impaired systems. In Dr. Ingo Titze’s laboratory, they are studying the micromechanics of vocal tissues. Dr. Bruce Tomblin’s research team is investigating genetic aspects of childhood language disorders. Other laboratories in Departments of Otolaryngology and Biology are collaborating with individuals relative to projects hearing impairment and possible treatments.



Contact Dr. Paul Abbas, Department Chair, (paul-abbas@uiowa.edu) or 319/335-8718 for questions / additional information.

Evaluation of auditory prostheses

While many departments offer clinical and laboratory studies of cochlear implants, there is also a need for a multidisciplinary approach to the area of auditory prostheses research. Doctoral students in this area will receive a broad perspective that includes study of auditory physiology, engineering principles, speech and music perception as well as language development. These experiences will provide students with the background needed to both develop new ideas and applications for auditory prostheses as well as to assess their utility. Examples of this approach which have already been successful at Iowa include the development of physiological evaluations of cochlear implants and the short-electrode (hybrid) implant.



About the Department of Speech Pathology and Audiology

The Department of Speech Pathology and Audiology at The University of Iowa is one of the oldest and largest programs of its kind. For more than 60 years, the Department has served clients with speech and hearing disorders, conducted state-of-the-art research, and trained students to carry out research and clinical missions. Graduates of the program have an impressive record of productive scholarship in the field of speech, language and hearing science. Ranked as the top graduate program in speech-language pathology and audiology by U.S. News and World Report, the Department’s student population is comprised of approximately 25 doctoral, 50 master’s, and 175 undergraduate students.