

# Speech Language Pathology & Audiology Majors

## Undergraduate Student Handbook

Department of Audiology, Speech Language Pathology & Deaf Studies

Welcome to the Speech Language Pathology & Audiology major at Towson University. This handbook is designed to answer many of the questions you might have as you proceed through the program. Please take time to review it carefully so you are prepared to move through the major and become a successful graduate of the program. The manual is divided into sections to help you find information easily: (1) Premajors, (2) Advising & Class Registration, (3) Sophomore & Junior Years, and (4) Senior Year and Beyond.

### Where it all Begins.....The Premajor

Students who enter Towson must complete premajor courses and a minimum of 27 credits of study to be considered for acceptance into the major. This next section will explain why we have a premajor, the required courses, and the application process.

- **Why a Premajor?** The undergraduate degree in speech language pathology and audiology prepares students for graduate study in either field. Getting into graduate school in these majors is competitive. Premajor students are screened into the major based on grades. This process insures that students accepted into the undergraduate major are on the right path to be accepted into graduate school. There is nothing worse than finishing the undergraduate degree and reaching a dead end. We think it's better to learn the major isn't a "good fit" during the freshman or sophomore year. Finally, the screening process lets us control class size and sequence, to insure that students get the classes they need in order to graduate on time.

**Premajor Course Requirements:** All students who want to enter the SPPA major need to complete two semesters of undergraduate courses and 5 required pre-requisite courses. Courses can be taken at Towson University, or transferred from other colleges. All courses must be completed by the end of May when admissions are processed. Students who have not completed all 5 courses by that date are not eligible for admission into the major until next May. Breaking it down further, here are the requirements:

- **Two semesters of study:** Students must complete a minimum of 27 credits of study across two or more semesters.
- **Four Required Prerequisite Courses:** Students must complete all of the following courses.

ENGL 102 or 190	PSYC 101 or 102
MATH 109, 111, 115, or 119	BIOL 190 or 201
- **One Category A or B Course:** Students must complete one course from this list.

CHEM 105 or 115 (Category A)	SOCI 101 or 102 (Category B)
PHYS 202 or 211 (Category A)	EDUC 203 (Category B)
	ANTH 207 (Category B)

**Other Admissions Requirements:** There are three additional admissions requirements: (1) Attend a Department Orientation, (2) Declare the SPPA major in Peoplesoft, and (3) Get your speech and hearing screened.

- **Department Orientation:** You must attend a department orientation meeting and fill out forms to set up a student file in the department. Large group orientation meetings are held at the beginning of each semester and are announced through email and class announcements. Students who miss group orientations need to contact the main office and set up an individual appointment with the department chair (410-704-4153).
- **Declare the SPPA Major in Peoplesoft:** Students must declare the SPPA Premajor in the Towson University Peoplesoft system (this does not apply to transfer students who haven't started taking classes at Towson). (<http://www.towson.edu/registrar/changingmajor.asp>)
- **Speech, Language Hearing Screening:** All premajors MUST have their speech, language, and hearing screened. Most students are screened in the fall semester, we also screen in the spring semesters. Transfer students should be screened their first semester on campus. Screenings take place during the first week of classes. Students should report to the Speech, Language, Hearing Center to sign up for a screening time, then return to the Center at the appointment time. Students who fail the screening can still enter the major, but may be asked to participate in therapy to improve their communication abilities.

**The SPPA Major Admissions Process:** Admissions decisions are based solely on grades. We find that grades, especially grades in the prerequisite classes, are the best predictor of who will succeed academically in the SPPA major. This doesn't mean we don't value your previous volunteer experience, desire to help people, or nice personality; we do. Those factors are good predictors of your future clinical interactions with patients. However, patients deserve to receive professional services from someone who is not only pleasant and personable, but also "knows their stuff." The best predictor of whether you "know your stuff," is grades. Plan to do well in all of your classes!

- **When Do Admissions Take Place?** We admit students into the program once each year after spring semester grades are posted. You must complete all premajor requirements and 27 credits of study by the end of the spring semester. You will be notified of your acceptance into the major in June and begin taking classes the following fall.
- **How are Students Ranked for Admission?** We compute two separate GPA's then average them together to determine your ranking.
  - **Overall GPA** – The overall GPA is based on the last 30 credits of study (or 27 for students with fewer credits). For a freshman student, this will likely be grades from the first two semesters at Towson. For sophomores or juniors, we do not use your cumulative GPA. Instead we hand calculate a GPA based on the last 30 credits that were completed, including transfer credits. Transfer students will have their overall GPA calculated similarly from their transfer school. The minimum overall GPA that will be considered for admission into the major is 2.50.

- **Why only 30 Credits?** Sometimes students start out in the wrong major. They try hard but don't do well in those courses, or realize they are in the wrong major and aren't motivated to do well. In addition, some students, particularly freshmen, take a year to "get their act together" before succeeding. A 30-credit GPA gives students with less than stellar grades in the first year, a chance to get into the program once they get themselves on the right track.
- **Prerequisite GPA-** We calculate a separate GPA for the 5 prerequisite classes. If you retake one of these classes, we will use the higher grade. In addition, if you take more than one Category A or B class, we will use the highest grade. Realize that any prerequisite class taken within the last 30 credits of study counts double in the GPA calculations. That is, if you take BIOL 190 in the spring semester before admission into the major, it counts in the prerequisite GPA AND the overall GPA. If it's exam time and you're trying to figure out which courses to emphasize in your study time, focus on the prerequisite courses. The minimum Prerequisite GPA that will be considered for admission into the program is 2.80.
- **Can you show me how grades are calculated?** Amy Audiology and Samantha Speech are both trying to get into the major. Amy is a sophomore and Samantha is a freshman. Here are their grades from last year.

Amy			Samantha		
Fall	DFST 207 (3)	B	Fall	ENGL 102	B+
Fall	SOCI 101 (3)	A-	Fall	MATH 115 (3)	A-
Fall	PHYS 202 (4)	B+	Fall	SOCI 101 (3)	C+
Fall	SPPA 101 (3)	A	Fall	SPPA 101 (3)	A
Fall	HLTH 221 (3)	B-	Fall	PSYC 101 (3)	B-
Spring	FMST 223 (3)	A	Spring	BIOL 190 (4)	C
Spring	FMST 220 (3)	B+	Spring	ANTH 207 (3)	B+
Spring	DFST 208 (3)	A	Spring	DFST 104 (3)	A
Spring	PSYC 212 (4)	A-	Spring	HLTH 101 (3)	A
			Spring	DFST 101 (3)	B

Here is how their grades were calculated for SPPA screening:

Amy	Samantha
Last 30 Credits: 3.51	Last 30 Credits: 3.19
Prerequisite Courses: 3.06	Prerequisite GPA: 2.94
ENGL 102 B	ENGL 102 B+
MATH 109 A-	MATH 115 A-
PSYC 101 B+	PSYC 101 B-
BIOL 190 C	BIOL 190 C
SOCI 101 A-	ANTH 207 B+
<b>Admissions GPA: 3.29</b>	<b>Admissions GPA: 3.07</b>

Amy's final ranking is 3.29, Samantha's is 3.07. Notice that Samantha took both ANTH 207 and SOCI 101. Similarly Amy took PHYS 212 and SOCI 101. The higher of those two grades was used to calculate the prerequisite GPA. Also notice that Amy and Samantha were almost identical on their prerequisite grades. However, Amy's overall GPA for the last 30 credits was much higher, giving her the advantage. If you don't know how to calculate your GPA, take a look at this Towson U web site.

<http://wwwnew.towson.edu/careercenter/student/gpa.asp>

### Frequently Asked Questions about the Premajor

- **How many Students Get into the Major each Year?** We accept 70 students each year into the SPPA major. Those 70 students are called a "cohort." Each cohort consists of sophomore, juniors, and even a few seniors.
- **How many Students Try to Get into the Major each Year?** The number of premajor students varies from year to year. In the past 3 years, it has ranged from 90 to 110 premajor students who were minimally qualified to get into the major. That is, the students had an overall 30 credit GPA of 2.5 or better, and prerequisite GPA of 2.8 or better. Students with lower grades are dropped from the process and not admitted.
- **So What GPA Do I Need to Get into the Major?** It varies from year to year depending on how many students apply, and what their grades are. As a rule of thumb, students with a ranking GPA of 3.0 or below never get into the major. Students with a ranking GPA of 3.5 or better usually make it into the major. The group that isn't clear-cut are students who rank between 3.0 and 3.5. Three years ago we accepted students with a ranking GPA of 3.19 and higher, two years ago it was 3.21 and higher, last year it was 3.29 and higher. The higher your ranking, the better your chances.
- **I'm a Premajor, and I don't think I'm going to make it into the SPPA major. What classes should I take next fall?** Premajors register for fall semester SPPA classes with the assumption that they will make it into the major. However, if your GPA is below 3.0, you will not be allowed to register for the fall SPPA classes. Instead, you need to sign up for alternative "Plan B" classes. That is, what will your major be if you don't ever get into SPPA? Sign up for fall classes that will move you towards the new major. If a miracle occurs and you do get into the SPPA major, then we will make sure that you are put into the necessary fall SPPA classes and you can drop "Plan B." If your GPA is "iffy" but is above a 3.0, then you also should think about "Plan B." That is, look up information about a potential Plan B major, and sign up for both SPPA courses and courses in the Plan B major for the fall.
- **When will I find out if I'm accepted?** We start the admissions process as soon as spring grades are posted and usually finish the process by mid-June. Decision letters are mailed to your home address. You will have 2 weeks to tell us that you want your spot in the program.

- **What if I'm not accepted?** Students who are not accepted are dis-enrolled from fall semester SPPA courses. Students then have two options, try again, or find a new major. If you are in this situation, consider the following factors:
  - (1) When do you want to graduate? Freshmen can try again and still graduate on time, Sophomores and Juniors who try again will take 5 or 6 years to graduate.
  - (2) Can you improve your GPA? If there were outside factors that pulled down your GPA, or if you know you can do better, then think about trying again. However, if you were doing your best and still didn't make it into the program, you should think strongly about another major.

If you want to retry, please notify the department so we can add your name to the premajor list for the following year. If you decide to change to another major, go into Peoplesoft and change your major in the system.  
(<http://www.towson.edu/registrar/changingmajor.asp>)

## Class Registration Procedures and Advising

All SPPA courses are set up with special permit codes. This lets us monitor who gets into classes and insures that you will get the classes you need, when you are supposed to take them. Here is a step-by-step guide to advising and class registration.

- (1) Schedule an Advising Session:** Students are assigned a department advisor during orientation. If you have a First Year Experience (FYE) Advisor, you will need to meet with both your department advisor AND FYE Advisor. Your department advisor will send an email or other notice that it's time to sign up for advising. Most advisors have sign-up lists on their office doors. If you do not hear from your advisor and know that your registration date is soon, be pro-active and contact them yourself.
  
- (2) What to Bring to Advising Sessions:** You need to be actively focused on your advising and not expect your advisor to do all of the work. Before the advising session, print a copy of your Degree Progress Report to bring to the session. Review the report to determine what SPPA classes you need, and what Gen Eds need to be completed. In addition, be aware of additional requirements such as 32 credits of 300+ level courses, and 120 credits total. Write out your 4-year degree plan for the next semester and through graduation (see attached) and bring it to the advising session.
  
- (3) During the Advising Session:** Be prepared to discuss your plans for next semester and future semesters. Determine a "Plan B" in case you don't get into certain classes. At the end of your session, your advisor will sign a colored course registration form that lists the SPPA classes you need next semester. Remember, your faculty advisor will likely write one of your graduate school recommendation letters. Impress them by being well prepared for your meetings.
  
- (4) Getting Permissions for SPPA Classes:** Seat permissions for SPPA classes are given out according to class status. That is, Seniors go first, then Juniors, Sophomores, and finally Freshmen. Class status is based on how many credits are completed, and do not include the courses you are currently taking. For example, a student who completed 27 credits, and is currently taking 15 credits of classes, would register with Freshmen because the current 15 credits don't count. Students with priority registration (athletes, students with documented disabilities, honors students) can get special permits with students one year ahead. For example, a freshman Honors student can register with sophomores. You must bring documentation that proves your priority registration status.

The colored Special Permit form distributed by your advisor lists the date you can get seat permissions from the department. On, or after, your date, bring the Special Permit Form signed by your advisor, and your Degree Progress Report to the Main Office.

- (5) Online Registration:** When you get your seat permissions from the office, we will manually enroll you in those SPPA courses. When your assigned Towson registration time starts, go online to enroll in any remaining courses. If you do not see your SPPA courses listed, please contact the main office.

## Frequently Asked Advising Questions:

- **Who is my advisor?** A department advisor is assigned during orientation. You will keep the same advisor until you graduate. If your advisor leaves Towson, we will assign you a new advisor. If you do not know who your advisor is, check the lists on the bulletin board outside the main office.
- **I haven't heard from my advisor, what should I do?** Go by your advisor's office to see if there is a sign-up list. Otherwise, email your advisor.
- **I'm an (athlete, Honors student, student with a disability), why can't I get seat permits when the university will let me register?** We let students in these categories get special permits one class ahead of their credits (i.e., freshmen can get special permits with sophomores), but not two or three classes ahead. Students in these categories can still go online and register for their other classes on their assigned registration date if the advisor has lifted the advising hold. Just don't schedule a class at the same time as one of your required SPPA classes. Once you get your special permits, you can register for the SPPA classes.
- **I will be (out of town, at a medical appointment, working, etc.) on my assigned day to get special permits from the department. Can I get them early?** The answer is, no. You can always come the next day. Although class assignments are based on seniority, rest assured that if a particular class is required for your cohort, you will get a seat in the class, it just might not be the section you want.
- **Someone who registered after me got the section I wanted, why?** Before registration begins we calculate the number of students who need a particular class and divide by two. Half of the students go into one section and half into the other. When one section fills, all of the remaining students have to take the other section. However, we never know ahead of time how many students might be retaking a class and they sometimes throw our numbers off. When both sections fill to the expected level, any additional students are added to both sections in a way that keeps class enrollment equal. That's why someone who registered after you might get into a section that was previously "closed."
- **I have a job or family situation that conflicts with the section I was assigned. How do I get this changed?** You don't. It's your decision whether to take the class or not. We will only change student sections for these reasons: (1) Medical- for those who have documentation that indicates they cannot take a section for medical reasons; (2) Religion- for those who cannot be in class at a certain time for religious reasons (documentation required); and (3) Class Conflict- for double majors whose class in another major conflicts with the assigned SPPA section. Students must be enrolled in the other major in Peoplesoft, and bring a copy of their schedule showing enrollment in the conflicting class. In addition, the department will check to make sure the student REMAINS enrolled in the conflicting class. Students who drop the conflicting class will be

moved back to their previously assigned section. If you need to change sections for one of these three reasons, contact the department chair and bring your documentation.

- **My advisor forgot to lift my advising hold.** If you met with your advisor and were assigned special permission to take SPPA classes, you have two choices. (1) Contact your advisor and ask them to lift the hold, or (2) Contact the Main Office and ask to lift the hold. Be sure to tell us your name, TU number, and at least one SPPA class that you were given permission to add to your schedule (so we can check to make sure you were seen for advising). If you never met with your advisor, go to “Step 1” on the previous page and start the process.

## Sophomore and Junior Year in the SPPA Major

This section of the student manual is set up for students who make it into the SPPA major, so if you're reading this section because it applies to you, congratulations! Now that you're in the major, your undergraduate SPPA classes are laid out in a two year sequence. If you are a sophomore who just made it into the major, you'll take SPPA classes this year and next, then take SPPA 417 as a senior. Then you will have a wide-open senior year with room for other options. If you are a junior, you'll take SPPA classes this year and next, then graduate. Here are some things to consider as you plan and progress through the next two years.

- **Get Involved – Get to Know the Faculty:** Although grades are the number one determiner to get into graduate school, now is the time to let your personality and perseverance shine. Get involved in the National Student Speech Language Hearing Association, ask a faculty member if you can participate in their research, take on a leadership role in the department, or proctor for a professor's class. These activities will help the faculty get to know you, which leads to better letters of recommendation, and a better resume for graduate school.
- **Really Get Involved – Don't Fake or Slack It:** Don't fake your involvement or slack-off midway through the year. The faculty know who really does the work in a student organization, versus those students members who never show up. Word also gets around on which students are dependable, versus those who are not. So if you decide to get involved, follow through on your commitment.
- **Plan for a Double Major or Minor:** If you are a sophomore who just made it into the SPPA major, realize that you will have a wide-open senior year. Plan now for how to make the most of that time. Many SPPA students have double majors or minors in Psychology, Family Studies, Foreign Languages, Gerontology, Health Administration, Deaf Studies, Sociology, and others. Realize that your SPPA advisor cannot advise you about other majors. Set up an appointment to discuss your plans with an advisor from that department.
- **Think about a Study Abroad:** The College of Health Professions usually has one or two study abroad trips planned for Minimester and/or summer semesters each year. Students are encouraged to think ahead and plan to study abroad. It is also possible for SPPA majors who start in the major as sophomores to study abroad in the fall senior year semester. The university has a rule about taking the last 30 credits on campus, but we have successfully petitioned exceptions to this rule for our seniors who have room for a semester of transfer credits.
- **Keep Your Grades Up:** You have to get into graduate school to go further in this major. Most schools have minimum GPA levels to consider for admission, but they rarely admit students at minimum levels. Strive for a 3.5 or higher if you want to be a competitive applicant. That doesn't mean that students with lower grades won't get accepted into a graduate program. It means that students with lower grades may need to apply to many programs and be willing to attend school out of state. Those students will need the

“extra factor” in their application materials to help them gain admission with a low GPA (see Getting Involved above).

- **SPPA 417 – Technical Writing in Communication Disorders.** All students must take this Advanced Writing Gen Ed class before graduating. Each cohort of students is divided in two. Half of the students take SPPA 417 in the spring of the second year in the major, the other half take the class in fall of the third year in the major. Students are placed into the spring or fall sections based on number of credits completed. Students who have finished more credits and are closer to graduation are scheduled for the spring semester, students with fewer credits are assigned to the fall semester. You will find out which semester you are assigned during the fall of your second year in the major. Students **MUST** take SPPA 417 during their assigned semester. The only exception is for students who are planning a full-time study abroad in their senior year. If you are in this situation, contact the department chair.
- **SPPA 487- Clinical Practicum.** Towson University is one of a few programs that offers clinical practicum at the undergraduate level. We run clinical practicum as an “honors” class within the department, however students who are not in the Honors program are eligible to take the class. Students must have a 3.5 GPA or higher in major classes to take clinical practicum. In addition, students must complete SPPA 416 and 25 observation hours prior to starting practicum. Because SPPA 416 is a prerequisite, clinical practicum is typically taken by students who start in the major as freshmen then have a wide-open senior year. However, students who start in the major later can take SPPA 487 in the Summer and graduate in August of their senior year. Students cannot take SPPA 487 after graduation. When you take SPPA 416 in the spring, you will receive a survey asking (1) whether you want to take SPPA 487, (2) whether you think you have the required GPA to take the class, and (3) which semester you prefer and why. Students who qualify are then assigned to a semester and can only register for the class that semester. If your grades are not high enough to take SPPA 487 at the beginning of the spring semester, but after the spring semester, your grades improve, contact the department chair for permission to take the class. We assign students to semesters because the clinic needs to have equal numbers of students in practicum each semester. We cannot take on additional patients one semester because a large number of students need practicum, only to drop them the following semester because fewer students are enrolled.

### **Frequently Asked Questions for Students in the SPPA Major**

- **What if I need to Retake a Class?** You must earn a C or better in all classes required for the major. This includes SPPA classes, and other major requirements such as PSYC 212, and BIOL 213. Students who need to retake a SPPA class need to get special permits during the advising process. Realize that the cohort coming behind you has priority to get into the SPPA class. If too many students are retaking a particular class, we won't have enough seats for the cohort coming up behind. When that occurs, we will remove “retake” students from the class. We will review the situations of each “retake” student and determine who should be removed. Retake students whose previous grade was

below a 2.0 will have priority over students who previous grade was above, because they have to raise their grade to graduate (i.e., a student with a D will have priority for retaking over a student with a C, C+, or B-). Number of credits completed will also be considered. Students who are closer to graduation will have priority for retaking over students with less.

- **Can I take SPPA classes ahead of schedule?** The answer is, no. Students progress through the major as part of a cohort. SPPA classes are taken in the assigned semester by the 70 students in each cohort. The cohort ahead of you, combined with a few students who need to retake classes, completely fill each section of the class. There is no room to allow students to take classes ahead of their assigned cohort schedule. Realize that cohort scheduling lets us insure that you WILL finish all requirements and graduate on time.
- **Can I graduate early?** The answer is, maybe. If you started in the major as a freshman, and began the major classes as a sophomore, you might be able to graduate at the end of the fall semester in your senior year. In order to do this, you must complete all of the required SPPA classes, all required Gen Ed classes, 120 total credits, and 32 credits of 300-400 level courses. Please discuss these plans with your advisor.
- **Can I be a part-time SPPA major?** Students can progress through the major on a part-time basis, however they should not expect to have their classes scheduled in a way that caters to a part-time student. In addition, they cannot take classes ahead of their cohort assignment. If you need to go part-time, please make sure your advisor and the main office knows so we can calculate class sizes correctly.
- **I need to take a semester off, what should I do?** Occasionally family, health, financial, or other reasons mean that you might need to sit out a semester, or more. If this occurs, let your advisor know, and also notify the main office. Let us know when you expect to return so we can plan for you at that time. In addition, there are steps you need to take with the university to inform them that you are taking a semester off.

## **Senior Year and Beyond....to Graduate School**

Graduation is just around the corner and it's time to think about what happens next. First of all, don't forget to apply for graduation! The university requires students to go online and fill out an application to graduate, usually the deadline is late in the semester BEFORE you expect to graduate. If you forget this step, your graduation will be delayed. If you think you can graduate, but aren't sure (i.e., maybe you want an extra semester to raise your GPA but haven't decided yet), go ahead and apply anyway. You can always let the university know that you changed your mind and pull the application later.

Now let's get down to business, what happens after you graduate? For most of you, the answer is graduate school. Speech language pathologists need a Master's Degree to practice, degree programs usually require 2 years of full-time study. Audiologists require a Doctor of Audiology degree which is a 4-year full-time program. We offer both degree programs at Towson University. This section will provide the information you need to graduate and move onto the next step in your professional education.

### **Finding the Right Graduate Program**

Students should develop a list of potential graduate schools during the spring and summer semester, a year before graduation. The American Speech Language Hearing Association (<http://hes.asha.org:8080/EdFind/Masters/MastersSearch.aspx>) lists every accredited program in the United States in a searchable database that includes information about program size, student GPA, admissions statistics, etc. In addition, accredited programs are required to have this information available for the public, most have it posted on their web sites. Just like you did when you were in high school, you should determine if a particular program is a "reach" school, a "probable" school, or a "safe" (easy-to-get-into) school. Then do more research on your potential choices. Review their web sites, look at graduation rates and praxis exam scores, and schedule a visit to the program.

### **Campus Visits to Graduate Programs**

If you want to see a program before you apply, visit early in the summer or fall semester of your senior year. Some students wait until after the application process and visit programs in the spring, after they know they have been admitted. You might want to do a combination approach, visiting the programs that you are most interested in during the fall, and visiting other programs that admit you during the spring (if needed). Check the program's web site to determine how to schedule a visit. Some schools have generic graduate school visits for all majors, and may not include a visit with faculty from the SLP or AuD major. Make sure that you are scheduled to meet with the program's Graduate Director or their representative on your visit day. As part of the visit, ask the program to arrange a meeting with current students. They are good barometers when considering whether to attend a particular program.

## Questions to Consider When Researching Graduate Programs

1. How large is the program? How many students are in classes?
2. Who teaches the classes? Full-time faculty or part-time adjuncts?
3. How large is the faculty? Will you have the same professors for multiple classes, or different professors for each class?
4. Can students get involved in faculty research? Is research required?
5. Are there electives or do all students take the same classes?
6. What are the faculty's areas of specialty expertise and interests? Do they match your interests?
7. How much clinical experience will you get during the first year of training?
8. What unique clinical experiences does the program provide?
9. What off-campus practicum experiences are available to students in the program?
10. What percentage of students pass the Praxis Exam on their first attempt?
11. What percentage of students finish the program?
12. Are assistantship opportunities available to defray costs? How many, who gets them, and how to apply?
13. How are admissions decisions made? How does the school review grades, test scores, recommendation letters, etc. to make their decisions?
14. What makes this graduate program different from the others you are considering? Are those differences strengths or weaknesses?

## How Many Schools to Apply to?

You don't have to apply to a "reach" school, but if you decide to, don't apply to more than one. Most of your applications should be to "probable" schools, and one or two "safe" schools. If you are applying to more than 6 schools, something is wrong. Most faculty limit their letters of recommendation to 5 schools per student.

## Letters of Recommendation

All graduate programs require 3 or more letters of recommendation. Programs want to see letters from faculty who know your academic potential, preferably faculty in the SPPA major. Do not have your employer at Bob's Big Barn, the woman you babysit for, or family friend who happens to be a SLP write one of your three required recommendation letters. However, if the school allows you to submit more than the required number of recommendations, you can submit an extra letter from one of these individuals. At least two letters of recommendation should be from SPPA faculty, and the third letter can either come from SPPA faculty, or faculty from another department.

You should ask faculty to write letters of recommendation early in the fall semester of your senior year. Your advisor should know you well enough to write a letter of recommendation; then find two additional faculty members to write the others. Ask faculty who taught the classes you did best in, or faculty who got to know you on a personal level. If you are currently enrolled in a faculty member's class, they might ask you to wait until more grades are posted or the semester ends before deciding whether to write a letter.

Each professor follows different procedures for writing letters of recommendation. Graduate school recommendation forms require students to check whether they waive the right to view the completed letter. Realize that some faculty will not write letters if you do not waive this right. They should explain this to you when you ask for a recommendation. The professor should also explain their procedures and deadlines. Although procedures will vary slightly, all faculty will expect the following:

- Turn in all recommendation materials in one organized packet by the deadline.
- Completely fill in the personal information sections of each letter. Don't expect the faculty to write in your name, your date of birth, address, etc. Forms will be returned if this information is incomplete.
- Provide envelopes for each letter that are already addressed, stamped, and ready to mail. If the letter is to be returned to you, address the envelope to yourself and write the name of the school on the back of each envelope. Otherwise you will get multiple letters addressed to yourself and won't know which schools to send them to.
- Include a 1-2 page resume that lists student activities, honors, and relevant volunteer or employment information. Be sure to include leadership experiences, experience working with people, or advanced scholarship experiences (i.e., assisting on a research project). We don't need to know that you were a waitress at Bob's Big Barn.
- Include an unofficial copy of your most recent transcript.

### **Graduate Record Examination (GRE)**

When you applied to Towson University, you had to take the SATs as part of the admissions process. For graduate school, most programs will require you to take the GREs. Just like the SATs, most students improve their scores by taking the test more than once. Most graduate programs will use the best combination of scores to determine admissions decisions. You should take the GRE during the summer before your senior year. This gives enough time to take the test again in the early fall, and if needed, again in the late fall. Just like the SATs, study guides and private classes are available to improve your scores. For more information about the GREs, go to (<http://www.ets.org/gre/>)

### **Transcripts**

Most graduate programs require students to apply by January or February of the senior year. You will need to send transcripts to all of the schools. If you make your transcript requests before fall grades are posted, you will have to send a second copy showing fall grades. If you end up wait-listed at a school, they may ask for additional copies of your transcripts after spring grades are posted.

### **Admissions Process**

Just like every undergraduate program makes admissions decisions using different criteria, graduate programs also vary in their admissions criteria. Some have minimum GRE or GPA requirements and will not review applications from students who fall below. Others review all applicants and rank them using various formulas. Some weight grades more than GRE scores,

others do the opposite. In other words, you might be seen as a great candidate at one school, but not another because they use different criteria to rank students.

## **Admissions Decisions**

**Best Case Admissions Scenario:** In the best case scenario, you are admitted to every school, or at least more than one school. Hurrah! Now you have to decide where you want to spend the next few years of your life. Go back to the questions listed earlier in this section and review through the information. Faculty are more than happy to discuss the decision process with you, even if one of the schools isn't Towson.

**In-Between Admissions Scenario:** The in-between scenario occurs when you are admitted to your second or third choice school, but are wait-listed to your first choice. Do you decide to go for the sure thing, or wait? Most programs will require your decision by a specific deadline. If you are in this situation, think through your rankings. Is your first choice really that much better? If the answer is yes, ask your second choice school whether you can defer your decision for an extra week or two. In addition, contact your first choice and ask whether you are near the top of the wait list, or further down. Finally, you can discuss your situation with a faculty member who knows you and can help you evaluate the strengths of your first choice school versus the schools that admitted you, and the likelihood of getting admitted off of the wait list.

**Worst Case Scenario:** In the worst case scenario, you weren't admitted to any programs you applied to. If this happens, take time to determine why. Were all of your schools "reach" schools for a student with your grades or GRE scores? If so, apply again, but make sure that you are applying to "safe" schools to guarantee your admission. Sometimes a "safe" school might not have filled their program after spring admissions are completed. It can't hurt to call the Graduate Director and see if you can apply late. Most programs would rather admit a strong late applicant, than a weak early applicant. Were you close to getting into a particular program? If so, ask the Graduate Director what you can do to improve your application next year. Typically they will recommend improving GRE scores, or grades. Realize that once you graduate, you cannot come back to improve your grades. If your grades are borderline, then look for programs that are not as competitive for admission. If your grades are low, then read the next section.

**I'm Not Going to Graduate School Scenario:** Sometimes students decide not to attend graduate school. Maybe you already know your grades are too low to get in, or you might have decided that you really aren't interested in pursuing a career in this field. Realize that an undergraduate degree in this field is similar to a degree in psychology or a related human-focus degree field. You can apply for positions that require bachelor's degrees in similar areas. Some states license speech language pathology assistants. The requirements vary from state to state, but Maryland requires a Bachelor's Degree in speech language pathology and audiology. You must find employment as a SLPA before filing licensure paperwork. The department chair then needs to sign off on the licensure forms. Finally, don't underestimate how the skills you learned in SPPA classes can prepare students for a variety of careers. Some of our faculty have degrees in other fields, and found that those classes were a piece of cake when compared to SPPA classes. So don't be afraid to think out of the box, your learning will transfer into a number of different career options.

**SPPA Major Advising Form**  
**For Students Admitted to the Major as Sophomores**  
**Fill Out this Form and Bring to All Advising Meetings**

Name:

Date:

Required Premajor Courses (Gen Eds)	Fall Freshman Year 1		Spring Freshman Year 1	
	Premajor Classes	Credits	Premajor Classes	Credits
ENGL 102 or 190 ( I.A.)				
MATH 109, 111, 115, 119 (I.C.)				
PSYC 101 or 102 (II.C.2)				
BIOL 190 or 201 (II.A.)				
CHEM 104, 115 (II.A.) PHYS 202, 211				
SOCI 101 (II.C.2), OR EDUC 203 (II.C.3), OR ANTH 207 (II.D)				

Additional Required Gen Eds	Fall SPPA Major Year 2		Spring SPPA Major Year 2	
I.B.	BIOL 213	4	SPPA 200	3
I.E.	SPPA 303	3	SPPA 302	3
II.B.1	SPPA 215	3	SPPA 304	3
II.B.3	SPPA 210	3		
II.C.3				
II.D.				

Additional Required Courses	Fall SPPA Major Year 3		Spring SPPA Major Year 3	
PSYC 212	SPPA 321	3	SPPA 325	3
SPPA 101	SPPA 313	3	SPPA 416	3
DFST 104 (II.C.1)	SPPA 306 OR ->		SPPA 341	
SPPA ELECTIVES: SPPA 306-SPPA 341 (3 credits Req) SPPA 487			SPPA 417 (I.D.) OR ->	
SPPA 496,496, 498				
PSYC 205				
ENGL 251				

Graduation Requirements	Fall SPPA Major Year 4		Spring SPPA Major Year 4	
120 Credits Completed?	SPPA 417 (I.D.)			
43 Credits of Gen Eds Completed?				
32 Credits of 300-400 Courses?				
2.00+ in all major courses?				
Final 30 credits taken at Towson?				
Apply for Graduation? May- Dec 1 Deadline Aug- May 1 Deadline Jan- Aug 1 Deadline	Total Credits Completed			

**SPPA Major Advising Form**  
**For Students Admitted to the Major as Juniors or Later**  
**Fill Out this Form and Bring to All Advising Meetings**

Name:

Date:

Required Premajor Courses (Gen Eds)	Fall Freshman Year 1		Spring Freshman Year 1	
	Premajor Classes	Credits	Premajor Classes	Credits
ENGL 102 or 190 ( I.A.)				
MATH 109, 111, 115, 119 (I.C.)				
PSYC 101 or 102 (II.C.2)				
BIOL 190 or 201 (II.A.)				
CHEM 104, 115 (II.A.) PHYS 202, 211				
SOCI 101 (II.C.2), OR EDUC 203 (II.C.3), OR ANTH 207 (II.D)				

Additional Required Gen Eds	Fall Premajor Year 2		Spring Premajor Year 2	
I.B.				
I.E.				
II.B.1				
II.B.3				
II.C.3				
II.D.				

Additional Required Courses	Fall SPPA Major Year 3		Spring SPPA Major Year 3	
PSYC 212	BIOL 213	4	SPPA 200	3
SPPA 101	SPPA 215	3	SPPA 302	3
DFST 104 (II.C.1)	SPPA 210		SPPA 304	3
SPPA ELECTIVES: SPPA 306-SPPA 341 (3 credits Req) SPPA 487	SPPA 303	3		
SPPA 496,496, 498				
PSYC 205				
ENGL 251				

Graduation Requirements	Fall SPPA Major Year 4		Spring SPPA Major Year 4	
120 Credits Completed?	SPPA 321	3	SPPA 325	3
43 Credits of Gen Eds Completed?	SPPA 313	3	SPPA 416	3
32 Credits of 300-400 Courses?	SPPA 306 OR ->		SPPA 341	
2.00+ in all major courses?			SPPA 417 (I.D.)	
Final 30 credits taken at Towson?				
Apply for Graduation? May- Dec 1 Deadline Aug- May 1 Deadline Jan- Aug 1 Deadline	Total Credits Completed			