Doctoral Program Faculty

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*JDP Executive Committee
The cooperating faculties of San Diego State University (SDSU) and the University of California, San Diego (UCSD) offer a joint doctoral program in Language and Communicative Disorders. The program's focus is the interdisciplinary study of language and communicative disorders. A major emphasis of the program is to apply techniques developed in cognitive science and neuroscience to the study of language and language disorders. The program involves study and research on typical and atypical language acquisition and development, sign languages, bilingualism and the neural bases of language use and language loss.

Our program combines faculties, facilities/labs, and resources of the School of Speech, Language, and Hearing Sciences; Linguistics; and Psychology at SDSU; and Cognitive Science, Communications, Linguistics, Neurosciences, Psychiatry and Psychology at UCSD. This combination offers students unique strengths of both institutions.

The program, the only one of its kind in California, was ranked fourth on the Faculty Scholarly Productivity Index rankings (Academic Analytics) and released by The Chronicle of Higher Education in 2007. The National Research Council (NRC) ranked our doctoral program among the top ten in the nation in their most recent rankings (2010).

The program is designed as a 5-6 year, year-round curriculum. In addition, SLHS offers a separate graduate program in speech-language pathology accredited by the Council on Academic Accreditation in Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. It may be possible for a doctoral student to complete a CFY or obtain academic and clinical training concurrently with doctoral studies. However, access to clinical training is not automatic nor is it guaranteed. Initiation of clinical training requires the approval of the S-L Division faculty and the availability of openings in the clinical program.

In the SDSU/UCSD program, students receive education in areas that are relatively new to the field of communication sciences and disorders. The program encourages applicants from a range of different backgrounds. Students are asked to concentrate in at least one of three tracks: child language (normal and abnormal), adult language (normal and abnormal), and/or multilingualism (including bilingualism in oral and signed languages, and cross-linguistic studies of language disorders). Students are exposed to a range of technologies, including experimental methods in the study of behavior, electrophysiology and functional brain imaging, and computational modeling.

Concentrations

By the end of the first year, students select a major field of emphasis from one of three concentrations: Adult Language, Child Language, or Multilingualism. All students are required to take courses in each of the three concentrations.

The Adult Language concentration is intended to provide intensive education in communicative disorders in adults. Students in this concentration also develop expertise in the study of language processing in normal adults.

The Child Language concentration is intended to provide specialized education in childhood (birth-adolescence) communicative disorders. Students also achieve competence in developmental psycholinguistics emphasizing language acquisition in normally-developing children.

The Multilingualism concentration is intended to provide education in cross-linguistic, ethnographic, and other comparative studies of communicative disorders in children and/or adults, including those associated with bilingualism and second language acquisition (including acquisition of sign language in deaf individuals).

Methods Minor

Students develop basic expertise in experimental design and statistics and become familiar with standard techniques for behavioral assessment, e.g., intelligence testing, standardized tests of language ability, analyses of free speech design and implementation of experimental measures of language and other related cognitive behaviors. By the third year students declare a Methods Minor from one of three options.

The Behavioral Dynamics minor is intended for students who want to specialize in computer-controlled methods for the study of language and cognitive processing in real-time.

The Neural Imaging minor is intended for students who want to complement behavioral studies with neuroanatomical and neurophysiological techniques, including event-related brain potentials and functional magnetic resonance imaging at the state of the art MRI Research Center at UCSD.

The Neural Modeling minor is intended for students who are interested in the simulation of normal and abnormal language and cognition in artificial neural networks.

Course Requirements

The program consists of a common core of courses designed to provide the tools for research and a foundation of knowledge in the important issues in language and communicative disorders, together with electives appropriate to the student's chosen concentration and methods minor.

The Foundation requirement consists of two courses in statistics/research design, a course in neuroanatomy and physiology, a course in language structure and theory, and a professional survival skills course.

The Electives requirement consists of at least four courses, with a minimum of three courses related to the chosen concentration. These electives must be chosen from a broad list of approved options from Anthropology; Cognitive Science; School of Speech, Language, and Hearing Sciences; Computer Science; Linguistics; Neurosciences; and Psychology.

Each student is required to complete two laboratory rotations and complete two research projects during their first two years of the program (First- and Second-Year Projects). All students complete at least two teaching-assistant (TA) assignments.

Upon successful completion of all requirements, the student is eligible to take the qualifying exam consisting of a scholarly review paper and a formal presentation. Completion and defense of the doctoral dissertation proposal will result in advancement. The dissertation proposal will take the form of an NIH or NSF grant proposal.

Funding

Our doctoral students are funded through TA/GA positions, tuition waivers, and a variety of stipends and research awards such as NIH training and research grants, ASHA research conference awards and dissertation grants, and doctoral research support from other foundations.

Doctoral Student Statistics

For Fall 2015, fourteen doctoral students are enrolled. 30 students have completed the program and hold faculty or research positions in the United States or abroad.