

## Freshman Year

1. *Take your classes seriously.* SLP/AuD graduate programs are extremely competitive. First year's grades do count, but do not give up if you have a bad first year. Many admissions committees look closely at grades from the your last two years. Most graduate schools require a minimum GPA of 3.0 (B average) but the competitive nature of SLP/AuD programs has increased that minimum to 3.5 in some programs. It is expected that your COMD GPA will be higher (3.6+) *There are tutoring centers on campus to help you with many of your general education requirements* <http://www.tutoring.niu.edu/TutoringCenters/index.htm> The COMD peer tutoring lab is located in 339 Wirtz.
2. *Make an appointment with the COMD academic advisor.* They will help you create a plan of study to ensure you sequence classes appropriately. Contact the department to make an appointment 753-1484. Meet with your advisor EVERY semester.
3. *Introduce yourself to your professors.*
4. *Go to Career Services – Campus Life Building 815-753-1641* <http://www.niu.edu/cppc> to discuss career development.
5. *Join COMDSA, and other campus student organizations.* <http://www.niu.edu/sa/organizations> This will get you connected with other students with similar interests.

## Sophomore Year (CRITICAL STEPS if you are planning on applying to graduate programs)

1. *Join NSSLHA and other professional organizations.* Participation will expose you to information about the professions and broaden your knowledge base. <http://www.nsslha.org/nsslha/>
2. *Get involved in the community.* Volunteer to work with individuals who have communicative disorders. Attend events sponsored by different NIU student centers and become knowledgeable of a variety of cultures.
3. *Engage in activities or employment opportunities that increase your knowledge of normal development/aging.* You need to know normal processes before you can understand disorders. Daycares, schools, and senior centers are good places to work.
4. *Begin thinking about specific aspects of communicative disorders that interest you most.* Look at the departmental homepage <http://www.chhs.niu.edu/ahcd/> for information concerning faculty interests. Talk to faculty about their research and clinical projects
5. *Prepare for the Graduate Record Exam (GRE).* Preparation books are available at university/community bookstores and internet book dealers. There is free study information and practice tests on the GRE official homepage <http://www.ets.org/gre/> Some aspects of the test will be changing August, 2011, but similar concepts will be tested.
6. *Start writing your resume.* It is easier to keep track of all you have done if you start making the list early. You should update your resume every year.
7. *Go to Career Services – Campus Life Building 815-753-1641* <http://www.niu.edu/cppc> to discuss possible internships.

## Junior Year

1. *Attend professional conferences when they are nearby.* For example, the Illinois Speech-Language-Hearing Association has conferences in the southern part of the state in October and in the Chicago area in February. Frequently, your registration is free when you volunteer to work at the conference. <http://www.ishail.org/>
2. *Observe professionals in your chosen area.* Many professionals will allow you to shadow them for a day. SLP/AuD students need to observe ASHA certified SLPs/AuDs who will sign a log verifying observations.
3. *Stop procrastinating and study for the GRE.* It is important to refresh your math skills!

4. *Assemble catalogs and application materials from all prospective programs.* Visit the ASHA website for accredited programs in SLP/AuD. <http://www.asha.org/gradguide/>. Most programs have information and applications on-line. Be sure to request information about financial aid/assistantships. NIU information available at <http://www.grad.niu.edu/>
5. *Start saving money for the application process.* You will have to pay for official transcripts, graduate school application fees, the GRE, and travel to prospective sites.

### Summer between Junior and Senior Year

1. *Schedule a time to visit the campus and department of potential schools.* Ask each school what you need to do to improve your chances of being admitted. Ask them if you are competitive for their program. If not, do not apply. If you NEED to start graduate school during a specific semester, then you will want to apply to more schools than if you have more flexibility. Apply to **at least** five schools unless you are not willing to move - then they can take your chances by applying to one. Not all schools allow for spring or summer admission.
2. *Take the GRE during the summer.* Doing so will reduce stress in the fall while you are preparing your applications and allow you to re-take the GRE (should you want to) and still apply to graduate school for the following year. Composite scores of around 1000 are considered competitive. Register online to take the test <http://www.ets.org/gre/>
3. *Begin preparing your autobiographical statement/letter of intent.* The personal statement lets the admissions committee assess your writing skills. Additionally, it tells them who you are as a person, your interests, why you want to earn a graduate degree, and how their school matches your interests and goals. Your interests may change once you enter a graduate program, but it is important for the admissions committee to know that you have thought about what you want to do.

### Senior Year

1. *Contact faculty members to write recommendations for you.* Make an appointment and ask them *in person* if they are willing to write you a favorable letter of recommendation. You do not have to give them all of the forms at this initial meeting. You need to give them ample time to write your letters (i.e., if you want a positive letter of recommendation, provide 3-4 months notice) You will provide them with addressed, stamped envelopes so they can mail the letters to you (for “self-contained” application packets) or the schools. Also include: a) your overall GPA, your COMD GPA, b) a reminder of how you did in that particular professor’s class c) your resume, d) draft of letter of intent, e) list of the programs you are applying to and the **application deadlines** and any special instructions
2. *Continue working on your letter of intent.* Ask friends and family to proofread. Letters are typically 1-2 pages long, although some programs have word limits. You can also get help from Career Services – Campus Life Building 815-753-1641 <http://www.niu.edu/cppc> Writing Center - Stevenson South – Lower Level, Tower B 815-753-6636 [http://www.engl.niu.edu/writing\\_center](http://www.engl.niu.edu/writing_center)
3. *Send official transcripts from **all** colleges attended (summer classes from the junior college too) to prospective schools.* It typically takes one to two weeks for transcripts to be mailed.
4. *Send in your application on time.* Check with the graduate school and make sure they have your complete application if you do not receive a letter stating your application is complete.
5. *You should be notified of your status (regular acceptance, provisional acceptance, on waiting list, application denied) by mid-April.* If all of your applications are rejected, take time to consider all of your options. You might (1) work for a year, study for the GREs, and apply to schools you DID NOT apply to the first time ; (2) think about applying to programs in fields similar to communicative disorders, such as special education.
6. *Be realistic during this process.* If you are applying to a program that requires a minimum 3.0 GPA and you have a 2.6 GPA, save yourself the time and money and do not apply.