

*This history of the Communication Disorders Program was written by Dr. Julie Bolling.*

When the Department of Special Education was opened in 1969, the Communication Disorders Program was one of the first three programs in the department. Here is our history:

The Bachelor's Degree in "Speech Pathology and Audiology" was first offered in the College of Arts and Sciences. We have not been able to learn the exact date when this program actually began (or if there are any alumni from that era), but it was moved to the College of Education in Fall 1969 when the "Department of Special Education and Rehabilitation" was established. The two other programs in the Department then were Mental Retardation and Rehabilitation Counseling.

The Department of Special Education with its three embryonic programs first housed in the Weaver (Physical Ed) Building from 1969 to 1971. The Department then moved to the newly built Wallace Building in Fall 1971. Somewhere along the way in the late 70's, the MR program became Learning and Behavior Disorders/Trainable Mentally Handicapped. During that same time frame, the name of the Department was changed when Rehab was moved to another department (later, the Rehab program was closed). LBD/TMH eventually became two separate programs. Other programs were also added in the Department: Teachers for the Hearing Impaired in the mid-70's (now called Deaf and Hard of Hearing); Interpreter Training in 1986 as a 2-year Associate Degree (now changing to a 4-year Bachelor's Degree); Special Education in Early Childhood in 1991 (now typically referred to as Interdisciplinary Early Childhood Education). In 1995 TMH was renamed Moderate and Severe Disabilities. In 2008, Interpreter Training became a separate department and is now called ASL and Interpreter Education.

Our students and faculty work closely with our colleagues in the other programs within the Department of Special Education. CD students take undergraduate special education courses (i.e., introduction, sign language, special education in early childhood, and behavior management). Our graduate students may also have the opportunity to take an elective (e.g., Speech for the Hearing Impaired) as part of their Master's program. Special Education faculty may be asked to guest lecture in our CD classes and consult with us in the Clinic when serving clients with certain handicapping conditions. Joint social events and fund-raisers are also common activities among all of our programs within the Department.

Specific to Communication Disorders, full-time services through the Speech-Language-Hearing Clinic were initiated in the Fall of 1972. The program's name was changed from Speech Pathology and Audiology to Communication Disorders in 1977. The Master's Degree in CD was begun in 1978. ASHA accreditation was first awarded in 1984 for both the academic program and clinical services. Sigma Alpha Eta, the original name of our student organization, became the ECU Chapter of the National Student Speech-Language-Hearing Association in the early 80's. To date, this program has approximately 700 alumni. About 20 years ago, an Alumni Newsletter was initiated. Alumni were polled in order to select a name for the Newsletter, which resulted in the title of "ECU Kommunikator." The "Kommunikator" is published annually in the summer.

