

Sacred Heart University

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FAIRFIELD, Conn. – Rhea Paul has joined the Sacred Heart University faculty as professor of Speech-Language Pathology in the College of Health Professions. She has responsibility for getting the University's new Speech-Language Pathology master's program up and running.

Before coming to Sacred Heart, Paul was a research professor at the Yale Child Study Center, where she studied children with autism spectrum disorders. Prior to that, she was a member of the faculty at Southern Connecticut State University in the Department of Communication Disorders.

Paul came to SHU for the opportunity to begin a new program from the ground up, including hiring faculty, designing curriculum and clinical education, developing a program philosophy and using a range of innovative tools for teaching and learning. "I found this opportunity extraordinarily exciting. My discussions with the dean of the College of Health Professions convinced me that Sacred Heart was willing to devote the resources it would take to build a top-notch program, and my interactions with faculty and students persuaded me that it would be a fulfilling place to work."

Paul just completed teaching a course called Speaking on Film involving the study of movies that portray people with communication disorders. She used them as a vehicle for learning and discussion about the disorders and their impact. "The course is designed to introduce SHU students to the field of communication disorders and to interest them in considering careers in the profession, so it is not so much a clinical science course as a course on the social and emotional aspects of disability," Paul said.

The students researched the disorders portrayed in films like *The Miracle Worker* and *The King's Speech* and then presented their research to their classmates before viewing the films. "In their

discussions, many students told me how watching the films not only introduced them to disorders they knew nothing about before, but also made them more aware of the impact of these disorders on patients and their families. It has enhanced their empathy for people who struggle to communicate. Even those who will not be going on to careers in Speech-Language Pathology have talked about a deeper understanding of the crucial role communication plays in what it means to be human,” Paul said, adding, “and I’m very pleased that quite a few of these students have decided to pursue our new pre-professional program in speech-language pathology.”

Paul, a resident of Milford, holds a bachelor’s degree in sociology from Brandeis University, a master’s in reading and learning disabilities from the Harvard Graduate School of Education and a doctorate in communication disorders from the University of Wisconsin- Madison.