

Sacred Heart University

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Free Language Assessments

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BY ANNIE MAY

Contributing Writer

Since 2016, Sacred Heart University's Speech-Pathology graduate program has offered free speech and language assessments to children ages 2 through 12.

The assessments consist of two graduate students working together in addition to a clinical supervisor. Although parents can accompany younger children into the testing, depending on the child's age, they sometimes remain outside of the room.

Undergraduate students in the Speech Pathology program observe and do about 25 hours of observations in preparation for hands-on client work at the graduate level.

Taryn Rogers, Director of Clinical Education and Clinical Assistant Professor, said that the goals of this program are not only to give real-life experience to Sacred Heart's graduate students, but also provide a free service to the local community.

"We are able to provide a service to the community that is of no cost and give parents information about their child's communication development," said Rogers.

What initially started as a small program has grown tremendously and there is now a consistent wait-list.

Due to the rise in interest and limited availability, the program now does little advertising. The program is offered weekly throughout the semester as well as a special program over the summer.

“We always interview the parents at the beginning and then we always bring them in at the end of the test to go over the results and everything with them,” said Rogers.

When a parent brings their child in for the speech and language assessments, they leave with a report of where their child is at, as well as community referrals for further assistance.

Emily Shea, a Speech Language Pathology graduate student, has had the opportunity to help with these assessments.

“As a first year SLP student, we are assigned to help with the speech and language assessments, and we receive clinical hours for doing so,” said Shea.

Children as young as two years old are eligible for a free speech and language assessment.

“They [parents] might not have concerns at that moment, but we can let them know what milestones their children are and aren’t meeting,” said Rogers.

Rogers explained the importance of hands-on experience for Sacred Heart’s graduate students, explaining that one of the best things about this program is that the students are able to be in a controlled environment, yet gain real experience.

“I absolutely love the clinical experience that this program has helped me with. It’s a great opportunity to demonstrate what is learned in the classroom in a clinical setting,” said Shea.

“It gives the students great clinical experience, such as how to talk to parents, how to talk to kids, how to give parents information that might be a little more sensitive,” said Rogers. “They are able to practice those skills before they go into their clinical externships in schools or private practices.”

In a clinical setting, such as the speech and language assessments, it is valuable to have clinical supervisors with the graduate students.

“The clinical supervisors know we are just starting out in the field and they are always willing to help us with anything we need,” said Shea. “Whether it’s advice on an intervention technique or a question on an assessment.”

The free speech and language assessments are offered each semester.