



## Department of Education Teacher Preparation Program Alumni Survey 2001

In Spring of 2001 the Department of Education distributed an alumni follow-up survey: *The Department of Education Teacher Preparation Programs Graduate Survey*. Surveys were mailed to all former graduates from Department of Education programs, undergraduate and graduate. A total of approximately 500 surveys were sent, and, in many instances, mailed again when returned with new addresses.

The *Department of Education Teacher Preparation Programs Graduate Survey* consisted of four sections. The first section asked for *demographic information*: job title, gender, year of graduation, ethnic background, and hearing status. The second section asked for *professional information*: current annual salary; type of facility in which the graduate providing services; region in which that facility is located; age and hearing status of students; and states in which certificates held. The third section asked for an *evaluation of programmatic resources provided during the teacher preparation program*: advisement; faculty quality; clinical experiences; interactions with other students; and content of the instruction. The final section asked graduates to *evaluate the skills they acquired as a result of the teacher preparation program*. These items, numbers 14 through 24, roughly parallel the Interstate New Teachers Association Consortium's ten principles (see Appendix for a comparison chart). Eleven additional open-ended questions asked graduates to describe strengths and weaknesses of programmatic experiences, courses, and their preparation for teaching.

### Demographic Data

216 survey responses were received (43% of total mailed). Of these responses, 60 (27.8%)<sup>1</sup> were from alumni who graduated between 1996 and 2001; 48 (22.2%) between 1990 and 1995; 41 (19%) between 1984 and 1989; 35 (16.2%) between 1978 and 1983, and 32 (14.8%) prior to 1978 (including four responses from alumni who graduated in the 1950's). 129 of the respondents (59.2%) identified as Hearing, 77 (35.3%) as Deaf, and 12 (5.5%) as Hard-of-Hearing. The vast majority of the respondents (197 or 97.3%) indicated their ethnic background to be White, Non-Hispanic. Females made up 190 (86%) of the alumni responses, while 31 (14%) came from male alumni.

Graduates reported holding teaching licenses in 37 states. 61 of the graduates reported holding licenses for two states; 19 report holding licenses for three states; 7 for four states, and one for five different states. The states in which graduates most frequently

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<sup>1</sup> See Tables in the appendices for detailed data.

hold teaching licenses are summarized in the chart below (note the totals include graduates who hold licenses in more than one state):

Other states from which graduates held teaching licenses included Arizona, Colorado, Washington, Indiana, Michigan, Arizona, Kentucky, Louisiana, Delaware, North Carolina, Vermont, Iowa, Alabama, Nevada, Kansas, Tennessee, Missouri, South Dakota, Nebraska. Two graduates also reported holding Canadian teaching licenses.

**Table 1**  
**Teaching Licenses Held by Graduates**

<b>State License</b>	<b># of Graduates</b>
Washington, DC	35
Maryland	18
Virginia	15
Pennsylvania	12
Massachusetts	11
Ohio	9
California	9
New York	8
Illinois	7
Connecticut	7
New Mexico	6
Minnesota	6
Texas	6
New Jersey	6
Florida	5

### **Program Resources**

A review of Section III: *Evaluation of Programmatic Resources* (see Appendix B), shows that in all of the ten categories, over half (53% to 83%) of all respondents believed that programmatic resources were excellent (as indicated by a response of either 4 or 5 on a scale of 1 to 5). Graduates expressed the greatest satisfaction with *Interactions with Students* (83%) followed by *Content of the Instruction* (73%), and *Advisor Availability* (72%). *Faculty Sign Proficiency* (53%) followed by *Exposure to a Variety of Service Model* (59%) were the categories with the lowest percentage of responses at the “excellent” end of the continuum (4 or 5).

When asked to list the strengths of the teacher preparation program, graduates repeatedly, and most often, said faculty are the program’s greatest strength. Graduates described faculty as “highly qualified”, “experienced”, “talented and knowledgeable teachers”, “expert”, “diverse”, “staff who know how to teach”, “caring”, and “available to them.”

Graduates also frequently described the Gallaudet milieu as valuable, with comments such as: “Gallaudet is the only place to train. The courses can be had in other places, the experience cannot;” “The opportunities to learn within a cultural setting such as this cannot be duplicated.”

Specific types of pedagogy, along with the outcomes, were also described by graduates:

- “Specific types of exams, such as the ‘take home exams’, really helped me with my critical thinking... The education program was the only program using this approach.”
- “Working with cases; dry practice in real situations.”
- “Most of our classes required team work with team members. It is an ideal way to get to know others’ points of view and various perspectives on our task.”

Worth noting is that alumni who graduated during the most recent six year period evaluated programmatic resources more positively than in prior years in most categories. For example, 84% of 1996-2001 alumni respondents assessed *Content of Instruction* as ‘excellent’ (4 or 5), compared with 73% of 1990-1995 alumni responses. 75% of 1996-2001 alumni assessed *Availability of other Department Faculty* as ‘excellent’, compared with 64% of 1990-1995 alumni responses. The two exceptions to improvement in response from recent alumni were in the categories of *Faculty Sign Proficiency* (59% for 1996-2001 compared with 65% for 1990-1995) , and *Exposure to a Variety of Service Models* (58% for 1996-2001 compared with 59% for 1990-1995 and 70% for 1984-1989).

One set of questions asked graduates to identify the **most** and **least** valuable courses in their programs. These responses are somewhat difficult to interpret because they come from graduates from the 1950’s, as well as the 1990’s and into the year 2000. In addition, responses regarding specific courses were often linked to the perceived teaching skills of the professor who taught the course rather than the course itself. Responses would state, for example, “The course itself should have been very valuable but this instructor could not teach well.”

The following courses were most often identified as most valuable (in order of frequency of response):

- ASL
- Linguistics (esp. 707)/Semantics/Syntax
- Audiology
- Reading
- Language development
- Student teaching/practicum
- Assessment courses
- Families with deaf children
- MD/LD/MHHI
- Counseling courses
- Methods courses

The following courses were most often identified as least valuable (in order of frequency of response):

- Speech
- Audiology<sup>2</sup>
- Educational technology<sup>3</sup>
- Curriculum development

Similar patterns were repeated in response to the question asking what courses “should be added to the offerings in the Education Program.” Students repeatedly mentioned the need for more content on differentiated instruction, multiple disabilities, IEP’s, and classroom management. Additional course suggestions included:

- “Courses on bilingual education including the philosophy and pedagogy are essential”
- “Methods!! Hands on for those who don’t have an undergraduate degree in education.”
- “Regular ed best practices”
- “More child development, normal and abnormal”
- “How to deal with the WHOLE student, their feelings, emotional growth.”
- “Education law, ethics, school politics”
- “Family dynamics/counseling”
- “More about language development and ASL development. More reading and math and less emphasis on the speech and hearing side of things.”

Another question asking alumni to identify weaknesses in their program. Graduates again identified needs related to modifying curriculum, IEP’s, multiple disabilities, and literacy. The following responses are representative of patterns that came up in this section:

- “The program required too many speech/hearing classes. There is so much more out there. More emphasis should be placed on learning theory and growth and development.”
- “I think the secondary ed majors should take the variety of subjects that elementary ed majors are required to take to be better prepared to teach other subject areas in future jobs. One does not always get the job of their choice.”

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<sup>2</sup> Negative responses regarding both speech and audiology often came from graduates who indicated that they have never used knowledge and skills from these courses in their role, often because their schools relied on specialists for this knowledge.

<sup>3</sup> Negative responses regarding technology fell into two categories: 1) students who already had technology knowledge and skills prior to the course who felt the course to be unnecessary for them; and 2) responses which seemed to indicate an early version of the course that did not include computers and software.

- “Teachers of deaf students have to take whatever is out there. I had a very specific program and course of training that prepared me very well for young children. When I got my first job I had to teach HS special needs students...”
- “Build on the experiences of students who come into the graduate program with teaching experiences...Once admitted to the program I found that many classes were geared towards students with not experience and there were few accommodations or even recognition of the value of experience...”
- “Higher expectations would make for better teachers”
- “Course offerings that reflect the current trends/population (adhd, students at risk)—conflict resolution, assessment, deaf studies, storytelling, reading/writing in content areas, inquiry-based research projects, and especially ASL Bilingual)”
- “Look at the job market/future for Deaf kids. Teaching students information about multiple intelligences. Emphasize what Deaf readers CAN do, instead of can’t...”
- “Establish more activities to maintain the close distance between students and all faculty members of the department.”
- “More information on the job market after graduation—what to expect once you leave.”

### **Comparisons Across Time**

In order to better evaluate the impact of program changes during the past 15 years, alumni responses to key questions were sorted according the period of time in which they were candidates in the program: 1984-1989, 1988-1995, and 1996-2001 (see Appendix C). Responses to the question asking about “most valuable courses” in the 1984-1989 period were: *Clinical Experiences, Literacy, and Language*. In the periods from 1988 to 1995, as well as from 1996-2001, *Language/Literacy, Methods*, and courses related to *Multiple Disabilities* were most valued. Courses described as least valued in 1984-1989 and 1988-1995 were *Speech and Technology*. While in 1996-001 *Research, Curriculum, Literacy*, and “*out of date methods courses*.”

### **Candidate Outcomes**

For all but one of the ten categories in Section IV, *Skills Acquired* (see Appendix D), over half (51% to 78%) of all respondents felt well prepared or very well prepared (as indicated by a response of either 4 or 5 on a scale of 1 to 5). The exception to this was *Knowledge and Skills Concerning Exceptionalities other than Deafness* (46%).

Overall, graduates expressed the greatest satisfaction with their abilities to: *Engage in Reflective Thinking* (78%), *Engage Students in Active Learning* (73%), *Develop Learning Experiences for Student Growth* (69%), and *Use a Variety of Communication Methods*

(68%). Fewer graduates felt well prepared in the following areas: *Exceptionalities other than Deafness* (46%); *Preparation to Incorporate Community into Learning* (52%); *Use of Varied Assessment* (57%); *Preparation to Establish Relationships with Colleagues and Parents* (58%); and *Use of Teaching Methods for Critical Thinking* (58%).

It is instructive, however, to compare responses from recent graduates (1996-2001) with graduates from previous years (1954 to 1995). In every category except one, the percent of respondents who describe themselves as *well prepared* (4) or *very well prepared* (5) was higher for the most recent period (1996-2001) than in previous years. Sometimes this difference was dramatic, as in *Preparation to Incorporate Community into Learning* (1990 to 1995 - 46%, 1996-2001 - 72%); *Preparation to Use Varied Assessment* (1990 to 1995 - 52%, 1996-2001 - 72%); *Preparation to Establish Relationships with Colleagues and Parent* (1990 to 1995 - 58%, 1996-2001 - 77%). The one exception to this improvement in skills acquired for recent graduates was in the category of *Preparation for Diversity* (1990 to 1995 - 75%, 1996-2001 - 73%). And, while responses for *Knowledge and Skills for Exceptionalities* showed an improvement for the period from 1990-1995 to 1996-2001 (from 43% to 56%), both of these periods reflect a drop from 1984 to 1989 (60%).

The responses of Deaf/Hard-of-Hearing (89 responses/40%) and Hearing (129 responses/60%) graduates regarding the impact of the program on their teaching knowledge and skills (see Appendix D) were also compared. In most categories the percent of graduates who felt *well prepared* (4) or *very well prepared* (5) were similar (within nine percentage points). A greater number of Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing students felt *very well* or *well prepared* than did Hearing students in the area of *Knowledge and Skills for Exceptionalities other than Deafness* (Deaf/HH - 59%; Hearing - 39%). In contrast, a greater number of Hearing students felt *very well* or *well prepared* than did Deaf/HH students in the areas of *Preparation for Diversity* (Deaf/HH - 48%; Hearing - 70%) and *Preparation to Establish Relationships with Colleagues and Parents* (Deaf/HH - 51%; Hearing - 63%).

When asked if Gallaudet's teacher preparation program "adequately prepared you for your teaching role?" responses were overwhelmingly affirmative:

- "As I looked back to my first year of teaching and compared myself with other first year teachers, I was better prepared and more confident."
- "I was already teaching when I attended Gallaudet's summers only program. I feel the classes strengthened my teaching interactions and contributions with other Deaf Ed and Regular Ed staff."
- "No, only teaching really prepares one! Really it was a good program. I've recommended it to many."

A number of responses indicated that graduates felt better prepared than many of their peers as they began teaching.

- “I think as a teacher I am more qualified than other well known Deaf Ed Teacher Prep programs.... Because we understand the varieties of deafness and our courses keep us creative.”
- “I remember during my early years and even now comparing my teaching style and methods with those who graduated from other programs. I always found myself appreciating my skills/knowledge gained from Gallaudet.”

Several responses indicated that the graduate believed the combination of undergraduate and graduate degrees from Gallaudet was particularly strong:

- “Yes! I felt I had the best preparation entering the field of most of my peers. I do believe, however, that my undergraduate studies in education were vital in giving me a strong basis in teaching strategies, classroom organization, etc.”
- “I felt prepared to teach because of the combination of undergrad major and grad school together.”

Another question asked graduates to describe “specific skills or knowledge which you are required to have in your present role for which you did not receive adequate training.” The most common responses related to teaching diverse students including children with diverse abilities (“I have a class with Language Arts 2-7 in one class”), international students and recent immigrants, students living in poverty, and deaf students with multiple disabilities. One graduate summed up the sentiment of many: “More than half of my ‘regular deaf’ students have all had additional disabilities.”

Other gaps frequently described by graduates were in the following areas:

- Writing IEP’s (“I feel a class on development of IEP’s should be provided and how evaluations affect IEP’s. This is a major part of our job and one that should be addressed before graduating.”)
- Interacting with parents, community members, and staff who are not in deaf education
- Classroom management (“Not a workshop or seminar or one day course. I mean more than negative and positive reinforcements. I mean methods, rules, expectations, anger management, stress management, sexual harassment, etc.)
- Testing, evaluation, assessment
- Using technology for instruction (e.g., writing instruction)

### **Recommendations for Improvement**

In addition to the course and practicum recommendations, graduates made the following suggestions for improvement of the teacher preparation programs:

- Establish a forum for student input into the program
- Establish a forum for the practicing teachers

- Set up a mentoring peer program
- Increase the amount of time in the classroom: 14-16 weeks for student teaching; more time for Aiding
- Include some kind of field experience or case study in every course
- Develop scholarships to encourage a more diverse student population
- Accept only graduate students who already have teaching experience
- Establish a BA program that combines general and deaf ed

While other responses had specific suggestions for strengthening preparation:

- “Emphasis on reading and writing should be maintained. This is our biggest struggle!”
- “No one is every completely ready to teach that first year. I wish I had been required to make long range goals, write my plans for the first week of school, planned several units, and ‘pretended’ I had my own class... before student teaching.”
- “Yes/no. I think profs should be required to teach in a school at least once every five years. Deaf education is constantly changing and with the medical interventions we have an entirely new breed of deaf students.”

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