

# **Earning The Professional Doctorate**

## **My Au.D Experience**



*by Louis Du Brey Au.D.*

**August 2004 Arizona School of Health Science Graduate**

*v 1.3*

# *Forward*

October 9, 2004

*The report uses hyperlinked text, the text in blue print, to jump to other information on the Web. Make sure you are connected to the Internet before clicking any of the hyperlinks. Clicking on the link will open a window in your Internet browser or email program. I may make updates to this report from time to time and you can revisit this link, <http://www.hearingoffice.com/aud.htm> to check for revisions.*

*This is a report of my Au.D experience. As I started looking into distance learning, I was surprised at how difficult it was to learn about the programs. I could find no personal testimonies or reports from the alumni of the distance learning programs. I heard many conflicting opinions from well meaning peers about distance learning. Until I began my research, I had only spoken with peers that weren't planning to earn their Au.D.*

*This report will be helpful if you are thinking about earning an Au.D. degree in a distance learning program. I will talk about why I decided to earn the degree. You will learn why I chose Arizona School Of Health Science, ASHS, as my school. As you will read, I felt the Au.D experience was very beneficial. You will get special insight into the ASHS program.*

*The report contains information that some will perceive negatively. This is the nature of writing a report. If I read a report that sounded too good to be true, I'd be suspicious! This is by no means a comprehensive report on all distance learning. I wanted to share my experience with you in the hope that it would help motivate you to pursue the Au.D. If you decide to earn your Au.D., you will be excited to be learning again and you will work hard to earn your degree!*

*Thanks*

*Dr. Du Brey*

*A version of this report will be published in the October 25th issue of [Audiology Online](#) later this year*

## To Au.D or not to Au.D? . . . . That is the Question!

I started college in 1980 after finishing a tour of duty with Uncle Sam. I was living in Port Angeles, WA and enrolled at Peninsula College. By 1987 I completed my Audiology Master's degree at Western Washington University and found myself at a crossroad. I really wanted to pursue a Ph.D., but for the past seven years I funded my education primarily by working full-time and the GI Bill. My GI Bill benefits were done. Along the way I also started a family. Our most recent addition, Ashley, was nearly two years old and I was very concerned that I have a role in her life. I was tired of working and going to school full-time. With some regret, I elected to enter professional life and did not pursue a Ph.D.. As time went on, I reconciled myself with the thought that I had made the right choice. Within a year, I started my private practice.

In the early 1990's I attended an American Academy of Audiology, AAA, meeting in Denver, CO. I heard Dr. James Jerger discuss the Au.D and learned that his resident program, the first in the US, received a grant from The Audiology Foundation of America, AFA. I also listened to a discussion about earned entitlement. The concept of earned entitlement sounded wonderful. In the years since I left graduate school, I found myself learning more intently than ever. The demands placed on me as a private practice audiologist were eagerly accepted. As time went by, I was saddened to hear Dr. Jerger's comments about how poorly prepared his resident students were and that he had closed the program. In addition, the idea of earned entitlement increasingly met resistance. The academic community felt earned entitlement would pollute the validity of the Au.D degree and were very much against the process. Audiologists that received their professional degree through earned entitlement quickly found that ASHA and AAA would not recognize their degrees. I felt betrayed and angry. In the years after, I found myself increasingly busy and decided that the Au.D would be something that I could never afford to earn since it meant that I had to leave my practice for three or four years.

As the 1990's ended, I saw more and more audiologists with the Au.D degree. It was difficult to pick up an audiology journal and find an audiologist that had published a report or an article with only a Master's degree. This caused me to reevaluate my previous position on the Au.D. I also needed to work ten more years, and didn't want to find myself in a position where I might be compromised with a Master's degree. In place of earned entitlement, distance learning was offered to practicing audiologists. These reasons, combined with my original desire to earn a doctorate at the end of graduate school, were my initial motivations to pursue the Au.D

In 2001, I began visiting with audiologists about the Au.D. I was amazed at the different reasons offered for not doing distance learning. Some of the reasons included:

- The degree was a "mail order degree".
- A university can't teach me anything I don't already know.
- Earning the degree will ruin my business and family life.
- I won't earn any more money as a result of the degree.
- Other members on the health care team won't treat me with any more respect.

Well, they were wrong!



### ***my study area***

*I used two computers, a desktop and notebook, and two printers, a black and white laser printer and a color inkjet printer, for the program. The notebook was helpful when I traveled. Most of my printing was done on the laser printer because it was cheaper and faster when compared to the inkjet. I used a broadband connection to the Internet, but also had an analogue connection for backup. There were a few times the modem was needed. I printed almost two cases of predrilled three hole paper for the program. I you are a tree hugger, rest assured that I plan to save these notes! Using the predrilled paper saved a lot of time and made it very easy to insert the pages in the class binders. To my right you can see three stacks of binders and books that were used. Just above the books, you can see Dr. Ruggle's email.*

## **Actual Experience**

### ***Which School?***

The choice of my graduate school, Western Washington University, was made after I toured several schools in Washington. I think it was easier to visit the school and meet the faculty and staff. Choosing a distance learning program was more complicated. The biggest obstacle was that I couldn't travel to the schools. I was surprised at how difficult it was to gather information about the four programs.

- Arizona School Of Health Sciences
- Central Michigan University
- PCO School Of Audiology
- University Of Florida

The most informative site about the programs was located on the AFA website: <http://www.audfound.org/index.cfm?pageID=19>. Later, I also found information here: [http://www.audiologist.org/prof\\_distance\\_ed.php](http://www.audiologist.org/prof_distance_ed.php). I did most of my initial research using email contacts listed on the university's web pages. Emailing was not very successful because I didn't always get a response. The best results were obtained by phone calling. I felt the problem was that emails were usually directed to the department chairperson, who I suspected didn't have time to respond to general inquiries. I found that it was very helpful to get names, email address, and phone number of graduates. I would then interview the graduates on my own. One of the universities I called refused to give any names and phone numbers. What a surprise! They said that doing so would violate the graduate's privacy. All I wanted to do was talk with graduates that were positive about their program. I received four names and phone numbers from ASHS. All of the alumni were positive about their degree.

In many ways I was shopping for the school that would do the best job for me! Some of the schools had difficulty answering these questions: "Why should I attend your distance learning program?" and "What does your program offer that separates it from the other schools?" Without exception, the Florida program was the most organized and communicative. They had excellent four-color marketing materials, a video, and a terrific person that worked the phones! He was tenacious and acted genuinely interested in trying to help me. The big problem was that their program did not meet my requirements. These included:

- The Florida program used regional meetings that would be difficult for me to attend. I would need to fly to Seattle, WA for the meetings. The costs to attend the meetings, time and actual travel expenses, were more expensive than the tuition. I couldn't afford the time out of the office.
- Florida used a cookie-cutter approach with one-program-fits-all. They did not take into account any of my professional experience when designing the program for me. I needed to enter the program and progress through it without interruption. I felt very confident about my abilities to do industrial testing, adult and pediatric audiology, hearing aid dispensing, and marketing to name a few of the things that I did in my practice daily. Why would I want to have more instruction in these areas?

The two nonnegotiable points for the school where I would earn my Au.D included:

- That I not have to leave my practice and travel long distances. Not only was this more expensive for me because there were no regional meeting areas within 500 miles of my office, but I felt that my business would also suffer because I wasn't working
- I didn't want to take classes in areas where I already felt confident of my abilities. Programs that did not take into account my work experience were eliminated.

The two programs that best fit these needs were the Arizona School of Health Sciences and Pennsylvania College of Optometry.

## ***The Application Process***

Before applying, I needed to complete the Evaluation of Practicing Audiologists Capabilities. The EPAC was designed as an objective tool for evaluating practicing audiologists. For more information about the EPAC, visit the AFA site here: <http://www.audfound.org>. Probably the most difficult process in the application was completing the EPAC. Oregon requires licensed dispenser's to receive at least ten hours of

continuing education annually. I never registered my continuing education credits with ASHA. The EPAC required me to document all continuing education since graduate school. It took me weeks to reconstruct my education history since completing my Master's program. I'm sure that some classes were left out, but I had to get the application submitted. The Arizona application was completed by hand, and later I did the Pennsylvania application on-line. Surprisingly, both times that I attempted to complete the PCO application errors were noted during my final submission. After the first failed attempt, a representative from the school called and was aware that only some of my information was transmitted. I was asked to re-enter the application twice. I am not sure why there were problems, but I was relieved when a call from ASHS was made to schedule an interview. Shortly after I had a phone conference with Dr. Parent Buck.

I submitted my application in early December, and had the interview in February 2003. My first class started in March. During the interview, my advisor informed me of the core requirements needed to complete the program. She also suggested electives to round out my program. I was able to negotiate on the electives. After signing the contract and paying my tuition, I was official enrolled. Applicants considering the Arizona program should know that the maximum credit load is 24 credits. Arizona offers over 40 credits for distance learning. While you may elect to take more than your core requirements, your total credits cannot exceed 24. I completed the program in June 2004.

### ***Life in the Au.D. Program***

To the critics who told me the Au.D would not be worthwhile, you were WRONG! Without exception, my practice benefited from the Au.D experience. I took something positive from each of my classes. AUD815, Medical Informatics for Audiology, was a requirement for all students. The instructor, Dr. Ruggle, finished the class with a letter to the new students. I printed this letter and kept it taped to my bookshelf throughout the program. You can see it in the picture of my study area. I found the letter inspirational. I included the letter at the end of this document in the [Appendix](#). He wrote that the Au.D would have an effect on me. He said that because of this experience, I would think and practice on a higher level. The Au.D program would change my life! Well, Dr Ruggle you were right!

The Au.D is a unifying degree for our profession. The adoption of the Au.D is a major turning point for audiologists and helps us to define our role in the health care system. Audiologists realized that the Ph.D. program was meeting the role of researchers and teachers, but felt consumers needed more help. Audiology looks to eliminate the MS and MA degree in favor of BA/S Au.D, and Ph.D. We want to be mature health care professionals that will be competent to interact with other doctoring professions involved in hearing health care. Our profession provided a means for practicing professionals to attain this advanced degree through distance learning.

1989 was a pivotal year for audiology. This was the year the AFA was created and charged to "transform audiology to a doctoral profession with the Au.D as its distinctive designator." By defining our role in health care, audiologists can change their link to the public. Audiologists began their first step towards professional unification with the adoption of the Au.D. As our profession moves forward, we will be successful in establishing our role as leaders in hearing health care.

Shortly after making my decision to earn the Au.D, my son, Robby, called. He was 22 years old and had worked a number of different jobs in the computer and technical support business. He didn't want to go to college after high school, but instead chose to work with computers. He was calling me to talk about college. At his most recent job, T-Mobile, he had



*My son, Robby, at the graduation. He did a great job with the photography during the graduation.*

*Graduation Day, August 7, 2004*



*The handshake and diploma*



*The hooding!*

trained his boss on three different occasions and was getting tired of it! However, unless he had a college degree there was no way that they would promote him. He then told me the words I had been waiting to hear: “Dad, I’m ready to go back to school.” We would both be starting back to school at the same time. I’m looking forward to attending his graduation—*hint hint Robby!*

## **Program Highlights**

Some of the high points in my program included:

- Development of a policy and procedure manual
  - This allowed me to better understand the role of HIPAA and CMS, and their interaction with my office.
  - Employee policies and procedures have allowed me to become a better manager of my employees.
- Creation of APD 1.0
  - During the CAPD class, I created a software learning tool for parents and professionals, APD 1.0, to aid them in the understanding of the diagnosis and treatment of central auditory processing disorders. You can visit this link: <http://www.hearingoffice.com/badown.htm> to download the tool. Later, I had an opportunity to publish an outline of this tool in a special issue of Educational Audiology Review devoted to APD.
- Development of a vestibular questionnaire
  - The vestibular assessment class allowed me to create a vestibular questionnaire that I use when interviewing patients with balance problems. Future version of the Hearing Office Pro will include the questionnaire as well.
- Pharmacology
  - Pharmacology reaffirmed my commitment to the role of the audiologist in ototoxic monitoring. The class also brought new awareness of how medications affect hearing and balance. I created a checklist for my office that is used during the patient intake.
- Cochlear Implants
  - The cochlear implant class allowed me to revisit eligibility requirements and technological changes since my externship at the VA in the mid 1980’s.
- AFA Leadership Award.

- I received this award in Arizona the day before graduation. Three graduates received AFA Professional Leadership Awards. The decisions were made based on faculty recommendation for students who meet the following criteria:
  - Candidate should be identified by faculty as a student whose positive attitude and strong work ethic were demonstrated throughout her/his Au.D program
  - Candidate should be involved in national and/or local professional activities to promote audiology awareness, quality patient care, services for underserved populations and/or other professional issues such as the Au.D movement, licensure changes ....etc.
  - Candidate should demonstrate a belief in public service through service to the university and/or community (i.e. student government, activities committees, community school or girl scouts or rotary activities)
  - Candidate should be considered a role-model for fellow students or colleagues, including having a high academic standing
- ASHS Au.D Endowment
  - I had an opportunity to work with another August 2004 Graduation student, Dr. Julie Feldman, to raise money to fund an Au.D endowment. The endowment will be used for scholarships to 2<sup>nd</sup> year resident students attending ASHS. This was the gift from our graduating class to ASHS.

## **Work and Time Issues**

I did not understand the amount of work that was required to complete my program. I did not take time off between courses and wanted to push through as quickly as possible. As I progressed, I found it very difficult to continue working at my normal pace and apply myself in the evenings for the required studying. I began my program in March 2003, and by October 2003 I was in trouble. While very excited to be learning again, I was very fatigued. I was amazed to learn that some of my colleagues were capable of doubling up on classes! My office is a private practice and it is difficult to gauge how your work setting would compare. During the time I was in the program, I was tested at least every two weeks, and many classes required weekly paper submissions. Almost all classes required at least one night a week for a chat. Chat participation was part of the overall grade as well. On average, I spent 10-20 hours per week studying.

I wanted to hire another audiologist to help alleviate the strain. Unfortunately, the hiring process turned out to be much more difficult than I thought. We did not secure an audiologist until August 2004. By that time I had completed my program. In February 2004, I experienced failed health that required me to leave work for nearly two weeks. In my entire life, I had never been sick for two weeks. I was able to recover from the illness and continue with the program. I am sure the strain from the Au.D program was a factor in my illness. I can only blame myself for letting this happen.

If you are considering the ASHA program, you should carefully evaluate your work requirements. I wish that I had! Here are a few ways to reduce the stress:

- Take breaks between classes and don't try to go through nonstop. This means that you may need to take off a month or two between classes. I think that I could have asked for this during the program, but it is better to set this up before you sign your contract. If you normally take a family vacation, take it and schedule your Au.D program around it.
- Consider hiring an associate BEFORE you begin.
- Don't double-up on classes.

## Epilogue

All of us want a perfect experience and realize that perfection is rarely attained. The most stressful part of the program was the difficulty communicating with faculty and staff. It wasn't everyone, but it happened more than I wanted. Some might say it was a natural side effect of not having regional meetings, which I didn't want to attend.

I am very proud of earning the Au.D degree. Within the professional communities there is more respect for an earned degree than one that was granted. Regardless of the initial comments of my peers, I felt that the ASHS distance learning program was very advantageous to me and my practice I would recommend the ASHS program to any audiologist considering staying in the field. Remember Dr. Ruggle's comments when you are spoken to negatively by well meaning peers. I was very grateful for the opportunity to earn my degree at ASHS and felt that they had an excellent program.

So you may be asking yourself: "How successful has the distance learning movement been?" How many audiologists have opted for distance learning to earn their Au.D? Well, it has been very successful. I recently corresponded with Becky White from the AFA regarding the success of the distance learning programs. She shared statistics from the four program's current enrollments and alumni. I summarized this information in the table below:

Schools	Current Enrollments	Alumni
Arizona School of Health Science	450 typically enrolled annually	720 Graduates as of August 2004
Central Michigan University	199 currently enrolled	104 Graduates as of Spring 2004
PCO School Of Audiology	500 typically enrolled annually	278 Graduates as of May 2004
University Of Florida	175 currently enrolled	786 Graduates as of August 2004
<b>Totals</b>	<b>1324 actively enrolled</b>	<b>1888 Alumni</b>

To date, there are over 3200 audiologists that earned or will earn their Au.D through distance learning. Are you part of the 3200? If not, I hope this report helped convince you to reconsider a Au.D distance learning program for your future?

The ability to attend the graduation brought closure to my Au.D. journey. I had a chance to put faces with names. I was filled with pride when hooded and realized what a great accomplishment it was to earn my degree. My family made sacrifices for me to earn my degree and it was great to have them there for graduation. My wife organized the graduation trip and there were many surprise guests! When the reader announced my name, I could hear everyone of them cheering! As an aside, my daughter, Ashley, who was just two years old when I finished my MA, graduated from high school the same month that I finished my Au.D.



*The Graduates!  
Father and daughter*



*The Du Brey party*

Thanks for reading my report and I hope you found it helpful. If you want to talk more, send me an email

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## **Acknowledgments**

I would like to thank my wife, Heidi, for her support during this time. My fellow graduate and good friend, Dr. Mel Gross, was a constant source of encouragement to me during the program. Finally, Dr. Loren Webb my advisor in graduate school and mentor.

I started college in Port Angeles, WA after I was discharged from the service in 1980. One of the cycling Mecca's for north Westerners is the 17 mile 5300 ft. climb from downtown Port Angeles to the top of Hurricane Ridge. The last time that I rode the ridge was in 1984. Unless your last name



*Dr. Mel Gross*

is Armstrong, the climb takes two to three hours to complete. The descent on the other hand can be completed in 30 minutes with speeds over 50 mph! I promised myself when I completed the Au.D, I would climb Hurricane Ridge. I used the trip for motivation during the program. The picture below was taken the week after graduation to celebrate my Au.D.



*On top of Hurricane Ridge Friday, August 12, 2004*

## Appendix

*(a private email reprinted with permission from Dr. Ruggle)*

**From:** webct\_nt@ashs.edu on behalf of Kevin Ruggle@815.WebCT.course

**Sent:** Thursday, March 27, 2003 9:44 PM

**To:** -\_@

**Subject:** Take these thoughts and ideas with you

[Message 49 from AUD815 - Medical Informatics for Audiology - Spring 2003]

AS you prepare to finish the first class at ASHS, I want to send you out with a few notes that I shared in chat tonight.

My experience has been that when I ask new Au.D students why they are obtaining their Au.D, most say they do it for personal reasons, or they do it to better benefit their patients. Very true, but whether you realize it or not, you are also doing it for our profession. The Au.D. can be a unifying designator of our profession.

The Au.D is not required of us, and in reality, many will choose not to obtain it. This brings us to you (yes, you!): the fact that you are sitting here reading this tells me about your character and your dedication to audiology. You don't hear this much coming from an instructor to a student, but it is important to hear from me...I HAVE RESPECT FOR YOU. I have been through what you are going through and I respect you because you are not settling for being "grandfathered" into Audiology. You are helping raise the standard and it will show in your patient care!

The fact that I respect you should make you think for a second. Just look around, take a look around your house and listen for the normal noises of your house. Think about the sacrifices your family is making so that you can take these courses and finish your degree. It is worth at least a heart felt thank you!

I don't teach this class for money or power. I teach it because it was the best way to give back a little of what I was "given" (the opportunity to get the Au.D). Long before I started teaching, a group of "rebel" audiologists fought for this degree. They spent their own time and money to make this possible. Their work

should be admired and respected.

Things may not always be easy on your journey to get your Au.D. You may have graduates from other programs say bad things about distance learning and getting your Au.D. I believe your responsibility as a “Doctor” is to be polite and educate these people if they are willing to listen, and secondly it is your responsibility to not be negative about other programs. Your education will be self-evident in how you treat your patients and how you will always “take the high road” even if others may choose a lower path.

Don't fool yourself! Your Au.D will have an effect on you! You will think and practice on a higher level. You will feel better about audiology, you may feel pride that you have not felt in a while. It will change or effect your life! It is awesome, I have been there!

If I have helped you in some small way tonight or throughout this class, I am pleased. That is what I enjoy most about teaching this class, that I can have a positive effect on your first ASHS experience!

If I have helped, then I expect to be paid back!! Your pay back is simple, just follow these directions. After you have finished your program, you will be at ADA or AAA or somewhere and you will recognize my name on my name tag. At that exact moment, I expect you to interrupt “whatever” I am doing, stick out your right hand and repeat the following: Hello Dr. Ruggle, I am Dr. (insert your name here)! Say it with pride and a smile on your face and I will have been paid back!

You are starting a great journey and adventure...work hard, but enjoy the experience, it soon will be over and you will be so glad you “took the ride.”

If I can ever be of assistance in any way, please let me know.

It has been a pleasure teaching you!

Dr.Ruggle

# FAQ's

## *Frequently Asked Questions*

*I've received a lot of interest in this report. The first month it was available only on the [ASHS 899b Bulletin board](#) and my personal site. I didn't think that many people knew about it, but it was downloaded over 1000 times!. There are a variety of reason that people are downloading the document. The most common questions that I've received come from audiologists considering a distance learning program. I think this is great and this was the primary reason I wrote the report. I wanted to encourage ALL audiologists the were eligible for distance learning to earn their Au.D. While I looked into all of the distance learning programs, I spent the most time with the ASHS and PCO applications. I thought it would be helpful to post some of the questions and comments that I've received about the report. For the questions, I posted a summary of my answer directly below the question.*

### **Questions About The Report**

o ***How did you decide to do the ASHS program and not the PCO?***

- o As noted in the report, the ASHS and PCO programs were the two that best fit my needs—no regional meetings and credit for life experience. My first choice was ASHS, but I also tried to apply to the PCO program. There were just some technical issues which were a little frustrating for me with the PCO application.

o ***What was the hardest part of the application process?***

- o Let's see if I can rate this for you. I will write the most difficult first:
  - By far it was the reconstruction of my CEU history for the EPAC. It took so much time to go through boxes beginning from 1987 to the present.
  - The ASHS application was really not difficult to do. You do need three letters of recommendation that must be sent in sealed envelopes with your application. Naturally, the letter writers take time to write the letter and then you wait for them mail to mail copies to you. Getting official grade transcripts from your universities also takes time.
  - Once the application was done, there is a waiting process. It took me months to get the application together including the EPAC, but I just couldn't wait to get a call that I was accepted. From the time I completed the application in mid December, I waited until the first week in February to get my call. This really wasn't bad when you consider there was the Xmas holiday.

o ***How long is each class or each semester?***

- o If you're doing the ASHS program, classes are either 1 or 2 credits. A one credit class is one month and a two credit class is two months. You can take more than one class at a time, double-up, but there are very few breaks between classes. The extended holidays ASHS recognized were Turkey day and Xmas. There was an occasional day off, but there were no spring, summer, or fall scheduled breaks like a residential program might have. There was a two week break at the end of January to get the schedule adjusted to begin in February. The adjustment was necessary because of the Xmas break forced a class stoppage for about two weeks over the holidays. In some classes instructors will post the final early so that you can take it and then relax for a day or two before the next class begins.

o ***What is the estimated expense per class?***

- The ASHS tuition is all inclusive except for text books. As you would expect, text books are expensive, usually at least \$100 per/book. You can find students that will lend or sell their books to help reduce these costs. Ask classmates if they have books for sale and also check the [899 Bulletin board classifieds](#) for used books. You can also post a WTB, want to buy, on the classified section. PCO has a registration fee, and then there is a per/class fee as well as texts. Check their site. You will need to buy paper, toner and/or ink, and folders to store your notes. I really found it helpful to print out all of the reading materials and put them in a binder. I would suggest a laser printer for the bulk of printing. Laser printers are fast and cheaper per/page to print text than an ink jet printer. .

o ***How important are the CEUs that you have obtained? As you mentioned you didn't have an extensive list...but you re-created as best as possible. I work for a manufacturer and teach courses extensively and have for the past 8 years. I have re-created a list of classes that I have taught with a brief description of each (I'm sure I didn't cover them all...but still it's three pages long) What is your thought on this...I want credit for what I have completed and do NOT want to spend time and money taking courses that I already teach or have taught frequently...do you think I would benefit from getting something from ASHA even if it didn't cover everything. I did include the ACE award for continuing ed that I received from ASHA.***

- Basically the more learning that you can document the better your chances of not having to take a class in an area where you are already strong. I have been in the field a little longer than you, but in the past took over 25 CEUs a year for most of my career. It is not that I didn't have an extensive list, but that I didn't have documentation handy of the list. This part of the EPAC literally took weeks to go back and reconstruct. I had over 12 pages of documented CEUs. I think that the big benefit from ASHS is that you can contact them and they are able to send you an exact list of what you did to earn the ACE award and any CEUs you register with them. Naturally, the more varied the CEUs are, for example, CAPD, dispensing, industrial testing, ototoxicity, and tinnitus, the better!

○ *On your computer set-up...did you use high-speed internet? Was one service better than another?*

- I used multiple types of high speed, HS, connections and an analogue connection on occasion. Most classes require you to have an organized class meeting, a chat, one time per week. Many classes require participation as part of the grade. If you don't attend the chat or have mechanical problems, you will loose miss out on valuable information. Some instructors will arrange a make project for missing a class, but in general you should plan to be at your computer at least 30 minutes before the class starts.

HS internet is very nice because it speeds the downloading process—some classes have lots of materials to download. I started out with Charter Inc, which is available nationally, but was my only option locally. I had so many problems locally that I abandoned the service. After Charter came to town, my local ISP began providing wireless. I used a wireless connection from them that was very reliable. I think you should have some type of HS internet, but also make sure you modem works so that you have a backup Which HS provider you use depends on what is most reliable in your area. Locally charter has improved their reliability and speed, but I am happy with the local ISP's service

○ *What was the most difficult part of doing the distance learning program?*

- I think that this would be different for each person. I have talked with other students and for some the actual setting aside of time to do studying was very hard. I didn't really have a problem doing that. After a class or two, you get into a groove where you know that after work you need to spend time with your family and then on to course work. If anything, when the program ended I was left with a bunch of adrenalin that I didn't know what to do with!

In education, the phrase "tools of technology" is a term that is used for programs that make use of computer learning. Of course, this term is exactly what you are doing in a distance learning program. For me the hardest part of the program was learning that not all the instructors where skilled in using the tools of technology. For instance, I really hate writing an email to faculty member and then having to resend the same email two or three times in order to get an answer. As another example, some faculty members were expert at maintaining the links on their site, but others seemed to have difficulty. There were classes that I spent more time trying to locate or acquire a document than I did actually reading it! I think that it would be great if each instructor stored the weekly reading in a single compressed file on the ASHS servers so that students would need to download only that file to have the weekly readings. The Pharmacology class was setup like this and it made things much easier. It wasn't that the content wasn't great, it just that it was too hard to get!

○ *Is there anything else that I should be thinking in terms of.....*

- Yes, think about the section I wrote dealing with vacation and time off. I see that you work at Starkey. Do you travel much? If so, this will put a strain on your study time and probably additional strain on your family life. If you would normally take a family vacation, be sure to take it. If you have to teach classes more at certain times of the year, reduce your study schedule. The ASHS distance learning program isn't closing until 2007, and once your enrolled you

can take as much time as you need. Your advisor, the person that calls to setup you initial class schedule, prefers if you know when you need time off at the interview. However, I am fairly certain that adjustments could be made while you are taking classes.

## Comments From Readers

- *Hi Louis! Nice report! The edits and additions were well done. One point you might want to consider- the numbers of those earning and AuD ignores residential school enrollment. Last Spring there were over 1300 enrolled on campuses. That's why your number of 1888 alumni doesn't quite jibe with our over 2200 graduates figure that includes the residential grads too. We don't have updates for this Fall yet, but it is undoubtedly higher as 20 new schools opened. If they average 8-10 students each, that's at least 160 more... So, you might want to mention that or say this doesn't include all the residential students...Did you see the article I wrote in Advance for Audiologists September issue. It has a lot of these numbers in it. (Although didn't include Summer graduates.)*

*Best regards-*

*Susan B. Paarlberg, MSIR  
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- *Dear Louis, Thank you very much for sharing your report on your AuD experience. I feel honored that you have shared this with me. It is honest. It is forthright. And it is marvelous. Congratulations! You in every way have earned your 'Doctorate' and I am very proud of you. I believe you need to share your experience with others and I believe the letter by Dr. Ruggle needs to be seen by every professional in our field. It truly is inspirational*
- *Dear Louis, I came across your testimonial on the ASHS BB today and felt I had to respond. Hope you don't mind that I contacted you by email rather than the BB. I am finishing up my next to the last class and have been feeling very overwhelmed. "Will this ever be over?" I have been feeling resentful lately of the time that I have not been able to spend with my husband and of all the extra things he has had to do while I huddled around my notes and endless articles. (As an aside this man deserves a medal-he supported me when I went back to school for my Bachelors and Masters after our two kids started school and never complained).Anyway, Then I read your story. The first thing that struck me was the picture of you at your desk and I said,"Good grief—that looks like **my** desk!"— . . . Your thoughtful words made me realize how much I had already accomplished and reminded me of how much I have learned and incorporated that knowledge into my daily routine. So I just wanted to say "thank you" for getting me back on track. Congratulations on your biking triumph. . . . Wishing you many more successes—*