

FALL 2024

COMD UNDERGRAD HANDBOOK



BYU McKay School
COMMUNICATION DISORDERS

<https://education.byu.edu/comd/bs>

2024 BYU COMMUNICATION DISORDERS (COMD) UNDERGRADUATE HANDBOOK

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OVERVIEW

This handbook provides important information about majoring in Communication Disorders (ComD) at BYU. If you have questions about anything, please ask! We're here to help.

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THE COMMUNICATION DISORDERS MISSION STATEMENT

We build belonging, achievement, and growth through Christlike service to:

Empower lifelong learners

Engage in impactful research

Provide compassionate, evidence-based clinical care

Core Values: *Belonging, Becoming, Collaboration, Kindness*

1.0 GETTING INTO THE MAJOR

1.1 WHAT IS THE COMD MAJOR ALL ABOUT?

Choosing to major in ComD means that you are genuinely interested in learning how to help people with hearing, speech, or language disorders and making a practical application of that knowledge to serve clients. The most common reason for students to major in ComD is because they are planning a career in speech-language pathology (SLP) or audiology. To become a certified SLP, you will need a master's degree. To become a certified audiologist, you will need a doctorate degree. If you choose to not pursue graduate studies, you may become an SLP or audiology assistant but will need to be aware of licensure requirements in the state in which you live. The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) [certification](#) of SLP and audiology

assistants is also available, but we do not have an assistant certification program at BYU. The bachelor's degree in ComD is designed to fully prepare you for graduate study, whether here at BYU or at another university. Our goal is to have you start your journey toward becoming an exemplary professional, to whom we could refer our own parents or children, rather than have you merely take courses, pass exams, and get grades. We want you to become as capable as possible both in terms of academic knowledge and in Christlike attributes like compassion and diligence.

1.2 WHAT CAN I DO WITH A BACHELOR'S DEGREE IN COMD?

A bachelor's in ComD focuses on human communication and connections between the physical, biological, and behavioral sciences. The degree provides a foundation in the normal anatomy and processes of language, speech, and hearing, as well as an introduction to disorders, instrumentation, and data collection procedures in these areas. Thus, in conjunction with general education coursework, a major in ComD is a "liberal arts" degree. Typically, earning a bachelor's degree in ComD allows you to apply for admission to a graduate degree program in either audiology or speech-language pathology.

1.3 HOW DO I CHANGE MY MAJOR TO COMD?

The undergraduate major in communication disorders is a Limited Enrollment Program (LEP) which means that you have to apply to be admitted to the major prior to being able to take the courses. Approximately one hundred and twenty students are admitted to the major each year. Any student may declare pre-ComD as a major, but all prospective majors need to apply for admission to the ComD major. When you have completed all four prerequisite classes (ComD 133, Stat 121, CELL 220, and PHSCS 167), you may apply to the major by filling out an Application for Admission to the ComD Major [online](#). There are two rounds of admissions to the major each year with deadlines on October 15th and April 15th.

Your application will be reviewed by a committee. Admission will be based on your GPA in the four prerequisite classes, along with your response to an essay prompt that will allow the committee to better understand who you are and your potential to succeed in the major. If you are not admitted to the major, each of the four prerequisite classes may be repeated only once, and you may reapply. We advise a student who is turned down twice for admission to ComD to consider an alternate major.

1.4 WHERE CAN I LEARN MORE ABOUT COMD PROFESSIONS?

One source is the [ComD 133 course](#), “Introduction to Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology.” This course surveys the breadth of these two fields, explores their interconnection, and describes clinical practice.

A second source is visiting <http://www.asha.org/>, the website of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. This site provides a wide array of information for the public, for students, and for professionals in the field.

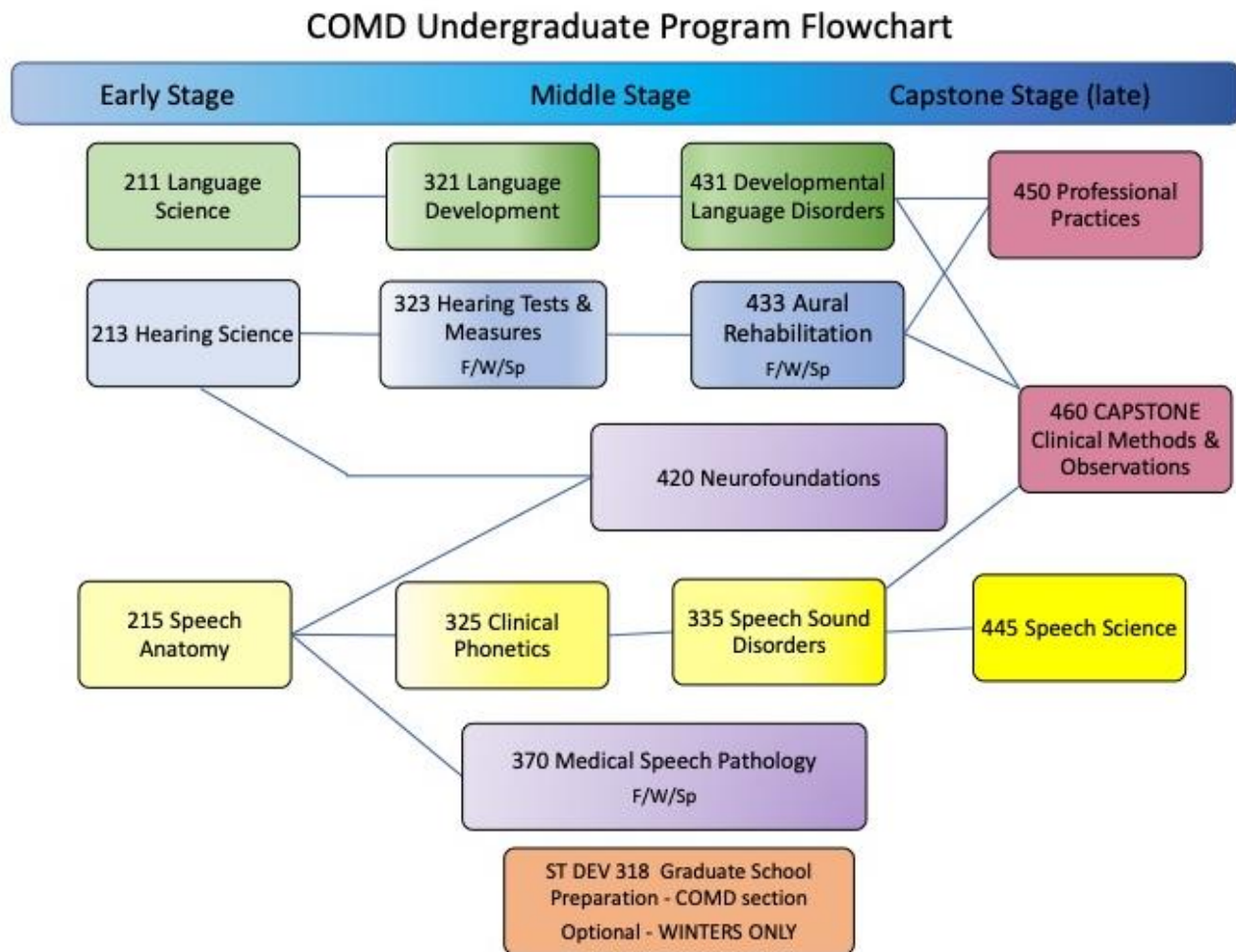
1.5 WHICH CLASSES MUST I TAKE?

All students must take the following classes before applying for the major: STAT 121, PHSCS 167, CELL 220 (preferred) or 210, and ComD 133. After admission to the major, students will take ComD 211, 213, 215, 321, 323, 325, 335, 370, 420, 431, 433, 445, 450, and 460. A specific section of ST DEV 318 (*Graduate School Preparation*) is also available as an elective for ComD students during winter semesters. We recommend that students interested in this class take it during the winter semester of their junior year.

1.6 CAN I SKIP THE PREREQUISITES FOR CERTAIN CLASSES?

No. The sequence of classes is designed so that course content builds progressively over several semesters. Without exception, classes must be taken in the sequence specified below.

1.7 COURSE SEQUENCE IN THE COMD MAJOR



To complete the program and graduate, the shortest time you can take is four semesters. To achieve that, you will need to take one class in each 'track' in your first semester (the green is for the Language track, blue is Hearing, and yellow is Speech). Once you're admitted to the major, you can take COMD 211, 213 and 215. The classes are all firm pre-requisites for the next one each track. The classes in the purple boxes are 'cross' track and are a bit more flexible, and the red boxes are capstone classes that must be taken after you have finished COMD 431, 433, and 335. Be careful, because if you miss a class in the track, it can set you back a semester to your graduation.

All of the COMD classes are required to graduate as a COMD major. All of them are offered Fall and Winter, with a few offered in Spring too (COMD 323, 433 and 370 right now).

The STDEV 318 Graduate School Preparation is a class that helps you apply to a COMD master's program and is ONLY offered in Winter. It is not required but very useful. Plan to take it the Winter before you'll be graduating (up to one year in advance), so you have that guidance prior to

completing your applications, bearing in mind that most application rounds are due in December or January for beginning a graduate program that Fall.

1.8 CAN I TAKE CLASSES ON ZOOM? DEPARTMENT ZOOM POLICY

The university administration has made clear the importance of an in-person learning experience on our campus. Therefore, Zoom will not be used to broadcast our classes. If a student is sick or has another extenuating circumstance, they may (with the instructor's approval) make arrangements that include audio or video recordings or a Zoom session (set up by a classmate on their computer or phone). Or they can arrange to borrow a classmate's notes. However, ComD professors will not be teaching or recording their classes via Zoom from the podium.

1.9 I'M A TRANSFER STUDENT—WHICH CLASSES SHOULD I TAKE?

You need to take all the required classes in the major, unless you demonstrate to the faculty that the class you took or will take elsewhere has the same level of breadth, depth, and rigor as the equivalent BYU class. As a BYU student, a maximum of six semester hours of classes taught in the ComD Department can be substituted by transfer classes. To initiate this review, give the program academic advisor (currently Tara Goulding) sufficient information about the course you wish to use as a substitute for your BYU ComD course (e.g., catalog description, syllabus, etc.). The academic advisor will then work with the undergraduate program coordinator (see Contacts on the first page) and the instructor of the course you wish to have waived to determine whether the course is an acceptable alternative. When you have passed the class and have an official transcript sent to BYU, notify the advisement center that you have passed this substitute class, and they will waive the BYU ComD class.

1.10 WHICH SEMESTERS ARE CERTAIN COURSES OFFERED?

Each COMD course is offered in both fall and winter semesters. Currently, only three classes are offered Spring term – COMD 323, 370, and 433. No COMD classes are taught during Summer term.

1.11 BEYOND THE COMD MAJOR CLASSES, WHICH CLASSES SHOULD I TAKE AS AN UNDERGRADUATE TOWARD MEETING THE 2020 ASHA STANDARDS?

The ASHA standards for graduate education in speech-language pathology implemented in 2020 specify that “the applicant must have demonstrated knowledge of the biological sciences, physical sciences, statistics, and the social/behavioral sciences.” Three of the prerequisites to the ComD major (CELL 220, PHYSC 167, and STAT 121) help to meet this standard.

The ASHA standard’s implementation language also says, “Acceptable courses in social / behavioral sciences should include psychology, sociology, anthropology, or public health.” In this area there are more options, but we would suggest either Anthropology 101 Social / Cultural Anthropology, Psychology 111 General Psychology, SFL 201 Human Development, or Sociology 111 Introductory Sociology, all of which currently meet BYU’s University Core social science requirement. You will need to have taken one of these classes, or something very similar, to meet the ASHA standard.

1.12 WHICH OTHER ELECTIVES MIGHT HELP ME AS A COMD MAJOR?

Audiology and speech-language pathology are multi-disciplinary fields, building on theories, methods, and research from psychology, human development, linguistics, physiology / neurology / medicine, acoustics, electrical engineering and technology, education, statistics, and philosophy.

If you are aiming for a career that involves working with children, coursework in special education, reading / language arts, learning disabilities, and child development could be a good investment. For a career that focuses on working with adults, courses in neurology, gerontology or aging, and clinical psychology would be useful.

1.13 WHEN DO I GET TO WORK WITH CLIENTS?

Only graduate students will receive supervised clinical practicum hours in speech and language. Undergraduates may participate in some experiential learning projects that involve working with children or adults in clinical, educational, or research settings. NSSLHA may assist with evening activities for children, such as a Halloween or spring carnival. The required ComD 460 course will also provide students with opportunities to view and discuss therapy sessions.

1.14 WHAT ARE GUIDED CLINICAL OBSERVATION HOURS AND HOW ARE THEY HANDLED IN THE DEPARTMENT?

Guided clinical observation hours consist of watching therapy in the company of and then debriefing with someone who holds the CCC from ASHA, and 2 hours of supervision training. These hours are an important part of clinical training, and 25 such hours are required for ASHA clinical certification. Any person holding the CCC, with a supervisory training completed, can sign for observation hours, but the person signing must have been present during the observation and debrief. Observation hours are *not* required for graduation from BYU, but may be required before beginning some graduate SLP programs. As part of the BYU ComD major, all students are required to take the COMD 460 Capstone Clinical Methods and Observation course. During this course, all 25 guided clinical observation hours can be earned.

You are responsible to keep a log of your observation hours and the signatures to eventually submit to ASHA. You can get a form for recording the hours and signatures [here](#). The ComD Department ***does not*** keep any record of observation hours and will not obtain signatures for hours after you have left BYU.

1.15 IS THERE ANY FINANCIAL AID AVAILABLE FOR BYU COMD UNDERGRADUATES?

Yes. ComD majors are eligible for a number of scholarships through the McKay School of Education (MSE). Information on these is obtained from the [advisement office](#) (350 MCKB). The MSE takes applications from mid-November to late February for scholarships offered the following Fall/Winter. You can complete one application form [online here](#) and it will submit your details for all of the available MSE scholarships.

1.16 WHAT DOES THE EDUCATION ADVISEMENT CENTER DO?

The Education Advisement Center

- Enters you into the computer system as an official pre-major or major,
- Offers advisement on meeting general and religious education requirements,
- Monitors your progress toward graduation,
- Handles exceptions and academic / administrative problems (if any),
- Maintains your permanent graduation file and approves your graduation,

- Provides scholarship application information and forms.

1.17 WHAT IS ASHA, WHAT ARE ITS BENEFITS, AND WHEN CAN I JOIN?

[ASHA](#) is the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. ASHA provides national certification in the profession; works with states to set professional standards; publishes journals to disseminate research in speech, language, hearing, and their disorders; and sponsors a national convention (where papers are presented and products displayed) and other workshops and educational efforts. In speech-language pathology, persons who complete a master's degree (including specified coursework and clinical practicum), complete a supervised, paid first-year on the job (the Clinical Fellowship Year), and pass a long multiple-choice test are eligible to join ASHA and receive national certification (the Certificate of Clinical Competence, also called the CCC). By paying membership dues, you can have online access to the ASHA journals, remain certified, vote for officers, and receive other benefits.

1.18 WHAT IS NSSLHA, WHAT ARE ITS BENEFITS, AND WHEN SHOULD I JOIN?

NSSLHA, the [National Student Speech-Language-Hearing Association](#), is the student branch of ASHA. Typically pronounced "nish-luh," it exists both at a national level and as a local chapter at BYU. Membership in the national NSSLHA (student fees are \$60 which gives you online access to the ASHA journals, as well as a discount on the cost of joining ASHA after your graduation, which you will want to do if you stay in the field. NSSLHA membership also gets you a reduced price on registration for the annual ASHA national convention, access to a job placement service, and other benefits.

The [local chapter of NSSLHA](#) sponsors guest speakers, service projects, and social events. Membership in the local chapter costs \$15 per year.

1.19 WHAT ARE SOME OF THE OTHER PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN THE FIELD OF COMMUNICATION DISORDERS?

The state professional association in Utah is [USHA, the Utah Speech-Language Hearing Association](#). USHA typically sponsors one state conference per year and works on professional and legal issues in the state.

Many audiologists are affiliated with the American Academy of Audiology (AAA). AAA sponsors a national convention and other resources for audiologists, including a website (www.audiology.org). Ask an audiology faculty member for more information.

1.20 ARE THERE OTHER STUDENT CLUBS OR OPPORTUNITIES TO GET INVOLVED?

In addition to the NSSLHA club explained above, BYU has an Audiology club. BYU's Audiology Club offers students several benefits:

- Educational opportunities related to the field of audiology in addition to in-class content
- Connecting students with real, working audiologists
- Facilitating hands-on audiology experiences

BYU's Audiology Club holds monthly events such as career panels, grad school nights, hearing screenings, and fun socials! You can also follow the Facebook or Instagram pages to stay connected with other students and events. The membership fee for BYU's Audiology Club is \$10. To officially become a member please visit: <https://clubs.byu.edu/link/Clubs/Audiology-Student-Association>.

There are also opportunities to become involved in research, teaching assistantships, clinical situations, and peer mentoring. The office manager will email all the ComD students about many of these opportunities. There are ComD labs that involve undergraduate student research assistants. You will need to reach out to faculty members who conduct research that interests you. You can find each faculty member's research interest on the [Faculty Directory](#) page.

Once you have completed a course with a high grade, you can also ask that professor if you can become a Teaching Assistant (TA) for them.

ComD Peer Mentors empower other students to achieve their potential – in the major and in other aspects of college life. More information can be found below in Section 4 and [here](#).

2. CLASSES, FACULTY, AND PLANNING AHEAD

2.1 CAN I WORK CLINICALLY BEFORE EARNING A MASTER'S OR DOCTORAL DEGREE?

You can't legally or ethically work as a speech-language pathologist before earning a master's degree. Likewise, you can't legally or ethically work as an audiologist without earning a doctoral or audiology degree. Working as a speech-language pathology assistant or audiology assistant is only legal under the direct supervision of a licensed speech-language pathologist or audiologist. It is only ethical to provide services when you are competent to do so.

2.2 HOW ARE GRIEVANCES HANDLED IN THE COMD DEPARTMENT?

We follow the university's [Grievance Policy](#):

Students may contact the department chair and then the dean of the McKay School if they feel their problem has not been solved by working with the individual professor. They may also contact the CAA, the accrediting affiliate of ASHA. The address of the CAA is as follows: Council on Academic Accreditation, 2000 Research Boulevard #310, Rockville, MD 20850-32891. They can also be reached at (800) 498-2071.

2.3 HOW CAN I INTERACT MORE WITH FACULTY OUTSIDE OF CLASS?

All faculty members keep regular office hours, and they can also meet with students by appointment. Make an appointment or drop in during office hours to introduce yourself, ask questions, share comments about class, and so on. If you are interested, you could also consider getting involved in faculty research.

2.4 SHOULD I GET INVOLVED IN RESEARCH? HOW DO I DO THIS?

This depends on your interests and available time. If you get involved in faculty research and do well, it will broaden your experience in the field and allow you to make a contribution to the profession. It could potentially strengthen your application for graduate admission, at BYU or elsewhere, but this should not be your motive for engaging in research.

Read the faculty publications, faculty vitae, and recent theses that can be found on the library's website. Volunteer as a research participant whenever possible. Show initiative in learning what faculty are doing. If that work is intriguing to you, decide if you have the time and energy to volunteer. In some cases, student wages may be available from a faculty member's grant funding.

3. GRADUATE SCHOOL AND AFTER GRADUATION

3.1 WHAT CAREER OPTIONS OTHER THAN COMD ARE POSSIBLE FOR COMD MAJORS?

As noted above, a bachelor's in ComD is a liberal arts degree, emphasizing human communication and connections between the physical sciences, biological sciences, and behavioral sciences. If you are not applying to graduate school, go to [BYU Career Services](#), ask to be treated as a liberal arts major (like communications or English nonteaching), and let them help you find a pleasing career path.

A bachelor's degree in ComD could be a pre-law degree if you took Philosophy 205, several other philosophy classes, and an LSAT prep class. It would also be a good pre-MPA degree; plan to squeeze in a couple economics classes, and a GRE or GMAT prep class. It is not a good pre-med degree unless you start early in the pre-med program and take all the chemistry and other science courses required for medical school.

3.2 HOW DO I GET INTO GRADUATE SCHOOL?

Get excellent grades; be known in positive ways by the faculty; get strong, supportive letters of recommendation; and [file all application materials](#) on time. Our department application deadline for the master's program is January 15th each year.

3.3 HOW DO I GET LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION?

Ask faculty members who know you and whose classes you have done the best in. It doesn't matter if they can't remember your name and academic history offhand. Allow them at least two to three weeks of lead time and provide them with information about what programs you will be applying to and when applications are due. Most faculty prefer (and some require) a short résumé, containing grades in courses and favorable things they might mention. By waiving the "right of access," you give the recipient of your recommendation letter greater confidence in the letter's accuracy (and even if you don't waive access, you only have access to the letter if you're admitted to and attend that school).

3.4 CAN I GET INTO BYU'S COMD MASTER'S PROGRAM (WHICH COVERS SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGY)?

The BYU ComD master's program is competitive. Many more students apply than can be admitted. Admission decisions are based on many factors, including your grades, your background and

experience, your academic, clinical, and research potential, and your perceived fit with the university and department mission. Every applicant is considered as an individual.

A program profile, listing graduate admissions and completion statistics, is available online [here](#).

3.5 WHAT ABOUT SLP (SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGIST) MASTER'S PROGRAMS OUTSIDE OF BYU?

There are over 300 SLP programs across the country, enough that students above a 3.5 GPA for the last 60 credit hours can *usually* get in somewhere. Programs for the AuD (doctor of audiology) are generally less difficult to get into than SLP programs. In our field, getting a bachelor's and master's from the same school has no stigma to it, as the two degrees together constitute a general education in the field. Changing schools gives you a more diverse perspective, but you may have to backtrack and take a few extra courses. If you are interested in learning about other programs, [ASHA EdFind](#) is a good online tool for getting started.

4. HONOR CODE AND RELATED ITEMS

4.1 HONOR CODE STANDARDS

It is our expectation that each student will abide by all Honor Code standards. Call the Honor Code Office at (801) 422-2847 if you have questions about standards.

4.2 PREVENTING SEXUAL DISCRIMINATION OR HARASSMENT

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 prohibits sex discrimination against any participant in an educational program or activity that receives federal funds. The act is intended to eliminate sex discrimination in education and pertains to admissions, academic and athletic programs, and university-sponsored activities. Title IX also prohibits sexual harassment of students by university employees, other students, and visitors to campus. If you encounter sexual harassment or gender-based discrimination, please talk to your professor or contact the Equal Opportunity Office at (801) 422-5895 or (888) 238-1062 (24 hours), <https://titleix.byu.edu/>, or contact the Honor Code Office at (801) 422-2847.

4.3 STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

If you have a disability that may affect your performance in a course, you should get in touch with the University Accessibility Center (2170 WSC) or at (801) 422-2767. This office can evaluate your disability and assist the professor in arranging for reasonable accommodations.

4.4 EQUITABLE TREATMENT STATEMENT

In our clinic, services are provided on equitable basis without regard to gender, sexual orientation, age, race, creed, national origin, or disability.

4.5 FOSTERING AN ENVIRONMENT OF EQUITY AND BELONGING

In the Department of Communication Disorders, we are dedicated to advancing the principles of covenant belonging, in line with BYU's strategic plan and in collaboration with the BYU Office of Belonging, BYU Undergraduate Education, McKay School of Education, and the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. To achieve this vision, we have introduced the Belonging Ambassador program by introducing two Belonging Ambassador positions, aimed at cultivating a diverse, equitable, and inclusive environment for all our students, faculty, and staff.

Our Belonging Ambassadors are committed to:

Promoting Inclusion and Belonging

Our Ambassadors actively work to foster a sense of belonging for historically under-represented groups within the Department of Communication Disorders. They recognize the importance of and need for diverse experiences and perspectives in our profession and are dedicated to addressing this need.

Enhancing Cultural Education

We believe that enhancing the cultural education experience of BYU students to meet the demands of society is paramount. Our Belonging Ambassadors play a crucial role in enhancing the cultural educational experience for our students, equipping them with the knowledge and skills to excel.

Feel free to contact the Belonging Ambassadors at comdbelonging@byu.edu. Their role is to support and facilitate a more inclusive and welcoming environment for everyone within the Department of Communication Disorders.

Harmful comments/microaggressions have no place in our classrooms. Microaggressions are intentional or unintentional words, behaviors, or aspects of an environment that communicate

negative insults toward individuals from minoritized groups. As both faculty and students continue to foster a sense of belonging and equity, we hope to become more comfortable addressing these hurtful behaviors and their impact on students. If you have experienced or witnessed microaggressions and want to communicate your experience in a safe space, please use this anonymous survey link: https://byu.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_3K1Hrcct6JH3P1k

4.6 OTHER USEFUL RESOURCES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The Belonging and Equity committee of ComD (BE in ComD) has put together a collection of useful resources on [this page](#). It includes Financial information, resources from our college and ASHA, and various other useful places to find information.

As you are planning to apply to the COMD major or are newly admitted, the BE in ComD committee also provides Peer Mentors. The goal of the ComD Peer Mentoring Program is to empower students to realize their full potential both in the Communication Disorders major and beyond. Peer mentoring is available for all students and particularly encouraged for students from underrepresented groups. We strive to develop a sense of belonging in individuals as well as a culture in the Communication Disorders major and beyond.