

The Higher Education Data System (HES): Value and Benefit to the Discipline

Loretta Nunez, Director of Academic Affairs, ASHA
Cheryl Messick, Vice President for Communications, CAPCSD
Colleen O'Rourke, Former Board member, CAA

The Higher Education Data System (HES) is a centralized Web-based system that collects data from communication sciences and disorders (CSD) academic programs. The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA), the Council of Academic Programs in Communication Sciences and Disorders (CAPCSD), and the Council on Academic Accreditation in Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology (CAA) collaborated on the design and development with an external vendor. The HES facilitates online data collection for six instruments, provides search capabilities through EDFIND (ASHA's public search interface for learning about graduate programs), and integrates data from the surveys and accreditation reports.

Aggregate data collected from the HES are analyzed and subsequently published as public reports (e.g., *CAPCSD Demographic Survey Report*, *CAPCSD Salary Report*, *Joint ASHA-CAPCSD Research Doctoral Survey Report*, and supplemental reports from the Graduate Guide Survey). Individual program data from the Graduate Guide Survey appear in EDFIND, and data from the CAA reports are used by the CAA in accreditation review.

The HES is of value to many different user groups in the discipline, including academic programs, students, CAPCSD, CAA, and ASHA. For academic programs and CAPCSD, the value lies in increased reporting efficiency, marketing individual programs in EDFIND, and contributing data to published standard reports about the discipline. Students benefit from EDFIND's focus on master's and doctoral programs in audiology, speech-language pathology, and speech and hearing science. The HES provides access to specific, customized data (e.g., listings of academic programs) and offers search capabilities by state and program characteristics. Since June 2007, there have been over 500,000 Web visits to EDFIND and more than 1 million views of EDFIND search results on individual-program detailed information pages. The value of the HES to CAA is twofold: (a) The HES data allow for a trend analysis across accredited programs, and (b) the HES enables consistency in program reporting. ASHA benefits from the HES data reports that inform ASHA initiatives undertaken on behalf of the discipline (e.g., the PhD shortage in higher education, personnel shortages in speech-language pathology and audiology, recruitment and retention of diverse student populations, international issues, specialization, research initiatives, and advocacy).

Program directors should know that data collected in the HES prepopulate other instruments and applications; ongoing participation lessens the response burden; standard reports will be publicly available; and HES information will be used to address initiatives important to CSD. Therefore, program directors' participation is essential. Further, program directors' participation in completing HES instruments allows national level marketing through EDFIND. Through HES, programs will have access to comprehensive aggregate data to inform important programmatic decisions and faculty initiatives (e.g., grant applications); also, ASHA, CAPCSD, and CAA will have current data to inform and initiate programs that are important to academic programs, the professions, and the discipline.

For further information about the HES, please contact hes@asha.org or visit the HES Web site at www.asha.org/hes. Information about EDFIND and access to the EDFIND search interface can be found at www.asha.org/edfind.