



STATE OF TENNESSEE  
**ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR THE  
EDUCATION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

710 James Robertson Parkway  
7<sup>th</sup> Floor, Andrew Johnson Tower  
Nashville, Tennessee 37243-0380

August 1, 2008

Governor Phil Bredesen  
Tennessee State Capitol  
Nashville, TN 37243-0001

Dear Governor Bredesen:

As your appointees to the Advisory Council for the Education of Students with Disabilities and as concerned voters and stakeholders we urgently request that you do everything possible to keep the University of Tennessee, Knoxville's Department of Audiology and Speech Pathology (ASP) open and fully functioning. This well-respected program fulfills a critical need for services within our state and across the country. 100% of our ASP graduates are hired immediately and many stay and contribute their considerable talents to our own citizens in East Tennessee.

As we are sure you are aware, in the last 14 months the department served around 2,500 patients from 25 counties. Over 500 medical personnel regularly refer patients to the program. About 38% of the services are administered to indigent populations who are critically at risk. Contracts with nine different county school systems to serve children with hearing impairments will cease to exist if the department of ASP is abolished. The steady flow of practicum students into our local schools and hospitals creates a synergy of sharing information and techniques that keeps us on the cutting edge of best practices. This would all be sacrificed if the UTK Department of Audiology and Speech Pathology is discontinued.

We understand that the building which houses the Speech and Language clinic is to be spared by the real estate agreement that requires the center to operate until 2057. Yet, without students to staff the facility, even an outside operator would be hard pressed to make the enterprise viable.

The Knoxville News Sentinel recently reported that all of our Tennessee newborns are now required to undergo a hearing test before leaving the hospital. Who will intervene when those hearing tests reveal a problem? Options for treatment for already traumatized and overburdened families in East Tennessee will be cruelly cut off.

Who will be there for our thousands of children with speech delays and pathology? Who will be there for the burgeoning population of children with autism (now one in 150), many of who could be significantly improved, or even have their diagnosis removed with early intervention?

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August 1, 2008

It seems that abolishing the UTK Department of ASP could cost the State of Tennessee millions upon millions of unnecessary dollars down the road as school systems scramble to catch up with the effects of a lack of early intervention. As people who care deeply about the education and support of our students with disabilities, we urge you to please save the UTK Department of ASP. This is a valuable resource we can't afford to lose.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'James Topp', written over a horizontal line.

James Topp, Ph.D., Chairman  
Representing the members of the Governor's Advisory Council on the Education of  
Students with Disabilities

cc: John Petersen, President, UTK  
UTK Board of Trustees  
Jan Simek, Interim Chancellor  
Bruce Bursten, Dean of Arts and Sciences  
Dr. Ilsa Schwartz, UTK Department of ASP Director