Applying to Graduate School in COMD

9-18 months prior to application deadline:
√ Visit the ASHA website for all accredited programs http://www.asha.org/gradguide/ Research the school – who are the faculty, what are the clinical facilities, what is the length of the program?

√ Schedule a time to visit the campus and department of potential schools. Ask each school what you need to do to improve your chances of being admitted. If you NEED to start grad school during a specific semester, apply to at least 5 schools unless you are not willing to move - then you can take your chances by applying to one (but realize you greatly reduce chance of admission). Few schools allow for Spring admission.

√ Get a study guide for the Graduate Records Exam (GRE). Purchase one with a CD, so you can take computer based practice tests. There are free resources on the GRE website http://gre.com Take the GRE 6 months before the application deadline (summer before senior year), so you can retake it if needed AND you aren’t worrying about the GRE while you are working on finalizing applications.

√ Work on your letter of intent. Why do you want to go to graduate school? Why do you want to be an SLP/AuD? Why do you want to go to a specific program? Highlight professional, life, and research experiences, leadership and volunteer activities, and honors/awards that make you special. Ask several people to proof read your letter and get their suggestions. The Career Planning Center Campus Life Building 815-753-1641 http://www.niu.edu/cppc and/or the Writing Center Stevenson South – Lower Level, Tower B 815-753-6636 http://www.engl.niu.edu/writing_center can help you with your letter. Letters are typically 1-2 pages long, although some programs have word limits.

6 months before application deadline
√ Take the GRE. You’ll want the admissions committee to have your score by the time they meet to review application. If you are taking it close to the deadline, you will want to send a copy of your scores as soon as you get it. Know four schools you want to apply to before taking the test.

√ Approach faculty in person (4-5 months before application deadline) and ask them if they will write you a favorable letter of recommendation regarding your potential success as a graduate student. Remember that finals week and the beginning of a semester are hectic for everyone, so you need to schedule this initial meeting 3-5 weeks into the semester. It takes time to write letters of recommendation (and COMD faculty are asked to write a lot), so it is important you offer them plenty of time to complete your request. You will want to give them all of the forms at least one month (two months is better) before the due date.

4-8 weeks before application deadline:
√ Give faculty who will write your letters all of the necessary forms. Ask the faculty how they prefer you contact them if the school has not received your letter (email, phone, in person) – and when they would like that reminder.

√ Each school has a different letter of recommendation form, so if you are applying to multiple schools, you will need multiple forms. If you print out the forms from the internet, make sure you print out the entire form (some are multiple pages) AND use paper with a heavier bond than typical copy paper. Many use online submission of forms.

√ Fill out the form prior to giving it to your letter writers. There is a place where you can waive your right to read the letter once you are admitted to that program. If you waive your right to read what was written, the admission committee may be more confident that the letter writer said everything that
needed to be said. If you do not waive your right, you may read the letter AFTER being admitted to a program. You can fill in the faculty’s name, address, phone – so they just have to sign and date. Include an addressed and stamped envelope (provide security or thick envelopes) so the form can be mailed once it is completed. Fill in the envelope’s return address area with the faculty’s name and campus address. Information you should provide faculty so they can write your letter:

- your overall GPA, your COMD GPA, GREs if you know them
- a reminder including work and/or volunteer activities
- a written summary of your career aspirations and/or a copy of your letter of intent
- a list of the programs you are applying to and the application deadlines and any special instructions – (e.g. use letterhead or sign the back of the sealed envelope)

√ Faculty tend to be disorganized at times, so it is best if you give them everything at once (in a folder/envelope is nice). If you have to make additions or changes, write faculty a note and ask that it is put in their box. If you are adding information, make sure it is well labeled with your name and purpose. If you want to know the exact date, a letter writer sends your letter to the graduate program, ask the letter writer to send you an email on the date they send the letter.

√ FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974) requires that you give faculty written permission to include information concerning your grades, GPA, class rank, and any course titles that correspond to that type of information in a letter of recommendation. The letter of recommendation will not become part of your academic record, so the faculty member will keep your ‘permission form’ and letter of recommendation in their office.

√ Send application materials at least a week before the deadline to make sure your application makes it to the right place by the deadline. You should receive a letter confirming everything was received. You should call the graduate school and/or the department to check on the status of your application if you haven’t heard anything after a couple of weeks.

**Chances of admission**
√ Each school has their own formula for determining admission, so you will need to check with each prospective school. Usually four items are assessed and ranked:
  - Overall GPA and sometimes COMD GPA – most schools have a minimum 3.0 GPA, but you need to be aware of the average GPA of admitted students – usually around 3.5 GPA.
  - GRE scores – Scores around 1000 are the norm. Students earning under 800 are having difficulty being admitted in an SLP/AuD program.
  - Letters of Recommendation – saying you will perform well in a graduate program. At least two should come from academic faculty.
  - Letter of Intent – this needs to be well written and indicate why you are a good match for a specific program.

**Ms/Mr Manners**
√ It is appropriate to let your recommendation letter writers know the results of the application process. √ You will receive notification several months after you apply concerning your admittance in a specific program. If you say you will attend a specific program, realize you are taking a spot. If you decide not to attend for any reason, you **MUST** tell the program immediately in order to allow a student on the wait list to enroll in the program. Imagine if you were first on the waitlist!