

AVAA Amplifier



Extern Edition

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Special points of interest:

- President's Message
- Now What?
- Extern Q&A
- "Pets of AVAA"
- Resume Wizard



President's Message by David Jedlicka, Au.D.

The experience of transitioning from student to professional will be one of the most exciting of your career. While you might feel some stress or anxiety due to the uncertainty of what comes next you hold a great opportunity in your hands. Once you graduate you now can choose any path in the field of audiology. VA externs are some of the most sought after candidates for audiology positions after graduation. In only the last few years, VA externs have started careers in private practice, ENT offices, industry, research, schools/intermediate units, military, and some are now working towards their PhD. There will be a large portion of you reading this newsletter that will have a very long and rewarding career in the VA. Regardless of where you end up, due to your graduate education and your VA externship experience, you now have the ability to become an exceptional audiologist.

One of the biggest challenges that you will face is figuring out what you will do next in your career. The first position that you obtain after graduation doesn't have to be the one that you keep for the rest of your life. This position can serve many different purposes, but most importantly, this first position should still be used as a time for you to continue to learn and refine your career. Our profession is one that will require you to constantly learn and adapt. As an audiologist you should always see yourself in a state of becoming, because there is always new and updated information to learn. Throughout your journey as an audiologist, your passions in the field will change. This means you may find yourself changing career paths along the way to fit those needs. If you find yourself feeling unsatisfied in your position or facing burnout, then you have a responsibility to find new ways to reignite your passion or find a new position. Always remember, audiology is a career, not a job.

With graduation on the horizon, you no longer have to worry about following a class schedule or meeting with advisors about potential clinic placements. You now get to choose your own path. As you start this independent journey, I hope that you will take two things with you.

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First, you should never stop investing into the field of audiology. Volunteering with local, state, and national organizations is a fantastic way to give back to the field. As a young professional you have the opportunity to bring new ideas and insights to organizations that, like you, always need to evolve. Volunteering with organizations such as AVAA, AAA, and state organizations is a great investment of your time. You've invested 8 years of your life into audiology through education and it shouldn't stop because you've earned the AuD.

Second, at some point you may find yourself with the opportunity supervise and precept students. Teaching AuD students the clinical skills they need to succeed is another rewarding experience. Take some time to think about the supervisors you have worked with who made a difference in your career. Think about what it was that made them so special. You may have the chance to provide that same type of clinical education to a student who will look at you in the same light as the person you thought of.

The AuD class of 2021 faced unprecedented and unexpected challenges on the path to graduation. Your ability to adapt to these changes through changing education methods and abrupt modifications to clinical procedures proves that you are ready for any challenge. We all wish you the best of luck and want you to know that we will be proud to call you our colleagues in the future.

Now What? By Megan Kennedy, Au.D.

For those of you in the final few months of your externships, this can be a very exciting, though anxiety-provoking, time. You were accepted into graduate school, worked hard during classes and clinicals, grew your knowledge and skills through great externship programs and now you are almost at the finish line... graduating as a Doctor of Audiology! However, sometimes with the end goal in sight, it can leave you with the question, "Now what?"

I finished my 4th Year Externship in Audiology at the VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System and graduated with my Au.D. in May of 2019. I was then fortunate enough to land my "dream job" as a full-time VA Audiologist at the VA Pittsburgh immediately after graduation. In the last few months of my externship, though, amidst job applications and interviews, navigating through licensure, and balancing my areas of interest in the field, I found the question of "Now what?" echoing through my head often.

Now, add a pandemic on top of that and overwhelming may seem like an understatement. My goal in writing this article is to offer some advice to all of the VA Externs finishing up their externships and looking ahead at their bright futures with a little bit of anxiety. Here are some tips that helped me move from “Now what?” to “I got this” that I wish I would have known earlier:

Stay Organized and Plan Ahead: You spent a lot of time in your graduate education reviewing the licensure process and learning the specifics for your state. But once you start the licensure application, new questions and tasks can make it seem like you aren’t as prepared as you thought. My biggest advice is to begin your state’s licensure process as soon as possible. The earlier you have an idea of the steps necessary and the specific items that need to be completed to become licensed, the easier it will be to complete the licensure application in a timely manner. Also, some items necessary for licensure require processing time or additional work on your end. For example, Pennsylvania, where I am licensed, requires a background check; you need to get fingerprinted and wait for your results to return before that portion of your licensure application is considered complete. This takes more than a day or two, so if you are in a hurry to get licensed, tasks like these can hold you up. For some of you who have jobs lined up and are waiting on your licensure to begin practicing, the best thing you can do is have each step of your application completed as early as you can so you aren’t trying to complete the entire application in a short amount of time. Overall, open your licensure application early so you know what is needed, keep the information that you need organized, and complete each step of the application as soon as you can.



Be Patient: This was probably the most frustrating lesson that I learned and the one that I wish I would have realized sooner when I was applying for jobs. Once you have completed the licensure application, the job applications and the interviews, you realize that a lot of the process is waiting. Unfortunately, no matter how prepared you are, a lot of the steps involved in graduating, applying for jobs, interviewing, and on-boarding just take time. During that waiting time, stress and anxiety can often seem unbearable. However, this is truly a time where stressing out and fixating on the “what ifs” do nothing but make the process harder. As difficult as it may seem, remember that you did your part of the work and try to be patient while everyone else does their part.

You Aren't Done Learning: During the job application and job interview process, I often felt like I still wasn't prepared to be completely on my own and that I had more to learn. I remember a specific job interview where I was unsure of the right answers to many of the questions that were asked and it left me feeling like I had failed after four years of hard work. However, what life as a "recent graduate" in full-time audiologic work has taught me is that I did not have all the answers after graduation and I still don't. Every day I learn something new that sharpens my skills, whether it is through my co-workers, continuing education or just more experience in the field. So if you feel like you don't have all the answers now, that's okay. You will keep learning and improving as you go... and that's a good thing!

Be Confident: One of the most difficult transitions for me when moving from an extern to a full-time, independent practitioner was realizing just that... my independence. When I began working as a licensed audiologist at the same facility that I had completed externship, I often felt as if I wanted to ask my previous supervisors for help on every case I had. It was hard work to teach myself that this was *my* patient and *my* case, so I needed to do what *I knew* was best. This does not mean that you can't ask for help, but I realized that my urge to go back to my supervisors often wasn't because I truly needed their help but because I wanted validation that what I was doing was correct. So be confident in your skills and try to remember the difference between needing guidance and needing someone to validate that what you are doing is right.

During the next few months, there will be a lot of change and growth as you transition from an extern to a licensed Audiologist. While it seems easier said than done, enjoy the process and remember all of the hard work you have done to reach this point. This should be a time of excitement, celebration and opportunity as opposed to stress and anxiety. Our field looks forward to seeing all that you have to offer!

Audiology Q&A: You Ask, We Answer!

How to get a job in the VA after you complete an externship?

Completing your externship year at the VA is a great way to increase your chances of being hired as an audiologist in the VA system. If you are interested in staying at the VA [usajobs.gov](https://www.usajobs.gov) is the best source to find current VA audiology career opportunities.

You can also keep an eye out for positions that are advertised through the VA audiology listserv. This is a great way to get in contact directly with individuals at that facility to find out more about their opening. Lastly, don't be afraid to search simply by asking your supervisors or manufacturer reps if they know of any VA audiology positions. It never hurts to ask!

What is the percentage of externs that get hired on after completion?

This is a very interesting question and one that we recently asked in our AVAA Membership Survey. Based on the responses that we've received thus far, just over 50% of VA audiologists that responded to the survey indicated they completed their externship at the VA.

If I take a non-VA job next but am interested in returning to the VA in the future, what advice would you give?

There is a saying among federal employees that "the easiest way to get a job in the VA is to already be a VA employee". As you can see from the question above, that motto isn't 100% accurate. Being a VA employee may make the process easier to find an audiology position at the VA, however working outside of the VA would not prevent you from joining the VA again later in your career.

What's the best place to find jobs after graduation?

As we mentioned above, if you are interested in staying with the VA, usajobs.gov is a great place to start. There are several other great options available such as Hear Careers which will have postings for many types of audiology positions that are open across the country.

At this stage in your career you probably have a great network of professors, supervisors, and peers that you can reach out to and see if any of those individuals know of potential audiology positions. You never know what you may find by simply asking!

How many VA audiologists still enjoy their work?

This might be the most difficult question in this list to answer. When you look at national surveys that ask this question, VA audiologists tend to rank highly in terms of job satisfaction. Now, you may find instances where people experience burnout or have other frustrations that negatively influence their career enjoyment, but usually there are ways to overcome those obstacles.

If you ever find yourself starting to lose your passion for this profession, try to think outside of the box and find new ways to become reinvigorated. Many AVAA members report that by volunteering, serving as a mentor, or engaging in tasks outside of the standard clinical duties have allowed them to remain enthusiastic about their work.

How many VA audiologists participate in research?

This is another challenging question to answer. Research opportunities will vary from clinic to clinic. There are some VA audiologists who are hired for research positions. If you were able to attend JDVAC Virtual, you may have found that some of the lectures and poster presentations were provided by VA audiologists who engage in research. While not every site will conduct formal research, many VA facilities will engage in Quality Improvement projects. These projects are not designed as formal research projects that have the purpose of sharing knowledge with the field, but rather they're used to ensure that clinic processes are functioning optimally. These projects are approved by an IRB board and if you have findings along the way that may help other facilities, you can seek permission from the IRB board to present your findings at conferences such as JDVAC. There will always be a need for good clinical research and good clinical Quality Improvement projects. If you have the opportunity to engage in these activities, we strongly urge you to take advantage of them!

How does your clinic handle changes to best practice standards?

Every facility will be different, but one of the signs of a good audiology clinic is changing their practices based on the most recent evidence based guidelines. Based on feedback from several clinic locations, here are the most common ways facilities report incorporating changes to follow best-practices:

- A. During staff meetings, audiologists will present information to their colleagues either from presentations or publications. This information is then used to determine what standard clinical practices need to be modified to ensure the best evidence-based care is being provided.
- B. The audiology chief or supervisor is responsible for recommending changes based on evidence-based practice guidelines.
- C. Audiologists will be designated as “subject matter experts” for specific specialties within the clinic. These individuals are responsible for evaluating the current evidence to establish and modify clinical practice guidelines.

What factors should you take into account when job searching?

The answer to this question is based on what is most important to you. Considerations such as location, pay, benefits, work environment, clinical responsibilities, opportunities for growth, and other factors should all play a role in your decision. Even though you are looking for your first position as an audiologist, you should try to find the career path which you feel will be the most rewarding and allows you to achieve your goals as an audiologist.

What recommendations do you have for determining a normal salary and benefits package as well as what should be non-negotiables?

Your initial salary range can be determined by several factors such as the location of your position, if the salary is expected to be supplemented by a sales commission, and where you are choosing to work. In the VA system, we follow the General Schedule (GS) pay scale. Most audiologists that are hired by the VA directly from graduation complete a probationary year starting at the GS-11 level. After that probationary year, the audiologist is then promoted to the GS-12 level. The salary amount for the GS levels are determined by the locality pay table.

Outside of the VA, you'll find that large hospital systems may not pay as well as a private practice. Educational audiologists are also known for not necessarily being at the high end of the pay scale, but they also have the benefit of summer breaks. Ultimately you will need to determine the audiology setting to start your career. From there you can use several sources available on the internet to show comparable salaries for those types of positions.

One word of caution for those of you who may enter the world of private practice. You may be asked to sign a non-compete contract which could legally limit the areas where you could work if you leave that position. You should review this with a lawyer if you're asked to sign a non-compete agreement

to ensure that it is legal to do so and to ensure that you are not preventing yourself from future employment in an area where you may wish to continue to work. Additionally, if you earn a position that pays a commission based on sales, it is often recommended that the commission rate is equal regardless of the level of technology that you are selling to a patient to help minimize any ethical violations to ensure that you are providing what is best for the patient.

Ultimately, you should determine your worth and make sure that you receive a salary and benefits package that is equal or greater to that value.

Are their opportunities to connect with other VA externs?

Social media is a great platform to connect not only with VA externs, but with audiologists and audiology health techs! You can find us at our Facebook group (Association of VA Audiologists) and soon we will be introducing our Twitter and Instagram pages! Make sure to give us a follow and feel free to post and share with your colleagues.

Pets of AVAA



Here is River Potter, aka “Rivs” or “Chicken Little”, with Laura Potter, an extern from Syracuse VA. He is a 2 year old goldendoodle. He loves going to the park, swimming, and car rides. Laura says, “He’s a crazy little guy who likes a lot of attention and snuggling on the couch!”

We also have Wasp (left) and Mantis (right) from Brigid Holmes, an extern from the Pittsburgh VA. They are both Siamese mixed cats. According to Brigid, “Mantis’ hobbies include

licking windows, eating entirely too fast, and telling you exactly how long its been since she’s eaten and how she is GOING TO DIE IF YOU DON’T FEED HER THIS INSTANT. She is also a professional string chaser. Mantis is also a polydactyly in the form of having thumbs. Wasp’s hobbies include bird watching, zoomies, impeding my studies, and judging. She is a professional laser light hunter.”



Staying Involved After Graduation – by the AVAA Board

One of the hardest questions to answer after you complete your AuD is “where do I go next”? The answer to this question for most people would focus on the position they will start after graduation. While that’s a logical starting point, we have to remember that audiology is a career, not just a job. One of the most rewarding aspects of a career in audiology is through volunteering with professional organizations.

Volunteering is a great way to give back to the profession, to network, and help further advance your career. Many audiologists even report that volunteering helps them avoid burnout, stay motivated, and helps them stay current with new evidence based practices. There are a plethora of opportunities at the local and national level where you can volunteer based on your interests.

If you are staying with the VA after graduation, you will have the opportunity to volunteer with AVAA or JDVAC. Volunteering for JDVAC is a great way to meet other VA audiologists. Some of the volunteer positions include poster reviews, field submission reviews, CEU committee, and social committee just to name a few. Another great way to give back is to write a letter for the AVAA Amplifier. This newsletter is put together by volunteers on the AVAA board and features articles written by fellow VA audiologists. Without our volunteers, these newsletters would not be possible!

One common concern among new graduates is that they may not have the experience they feel is needed to volunteer. Simply having your degree means that you are qualified to serve on many committees. Having the input from a new professional is very valuable and allows organizations understand how they can best meet the needs of audiologists like you!

We strongly recommend that you volunteer after graduation and do so in a capacity that is meaningful for you. If you are interested in volunteering with the VA organizations, feel free to email AssnVAAuds@gmail.com. The American Academy of Audiology offers great volunteer opportunities for new professionals as well. You can find their volunteer opportunities at <https://www.audiology.org/get-involved/volunteer-opportunities>. Additionally, state organizations are a great place to volunteer where you can have an even bigger impact in supporting the field of audiology.

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Andy T. Audiology

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Education

2021	University of Somewhere <i>Doctor of Audiology</i>	Somewhere, CA
2017	Somewhere State University <i>Bachelor of Science</i>	Somewhere, CA

Clinical Experience

May 2020-May 2021	Au.D. Externship City Veterans Affairs Medical Center	City, CA
January 2020-May 2020	Clinical Intern University of Somewhere Speech and Hearing Center	Somewhere, CA
Fall Semester, 2019	Clinical Intern Big City Children's Hospital	Big City, CA

Summary of Skills and Qualifications

Adult and pediatric comprehensive audiological evaluations
Electrophysiology

- Auditory Brainstem Response
- Electrocochleography
- Automated Steady-State Response

And So On...
Blah Blah Blah All the Things You Can Do

Research Experience

List your 4th year capstone project here using APA style format
List any other relevant research experience (poster, working as research assistant, etc)

Memberships and Awards

Student Member, American Academy of Audiology
Some Organization's National Leadership Award Recipient
Event Chair, Meals on Wheels
Varsity Letter in Lacrosse, Somewhere State University

A resume should be a general, concise introduction of your experience and skills. Tailor your resume for each position to emphasize your skills and experiences that relevant to the work. Choose a font and layout that is easy on the eyes, with your name and contact information prominently placed at the top of the document. Be sure your name sticks with the reader, and that sections are evenly spaced. You are looking for the perfect balance of information and space.

The title section needs to include your name, phone number, address, and your email address. It is strongly recommended to use your personal email address and not your school email address because depending on your university, you may not have access to your school email address after you graduate. Some institutions will keep resumes and CVs for years, so you want to make sure they have a way to contact you in the future. Make sure your personal email address comes across as professional.

Next include your education background starting with your graduate school and then followed by your undergraduate degree information. In an audiology resume, you will not need to include an objective statement. That is what your cover letter is for! Also, we are Doctors of Audiology. We do not have Doctorates, Doctorals, nor are we “candidates” for a degree. If you have not graduated yet, put “Anticipated” followed by the expected date. *Wait....there's no GPA listed?!?! We are of the mindset that GPA does not mean as much to us as having a solid audiologic clinical skills. You are expected to have strong grades in graduate school, so if you list your GPA and it is strong, the reader just receives confirmation of what they are expecting. If you include your GPA and it is poor, then the reader may think negatively of your skills. This is one of the main reasons why we recommend not including a GPA, it can only be a negative for the reader.*

This is an example of a chronological resume. You have the option to make a functional resume however this style is more common for a person that has been in the career for a longer period. You may also wish to list skills you have mastered at each placement.

A resume at this stage of your career should only be 1 -2 pages. You want to avoid repeating yourself in the resume as bullet point should tell the reader something new about your skill set. If you list something as simple as “Completed comprehensive audiometric evaluations” on each line of every clinic placement, then you are wasting space and wasting the readers time. There are creative ways to tell the reader something new about your skills. If you say that you completed comprehensive audiometric evaluations at each placement, you can include the equipment you used, list specialized tests such as acoustic reflex testing, or mention speech in noise tests that were part of your test battery. Small inclusions such as this will enhance your resume by highlighting a wider skill set and make your resume stand out. These small inclusions should not be limited to diagnostics. You can use this for any clinical skill such as hearing aid evaluations and fittings, working with assistive devices, or specialty services. Your main job in this section is to show the reader how your skills make you the perfect fit for the position.

After you've completed the clinical skills section you have some freedom on the other sections you can include. Many audiology students will include their capstone project, volunteer experience, work experience, and professional development (aka conferences attended). Be sure to keep these inclusions relevant. It is not advisable to include things such as unimportant or unrelated jobs from many years ago. You also do not need to include obvious skills such as “Microsoft office”. The language you use in your resume is also important. Always use action verbs such as achieved, collaborated, expanded, managed. Consider including quantifiable accomplishments. For example “organized a fundraiser for SAA that resulted in x donation for y charity”. This shows off skills such as managing a team, time management, organization.

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Now that you have that part finished, you are close to having a complete resume. Before you make any edits to your resume, look at it from a distance and check for layout issues such as top-heavy/bottom-heavy, imbalanced, or too wordy.

You need to use spellcheck and read your resume several times to make sure there aren't any errors, inconsistencies, or issues in the document. Have your friends and family read it as well because a fresh set of eyes can help you catch errors you may have overlooked. Once you're satisfied with the document your next step should be having someone who routinely reviews audiology specific resumes critique your resume. One of the best services available for this is the American Academy of Audiology's Resume Review service. If you are a member of the Student Academy of Audiology (and we hope you are!) you can email resumereview@audiology.org to have your resume reviewed by an audiologist with experience in critiquing resumes. This is a service that you can continue to use after graduation as long as you are a member of the American Academy of Audiology. Additionally, you can feel free to email Dr. David Jedlicka at David.Jedlicka@va.gov or Dr. Erica Dombrowsky at Erica.dombrowsky2@va.gov for a free resume review as well as long as you are a student at the VA. It's important to save your resume as a PDF so that if you need to submit your resume electronically, there are not any issues with the format changing based on the software that is being used to open the document.



You should invest a good amount of time into creating, editing, and finalizing your resume, as it truly is one of the most important documents of your career. The resume often your first introduction to a potential employer. A poorly crafted resume says a lot to a potential employer and may prevent you from being offered an interview for a position that you are seeking. A great resume will help open the door to your first career audiology position after graduate school. We hope that this guidance has given you some of the tools needed tools to create your own exceptional resume.

Special thanks to Dr. Dombrowsky and Dr. Jedlicka!