



Kenneth Shipley

Communicative
Disorders

School of Health
and Social Work

To many of us, being able to make a difference in the life of a person in need is a worthy and desirable goal. As ambition meets reality, however, few of us are able to make such a claim.

For Dr. Kenneth Shipley and the Department of Communicative Disorders of California State University, Fresno, however, making a difference is a required goal and frequently standard practice.

In the study of communicative disorders, Dr. Shipley and company concern themselves with the fields of audiology, education of the deaf and speech-language pathology, which focus on the development, problems and disorders found in the speech, hearing and language of individuals. Through their instructional program, they provide diagnostic, rehabilitative and educational services to children and adults with communicative problems.

"Our's is a tremendously challenging field," Dr.

Shipley says of the department he chairs. "I've worked as a speech pathologist since 1973, and I have never seen two patients that were the same. There are a tremendous number of variables."

Because of the ever-changing nature of today's society, Dr. Shipley says new communication problems arise each year. As a result of this increase in the "inventory" of disorders, the challenge continues to mount. He illustrates this by citing two areas of emerging concern.

"One tremendous problem is the re-culturization of new members to our society. The Hmong population is a good example. There is also a significant challenge posed by our aging society. As we grow older, communication problems become magnified because they increase in number."

The communicative disorders program has a substantial applied element built into the curriculum. The CSUF Language, Hearing and Speech Clinic provides students in each emphasis area with the hands-on training they require to be effective professionals. The on-campus clinic also provides the faculty with an opportunity to continue their research. Most importantly, however, the clinic provides the community with a means of addressing communicative disorders.

"The students are studying to be licensed and credentialed professionals, so the instruction is very controlled. At most, there is a four-to-one student/teacher ratio in all clinical work. They work in

the clinic for about three semesters. By the time they graduate, the students will have between 400 and 900 hours of on-the-job training, depending on their emphasis area.

"There is just a wide range of opportunities to do what they want to do. If someone is interested in pediatrics, that is available to them. A public school setting? That is available to them. Private practice or hospital settings? That is also available. It is also a field that allows an individual to change to a different area within the profession.

"The employment opportunities are just wide open. We cannot meet the demand, particularly in this region. I expect that to remain true for at least several more years."

Being a teacher in a helping profession provides Dr. Shipley with a most satisfying arena in which to work. He characterizes his post as a "wonderful opportunity."

"I remain a practitioner," he explains. "At the same time, I still have the opportunity to teach and pass on to young people that which I have learned. Teaching also requires me to remain current and up-to-date. I'm also allowed the option of research, which for me is one of the best possible settings."

"The characteristics of wanting to help people improve their way of life passes on to wanting to help students improve. There is an awful lot of pride in seeing someone progress — both the students as clinicians and the patients in therapy. It feels good."