

Example 1 (2015)

I believe that music is an integral element of life, on both an individual and societal level. While it can evoke the deepest emotions through personal relevance, history has also shown its capacity to connect members of communities in order to make changes, such as inciting rebellion and promoting peace. Since I was young, music has inspired and entertained me. I have taken clarinet lessons and played in many school and auditioned ensembles for the past 10 years. Now, I am minoring in music to learn more about its history and theory. I declared SLHS as my major when I realized that even with hearing aids and auditory implants, not everyone can experience music how it is intended to be heard.

This realization drove me to read articles about music perception with hearing aids and cochlear implants and I found that there has not been much done to optimize listening to music with hearing impairments. Jumping from journal to journal, it also became evident the state of the auditory system can have an effect on a person's experience with music, but music can also have beneficial and adverse effects on the auditory pathway. I am exploring aspects of this dichotomous relationship as part of a research project being conducted at *this university with three faculty members*. We are in the early stages of a longitudinal study, informally titled "MusiConn," to determine the prevalence of noise induced hearing loss in college-aged musicians. I am currently the only undergraduate student affiliated with the project and I will use the initial results to write my Honors thesis next semester. Compiling literature reviews, the hands-on aspects of recruiting, and training to conduct ABRs have cemented how rewarding research can be.

As a result of my interest in research, I've sought out projects in which I could collect and analyze my own data to fulfill Honors credit requirements rather than writing essays. For my Aural Rehabilitation class, I'm anonymously surveying teenage cochlear implant users about their musical preferences and listening behaviors. Through this, I have learned how to submit for IRB approval and write questionnaires. I look forward to presenting my results at the Frontiers in Undergraduate Research exhibition in the spring. For my Phonetics class, I am helping a native Mandarin-speaking Ph.D. student modify his accent. Although he is self-directed in advancing through textbooks full of relevant exercises, I agreed to take on a tutoring role in which I'd help him go through his exercises for a few hours per week and provide feedback and suggestions for pronunciation. This semester, he has agreed to let me record him reading a standardized passage so that I may transcribe them into IPA and look for patterns and progress showing more English phonemes. This experience has demonstrated the reward of developing a working relationship with an individual whom you can directly support, which has helped to solidify my interest in audiology. This, in addition to observing a local audiologist at her private practice, has convinced me to pursue a clinical career.

I believe the future of this field will continue to delve deeper into improving existing treatments, but also grow broader to cover more populations. As a clinician and possible researcher, I want to bring attention to musicians as a clinical population beyond the scope of noise induced hearing loss. There is a need to learn more about how music affects the auditory

system beyond possibly damaging it. So far, studies show that musicians are more adept at listening in noise and have more robust auditory responses. Information like this could be used to benefit non-musicians. For example, I want to investigate if we can produce training programs to combat age-related auditory decline or habilitate young children with aids or implants that build on music-based pedagogies.

Your program has both the clinical and research aspects that I want from a graduate program. Specifically, I would love to continue working on the MusiConn project because it is completely relevant to my interests and experiences. It would be thrilling to see how the project evolves over the next few years. As a first year graduate student, I already would be familiar with the protocol and goals of this study, and would be able to help with data collection and recruitment of other student researchers as those before me graduate. While my end goal is to become a clinical audiologist, I truly hope to continue my involvement in research during the remainder of my education, and possibly beyond. For this reason, I am seriously considering your combined AuD/PhD option. I would be honored to earn my graduate degree from this university.