

Speaking from the
HEART

“Nothing would be more rewarding than to have my students be warriors for the stuttering community in society and champion their right to have their voices heard with respect and understanding.”

– Dr. Angela Medina

Professor emphasizes research and advocacy to empower people who stutter to own their voice

For many of the three million people diagnosed with stuttering, communicating can be a physically and emotionally draining experience. But it doesn't have to be, if professor Angela Medina, PhD, CCC-SLP, has anything to say about it.

While doing a clinical rotation as a doctoral student at a university health center, a Spanish-speaking bilingual student came for help with stuttering that he said was ruining his life. “He did not display the ‘typical’ stuttering behaviors, but his anger at his inability to ‘speak correctly’ in either language was undeniable.”

She was driven to find research about bilingual stuttering, and was disappointed to find that there was not much available on the topic.

“When I saw there was no conclusive data for practitioners to assess and develop therapies for the bilingual stuttering community, I said to myself, *‘this is what I have to do.’*”

Since joining FIU in 2015 to teach a class on stuttering, Dr. Medina has mentored master’s speech-language pathology (SLP) students in an ongoing study to analyze the lived experiences of bilinguals who stutter.

“Research is coming from the wrong direction if it doesn’t acknowledge that clients have expertise of their own stuttering,” said Dr. Medina. “By having clients’ lived experiences as bilinguals who stutter drive the research process, we as practitioners can better understand the relationship between bilingualism and stuttering.”

She has also incorporated counseling techniques into the curriculum for use during stuttering therapy. “Mental and emotional stresses brought on by stuttering can be intense and overwhelming for the client. I want my students to appreciate they are treating the whole person, not just the clinical condition.”

Her crusade also entails leading Miami’s first and only chapter of the National Stuttering Association (NSA), located at FIU.

As Dr. Medina explained, stuttering in its clinically truest form is a genetic or congenital developmental condition that manifests in early childhood. About 75 percent of children who stutter outgrow the condition by puberty, but the remaining 25 percent will stutter the rest of their lives.

“The NSA empowers people who stutter to embrace their voice, take control of their stuttering rather than letting it control them, and educate the rest of us to give them the latitude they need to communicate.”

Dr. Medina is optimistic her graduate SLP students will also one day advocate for the stuttering community that is often underserved by practitioners.

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INSIDE COMMUNICATION SCIENCES & DISORDERS

Chair: Monica Hough, PhD, CCC-SLP

Program(s):

- Master of Science in Speech-Language Pathology (MS-SLP)
- Graduate Certificate in Communication Sciences & Disorders

Student Enrollment (in and out of state):

89 (degree program); 142 (graduate certificate program)

Number of Graduates: 43

Graduation Rate: 93%

First-Time Board Certification Pass Rate: 98%

Overall Annual Pass Rate: 100%

Full-Time Faculty: 7

Accreditation(s): Council on Academic Accreditation in Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology (CAA) of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA)

Student Body Diversity:

