

Speech and hearing science doctoral student secures assistant professorship upon graduation

By Eden Miller, ASU News
May 4, 2025

Editor's note: This story is part of a series of profiles of notable [spring 2025 graduates](#).

R.J. Risueño's many accomplishments at Arizona State University are a testament to his leadership in the field of speech and hearing science.

[College of Health Solutions](#) Professor [Shelley Gray](#) says Risueño is a “leader in community-engaged research locally and nationally.”

Risueño began his graduate studies at ASU in 2018, completing his MS in [communication disorders](#) before moving into his [Speech and Hearing Science](#) doctoral program in 2020.

During his master's study, he also obtained a certificate in [communication disorders in multilingual/multicultural populations](#), which has assisted him in becoming a licensed and certified speech-language pathologist.

Over the course of his study, Risueño acquired several accreditations and accolades, including his professional license to practice as a speech-language pathologist and a certificate from the [Arizona Department of Education](#) to serve in this role for K–12 students.

In addition to this, Risueño received the Distinguished Early Career Professional Certificate in 2023 and the New Century Scholars Doctoral Scholarship in 2024, both of which were awarded by the [American Speech-Language Hearing Association](#).

After graduation, Risueño has landed a position as a assistant professor of speech-language pathology, where he will continue to make an impact as both an educator and researcher.

Question: What was your “aha” moment when you realized you wanted to study the field you majored in?

Answer: I always wanted to be a teacher, but I didn’t want a classroom of 20-plus students! Speech-language pathology was perfect because we typically work with students one-on-one or in small groups.

Q: Why did you choose ASU?

A: I chose ASU because of its world-renowned research in language and literacy disorders in monolingual and bilingual children. Dr. Shelley Gray’s citations have been ranked within the top 2% of cited scientists in her field. In addition, the College of Health Solutions highly values translational science which supports community uptake of evidence-based assessments and interventions.

Q: What’s something you learned while at ASU — in the classroom or otherwise — that surprised you or changed your perspective?

A: I learned how important interdisciplinary collaboration is to improving outcomes for children. Over the course of my PhD program, I have collaborated with pediatricians, teachers, speech-language pathologists and families to develop and improve screening and intervention tools for children at-risk for or diagnosed with dyslexia and developmental language disorder. It seems easiest to work alone, but working with others makes your work more meaningful and more likely to be implemented within the community.

Q: Which professor taught you the most important lesson while at ASU?

A: Dr. [\(Tamiko\) Azuma](#) taught me how to be an excellent teacher and mentor to students. It was an honor to learn about building connections with students and helping them feel welcome at ASU.

Q: What’s the best piece of advice you’d give to those still in school?

A: It’s okay to be imperfect. It’s okay to be mediocre. You can’t be the best at everything, so just be yourself.

Q: What are your plans after graduation?

A: I will be an assistant professor of speech-language pathology at [Old Dominion University](#) where I will continue my research on improving early identification and intervention of dyslexia and developmental language disorder in monolingual and bilingual children.

Q: If someone gave you \$40 million to solve one problem on our planet, what would you tackle?

A: I would tackle literacy inequities by fully funding public schools and special education.

This story originally appeared on [ASU News](#).

Main image

