



A new international mentoring forum for deaf and hard-of-hearing academics

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While ~17% of the adult population has significant hearing loss, we remain under-represented within academia outside of the field of Deaf Studies. One primary contributor to this leaky pipeline is lack of mentorship and a peer community, due to the difficulty of deaf and hard of hearing academics in recognizing one another. Hearing loss among non-signers is seldom obvious; consequently, non-signing deaf and hard of hearing academics at predominantly hearing institutions often remain isolated without guidance on how to manage the myriad of communication challenges facing academics, such as teaching, leading group meetings, addressing questions at conferences, participating in discussions at professional meetings, and serving on grant proposal panels. Adequate solutions are often not available from our hearing health care providers nor from disability services offices, which are mandated and designed to serve undergraduate students. However, the success of all academics depends on mastering these different communication challenges. To fill the mentoring gap, we have started a blog by and for academics at all career stages with some degree of hearing loss called, “The Mind Hears”. This title derives from the Victor Hugo quote “What matters deafness of the ear, when the mind hears? The only deafness, the true deafness, the incurable deafness, is that of the mind.” The goals of the blog are:

- To provide a forum for crowd-sourcing ways to minimize our challenges and share strategies for thriving in academia with hearing loss.
- To foster a network of deaf and hard of hearing academics who promote hearing inclusive strategies at universities.

Through social media (@themindhears) and networking, the blog (www.themindhears.org) has been increasing its reach to deaf and hard of hearing academics within a wide range of disciplines all around the world. We have also found support from hearing allies who want to make their communities more accessible for deaf and hard of hearing academics. Our blog posts to date include topics such as teaching large classes, making an impact at high stakes conferences and deaf gain. Hearing loss is variable and can affect us in many and different ways – but through this shared blog we hope to reduce isolation in our community and build a community toolbox of resources and ideas, providing something of value to all of those who visit and contribute to our discussions.