

# Leadership Program Has Interdisciplinary Focus | CPD

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*URLEND trainees participate in group work at a recent orientation*

Now in its 14th year at Utah State University, the Utah Regional Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental Disabilities (URLEND) program is encompassing its largest geographic location yet.

According to Judith Holt, director of the Interdisciplinary Training Division at Utah State University's Center for Persons with Disabilities, nearly 40 trainees from four states are participating in URLEND during the 2014-2015 school year.

The trainees hail from Boise and Moscow, Idaho; Minot, North Dakota; Missoula, Montana; Utah State University; Brigham Young University and the University of Utah. Five are returning for a second year focus on autism, three are family members of a person with a disability, and one is a young adult consumer who has autism. Their disciplines include speech-language pathology, audiology, nursing, special education, social work, pediatric dentistry and genetic counseling. Some are practicing professionals, and some are still in their graduate programs, Holt said.

The trainees met recently for two days of small group work, leadership seminars and relationship building in Salt Lake City.

Audiologist Daniel Roberts, now of Show Low, Arizona, participated in URLEND in 2012-2013. He had participated in the Interdisciplinary Disability Awareness and Service Learning (IDASL) class and Future Leaders

in Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology (FLISPA) program during his time at Utah State.

"I valued the experience it provided me in working with people with disabilities and learning to be a member of an interdisciplinary team," Roberts said. He expected the experience to better himself, not only as a professional, but also as a person.

"Working with children with hearing loss provides the ability to greatly impact not only the child's life, but the entire family's lives," he said. "I wanted to be as well-equipped as possible to provide the absolute best care possible. I was a student during my URLEND training. At times it was intimidating to be around experienced professionals, but they were kind and willing to help in any way possible. I was able to learn from them and soak in their expertise. URLEND was much more than I expected, and I was able to learn how to work with other professions to provide the best care possible for children with disabilities. It provided me with the confidence to enter the professional world and feel like I can contribute and make a difference."



*URLEND faculty member Vicki Simonsmeier, right, leads a small group discussion.*

Audiologist Haleigh White, currently from Layton, Utah, participated in URLEND in 2013-2014 to broaden her expertise and clinical experience. She expected to be extremely busy and to learn a lot—but the experience was better than she had hoped.

"I learned so much about other healthcare professions and our relationship as the Medical Home," she said. "I met great people, had a lot of fun, and loved the seminars."

Audiologist Steffi Rusk, now of Talkeetna, Alaska, participated in URLEND in 2013-2014 because she had heard how much emphasis was placed on interdisciplinary care.

"Interdisciplinary work is a whole new level of patient care," Rusk said. "I know that I want to incorporate interdisciplinary foundations into my practice as a doctor. I wanted to get know professionals in various fields, and it what it meant to be in their shoes. I hoped to network with some of the amazing minds that shape my field of work."

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I wanted to be able to take information that these leaders present, and apply it to my professional development.

“It was different than I had expected--it was better. I was able to accomplish all of my goals, and then find new ones to master. URLEND opened many opportunities that I was unaware of, and that I am now so happy to participate in. “

Rusk said URLEND set her a new path related to her profession.

“I am becoming more involved in the state and national level of my profession--something a second-year doctoral student doesn't even think of doing. I have adopted a project in URLEND that I hope to continue developing throughout my career.”

All three of the URLEND trainees encouraged others to participate.

“If you ever have doubts about whether URLEND is a program you'd like to join, I would recommend joining no matter your doubts,” Rusk said. “It is such a wonderful, collaborative environment that supports any learning and professional development goals.”