

# Balancing Science and Service

## ANALYZING UNIVERSITY WEBSITES' DEPICTION OF CSD PROGRAMS

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### INTRODUCTION

- Speech-language pathology (SLP) is a dynamic field requiring a combination of multiple analytical, diagnostic, interactional and relational skills (ASHA, 2016) across a range of settings.
- Between 42% and 53% of SLPs work in education settings, and 39% in healthcare settings (ASHA n.d.) including 18% in hospitals, nursing homes and residential facilities (US Department of Labor). With an estimated 19% growth rate over the next 10 years (US Department of Labor), the field is poised for massive growth and a viable option for students looking for a variety of work settings.
- Varied professions, students and even SLPs themselves have a range of perceptions regarding the field's scope of practice, roles and skillsets (Johnson & Johnson, 2007; Byrne, 2010). The disproportionately high percentage of female SLPs may purport gender-based assumptions (Lindsay, 2007a; Litosseliti & Leadbeater, 2013), which may subsequently influence motivation for this career path (Lindsay & Kolne, 2023).
- Potential students may share similar uncertainties regarding components of the field. Some may see the field as primarily a "helping" profession while others as a "science" profession, or some combination of both. University websites are often a first gate entry point for impressions, and typically serves as a precursor to visiting campus (Schimmel et al., 2010).

### RESEARCH QUESTION

How do university websites portray components of *helping* and *science* among speech-language pathology programs?



### METHODS

- Thirty randomly identified public and private university SLP department websites were reviewed (20 D1; 2 D2; 8 D3). Deductive content analysis (Byrne, 2018) was used to identify the strength of presence of *science*-based content and *helping*-based content using a 1-10 Likert scale developed by the research team.
- Websites were analyzed by two CSD undergraduate researchers collaboratively with 100% consensus achieved, and reviewed with research mentors.
- Ratings, notes and observations, and relevant website relics were recorded.
- Science* concepts: empirical studies, emphasis on research, medical pictures/images, white lab coats, emphasis on science, procedural, processes
- Helping* concepts: images of human interactions, language of helping to overcome, creating meaningful careers, client-centered compassionate care.
- Schools were divided into quadrants based on science/helping Likert ratings
- Four quadrants were operationalized:

High science (> 5);  
Low helping (≤ 5)

High science (>5);  
High helping (>5)

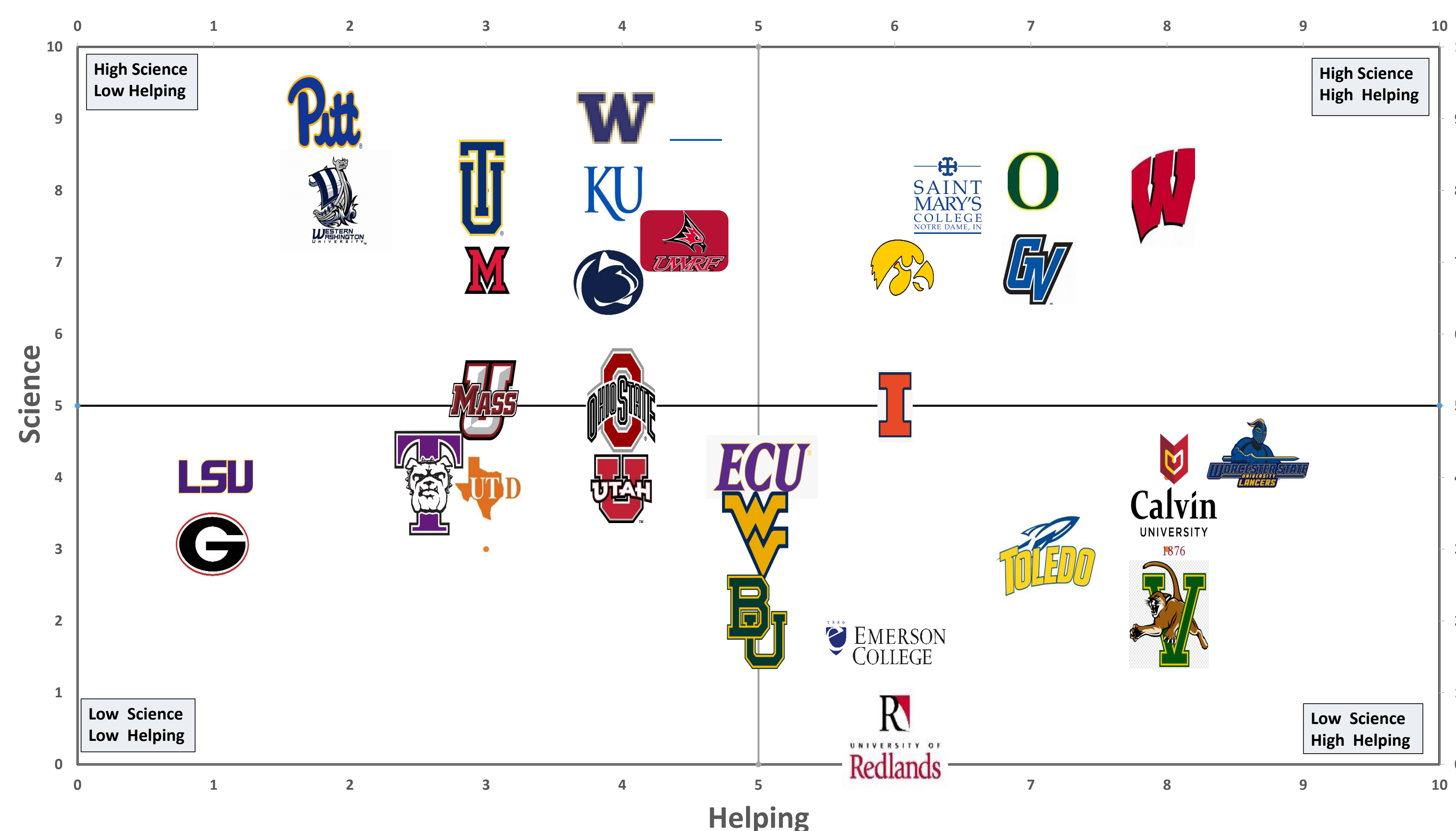
Low science (≤ 5);  
Low helping (≤ 5)

Low science (≤5);  
High helping (>5)

### WEBSITE EXAMPLE

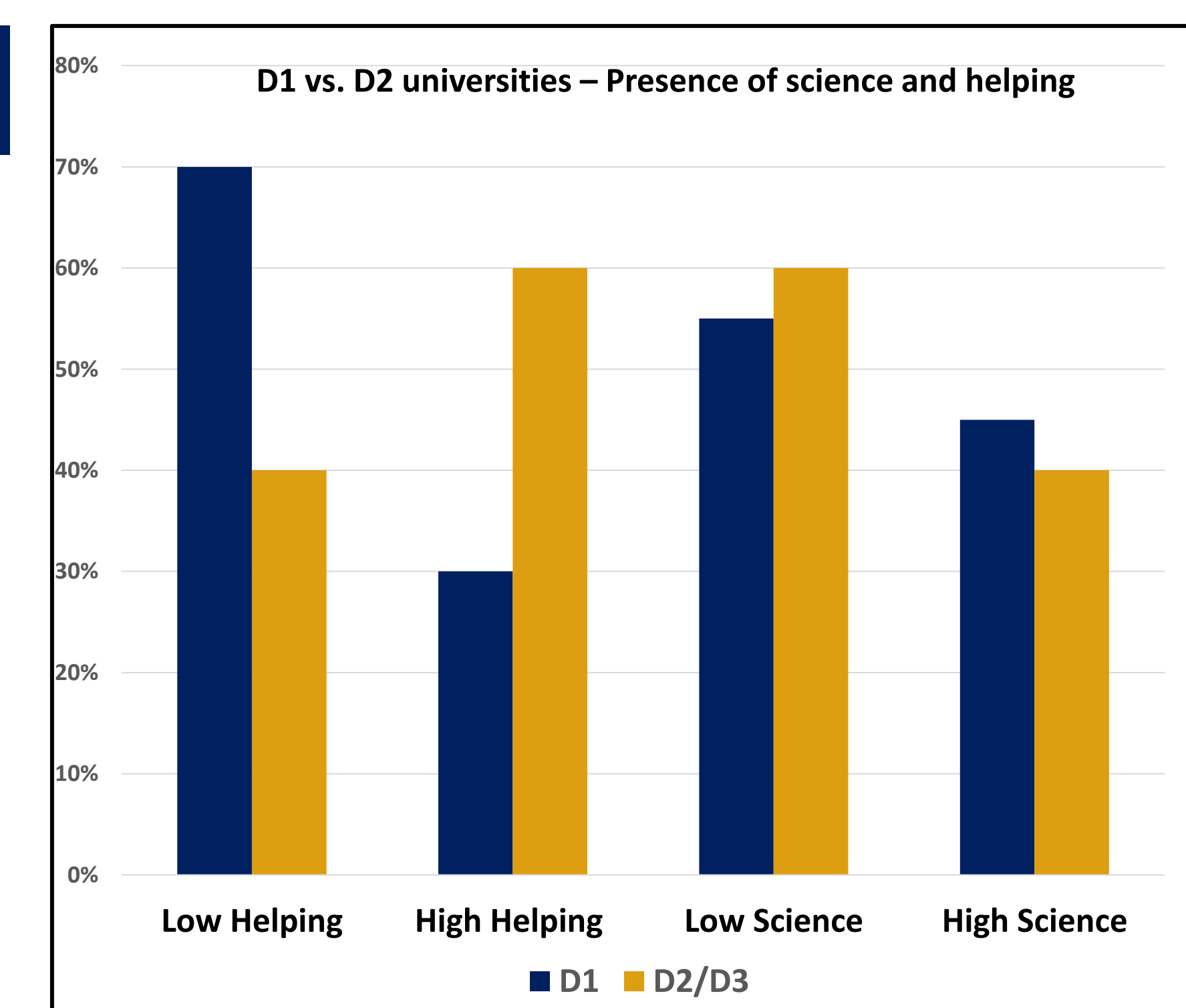
"Be a part of the next generation of insightful leaders, compassionate clinicians, innovative researchers, and dedicated teachers."  
University of Iowa

### RESULTS



### DISCUSSION

- Almost all websites included an image of a woman interacting with a child. This contributes to the perception that speech-language pathology is only a helping perception.
- We were surprised how many websites did not have a high emphasis on components of science or helping and were vague or neutral about the expectations of the field and the program. This could be problematic for a vagueness in what the field offers.
- While some websites had a variety of images others had a lack of diversity in images.
- D1 schools have a lower content of helping and D2/3 have a higher content of helping. This lack of consistency could contribute to misconceptions of the field.



### FUTURE DIRECTIONS

- We hope to survey the 2024 CSD freshman class to further learn of misconceptions and perceptions of communication sciences and disorders and speech-language pathology.
- Additionally, we want to learn more about university website marketing, and what they think incoming freshman want to hear about the major.
- We also hope to interview a university's CSD department chair to learn about marketing recruitment through websites and what that process entails.

### REFERENCES

