
Episode 49: A Continued Conversation with a Soon-to-be Audiologist {Graduate Student Journeys}

Catch up with Jordan McLaren, who graduated from St. Cloud State University this December with a Bachelor's degree in Communication Sciences and Disorders and a minor in Psychology. Jordan catches us up on everything she's accomplished since receiving her diploma, discussing how she's preparing for grad school interviews, what organizations she's been keeping busy with, and how she's staying organized with so much on her plate. Update

Discussion & Reflection Questions

1. You just finished your undergraduate program in December, and you're currently waiting to hear back from graduate schools. Have you heard anything yet?
2. What specific strategies have you been using to prepare for grad school interviews? What resources have you been using?
3. Have you read anything about what questions you might be asked during grad school interviews?
4. What are your views on the impact the pandemic has had on speech-language pathologists?
5. Tell us how you balance a full-time job with school, and how you stay organized.
6. You are an undergraduate student, and you are co-president of the Executive Committee for Minnesota Future Professionals. That is unusual for someone of undergraduate status. How did you get that?

Quote Of The Conversation

"There's always going to be a population that needs your help — that needs your love and your kindness. But you also need to do that for yourself. You are included in that population." -Jordan McLaren

Jordan McLaren

Audiology Student



Jordan McLaren just graduated from St. Cloud State University this fall with a Bachelor's in Communication Sciences and Disorders and a minor in Psychology.

She served as co-president of SCSU's NSSLHA chapter, and is the audiology student representative on the

executive board for the Future Professionals Committee. Jordan has a love for Audiology and traveling, and she plans to work with pediatric cochlear implant recipients in a medical setting upon graduation.

Keep the Conversation Going

Guest Speaker Information

Jordan McLaren

Speech-Language Pathology Student, St. Cloud State
Graduate



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Send a message to Mattie@FreshSLP.com!*

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Mattie Murrey

Do you remember we talked with a very excited audiologist-hopeful who was waiting to hear about her doctoral program? We are back with her again today, and we're going to have some updates.

Mattie Murrey

Hello, and welcome to The Missing Link for SLPs podcast. I'm glad you're here. Remember what it was like back in graduate school? Or maybe you still are in grad school. Today's episode is part of the CSD Graduate Students Journey series. In this series, I talk to students who are either in school or fresh into their clinical fellowship year. We talk and cover real subjects, like how to get into graduate school, how to find and prepare for a medical internship, thoughts on teletherapy from a student's perspective, and lots more. Get ready for some real conversations with SLP students who are at the very beginning of their careers.

Mattie Murrey

We are back with Miss Jordan. So, we are excited to hear what you have been doing between Episode 42 at the end of 2020, when we first heard you, and episode 49 where we are now. What have you been up to? And how are you doing?

Jordan McLaren

I'm great. Thank you so much for having me back. It's such a pleasure to be here. Things have been really busy. I am currently working on a few projects for the Future Professionals Committee for MNSHA, which is the Minnesota Speech Language Hearing Association. And we have some great projects in the works. And I'm very excited because they will be very immersive, and other students and professionals will be collaborating to give lots of great information.

Mattie Murrey

Sounds like you're keeping busy.

Jordan McLaren

Absolutely.

Mattie Murrey

So, bring us up to speed on your timeline. You finished grad undergraduate in December. You're waiting to get into graduate school. Have you heard yet?

Jordan McLaren

So, I actually have three interviews lined up out of my five schools. So, I'm only waiting to hear back from two. So, I have those coming up in mid-February. So, lots of preparation is being done. Lots of mock interviews with my roommates, who have been very patient. And so, I am very excited for those.



Mattie Murrey

We are starting... You know I run a membership site, and we are gearing it down more toward students who are going to be arranging some breakouts, where students can practice one-on-one interviews with each other, which is going to be super cool. So, you don't have to ask again for your roommate. The interviewing is so important, especially in the virtual setting, because if you have really positive energy, like you do — or not positive, or you know, whatever it is — you've got to navigate these parameters in a virtual setting. So, exciting. You'll have to come back on in February and let us know how those went.

Jordan McLaren

Oh, my goodness, I would love to do that. And that's something that I really appreciate, that there are platforms such as this, where students are able to come and get that information. I think so often, you know, we get stressed and we say, "Oh, I have to do all of this research for interviews, and, "How do I conduct myself, and what will the questions be?" And I think we want to be so prepared to make sure that it's successful that we forget to just practice and be ourselves. But what a great way to have other students be able to prepare them with each other. You know, we are in the same process. We understand that there's a lot riding on this. It's our passion. It's our future. This is something that we love to do. And I think we're also a lot more comfortable with our fellow students and our fellow cohorts. And so, I think that will definitely bring out our personalities a lot more.

Mattie Murrey

And you can collaborate on what to do, what not to do. I have a guest coming on, well, a little ways out yet, because I have a lot of guests lined up. But she's going to come and talk to us on what went wrong with her interview, so we can learn from that. And as tender as that moment I'm sure was, we appreciate her bravery stepping up, and your bravery being vulnerable with us today.

Jordan McLaren

Absolutely. And you know, I think that's something that a lot of students would like to hear as well. You know, and we don't see that in a negative light at all. I think, sometimes, you have to step over the line or make those mistakes to know where they are, and to know how to avoid them in the future or how to be better. And so, it's really helpful for students to be able to hear that perspective. And I speak for myself when I say I am so grateful that there are professionals like that and students like that, who are willing to come on here and share their experiences. Because I think it helps future professionals.

Mattie Murrey

It definitely does. And it makes the world just a better place. I don't think rainbows and puppies and all of those good things in life. So, it is the end of January right now. You've got interviews coming up in a couple of weeks. We'll hear about those. What specific things have you been



doing to prepare for the interviews other than practicing with your roommates? Where have you gone to find out how to do things?

Jordan McLaren

Absolutely. So, I have actually been having video conferences with some of the professionals and some of the doctors who will actually be conducting the interviews. I have conducted a lot of research on who they are, what their background is, what they have done as far as research goes, what their specialties are — just because they want to know me, their audience, and they have studied my application. I feel it's important that I need to know who my audience is, as well. Not so that I can, I think, tailor my answers to that, but so that we can have a genuine connection with one another during that interview.

And I have also been writing down a list of goals for myself. So, these are things that I want to remain true to myself. I don't want to provide answers that are well rehearsed — things that sound fake. I want to make sure that my passion shows through for what I'm doing and what I love to do. And so, those have been two things that I have been focusing on. A big thing is interviews because I'm somebody who gets nervous. So, you might be able to see me use a lot of my hands in conversation, or my voice will shake sometimes, or I will use filler words, such as, "um." So, I've actually been sitting on my floor in my living room, and I have been practicing breathing and just remaining calm. And I think that's a big thing for me because it's okay to be silent. And I realized that, sometimes, I'm not okay sitting in my own silence and thinking about things before I respond in a way that I know is true to myself, and true to what I want them to know about me. So, that's been a big thing for me, is a lot of introspection.

Mattie Murrey

Sounds like you're being very intentional with your interview skills that you're developing. Have you read anything about some of the questions that you might have?

Jordan McLaren

I have, yes. So, I actually did a lot of research on this. And something great that I came across is the Student Academy of Audiology, or the SAA. I know that a lot of doctoral programs and colleges will have a chapter, such as, we had a MNSHA chapter in our undergrad. And so, the SAA, like MNSHA and other chapters, is a great resource. And I did read a list of interview questions. And so they actually lay it out really nicely. And they say, "These are a list of general interview questions that you might experience. They can be tailored a little bit depending on where you go." But I think it was also, for me, a to-do list. So, I created a list. And some of the questions were, "How would you manage conflict if you were to be involved in a situation where that was happening, and how have you done that in the past?" Another question that they might ask you is, "Why do you want to come to our program?"

They know the obvious things, right? Because they've read the letter of intent, and they've seen, you know, your GPA and your intention coming to their university. They know you want into their doctorate program because that's why you're applying. But what they don't know is why you chose that college out of the hundreds of others across the country. And I think that's



where you get to be personal with it. You know, they've seen your grades, and they know your GPA and they know you're a good student. They know you've graduated. But now what they want to see is what your passion is. Do you want to be a student who works with cochlear implant patients? Do you want to be an audiologist who travels, who works primarily on rehabilitation or habilitation? Do you want to work with younger generations? Or maybe an older population? And so, I think I've kind of been thinking, looking at these questions on the SAA website. And I've also even researched YouTube videos. There are some great SLP and audiology students who are in the midst of applying who will actually put their own personal experiences on YouTube, which I think is another great platform aside from podcasts. Because now I get to see a student telling me in real time, or in a recorded video, what it was like for them.

Mattie Murrey

You and I are both... I have an interview for my doctoral program coming up on Monday at 3 p.m. I'm excited. I'm not really too nervous about it, but I am excited about it. Because, like you, I believe in what we're doing and where we're going, and the interview has that opportunity to let that personality shine through.

Jordan McLaren

Absolutely! Well, I do want to say congratulations. That is a very exciting step. And I think you will be great in the interview process. It was really helpful for me, I think, to go through my undergraduate with you because the passion that you have, and the love for teaching us to have the same for our field, is so contagious. And I think kindness in the world... It only takes one person to make one small step. And then it spreads like wildfire. And it's just beautiful. And so, I hope you do well in the interview process. And maybe we can share some tips here today on how we get through them.

Mattie Murrey

Right! When we call you back on — when you come back on — we both will have been through our interviews. And so, we'll have to say how it went.

Jordan McLaren

Absolutely.

Mattie Murrey

That will be fun. I have... I'm going to turn around for just a minute. I'm sitting. Let's see. There's a quote I have in here, and it says, "When words and deeds are both kind, they can change the world." And so, that, I guess, epitomizes why I do what I do. I want to, in my small little corner, change the world. And understanding why you're going into your profession, and what your objectives are, and making sure they line up with who you are as a human being is important.



Jordan McLaren

Absolutely. You know, this is a very popular thing, but they say, "When you love what you do, you're not working a day in your life." It doesn't feel like something that is forced. And that's the beautiful thing: Even though we're going through this long process of applying and interviews and being accepted — you know, and possibly going through a few more years of school — we're sacrificing our time for a lifetime of love and passion and service to others, who are going to then go and spread that. And just knowing that you've made a change in somebody's world, even if it's just a small drop in a big pond, you know, there's that ripple effect.

Mattie Murrey

And another thing about you and I. You know, we're definitely of different generations. I've got a few years on you — wink, wink. You know, people say, "Well, you know, you're just going to waste all your time." Because I'm more toward the end of my career. And I stepped into this career... I'm stepping into the doctoral program because I stepped out of many years of a clinical practice, loving what I do, stepped into the academic setting, and I thought, "Oh, I'm just going to share my stories, and the students are going to love me, and they're going to learn, and everything's just going to be great." And it didn't roll out that way.

I learned that there's a skill. There's a skill to teaching. And I greatly admire my colleagues, like Dr. Janet Tilstra, who just won a Minnesota Award for her academic teaching. I mean, she's amazing. That's what I want to be. We all have 24 hours in a day. We all, hopefully, have years in front of us. And so, we're not wasting time when we pursue our dreams. We are being intentional and proactive with how we want our lives to go, and the story that we want to write for each chapter that unfolds in front of us. So, even though I am older, I'm passionate about... My platform, or my angle, is going to be the classroom-to-clinic connection. How do I help students take what they've learned in the classroom and apply it in the clinic? Across all of the things, whether it's the clinical skills or the professional skills. But this podcast is about you. I don't learn when I talk about me. I want to learn from you. So, we're going to turn it back to you. What are your views on the impact that the pandemic has had on us?

Jordan McLaren

Yes. So, there has been a lot happening with that, especially in our field, because we are in a very hands-on field, whether you are in speech-language pathology or audiology. We are very interactive with our patients. That is how we determine progress. And that is how we assess what needs to change and what needs to become better and what we're going to do about it. And so, now, when we've moved on to this virtual platform, as you mentioned, we are all learning a completely new way of interacting with one another. And I think that's important, especially when you're interacting with patients, but also when you're interviewing for important positions.

So, because this is such an ongoing issue — this pandemic that seems to be never-ending, but we will get there — I think all of us are kind of in this transition period, where we're figuring out how to read one another's attentions when we are in a Zoom meeting. How we are going to get



to know one another and how we're going to make that connection virtually. And so, whether that be on Zoom or an online school platform, I think everybody is in the midst of kind of making this transition. And it's awkward for all of us. Let's be real. You know, this is a time to learn. But that's the beautiful thing. It's that, in our field, it's continuing education, even about the small things. We can still be successful with our patients and make those lifelong connections with them, even if it's online and virtual. And so, that's the great thing, is that it's constantly evolving. And I even think that teletherapy might be something that we'll utilize in the future, even when we're able to go back into a close, personal in-room setting.

Mattie Murrey

I agree. And virtual learning, I think, is going to continue as well.

Jordan McLaren

Absolutely. And what a great way, as well, for students and teachers to find their voice. I think, sometimes, it's comfortable when we learn our way in a classroom. I mean, I have been in a classroom now for more than 16 years. And I'm going, you know, for another four, which will be almost two decades interacting in a closed space with my peers and my professors. And so for us to go to a virtual-learning setting, I think students now have to be more open about what we need. And I think there's a lot more leniency. And I think we're all trying to find this ebb and flow and this balance of what our professors are able to do virtually for us — providing us resources, speaking with us, face-to-face time (virtually) for office hours. Things like that. It really is more of a collaboration almost than it even would be in person, because now both of us are having to say, "We're having this collective issue. Students can help professors, you know, learn how to transition, and professors help us as well." And, I think, even though we struggle with it, it's been a really great transition for me, and I feel like a lot of my cohort as well.

Mattie Murrey

Excellent. I like the mindset on that. That's great. Tell us how you balance a full-time job with school, and how you stay organized.

Jordan McLaren

So, I am a very disorganized person. I will be honest and disclose that right off the bat. And it's taken a lot of work and a lot of money spent on different products to try and become organized. But I realized that it really is more about the mindset that I have. And so, I've worked a lot, actually, on blocking. So, what I did first was I spoke with my job when I was an undergrad, and I said, "I am in a full-time position." So, the job that I wanted to do and that I'm currently in requires me to be at work eight hours a day for five days a week, sometimes on the weekends. And the weekends were always my designated days to complete homework. They would be the days I would stay at home and get everything done. But I started to realize that wasn't good for my mental health, and I was starting to be burned out a little bit.

And so, I spoke with my job. And I wrote down a list of priorities. What do you need from me? What is it going to take from me? How much time? How much energy? How much of my space



am I going to have to give up? Am I going to have to work from home? And this mindset of, "I live at home, I rest at home, and I work at home." So, that was a tough mental balance for me for a little while. And then I also spoke with my professors and I said, "How many hours a week am I going to need to spend on homework or projects? How often will I need to collaborate with my peers?" And so, then I wrote a list of both. And I tried to find a balance. And I ended up telling my job... I said, "I need to reduce my hours." I love what I do, and there's this pressure to put a roof over my head. Pay tuition. Go out and volunteer. Make sure I'm getting, you know, all of my hours, my observation hours done for class. And it was a struggle at first. But I began to write in a planner. I actually have a whiteboard, right above my head on this wall up here, that I block out time. I say this is going to be my rest day. I will circle days when I know that things are due. And so, I have designated days to get certain assignments done, certain volunteering done, certain projects that we're doing for MNCHA. And so, I've really taken time to kind of assess what all of the responsibilities need from me. And that way, I can kind of block out certain days and times to get those done.

Mattie Murrey

Would you be willing to take a picture of that whiteboard? Take off all the identifying information and send it and put it on our show notes? And would you also send a list of those interview questions that you've compiled?

Jordan McLaren

Oh, absolutely. I would love to. And all of these ideas that I'm speaking about... Some were my own, but some of these were ideas that I had gotten from talking to other students. From professors. And I learned to be vulnerable, too. I learned to admit that I didn't know how to organize my time very well. And I wanted to get better because I knew that's what would be required to give myself peace of mind, and to do as good as I wanted to do, whether that was in school or out my job. So, I will definitely get those sent over to you.

Mattie Murrey

That would be great. And we'll put them for free on the downloads.

Jordan McLaren

Perfect.

Mattie Murrey

That would be great. Last question before we are done: I know something about you that is unusual. You are an undergraduate student, and you are co-president of the Executive Committee for Minnesota Future Professionals. That is unusual for someone of undergraduate status. How did you get that?

Jordan McLaren

It was a lot of, I think, overcoming my fear of "I'm the youngest one here in this group." So, it first started... The co-president that I was with, actually, when we were heads of the NSSLHA



chapter at SCSU, **Summer cup**... She is a wonderful student. She is now a graduate student in the SLP Master's program at SCSU. She was actually on the Future Professionals Committee, as well, as an undergraduate student. And so, she would talk to us about how great MNSHA was and how there were a lot of resources. So, I decided that I would take a look on the website, and I actually signed up for the mentorship program. And I saw the opportunity that they were accepting applications for the Future Professionals Committee.

At the time, I was not aware that we would be designating positions. I thought we were all just equals on a board underneath a head of that position. And so, I applied. And I hadn't heard anything back. And so, I had actually reached out to email the head of the board at the time, who was actually moving. And so, as it turns out, I actually knew the head of the board on the Future Professionals Committee. And Mattie, that would be you. And so, you know, we were speaking about the position and what it would entail. And you mentioned that you would love to have me on the board. And I think that was the start of a really beautiful collaboration. And so, we started these Zoom meetings, and I met up with these wonderful other graduate students who are all actually graduate students in Master speech-language pathology programs. And so, again, I was the only audiology student on this board. And I think I just had a moment when we were deciding positions. I didn't want to wait. So, I spoke up, and I was practicing rejection — something I know you have spoken about to us before. And the worst they could say is no.

I have many, many years left of positions to be in, of leadership positions. I want to be a thought leader, and I want to put myself in a position where I can execute those ideas with my peers, and I can listen to their ideas. And we can all kind of collaborate to bring these resources to other students. The worst they could say is no. I could either fail or I can succeed, but either way, I'm on this board with great students and other professionals. And I'm learning so much. And so, it kind of goes back to NSSLHA. I was the vice president because I didn't say anything. When we were all at this table, figuring out at the first meeting what positions we were going to hold, I let somebody else speak up first. And I wanted to be the president. I wanted to be the leader, but I didn't know how. It was a new school. It was a new position. And I just wasn't confident in myself. But, like I mentioned, I've done a lot of introspection, a lot of thinking. And, you know, I figured, nothing bad is going to happen to me as a result of me sticking my neck out or trying to be a better version [of myself]. And so, I asked. I said, "I would love to be it. But, at the same time, if anybody else would love to be president, please let me know. We can talk about this. We'll come to a solution." And it ended up paying off.

Mattie Murrey

It definitely did. It definitely did. Everybody that stepped forward easily settled into their positions, and everybody's very happy with their positions. And you've definitely risen to the occasion of stepping into this position and making things happen. You sound a lot... You're just, you're a rock star. And I've really never met a student who hasn't had that potential to be a rock star. What words of encouragement would you give somebody who is listening to you and totally — I don't want to say intimidated — but she's hearing you, or he's hearing you, and



they're like, "I can't do that. And she's doing these goals, and this and that, and this and that." And they may not realize that they have that greatness in them. What words of encouragement would you give to somebody who is learning to build their confidence?

Jordan McLaren

That is a great question. The first thing that comes to mind is, you are sufficient as you are. You are enough. And what I mean by that is, I think, so often in our field, no matter what field you're going into, there are always going to be expectations of you. And you are always kind of expected to rise to the occasion. But it's okay to look back on everything that you have accomplished so far and to give yourself credit for it. You've done that. And it's okay to receive help and to ask for help. And it's a great thing to be curious. And I would encourage everybody to continue to seek knowledge, whether that's knowledge about yourself, about future passions, about what you want to go into. There's always going to be a population that needs your help — that needs your love and your kindness. But you also need to do that for yourself. You are included in that population. And, I think, what you are doing now is a great thing. So, give yourself credit for it. Take a moment to breathe and say, "I'm here because I'm enough. I am where I'm supposed to be. And this is perfect." And if somebody says "no" to me, it's only an opportunity for you to go and find something even better. I believe that everything happens for a reason. And so, I would just say, believe in yourself. I know that sounds so cliché, but please do it. Please forgive yourself. You know, if you think you didn't achieve enough, or a high enough GPA, or if you didn't apply for something in time, reach out. Because somebody might be willing to make an exception for you. And it's never too late to do what you love to do.

Mattie Murrey

And ask. And believe.

Jordan McLaren

Absolutely.

Mattie Murrey

Beautiful words to end on. Thank you for coming on today.

Jordan McLaren

Yes, thank you so much for having me.

Mattie Murrey

We're going to have you back in a few weeks after your interview. More than one. And I'll be done with my interview, too. I sure hope. I'm putting myself out there. What do I do if I don't get in? I think I will, though. Knock on wood. I'm seriously knocking on wood here. I believe in myself. You believe in you.

Jordan McLaren

Absolutely. And the great thing is, too, that we believe in each other. You know? And there's been such a great impact that you've had on my life. And I'm certainly taking lessons from you



into my own interview. So, the best of luck with that. And I will be reaching out again to see how that's gone.

Mattie Murrey

Thanks. Take care, and we'll talk to you again.

Jordan McLaren

Sounds great.

