Department of Communication Science and Disorders

Strategic Plan

2014-2019

Approved via consensus August 20, 2014

Updated August 21, 2019

Introduction

The Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders is at the forefront of research and the scientific study of speech production, speech perception, hearing, habilitation, rehabilitation, recovery, language organization in the brain, and language and literacy development and disorders. Our master's degree program focuses on preparing clinical scientists to advance the practice of speech-language pathology. As such, it provides a broad-based curriculum with clinical and research opportunities for students to develop special expertise in spoken and written language development and disorders, adult neurogenic disorders, and cochlear implant (re)habilitation. Our doctoral program is actively training the next generation of university professors and research scientists. Our students are highly sought after and our faculty are widely regarded as national and international experts in their respective fields of study. Educational and research opportunities abound within the Department.

Vision

The Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders will be known for providing the highest quality research, education, and service. It will be the resource for excellence in graduate communication sciences and disorders in our state, regionally, nationally, and internationally. The Department will be known as 1) a producer of highly trained professionals ready to assume clinical and/or research leadership positions in universities, school-based settings, and rehabilitative health care organizations serving the discipline of speech-language pathology and communication sciences; 2) a resource in consulting to both the private and public health and education sectors in South Carolina and the nation; and 3) a networking and integrating resource for alumni, providers, and leaders in the discipline of speech-language pathology. Distinct areas of research will continue to be developed to focus on the collaborative study of adult neurogenic disorders, child language and literacy development and disorders, aural rehabilitation/habilitation, and neuroscience. Through research, teaching, and service, faculty will create a department at the forefront of the discipline of speech-
language pathology that maximizes the use of current technology to create a nationally recognized, financially sound, and well-managed program. It will reward faculty at a level reflective of productivity and excellence in research, teaching, and service.

Mission

The mission of the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders is to promote and advance knowledge of the nature, prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of communicative disorders. Through excellence in scientific research, instruction, and service, the Department seeks to fulfill its mandate as the leading graduate and research program in communication sciences and disorders in South Carolina and, indeed, one of the leading programs in the nation. The scope of the program reflects the broader communities (state, national, and international) it seeks to serve.

The following long-term goals have been set by consensus to move the Department (COMD), including the Speech and Hearing Research Center (SHRC), forward in the areas of research and doctoral training, curriculum/clinical practica, student demographics and quality, increased awareness and support of COMD, and resources. The Department will review the plan a minimum of twice a year to note possible changes in target outcomes.

| Focus Area: Research and Doctoral Training - COMD will be known as one of the top research and doctoral programs in the nation |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Action step | Rationale | Resources Required | Responsible Party(ies) | Timetable |
| Seek funding mechanisms to support research/clinical collaborations | Obtaining funds to support research/clinical partnerships should lead to an increase in these collaborations. | Time and effort; collaboration between clinical and research faculty | Department faculty | Years 1-3: Research and clinical faculty will identify potential funding opportunities and deadlines and apply for funds |

By the end of Year 3:
- There will be a 100% increase in the number of funded research/clinical partnerships. (Baseline= 0)

Updated April, 2017: Three proposals submitted, not funded

Updated January 2018: no change;
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<tr>
<th>Recruit highly qualified doctoral students</th>
<th>Increasing the number of highly qualified doctoral students in COMD’s doctoral program, which is still in its infancy, will increase the department's research productivity and raise awareness of our department nationwide.</th>
<th>External and internal funding</th>
<th>Doctoral faculty, doctoral program chair, chair, COMD Advisory Board, ASPH Development Officer</th>
<th>Years 1-2: Investigate all potential sources for doctoral training grants. Educate COMD Advisory Board and ASPH Development Officer about financial needs for doctoral program Years 3-5: Submit doctoral training grants. Solicit requests for funds to support the doctoral program. Submit research grant proposals that include</th>
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By the end of Year 5, COMD will have:
- Restored use of annual internal funds of approx. $70k to support two doctoral students per year
**Updated Aug, 2016:** Goal met.
- Contributions to the doctoral fund via specific fundraisers and/or individual contributions
**Updated April, 2017:** Goal met. Elaine M. Frank Endowed

1 Werfel and Wigand
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<tr>
<th>Fellowship Fund established</th>
<th>A minimum of one doctoral training grant</th>
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<tr>
<td>Updated April, 2017:</td>
<td>One submitted, not funded, now resubmitted²</td>
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<tr>
<td>Updated August, 2017:</td>
<td>no changes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Updated January, 2018:</td>
<td>no changes</td>
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- Additional research grants tied to specific labs to support doctoral students

Updated April, 2017: six grants written with doctoral student support (one funded, other not funded)³

Updated August, 2017: two proposals written, one submitted (Werfel), one unfunded (Adlof).

Updated January 2018: two proposals in process: Werfel and Adlof

Updated August 2018: Proposal submitted (Wade-Woolley and Werfel)
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<th>Apply for Center (P50) Grants</th>
<th>COMD has two major research concentrations (Adult Neurogenics &amp; child language/literacy) that are strengths that many programs do not share, placing us in a competitive position for a center grant.</th>
<th>Time and effort; collaboration with research faculty at other institutions</th>
<th>Department senior faculty in collaboration with junior faculty</th>
<th>Years 1-2: Develop the infrastructure support needed for a successful P50 grant proposal. Develop and submit a P50 proposal. <strong>Updated December 2018:</strong> Dr. Adlof had two grants awarded in July 2018 that had finding for 1.5 doctoral students. <strong>Updated August, 2019:</strong> no new awards <strong>By the end of Year 3:</strong> COMD will have submitted at least one P50 grant for review. <strong>Update Feb, 2016:</strong> Goal met; P50 awarded to J. Fridriksson.</th>
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<td>Ensure doctoral students have advance knowledge in statistical analysis or other methodologies specific to their area of study necessary to conduct their specific research</td>
<td>Researchers need to have advanced tools and methods for research design and analysis. Possible topics could be in advanced statistical methods (e.g., Bayesian analysis), computational methods (e.g., modeling, machine learning), signal analysis (e.g., EEG, fMRI, digital signal processing, etc.), computer</td>
<td>Minimal, other than identifying faculty within or outside the department to teach the courses.</td>
<td>Doctoral program faculty, doctoral program chair</td>
<td>Year 1: Develop a research “tools” requirement for the PhD curriculum (perhaps as 3 of the 12 required statistics credits). Determine potential courses and/or instructors across campus that may be viable options for the tools requirement. <strong>By the end of Year 1, COMD will have:</strong> - Rewritten the Doctoral Program handbook to include the research tools requirements <strong>Updated April, 2017:</strong> Goal met - Assembled a list of potential courses and/or instructors for the tools requirement.</td>
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| **Formalize communication of a research culture at the Speech and Hearing Research Center with clients via regular communications about the mission of the Research Center** | The Center is unique in the Midlands because of its commitment to the advancement of clinical practices through research. This focus will facilitate the growing collaborations between the clinical and research faculty as well as other research projects occurring within the department. | Minimal | Clinic Director, research/clinical partnerships, individual research faculty | **Year 1:** Develop a process(es) for automatically and seamlessly alerting SHRC clients about current COMD research projects. **Year 2:** Implement the new process. | **By the end of Year 2,** COMD and the SHRC will:  
- Have a centralized, local database of ongoing research studies for which SHRC clients may qualify  
- A centralized means within the Center that alerts clients to those current research opportunities  

**Updated Aug, 2016:**  
**Goal met:** Waiting room monitor now provides information on research opportunities (meets both goals). |

| **Create predictable COMD Science Requirement course offerings at the doctoral level** | Predictable doctoral COMD Science Requirement course offerings will provide stability in developing plans of study for our own doctoral students as well as potentially attract students from other majors. | Assure research faculty are freed-up from master’s level teaching assignments | Curriculum committee, doctoral program faculty | Years 1-2: In conjunction with a reorganization of the master’s program, a determination of teaching loads will be conducted to examine what doctoral faculty are able to teach at the doctoral level. Determine whether an additional Science | **By the end of Year 5,** the COMD doctoral program will have:  
- A set of core Science Requirement courses, and  

**Updated Aug, 2015:**  
**Goal met:** Normal Bases of Literacy added as a core Science Requirement course |
Course can/should be added
Years 3-5:
Implementation of schedule/rotation of doctoral level courses will begin.

- A predictable teaching schedule for those courses with the ability for different doctoral faculty to teach those courses across different semesters.
- Responsibilities for research faculty that includes consistent coursework for the doctoral program
- **Updated Aug, 2016. Goal met.** Predictable teaching schedule set; balanced schedule of teaching across doctoral faculty set.

| Focus Area: Cutting-edge Curriculum and Clinical Practica – COMD will have a curriculum and clinical practica that will be a model for the nation |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Action step** | **Rationale** | **Resources Required** | **Responsible Party(ies)** | **Timetable** | **Outcome(s)** |
| Evaluate required and elective courses for MSP and MCD programs and reorganize/revamp curricula, with an aim to decrease the number of required courses and increase the elective options | The purpose is three-fold: a) Students have few opportunities to pursue electives for specialized training in areas of interest, particularly those that represent the expertise of the FT faculty. | Other COMD programs for examples, ASHA documents and resources re: reframing the SLP profession. | Curriculum Committee, department faculty | Years 1 – 2: Evaluation of curriculum Years 3 – 5: Reorganization of curriculum and implementation | By the end of Year 5, COMD will have: Developed a curriculum that allows students to select electives that meet their interests Developed a curriculum that allows faculty to offer courses that highlight their expertise |
| b) A reorganized curriculum may help students better integrate research into clinical practice. | c) Due to changes in health care, students (and faculty) need to understand the changing roles of SLPs for the future (e.g., working at the top of their license, managing SLP-As, streamlining documentation for efficiency, best uses of technology, including telehealth). | Developed content covered in self-standing courses, or infused into courses, representing:  
- Critical thinking  
- Patient-based EBP  
- Telehealth and telemedicine  
- Intercultural/language diversity skills  
**Updated Aug, 2016:**  
**Goal met:** MSP and MCD curricula modified |
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<td><strong>Ensure a consistent evaluation process for evaluating all courses/instructors of academic courses, including teaching faculty who are not FT faculty and clinical faculty</strong></td>
<td><strong>Currently, only tenure track faculty receive peer evaluations of their academic courses, but the teaching quality of those teaching in the program in its entirety should be regularly assessed as well.</strong></td>
<td><strong>An organizational structure within the department (process and assessment tool) to implement COMD peer evaluations</strong></td>
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<td><strong>COMD chair, Graduate Director, COMD Administrative Assistant</strong></td>
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| | | **Year 1: Development of process and assessment tool**  
**Years 2-3:** Roll out of inaugural peer evaluation process |
| | | **By the end of Year 3:**  
- All COMD faculty teaching an academic course, regardless of status, will be peer reviewed. Those not receiving peer evaluations via the ASPH will receive an inaugural review via the COMD review process in Year 2 or 3 and then be reviewed every three years thereafter. |
| Increase the security of online testing | Because online testing within COMD has increased, faculty must feel confident that testing situations are secure and proctored well. | USC Distance education department, Blackboard Support Services. | Distance Education Director, department faculty | Year 1: Review of potential tools to ensure secure online testing. Obtain baseline number of tests conducted online with/without specific security measures. Years 2-3: Implementation of security tools for online testing. Obtain baseline number of tests conducted online with/without specific security measures. By the end of Year 3: - All COMD faculty using online tests will take advantage of maximized test security features. - The MCD program, via the Distance Education Director, will promote student access to on-line proctoring (e.g., ProctorU). Updated Aug, 2016 and December 2018: Goal met: USC has chosen Proctor U. Beginning Fall, 2017, cohort 2017 will have tests proctored using Proctor U. |
| Increase COMD students’ experiences with interprofessional education (IPE) and interprofessional practice (IPP) | IPE and IPP will provide COMD students to learn about, from and with students from other professions to enable effective collaboration and improve health and education outcomes. | Minimal | Center Director, Chair, Curriculum Committee, Department IPE committee | Years 1-2: Develop department-level IPE committee. Develop relations with faculty in other programs to establish potential academic and clinical experiences for COMD students. By the end of Year 4: - COMD students will have a minimum of one IPP experience within the USC SHRC - COMD students will have a minimum of two additional IPE |
| **Promote increased integration of research and clinical practice within COMD** | **COMD is committed to developing clinical scientists. This aim will help solidify this commitment and serve as a model for students regarding the integration of research and clinical practice.** | **Minimal** | **Department faculty** | **Years 1-2: Obtain baseline of number of current research/clinical partnerships and co-authored posters/publications. Development of new clinical/research partnerships**
| **Years 3-4: Implementation of research projects within the SHRC** | **Years 3-4: Develop new IPE/IPP courses and/or experiences within courses or clinical practica** | **experiences beyond PHBH 678**
| **Update April, 2017:** **Goal met:** USC SHRC has sponsored four IPP events including Pharmacy, Social Work, Nursing, and PT. Such events will be continued annually. | **Updated April, 2017:** 2 publications, six presentations/posters
| **Updated August, 2017:** No change
| **Updated January 2018:** One publication and one poster
| **Updated August 2018:** One presentation²

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<td>Recruit students from underrepresented groups (i.e., males and/or students who list their race/ethnicity as Hispanic or non-Hispanic/non-white)</td>
<td>COMD typically does not draw many students from underrepresented groups, yet diversity is always optimal.</td>
<td>John Dozier (USC chief diversity officer); Dr. Sara Corwin, ASPH Assistant Dean for Undergraduate Student Services</td>
<td>Graduate director, chair, NSSLHA</td>
<td>Years 1-2: Meet with key personnel (Dozier, Corwin) to discuss recruitment strategies. Develop a plan for recruiting underrepresented students. Determine funding mechanisms that are specific to students from underrepresented groups (e.g., McNair Scholars program). Years 3-5: Implement recruitment strategies.</td>
<td>By the end of Year 5, there will be a 20% increase in students from underrepresented groups (baseline = 10%)</td>
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*Updated December 2018: no additional partnerships.*

*Updated August, 2019: one presentation*³

| Encourage students’ self-care and strong mental health | At times, students may be overly anxious and lack some self-care techniques. Additionally, there is a rise in mental health issues in general and, recently, in COMD. Finally, there is a general perception that some students entering into graduate programs do not always have the self-help skills needed to succeed. | USC Counseling and Human Development Center; Alisa Cooney-Liggett, USC Behavioral Intervention Team; others as needed. | Graduate Director, Center Director, Chair, NSLHA | Year 1: Consult with USC resources to determine what resources are available for students (facilities as well as handouts for students), their availability to attend COMD orientation to talk about those resources, and how students may help other students. Year 2: Implement strategies to encourage students’ self-care and strong mental health. | By the end of Year 2, COMD will have developed: - A partnership with the USC Counseling and Human Development Center, as evidenced by sharing of information from both departments of their students (COMD) and their services (CHD). - A program for incoming graduate students, such as a “meet ‘n’ greet” at orientation, during which students will learn about counseling and crisis resources from USC counselors and receive brochures. | Updated April, 2017: Center Director connected with CHD; incoming 2015 and 2016 graduate students received CHD information at ASPH (2015) and COMD (2016) orientations. Student Health Wellness |
representative also visited on 4/13/17. Updated August, 2017: 2nd year students provided overview of campus mental health services available for 1st year students; well-received.
- Developed a student-to-student approach to helping students help each other change unhealthy to healthy behaviors (via NSSLHA)
  Updated Aug, 2016: NSSLHA created “buddy” network for incoming MSP students
  Updated August and December 2018: Maintaining strategy
  Updated August 2019: Maintaining strategy

Focus Area: Increasing Awareness of and Support for Communication Sciences and Disorders – COMD and the SHRC will have community recognition and financial support that allows them to achieve their goals in all areas

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<th>Outcome(s)</th>
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<td>Increasing the public’s knowledge and awareness of</td>
<td>With the growing understanding of the role of the SLP in IPE,</td>
<td>ASHA documents and resources,</td>
<td>Department faculty; NSSLHA, COMD</td>
<td>Years 1-2: Develop ideas for flyers, media</td>
<td>By the end of Year 5, COMD will have:</td>
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<td>a) the SLP’s and audiologist’s role in improving population health and education</td>
<td>SLPs and audiologists need to educate the public and other professionals about their role in such areas as: early intervention, literacy (including health literacy), facilitating communication among health care providers and between health care providers and patients/families, enhancing medical and educational environments for better communication, etc.</td>
<td>other IPE literature</td>
<td>Advisory Board; ASPH’s Director of Public Information</td>
<td>spots, social media promos, etc.</td>
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<td>b) COMD and the Speech and Hearing Research Center (SHRC)</td>
<td>- Implement public awareness/knowledge campaign</td>
<td>- A minimum of monthly public announcements or informational pieces re: COMD and/or speech/language/hearing (e.g., USC Today, The State, ABC Columbia, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram)</td>
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**Increase metropolitan Columbia’s support of COMD and the Speech and Hearing Research Center**

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<td>The COMD and the Speech and Hearing Research Center provide many benefits to the greater metropolitan Columbia through its research and clinical services. Greater awareness of its contributions can lead to greater support.</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>COMD Advisory Board</td>
<td>Year 1: Develop key person on the COMD Advisory Board to assume leadership of an annual fundraiser Years 2-3: Develop a format, venue, and time for a COMD/SHRC annual fundraiser</td>
<td>By the end of Year 3: COMD/SHRC will have had the first of its annual fundraisers Update Feb, 2016: Goal Met: COMD now has an annual fundraiser held in May. Update August, 2017: Will continue to hold annual fundraiser but will</td>
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Provide outreach via professional/research presentations and continuing education opportunities to community partners and other professionals

The purpose is four-fold: to a) provide free CEUs for external clinical supervisors; b) provide continuing professional education within the state; c) promote the department (faculty and research), and d) provide increased summer funding for the department.

None

Department faculty and, potentially, doctoral students; CEU Committee

Years 1-2: Development of potential courses/seminars that can be offered for CE

Years 3-5: Implementation of CE offerings and evaluation of their effectiveness for meeting the four purposes listed in the rationale.

By the end of Year 5:

COMD will have

- offered a minimum of three half-day, full-day and/or week-long courses for CEUs or CMHs

- evaluated whether the courses met the four purposes outlined under rationale

Updated April, 2017: Goal met: COMD offered a two day, Read to Succeed course in Summer, 2016 (provided
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<th>Goal</th>
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<td>Increase the public’s awareness and understanding of the “strength” of the MCD program</td>
<td>Because of other distance education programs that have less than stellar reputations and outcomes, at times, personnel at clinical sites may have preconceived notions about USC’s MCD students.</td>
<td>Minimal Director of Distance Education, ASPH Webmaster, volunteer MCD students</td>
<td>By the end of Year 2, COMD will have short videos on its webpage that discuss the rigor and quality of its MCD program. Updated April, 2017: Sixteen COMD-MCD alumni selected and asked to serve as “COMD Distance</td>
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- Increased funding for the dept. CE for SLPs in state) and as well as two, half-day CEU workshops for external supervisors in Spring, 2016 (provided free CEUs and promoted COMD faculty). Five other CEU offerings held during the 2016-2017 academic year.

**December 2018:**
- Third and final Read to Succeed course offered in summer 2018. Individuals can now take the three modules as one course for CEUs.
- COMD planning a COMD Scientific Conference for summer 2019.
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<th>Focus Area: Resources (added 2015)</th>
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| Secure additional teaching, research, and clinical space for the department and Speech and Hearing Research Center. | Because the department is growing in the number of grant-funded research projects, doctoral students, and the specialty clinics offered (i.e., Literacy Center), among other space-requiring initiatives, additional space is necessary. | Physical space and funds to pay for that space. | Department chair | Year 2 (first year of initiative): Request funds from Dean to pay for additional space. Develop plan for self-sustaining funds for space after initial funds to develop space. Year 3-5: Promote plan for self-sustaining funds with potential donors. | By the end of Year 3, COMD will have additional space to conduct teaching, research, and clinical services. By the end of Year 5, COMD will have additional funds from outside source(s) that serve as self-sustaining funds for the new space. Updated July 2017: Due to generous
donor, COMD will be able to relocate to Close-Hipp building in late Spring 2019, gaining an additional 4k sq. ft. of space. Department and Center will no longer need to pay lease. 
**Updated August 2018:** COMD will move to Close-Hipp, 2nd floor in May 2019. Increase in sq ft is approx. 4-5K.
**Updated December 2018:** Move is still on for May 2018.

**Addendum: Footnotes to Strategic Plan**


1 ASHA, Multicultural Research Grant. *Latinos In Borderlands Reading Outreach (Project LIBRO).* PI: Gina Crosby Quinatoa, Co-investigators: Angela McLeod and Suzanne Adlof. Submitted May 2016, unfunded.


3 National Institute of Deafness and other Communication Disorders. Maximizing speech recognition under adverse listening conditions. (R01-DC015465-01; funding period: 7/1/2016-6/30/2021; total direct costs: $ 1,563,416). PI: Dan Fogerty, Funded.


