

March 5, 2020

To: Pamella Oliver, Provost

From: Bey-Ling Sha, Dean

Re: Dean's Summary Report and Recommendations
Program Performance Review: Communicative Disorders B.A.
Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders

I have read the self-study of the B.A. program in Communicative Disorders submitted to me by the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders in February 2020. I note that this Program Performance Review was authorized to skip the external review portion of the process. This dean's report summarizes my observations and recommendations regarding this program.

History. The Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders was formalized in Fall 2017 following the separation of its faculty from the Department of Human Communication Studies. The Department offers the M.A. and the B.A. in Communicative Disorders.

Department/Program Mission. As noted on page 5 of the self-study, the mission of the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders is to provide students with an understanding of these disciplines within a diverse society. With regard to the unit's priorities for the future (self-study section 1.C on page 6), I encourage the faculty to discuss and then to articulate goals for undergraduate students who are neither admitted to graduate programs nor licensed to work as speech-language pathology assistants (SLPAs).

Curriculum. I note that this is the first review of the undergraduate program in Communicative Disorders. The curriculum of the B.A. program in Communicative Disorders comprises 39 units, of which 12 units are listed on page 7 of the self-study as being prerequisites for other upper division courses.

Course Prerequisites. The four courses of these 12 units of prerequisites are: COMD 241 (Introduction to Phonetics); COMD 242 (Introduction to Communicative Disorders); COMD 307 (Speech & Language Development); and COMD 344 (Anatomy & Physiology of Speech & Hearing Mechanisms). I note that these four courses do not comprise a collective prerequisite for subsequent coursework. Rather, different combinations of COMD 241, 242, 307 and 344 are required for different subsequent courses, which may be confusing for students. I encourage the faculty to consider treating the four prerequisite courses as a collective, successful completion of which would then permit enrollment in subsequent coursework. In these considerations, the faculty should examine the extent to which offering two of the four required prerequisites at the 300-level may be disadvantaging transfer students and preventing the establishment of an ADT, if implementing one were to make the program more attractive to potential transfer students.

Course Sequencing. Based on the self-study, it does not appear that the 27 units of coursework subsequent to the 12 units of prerequisites are sequenced, i.e., it appears that students may take any of the subsequent coursework in any order as long as they meet the prerequisites of that particular course. Given that the Council on Academic Accreditation in Audiology and Speech Language Pathology expects coursework in undergraduate programs to be "delivered in an organized, sequential, and integrated manner" (cf. Self-Study,

page 7), I strongly recommend that the faculty consider ways to structure the curriculum to more clearly sequence the course offerings for students. A more-sequential model for coursework (perhaps across four or more semesters of enrollment) offers numerous potential advantages, including:

- Better opportunities to scaffold the learning of students;
- Greater sense of camaraderie among students in a quasi-cohort model of course-taking;
- More-efficient class scheduling because the course enrollments will be more easily predictable from one semester to the next;
- Less stress experienced by faculty and students during course registration times, as section offerings are anticipated in advance;
- Closer tracking of student progress and points of non-retention;
- Reduced demand for undergraduate academic advising; and
- Closer alignment to the recommendation of the accrediting body.

Community Engagement. The self-study mentions on page 6 that students volunteer in various community settings to help students connect their classroom learning to the clinical application of that knowledge. I encourage the faculty to discuss and clarify their curricular expectations with respect to student volunteering, as well as the extent to which these activities may or may not be part of an overarching pedagogy of community-engaged learning or community-based service-learning. Furthermore, faculty should address how their expectations can be met by students whose personal circumstances may prevent them from undertaking volunteer work (e.g., due to time constraints related to family obligations, monetary constraints that necessitate co-curricular paid employment, or resources limitations such as lack of private transportation to volunteer sites).

Last, with respect to curriculum clarifications needed for the future, I encourage faculty to consider the creation of a separate course that helps students meet SLPA licensing requirements, rather than relying on the COMD 495 internship course, especially given the different nature of SLPA licensing requirements compared to expectations of an internship.

Enrollment. The program enrollment is robust and steadily growing, per information provided in the self-study. Moving forward, I expect the faculty to deliberate and outline clear and specific strategies for enrollment growth in the undergraduate program to compensate for the very small enrollments in clinical courses at the graduate level that are necessitated by the requirements of ASHA accreditation of the M.A. program. For example, faculty might wish to consider the extent to which offering undergraduate courses in the evenings, --- while necessitated by the availability of the part-time lecturers who teach these courses --- negatively or differentially impacts student enrollment in the undergraduate program.

Student Assessment. The program's assessment efforts are detailed on pages 10-13 of the self-study. The assessment test uses multiple-choice questions drawn from five specific courses, but the relation of these 15 units to the other 24 units required by the program is unclear. Also unclear is the extent to which the assessment test (which measures "retention of the foundational knowledge of the major courses") examines program learning goals of the undergraduate degree. If the program-learning outcomes as described in III.B of the self-study are indeed merely to "maintain the accumulated essential knowledge in the major courses," then a strong justification should be offered for requiring the additional 24 units in the major. Related to assessment, I encourage faculty to undertake the following by the start of the next Program Performance Review:

- Clarify what formative assessment is done of student learning, per Goal #3 of the Department's 2018-2023 Strategic Plan: "Incorporate formative and summative assessment instruments to evaluate student achievement" (cf. Self-Study, page 22).
- Articulate more-robust program learning outcomes.
- Develop an assessment plan that maps program-learning outcomes/goals against a more-sequenced curriculum.

- Note in the assessment plan of where specific learning outcomes are introduced, developed, and mastered.

Student Support and Advising. The Self-Study offers an impressive list of students participating in High Impact Practices and their faculty advisers/mentors. I encourage the faculty to provide a direct answer to the question/prompt located on page 16 in section V.B, i.e., explain how these opportunities are made known or available to students, ideally in equitable and timely ways. In addition, the faculty should clarify the relationships between the elected undergraduate adviser and the Student Success Team that is now provided by the College in collaboration with the Division of Student Affairs.

Faculty. The Self-Study offers an overview of current faculty headcounts and teaching areas. What remains unclear with respect to section IV.B (page 15) is what faculty hires are anticipated by the Department to be needed in the coming short term (3 years) and long term (10 years), as well as why those hires are anticipated, e.g., expected retirements, accommodation of changes in the field, strategic positioning of the program vis-a-vis competing programs, etc. I encourage the faculty to discuss these anticipated hiring needs.

Resources/Space. In an era of declining state support, every program needs more resources, including space. I strongly encourage the faculty to describe more thoroughly the facilities and space needs of the program, in particular the student clinical practica. To position the Department and College to best compete for limited campus resources, I encourage faculty to articulate what priority needs are anticipated over the coming years in both the short term (3 years) and long term (10 years), to best serve the needs of the program, its students, and its faculty. Last, I request that the faculty clarify the need (stated on page 23 in section VII.D) for funding to compensate the externship site supervisors.

Closing Comments

I congratulate the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders upon the near-completion of its third year as a stand-alone academic unit. The hard work of the faculty --- in particular the Department's founding chair, Dr. HyeKyeung Seung --- is very much appreciated and respected. I am proud to note the many strengths of the B.A. program in Communicative Disorders, and I am optimistic about the future of this program, particularly with regard to its strong potential for continued enrollment growth. I hope that the encouragement and recommendations offered in this dean's report will be useful to the Department in the continued strengthening of the B.A. program in Communicative Disorders.