



To: Committee on Graduate Studies
University of Delaware Faculty Senate

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Subject: Speech-Language Pathology Master of Arts Program Review

According to our charge from the Committee on Graduate Studies, we have reviewed the self-study report of the Speech-Language Pathology master's program, now referred to as Communication Sciences and Disorders (CSCD). The report does an excellent job of explaining the context, purpose, and successes of the Master of Arts Program in Speech-Language Pathology.

Context

Established in 2013 under a five-year provisional status from the UD Faculty Senate, the MA in Speech-Language Pathology received national accreditation on a provisional basis in February 2016. Subsequently the program accepted cohorts in 2016, 2017, and 2018, with 2019 admissions currently underway. The 2016 cohort graduated in 2018, and the program applied for full accreditation in February 2019 from the Council on Academic Accreditation (CAA) in Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology. After a CAA site visit in the Fall of 2019, the program hopes to receive full accreditation by February 2020, at which time the accreditation requirement of 3 cohorts is expected to be satisfied.

Curriculum

Originally established as a 58-credit program, two credits have been added to cover additional CAA-stipulated knowledge and skills requirements. The program now is a full-time, two-year, 60 credit-hour major consisting of 44 didactic and 16 clinical credits. Students attend 6 academic terms (fall, winter, spring, summer, fall, and spring) and complete 375 hours of supervised clinical experiences.

Accreditation

Every year, the MA in Speech-Language Pathology program must submit an accreditation report. This CAA annual accreditation report requires the program to demonstrate how it is meeting standards on six accreditation dimensions including (1) Administrative Structure and Governance, (2) Faculty, (3) Curriculum, (4) Students, (5) Assessment, and (6) Program Resources. Since receiving its provisional accreditation in 2016, the program has submitted two CAA annual reports. In the 2017 report, the program passed 47 out of the 50 CAA standards. The program was responsive to these standards and addressed deficiencies by adding 8 faculty members, adding 39 health and education externships and expanding teaching/research facilities with their move to the 5th-6th floors of the Tower at Star. In the 2018 report, the program passed all 50 CAA standards.

Student Input

The program has solicited input from students and has made some changes requested by students. For example, the department is specifically hiring a new full-time faculty member in the area of motor speech disorders to address a weakness identified by students in this major content area that was being taught by adjuncts. Also in response to student course evaluations, clinician-led practice using virtual simulations has been added in all academic courses.

Recruiting

To recruit students, the program participates in the nation-wide online Communication Sciences and Disorders Centralized Application Process (CSDCAS). In order to recruit under-represented minorities, faculty and staff participate in CSDC minority caucuses including the National Black Speech Language Hearing Association, the Latino Caucus, and the Asian and Pacific Island Caucus.

Completion

The number of students in the program is impressive. Of 26 students matriculating in 2016, all 26 graduated in 2018 and all 26 passed the Praxis Exam for Speech-Language Pathology. The 2017 and 2018 cohorts contain 23 and 26 students, respectively. Admissions are competitive with applications coming from about ten times as many students who matriculate each year.

Careers

The program's graduates are succeeding in finding jobs. All 26 students who graduated in 2018 found jobs, most within one month of graduating. Of these 26 graduates, 15 work in school districts, 7 in out-patient clinics and 4 in healthcare facilities.

Facilities

Located within the new STAR Tower, the CSDC program has state-of-the-art facilities that include the UD Speech-Language-Hearing Clinic that services 300 clients annually in 7 treatment rooms and an audiology suite staffed by a team of 2 full-time and 26 part-time certified and licensed speech pathologists and 2 part-time audiologists. This is a fee-for-service clinic accepting Medicare, Medicaid, private insurance and private pay, thereby generating revenue sufficient for paying the staff salaries. In addition, this model necessitates 100% supervision of students in the clinical setting by a licensed/certified speech-language pathologist, making this program very unique.

Summary Recommendation

This is an excellent program with strong support from the College of Health Sciences. Although one might argue that permanent status could wait until the granting of the full accreditation that is expected in February 2020, we recommend that based on the excellent progress reported here, including accreditation site visits, the cohorts meeting their admission targets every year, the student feedback about the program, their 100% employment rate, their input into curriculum improvements that the program has made, and the critical role that this program plays in the midst of the nationwide and regional shortage of speech-language pathologists, the Faculty Senate should proceed with granting permanent status to the Master of Arts Program in Speech-Language Pathology.