

Report of the 2013 Academic Program Review (APR) External
Committee on the Department of Speech and Hearing Sciences,
University of New Mexico (UNM)
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Introduction

The Department of Speech and Hearing Sciences is comprised of 7 tenure-track faculty members, one of whom is retiring this year, and 5 non-tenure-track faculty members who provide clinical instruction. With the impending retirement of Dr. Dale there will be 5 Associate Professors and 1 Assistant Professor. Over the past three years in particular, there has been a notable increase in undergraduate student credit hours completed (over 2000 SCHs). The discontinuation of funding from Albuquerque Public Schools in 2007 resulted in a decline in the admission of graduate students from ~ 23 to ~14. Only this year has graduate enrollment returned to APS-contract enrollment levels, made possible by recent investments in departmental faculty.

The master's degree in Speech-Language Pathology (SLP) in the Department of Speech and Hearing Sciences at UNM (the Department) is a clinical professional degree as it is in other similar programs throughout the country. The undergraduate degree offers the coursework needed to satisfy the prerequisite requirements to enter into a master's program in SLP, as well as providing liberal arts and science education about, what many consider the essence of the human condition, communication. Students who are accepted into SLP master's programs do not need to have an undergraduate degree in speech and hearing sciences. However, they must complete coursework to remediate deficiencies in their background knowledge in the discipline.

The shortage of SLPs continues in New Mexico and many parts of the country. This means that there are many employment opportunities for graduates of the UNM master's program. Those graduates meet the requirements for the New Mexico state license in SLP and for the professional certification offered by the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA). With the UNM state license in SLP, graduates can work with clients across the lifespan including in early childhood settings, schools, hospitals, rehabilitation settings, and private practices.

Changes since the 2001 Academic Program Review (APR)

The Department has made dramatic improvement since the last APR in 2001. These changes include the construction of new facilities and a move out of a set of trailers,

the tenure and promotion of five faculty members, and the addition of three new tenure-track faculty hires. Consistent with the recommendations in the 2001 APR, the Department has attained national prominence in the areas of multilingual and multicultural research and training. In addition, two active, federally-sponsored grants, one for research and one for training, demonstrate the ability of faculty to compete successfully for scarce federal dollars.

The Department's one setback since the 2001 APR was the loss of a supervision and services contract with the Albuquerque Public Schools (APS). The cancellation came with new administrators in APS. The loss of four (of six) supervisors plus \$60,000 in additional revenue per year to the Department resulted in a decrement in master student headcount that only this year has recovered.

Department Strengths

The Department's goals, vision, and activities align well with the UNM mission and vision. The Department embodies that vision along all the following dimensions: "strength through diversity; student success through collaboration; vital academic climate; excellence through relevance; research for a better world; health and wellness leadership; and international engagement." It is impressive that the Department has activities that directly align with each of these elements of the university's vision. Furthermore, the Department is seeking opportunities to more fully realize that vision with respect to 'student success through collaboration' and 'health and wellness leadership' through proposed partnerships with the UNM Health Sciences Center (HSC).

Peer institution comparison data show that UNM enjoys a far better reputation than one might predict given the size and structure of the program (e.g., no PhD or Audiology program). This speaks to the high national visibility of faculty and the quality of published faculty research. In fact, UNM is the highest ranked SLP program in the nation without a Ph.D. program, despite having far fewer tenure-track faculty members. The number of applicants to the Department has been increasing annually, which speaks to the heightened visibility of the Department nationally.

During this current APR, it was readily apparent that the faculty is the Department's greatest strength. The students underscored this finding saying, "Professors are passionate, knowledgeable, and approachable;" and "They really care about the students." In individual interviews the faculty, clinical faculty, and administrative staff emphasized the collegial nature of the Department and their respect for each other's work and contributions to the Department. Most evident was the respect and appreciation all had for the excellent leadership and support offered by Dr. Barbara Rodriguez.

The tenure-track faculty hires in the past decade are impressive. They have established active research programs and newly tenured faculty are demonstrating

the ability to compete successfully for NIH grants. This has spurred more interest in grantsmanship among the other faculty members. The desire to support graduate students and build on areas of strength also is evident in the recently funded personnel preparation grant from the U.S. Department of Education. This is a collaborative group that interacts well with students and with one another.

The clinical faculty also is excellent and brings a wide range of expertise and significant experience. Students develop their clinical knowledge and skills through a well-considered, strategic system with excellent supervision and support. The coordination between the research faculty and the clinical faculty ensures that academic knowledge and clinical skills form a solid foundation in students' development as SLP professionals.

In addition to the great value of the Department's human capital, other strengths were evident. The facility is new, well planned, with sufficient space for the activities of the Department. The annual trip to Mexico to offer clinical services in a school for students with disabilities offers a culturally- and linguistically-rich experience for the master's students. In a conference call, the SLP liaisons of the APS indicated that they find the UNM SLP master's graduates well prepared to work independently, professionally, and at a high level, and only wish they could hire more UNM graduates to work in APS. It is worth noting that virtually all master's students graduate from the program in a timely fashion and obtain jobs as speech-language pathologists.

Department Weaknesses

Specific Department weaknesses are listed in the Academic Program Review Team Worksheet (attached). What follows are recommendations that build on Department strengths and also attempt to address perceived weaknesses.

Recommendations

1. *New Faculty Needs:*

- a) *The need for full-time tenure-track faculty.* The major weakness of the Department is the low number of tenure-track faculty and their inability to cover all program and curricular areas. This weakness is evident in the heavy reliance on part-time instructors. It will be exacerbated with the impending retirement of the single remaining full professor in the Department. Dr. Dale's retirement represents a void in senior leadership that could be lessened with potential promotions in the next year or two.

In light of the tremendous strides this Department has made since its last APR, a decline in faculty size at this point could do considerable damage to the progress experienced in recent years. In addition to the replacement of the retiring professor, the Department needs at least one additional tenure-track faculty member to provide educational opportunities in at least one of the three or four fundamental areas in the field of SLP not currently

represented by research faculty, such as: adult neurogenic disorders, phonological disorders, cranio-facial disorders, and developmental disabilities.

Strategic thinking will be needed to consider areas where there are funding opportunities, areas that capitalize on unique needs or populations available in New Mexico, and areas that might tie into other initiatives. For example, Provost Abdallah suggested the possibility of a joint hire with HSC. It would be best if the position(s) would help develop unique areas of strength within the Department (esp. multicultural, multilingual focus) and help build a critical mass of faculty (e.g., adult speech and language disorders).

- b) *The need for a full time audiology instructor.* The Department should consider combining funds to pursue a full-time clinical faculty member in Audiology. This position could address a number of weaknesses. First, the Department is shirking its responsibility to prepare and encourage students to pursue graduate education in the sister profession in the discipline, audiology, another area with critical personnel shortages. This could reduce the need for part-time instructors to teach the two audiology courses required for speech-language pathologists. Second, it would ensure that there is adequate supervision of audiology screenings and aural rehabilitation services that are part of the scope of practice for speech-language pathologists. Third, it will allow the Speech and Hearing Clinic to meet the demand for hearing evaluations, for which there are ample referrals. Fourth, it has the potential to generate considerable clinical revenue, as hearing aid dispensing is typically the highest revenue generator in Speech and Hearing Clinics. A single instructor of audiology could satisfy these four roles in a cost-effective manner.

2. Multilingual, Multicultural Focus:

The Department is recognized nationally for the quality of its research and training for multilingual, multicultural populations. Several recent developments offer the Department an opportunity to expand this identity: 1) New Mexico recently created a bilingual certificate recognition to the state license for SLPs, 2) Dr. Rodriguez's USDOE \$1.2 million grant with NMSU on providing culturally and linguistically appropriate speech-language services for all language learners in New Mexico, and 3) hiring of a new Spanish-English bilingual clinical faculty and a new Latino faculty member, and the possibility of hiring new faculty with that area of expertise.

In interviews, the faculty, clinical staff, and students indicated that they recognize that the multilingual, multicultural focus is an area of strength for the Department. But this emphasis may not be fully integrated and may be overly-restricted to Spanish-English bilingual issues. With small, but important, changes in readings, projects, and even classroom and clinical examples, the faculty and clinical staff can expand the multilingual, multicultural focus and infuse it throughout the academic

and clinical aspects. Possible changes in readings, projects, and even classroom and clinical examples to illustrate content might include:

- How to support the appropriate use of glottal stops in Navajo while reducing the use of mis-learned glottal stops in a Navajo client after cleft palate repair?
- What is the effect of stroke on a bilingual Vietnamese-English patient's language production?
- What phonemes might you hear from a speaker of Chicano English that differ from a speaker of "newscaster's English"?
- What is normal language development for languages and dialects spoken in New Mexico? How do you find that information if it is not in the literature?
- What is the difference between clinical stuttering and dysfluencies that may occur during second language acquisition?
- What can we learn from the research in linguistics and anthropology to inform clinical practice in New Mexico?
- How does normal second language learning look if the child is experiencing language loss in the first language while in the process of acquiring a second language?
- What does ASL acquisition look like for a deaf child in a trilingual (ASL, spoken English, spoken Spanish) environment -- that is, a child from an immigrant, Spanish-only speaking home who is attending school in a deaf education classroom?
- What does language acquisition look like for a hearing child with deaf parents, that is, for a hearing child whose first language is ASL?

This small, but significant, shift will mean that the faculty and clinical faculty as a whole will embrace the multilingual, multicultural focus. The Department will be further distinguished as one of a handful of Speech and Hearing Sciences Departments nationwide with this expertise. In addition, it will mean that all students graduate with the knowledge and skills needed to provide culturally and linguistically appropriate services.

3. Expand collaboration with UNM Health Sciences: The Department expressed considerable interest in pursuing collaborations with the UNM Health Science Center (HSC), which have been difficult to establish historically. During the site visit, Provost Abdallah encouraged the faculty to renew their efforts to establish productive relationships with faculty and staff in HSC and offered his assistance in overcoming institutional barriers. For example, faculty are pursuing research collaborations through the Brain and Behavioral Health Institute at HSC. Health care reform and recent initiatives to promote Inter-Professional Education and Practice (IPE and IPP) set the stage for collaborations with a variety of departments. This would further the goal of preparing students for collaborative teaming as well as for leadership roles as advocates for ensuring that communication in all its aspects are not neglected in new models of promoting health and wellness and new reimbursement models for healthcare services. Also, opportunities may exist for

coordinating or potentially integrating clinical services and billing systems at the Department's Speech and Hearing Clinic with those services provided at the HSC.

4. **Retention of UG majors:** Retention of UG majors is a weakness within UNM that also *may* be reflected in the Department. The Department needs to gather data to understand whether the Department has a problem with recruitment and, if so, why. Class sizes in required courses have increased to ~70. Nevertheless, there has not been an increase in the annual UG major graduation rate. Potential avenues discussed that might help address this problem include:

- Establishing a Department-sponsored minority affairs committee that capitalizes on minority grad student and community mentors.
- Encouraging participation in minority caucuses, minority student leadership and other programs offered through ASHA.
- Increasing UG student involvement in and connection to the department through innovative research and clinical experience opportunities.
- Offer orientations or meet-and-greets for UG majors with faculty and graduate students. Offer information to UGs on the truth of getting into graduate school to dispel the rumors (e.g., one B- is enough to doom acceptance into graduate school).
- Increasing the attractiveness of major as an exciting liberal arts and sciences education rather than simply as a pre-professional program.
- Possibly raising the standards for admission into the major.

To bring more attention to the Department and recruit more majors, especially more minority and bilingual majors, the Department might consider offering a university college course with a multicultural focus, such as, "Culture, Communication, and Disability."

5. Resources and Planning:

a) *Staff reclassifications.* The Department is in danger of losing Tracy Wenzl, Department Administrator. Wenzl is highly competent and would find it quite easy to move to another Department in a DA 2 position. The Department Chair has begun the process to have HR reclassify Wenzl's position to a DA 2, and the review team wholeheartedly endorses this decision. Wenzl has made a huge improvement to Department policies and procedures. In the coming years, as the Department increases its external funding, she will take on an even more critical role in obtaining and managing grants.

b) *Bolster tech support.* Faculty need to be able to access technical support to help with research lab computing and equipment set up and troubleshooting. This need has already become significant and it will only become more critical as external funding increases the Department's research profile and need for technical assistance. The review team recognizes that there probably will not be funds, or at this point the need, for a full-time IT staff position. Perhaps in the interim the Department could seek other departments with similar needs

and team with them to co-fund a part- or full-time position. It has been suggested that the College of Arts & Sciences IT staff person could meet the Department's needs, but the review team views this as unlikely. The type of technical assistance required is specific to their research and clinical service equipment. While the College IT staff person could assist with general operating system problems and upgrades, it is unlikely that he can provide the highly specific technical support required. The Department should also keep this need in mind as external funding brings in more F & A funds.

The review team emphasizes that the Department's upward trajectory in sponsored research support and personnel preparation grants will continue to put stress on support staff. Both the Department and the College must plan for this situation or risk endangering the Department's ability to successfully obtain and manage future research grants

Future Directions

1. Develop a strategic plan to offer a PhD program: The Department has a long-term goal of offering a PhD program. This is a worthy goal for two reasons. First, there is a well-documented, critical shortage of PhDs in the field, which the Department would like to help remedy. Second, the upward trajectory in research activity, publication, and grant funding might be boosted by the entry of talented and motivated doctoral and post-doctoral students. Although there are avenues available for students to pursue interdisciplinary PhD programs, such as the Joint PhD program with Linguistics, these programs are attractive to too few potential doctoral students in the field. The Department was encouraged to explore the potential for restructuring and revitalizing joint PhD program options with Linguistics and other departments. Because there are no universities offering a PhD program in SHS in New Mexico, such options should be made available for high performing students. In addition, faculty with grants that could support doctoral students would benefit from the opportunity to recruit high caliber students interested in their research areas. Finally, joint PhD programs would provide a transitional step that would spur the Department to build the capacity to offer an independent PhD program. If the Provost's office would support negotiations with other departments, this would help the SHS Department reach its potential, consistent with a research intensive university, as it prepares doctoral students to generate and disseminate new knowledge in an interdisciplinary field that is so clearly aligned with the vision of the university (discussed above). The Department seems to be well positioned at this point to develop a long-term strategic plan for the development and implementation of an independent PhD program. One avenue suggested would be to recruit research faculty or post-doctoral positions (soft money) to help with the transition to the PhD program.

2. Develop core curriculum offerings to contribute to liberal arts mission: Some concern was expressed about whether the Department should modify its focus to contribute more to the learning goals of the College of Arts and Sciences. The UG

major offers an opportunity to study in depth a myriad of aspects of communication: developmental and learning processes, sensation and perception, and cognition of auditory and visual inputs (i.e., psychology); the structure and function of speech and language (i.e., linguistics); the nature of sound (i.e., physics); and the anatomy and physiology of speech, hearing, and swallowing (i.e., biology and neuroscience). An appreciation for the fundamental aspects of communication and its role in social contexts may be lost if the focus gravitates toward how to assess and treat communication disorders. Moreover, it has a tendency to focus on one career path for students, which may contribute to attrition of majors who are discouraged by the intense competition to get into graduate training programs to practice as speech-language pathologists or audiologists. We also discussed the potential to increase visibility within the College of Arts and Sciences by offering exciting courses that satisfy core curriculum requirements. Such courses could satisfy requirements in multiple areas, such as the natural and physical sciences, the behavioral and social sciences, or cross-cultural competence. Potential courses discussed included: *Speech and Hearing Science for Non-majors*; *Human and Animal Communication*; and *Culture, Communication, and Disability*. Such lower division courses also might serve to recruit some excellent students into the major.

Conclusions

The UNM Department of Speech and Hearing Sciences is an excellent program with the potential to augment its already well-established reputation. Its multilingual, multicultural program focus adds to its national prominence. The Department's greatest strengths are its faculty; their potential is reflected by recent awards of substantial grants and by important research being published. The clinical faculty also is quite strong with a thoughtful, systematic approach to the development of students' clinical skills.

Most critical is the addition of full time tenure-track faculty with expertise in the areas not covered by the current faculty. The current faculty needs additional administrative and technical support so they can focus primarily on their teaching and scholarship. The faculty needs to be augmented especially with the retirement of one full professor. The Department can enhance the multilingual, multicultural focus by encompassing the cultural and linguistic diversity of New Mexico and expanding it throughout the academic and clinical training programs. Increased collaboration with UNM Health Sciences will benefit both faculties.

The Department of Speech and Hearing Sciences has made tremendous advances since its last Academic Program Review. Faculty members have increased from a substandard level to one that is currently acceptable (although minimally, as defined by ASHA accreditation standards). Graduate student enrollment is increasing, and the Department has a very good national reputation. Research activity has increased tremendously.

The review team would like to see the Department continue on this path, with only minor course corrections. We encourage the Department to clarify and focus its identity as one that serves a multilingual/multicultural population. We also encourage the Department to broaden its undergraduate program to include a more liberal arts focus, making clear to students that a degree in Speech and Hearing Sciences has value beyond gaining entry into a master's program in SLP. Finally, we strongly encourage the faculty to maintain planning for a Ph.D. program entirely administered by the Department.