

Division of Communication Disorders AP4 Strategic Plan (2015-2020)

1. What is the current status of your Academic Unit?

- a. **Constituencies served and constituent needs addressed.** The mission of the Division of Communication Disorders is to prepare students to become clinical practitioners, researchers, and instructors in the fields of audiology and speech-language pathology. The Division accomplishes this mission by:
- Providing didactic and clinical learning through on-campus and distance education
 - Providing direct clinical training through operation of a full service audiology and speech-language pathology clinic
 - Conducting scholarly inquiry and research in communication disorders
 - Educating students to develop and maintain the highest ethical standards of quality in the provision of services to culturally diverse populations
 - Participating in the UW community through interdisciplinary educational programs
 - Providing audiology and speech-language pathology services to Wyoming communities
- b. **Degree programs offered; degrees actually granted in academic year 2012-2013.** The Division of Communication Disorders provides academic and clinical preparation for an accredited Master of Science in Speech-Language Pathology on campus and through Outreach. Our Bachelor of Science in Speech, Language, and Hearing Science provides pre-professional preparation in speech-language pathology, audiology, and American Sign Language: 25 B.S. and 20 M.S. degrees in 2012-13. Our bachelor's degree provides an excellent foundation for students who choose careers in other health and educational fields.
- c. **Faculty and staff numbers, and deployment by Department and discipline.** The Division has 8 tenure-track faculty (including the Director and the Provost) and 7 academic professionals. Of the academic professionals, 3 are ETT lecturers (2 in speech-language pathology and 1 in audiology) and 4 are NETT lecturers (1 in speech-language pathology, 1 in audiology, and 2 in American Sign Language) who provide clinical education, academic instruction, and direct service. We have 3 support staff for the office and clinic: 2 funded through Section I monies and 1 through Section II.
- d. **Student majors, current academic year.** We have 85 undergraduate and 54 graduate majors. Approximately 150 non-majors take our ASL classes each year and 50 non-degree undergraduates take our Outreach courses each year.
- e. **Faculty papers accepted for publication, academic year 2012-2013.** Five of seven faculty with significant research allotments (20%-32%) authored a total of 12 publications, including 8 peer-reviewed articles. Two faculty members submitted a total of 9 grant applications, including 5 external applications. Two external and 2 internal applications were funded. Seven faculty gave a total of 17 state or national presentations.
- f. **Significant services rendered to Wyoming citizens, academic year 2013-2014.** Thirteen of the faculty (80%) provided local, state, or national professional service. One of our faculty serves on the Wyoming Cleft Palate team. Three consult and present to early care centers, school districts, and professional associations in the State and nationally. Our faculty serve in leadership roles for the Wyoming Speech-Language-Hearing Association and the State Licensure Board for Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology.

Through preservice and continuing education, the Division supports speech-language pathologists (SLPs), audiologists, teachers, school administrators, and medical professionals who improve the quality of life for Wyoming citizens. Every M.S. graduate is quickly employed to serve the needs of Wyoming and the U.S. With the generous support of the Barbara Kahn Speech Foundation, we host a nationally-recognized speaker at no charge to SLPs in Wyoming.

Our UW Speech and Hearing Clinic provides comprehensive, quality, affordable speech-language pathology and audiology services. We staff approximately 900 hearing visits and 1800 speech-language visits a year, primarily from Albany County, but also from Laramie and Carbon county, and even from other Wyoming counties and northern Colorado. We provide hearing aid checks for the residents of the Spring Winds Assisted Living Facility. A Division audiologist for a multidisciplinary Pediatric Audiology Clinic, offered by the Wyoming Developmental Disabilities Division and other state agencies every six weeks in Casper for children who fail newborn screenings or who have identified hearing loss.

- g. **Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges by Department.** The strengths of our Division are numerous. The Division works together as a team, in a coherent, collaborative, positive manner. Our people assets include strong senior faculty, promising junior faculty, capable office staff, and able students. Our material assets include office space, excellent clinical teaching space and equipment, and excellent research facilities and equipment. Our division offers strong academic and clinical education. Our distance program is integrated into faculty's on-load duties. We have good assessment and tracking procedures for our programs. Our 2009 re-accreditation report commended us on our innovative, quality distance program, student participation in research, pre-tenure faculty mentorship, full-service campus clinic, Kahn Summer Lecture Series, and supportive learning environment.

One weakness of our Division is how we have sequenced learning experiences for the distance track of our master's degree. Another weakness has been in career advising for students who have not performed quite well enough to be accepted into graduate programs in speech-language pathology and audiology. Undergraduate assessment and interprofessional education are areas that would benefit from further attention. There are actions planned to address each of these weakness or growth areas.

A potential weakness is the low number and restricted diversity of clients for clinical education in this rural setting. However, we successfully address this through a combination of the opportunities provided on campus in the UW Speech and Hearing Clinic and externships throughout Wyoming and the country. Our speech clinic director maintains extensive collegial networks and contracts, and our academic and clinical faculty work hard to ensure our students are proud ambassadors of UW across the nation. Evaluation data and repeat business attest to the superior quality of our students.

A major long-term threat to our Division is the lack of doctoral-trained individuals in the field, resulting in difficulty filling faculty positions in specific areas of research. Our previously competitive salaries helped alleviate this problem, but that is no longer so. A related "people" threat is difficulty in finding sessional lecturers, research assistants, and research participants in this rural locale, all of which hinders major research and service projects.

2. What are the major programmatic goals of your Academic Unit over the 2015-2020 plan period? Why? What will be the benefits of successfully achieving these goals to the people of Wyoming, the students, and the faculty? Be as specific and quantitative as possible.

Our goals and actions are detailed in a combined answer following Question 3.

3. Given the major goals of your Unit over the plan period, what specific actions need to be taken, year-by-year over the plan period, to achieve these goals?

Action Item 1. Improve the sequence of the distance graduate program.

Rationale – The distance track of the master’s of science in speech-language pathology has been in operation for more than two decades. Over time, we have improved the technical delivery of the academic curriculum, the preparation and expectations of the summer clinical education component, and the communications with students. However, the current track structure, which involves annual admission with courses taught once per three years to a mix of Year 1, 2, and 3 students results in problems with the sequence of coursework and preparation for clinic. It also results in a too-heavy load in the final spring semester when students do full-time practica, distance coursework, and their Oral Comprehensive Exams. The Division has developed an alternative program structure that can respond to these issues within current instructional resources.

The Division will be adopting a synchronous campus and distance instruction model. This will (a) improve the sequence of knowledge and skills acquisition, (b) improve the preparation for summer clinic and externships, (c) eliminate coursework during the final semester when students are on full-time externships and are preparing for their Oral Comprehensive Examination, (d) parallel the campus curriculum structure, and (e) speed up the time to completion from 3.5 to 3.0 years. A major advantage to the new model is the freeing up of some instructional resources when additional separate distance graduate courses do not need to be taught.

Actions – The actions to achieve this new distance education program will include: (a) teaching out the current distance class, which will complete classes in Spring, 2016; (b) finalizing the new distance master’s course sequence; (c) piloting the technology for synchronous delivery in Fall, 2015 and Spring, 2016; and (d) advertising in Fall, 2015 for the re-start of admission of distance graduate students for Fall, 2016.

Measurement – Adequate yearly progress will be determined at the following assessment points: (a) Fall, 2014: post on the website the new graduate distance program description (DONE); (b) Fall, 2016: initiate formative performance measures with the first distance class in the new model and assess the number of applicants and applicant quality; and (c) Spring, 2019: analyze the first summative evaluation of the graduates of this new distance track structure.

Action Item 2. Expand clinical service to the State.

Rationale – As a Land Grant University, it is important to serve the citizens of Wyoming affected by communication disorders. Direct clinical services are provided on campus at the UW Speech & Hearing Clinic and at externship sites across the State. In addition, faculty provide clinical consultation, continuing education, and clinical services as part of their scholarship and research activities. Our faculty, who include individuals with national recognition for their research and clinical expertise, are frequently sought out for brief informal guidance and for

more extended formal assistance. These connections, along with technologies that increase the possibilities of remote access, can be built upon to improve clinical service in Wyoming.

Action – We will review how we can improve access across the state for direct services, consultation, and continuing education opportunities. Possibilities include regional assessments, telehealth service delivery, on-site visits, and regular remote consultations. We will explore posting contact opportunities on our Division website and contacting the Wyoming Speech-Language-Hearing Association membership to determine how we can be a better resource to our colleagues around the state.

Measurement – The number and nature of new and different in-services or consultations with individual clinicians, developmental preschools, school districts, and medical settings will be documented within the state of Wyoming. An evaluation protocol assesses satisfaction with the interactions and outcomes will be developed and administered to the participating individuals.

Action Item 3. Infuse interprofessional education into the UG and Grad curricula.

Rationale – The field of speech-language pathology is inherently interdisciplinary, drawing on the knowledge gained across many disciplines. In clinical practice, speech-language pathologists and audiologists work closely with other healthcare and education professionals. There is increasing emphasis on initiating the interprofessional process during the educational period. Students in one profession who interact with students in other professions gain valuable insights and perspectives into different professions and practices. Interprofessional education can cross College boundaries, to related professions such as teachers and clinical psychologists.

Action – We will increase interprofessional learning opportunities through projects embedded in undergraduate and graduate coursework and will participate in CHS-level cross-unit initiatives. We will modify one graduate course to provide dedicated attention to teaching students within interprofessional medical and educational teams. We will continue to encourage more interprofessional participation in a stroke support group led by a faculty member in our Division.

Measurement – We will evaluate and document our activities. We will seek instructor and student perceptions of the value of these activities. We will seek feedback from externship supervisors on student performance in interprofessional work situations.

Action Item 4. Improve assessment of our undergraduate student learning.

Rationale – We have comprehensive, systematic competency-based assessment systems in place that inform teaching and learning in the graduate program. In contrast, systematic assessment of our pre-professional undergraduate preparation is in an earlier stage of development. We have collected systematic outcome information, but this has not generally revealed areas of significant need or led to improvements in the program more than the information obtained from individual course evaluations, anecdotal judgments of program strengths and weaknesses, and performance of our undergraduates when they are accepted into the graduate program. We need to further develop our assessment procedures and systems for our undergraduate education. Specifically, we need to evaluate our undergraduate programming in relation to success in the graduate program.

Action – We will review our undergraduate learning objectives to better reflect the core knowledge and skills expected across a rigorous but supportive preprofessional curriculum. We will explore effective and efficient ways of assessing the undergraduate learning outcomes, then evaluate, and systematize the chosen procedures. We initiated this process with an exploration of

meaningful assessments in Spring, 2014 and will evaluate these results and plan for next steps in Fall, 2014.

Measurement – We will assess the effectiveness of our assessment systems by considering if performance data meet our goals, as well as by considering feedback from the CHS Assessment Committee.

Action Item 5. Offer students information about alternate career options for undergraduate students not going on to speech-language pathology and audiology programs.

Rationale – Admission into our and other graduate programs in speech-language pathology is very competitive. Average undergraduate grades, Graduate Record Exam scores, and applicant numbers have gone up steadily in the past 5 years. Good students who formerly could be admitted and succeed in graduate school have difficulty gaining admission now. The faculty and student organizations of the Division of Communication Disorders needs to provide more information and guidance about other careers in healthcare and education for which our bachelor’s degree provides a strong foundation.

Action – We will increase information and guidance about alternate careers on our Division website and in our student advising. Each fall, we will guide our student organization or Aspire Award students to host an Alternate Careers Panel or other activity that brings in positive alternative career paths, such as a special educator, reading teacher, social worker, counselor, case manager, healthcare administrator, and speech-language pathology assistant. Students can also be referred to the University Center for Advising and Career Services for individualized planning for alternative career paths.

Measurement – We will examine undergraduate exit survey items for career advising satisfaction and alumni survey data to determine how our graduates do in alternate careers.

4. What resources (faculty, staff, facilities, funding) must be acquired over the plan period for your Unit to undertake the actions identified in #3 above? What assistance will you need to acquire these resources?

We can accomplish the programmatic goals and action items listed largely within available resources, so long as no other new significant pressures occur on our faculty, staff, funds, and space. One item we need is **more computer classrooms or classroom-sets of laptops** to accommodate the increased use of internet and computer technology in teaching and assessment.

5. What is your succession plan for the principal administrative positions (Dean, Associate Deans, Department Heads) in your Unit over the plan period?

The succession plan previously had involved the current director, Dr. Teresa Ukrainetz, stepping down in Summer 2014, after six years of service, and the only available senior faculty member, Dr. David Jones, moving from his CHS Associate Dean position to the Director position. Dr. Jones’ move to Academic Affairs has disrupted this plan. Dr. Ukrainetz will stay in the Director position for two more years and mentor junior faculty into leadership roles so one of them can move into the director position. If not, then a national search for a director of the Division of Communication Disorders will have to be conducted to fill the director position for Fall, 2016.