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, and increased awareness and support of COMD.

| 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 | Outcome(s) |
| 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 research/clinical partnerships funded by an internal funding mechanism. (Baseline=0) |
| Recruit highly qualified doctoral students | Increasing the number of highly qualified doctoral students in | External and internal funding | Doctoral faculty, doctoral program chair, | Years 1-2: Investigate all potential sources for doctoral training | By the end of Year 5, COMD will have: - Restored use of annual funding mechanisms |
COMD’s doctoral program, which is still in its infancy, will increase the department's research productivity and raise awareness of our department nationwide.

Chair, COMD Advisory Board, ASPH Development Officer

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 funds for doctoral students. Allocate department funds for ongoing and continuous support of doctoral students.

Internal funds of approx. $70k to support two doctoral students per year

Updated Feb 2016: Approx. halfway toward goal

- Contributions to the doctoral fund via specific fundraisers and/or individual contributions

Updated Feb 2016: no change

- A minimum of one doctoral training grant

Updated Feb, 2016: One submitted

- Additional research grants tied to specific labs to support doctoral students

Updated Feb, 2016: three grants written with doctoral student support (one denied, two waiting feedback)

Apply for Center (P50) Grants

COMD has two major research concentrations (Adult Neurogenics & child language/literacy) that are strengths that many programs do not have.

Time and effort; collaboration with research faculty at other institutions

Department senior faculty in collaboration with junior faculty

Years 1-2: Develop the infrastructure support needed for a successful P50 grant proposal. Develop and submit a P50

By the end of Year 3: COMD will have submitted at least one P50 grant for review.

Update Feb, 2016: P50 awarded to J. Fridriksson.
| Ensure doctoral students have advance knowledge in statistical analysis or other methodologies specific to their area of study necessary to conduct their specific research | 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 programming, or other topic area. | Minimal, other than identifying faculty within or outside the department to teach the courses. | Doctoral program faculty, doctoral program chair | 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. | By the end of Year 1, COMD will have:  
- Rewritten the Doctoral Program handbook to include the research tools requirements  
  **Updated Feb, 2016: no change**  
- Assembled a list of potential courses and/or instructors for the tools requirement.  
  **Updated Feb, 2016: no change** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 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 Feb, 2016:** Waiting room monitor now provides information on... |
Create additional course offerings at the doctoral level

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<th>Action step</th>
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<td>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</td>
<td>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. b) A reorganized</td>
<td>Other COMD programs for examples, ASHA documents and resources re: reframing the SLP profession.</td>
<td>Curriculum Committee, department faculty</td>
<td>Years 1 – 2: Evaluation of curriculum</td>
<td>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</td>
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| Ensure a consistent evaluation process for evaluating all courses/instructors of academic courses, including teaching faculty who are not FT faculty and clinical faculty | 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. | An organizational structure within the department (process and assessment tool) to implement COMD peer evaluations | COMD chair, Graduate Director, COMD Administrative Assistant | Year 1: Development of process and assessment tool Year 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. 
*Updated Feb, 2016: Process and tool are* |
<p>| 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. 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 online proctoring (e.g., ProctorU). Updated Feb, 2016: USC has chosen SOFTWARE Secure. Costs are involved. COMD needs to determine how fees might be paid. |
| 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. Years 3-4: Develop new IPE/IPP courses. 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 experiences beyond PHBH 678. Update Feb, 2016: USC |</p>
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<th>Focus Area: Creating a Premiere Student Population – COMD will have a healthy and diverse student population</th>
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<td><strong>Action step</strong></td>
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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>
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**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 |
| By the end of Year 4: - There will be a 25% increase in clinical/research partnerships, posters, and publications. (Baseline = 3 pubs and 2 posters) **Updated Feb, 2016: 2 publications, four presentations/posters** |

SHRC held IPP event in June, 2015, including Pharmacy, Social Work, Nursing, and PT. Spring 2016 event in planning.
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<th>Year 1</th>
<th>Year 2</th>
<th>Year 3-5</th>
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<td>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.</td>
<td>Implement strategies to encourage students’ self-care and strong mental health.</td>
<td>Implement recruitment strategies.</td>
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**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, NSSLHA**

**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 Feb, 2016:**

Center Director connected with CHD; incoming 2015 graduate students received CHD.
**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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| Increasing the public’s knowledge and awareness of a) the SLP’s and audiologist’s role in improving population health and education b) COMD and the Speech and Hearing Research Center (SHRC) | With the growing understanding of the role of the SLP in IPE, 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. | ASHA documents and resources, other IPE literature | Department faculty; NSSLHA, COMD Advisory Board; ASPH’s Director of Public Information | Years 1-2: Develop ideas for flyers, media spots, social media promos, etc. Years 3-5: Implement public awareness/knowledge campaign | By the end of Year 5, COMD will have:  
- 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)  
- Update Feb, 2016: Met with Erin Bluvas Fall, 2015 and developed plan for COMD and ASPH (and potentially USC Today) web stories re: Center clients. To date, there have been 10 stories |
on COMD/SHC. USC Times (hard copy and electronic) also contained featured article on USC SHRC. Times produced video that was featured on UofSC and is now on our webpage. Also attempting to develop “Communication Minutes” for television station distribution.

- Update Feb, 2016: Chair and Center Director working with Shirley Mills (USC lobbyist) to have COMD/SHRC at Carolina Day (and one other day) at state legislature and for SHRC to host “open house” for Richland County Legislative Delegation.

| Increase metropolitan Columbia’s support of COMD and the Speech and Hearing Research Center | The COMD and the Speech and Hearing Research Center provide many benefits to the greater metropolitan Columbia through its research and clinical | None | COMD Advisory Board | Year 1: Develop key person on the COMD Advisory Board to assume leadership of an annual fundraiser | By the end of Year 3: COMD/SHRC will have had the first of its annual fundraisers. Update Feb, 2016: First fundraiser held May, 2015. Next one scheduled for |
| 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 | 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. | 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 Feb 2016:**
COMD offered two, half-day CEU workshops for external supervisors. 
Three, 1-credit courses to be offered that meet the Read to Succeed requirements starting Summer, 2016.

| Increase the public’s awareness and understanding of the “strength” of the MCD program | 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 | Minimal | Director of Distance Education, ASPH Webmaster, volunteer MCD students | By the end of Year 2, COMD will have short videos on its webpage that discuss the rigor and quality of its MCD program. | 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 Feb 2016:**
Sixteen COMD-MCD
| MCD students. | willingness to share information via short, videotaped vignettes. Develop questions for vignettes. Year 2: Produce vignettes that attest to MCD program. Provide these to ASPH webmaster for COMD webpage. | alumni selected and asked to serve as “COMD Distance Education Ambassadors” for PR purposes (e.g., provide quotes, videos). |
Addendum: Footnotes to Strategic Plan


