

# A STRATEGIC PLAN FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION SCIENCES

## **STRATEGIC PLAN OBJECTIVE**

To build a Department of Communication Sciences that:

- is distinctive for its interdisciplinary and technology driven approach to addressing medically and biologically oriented topics relating to normal and disordered speech and hearing.
- is distinctive for attracting and training Ph.D. and Plan A Masters students with backgrounds in engineering, computer science, the biological sciences, cognitive science and other related disciplines.
- is distinctive for its undergraduate program that prepares students to pursue an advanced research degree through rigorous course work and undergraduate research opportunities. The undergraduate program also features an Integrated Graduate Studies (IGS) Program that prepares undergraduate students to obtain their clinical master's degree and clinical certification in a total of 5 years.

## **IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

### **Double the Tenured/Tenure-track faculty size from 3 to 6 over the next three years**

The current faculty size of three is too small to carry out all of the missions of the department. Furthermore, this size faculty puts incredible service obligation pressure on the three junior faculty, which if not immediately addressed, will jeopardize their chances of getting tenure or force them to seek career opportunities elsewhere. Doubling the size of the faculty from the current three members, to six members over the next three years, will provide the department with a faculty large enough to effectively implement the strategic plan outlined below. Furthermore, it is likely that the department will move out of its current space in the Cleveland Hearing and Speech Center (CHSC) building and into a new CHSC building in 2-3 years. Although the department will occupy approximately the same amount of gross square footage in the new building that it currently occupies, the new building will be designed to accommodate a faculty size of six tenured/tenure track faculty plus the additional students and staff that are discussed in the strategic plan below.

### **Phase out the Teacher Licensure Program over the next two years**

The Teacher Licensure Program will be phased out for the following reasons.

- The mission of training Speech-Language Pathologists (SLPs) to work in the schools is not an activity consistent with the strategic mission described above.
- There is a severe shortage of SLPs currently available to work in the schools. Because of this, the State of Ohio is moving towards abolishing its requirement for separate state licensure (all practicing SLPs are licensed by the American Speech-Language Hearing Association (ASHA)) in order to attract SLPs to work in the schools.

- Supervising students through the teacher licensure process is a labor-intensive operation that requires significant investment of both faculty and staff resources. The department will not be able to afford to devote the resources required for a teacher licensure program if it hopes to effectively implement other programs that are more central to its stated mission.
- The number of Case students that have gone on to work in the schools has declined dramatically over the last decade.
- We anticipate that the type of student that will be attracted to our program in the future based on the strategic mission of the department outlined above, will likely be less interested in practicing in a school setting relative to a clinical setting.
- There are numerous programs in Ohio that offer teacher licensure in this area for students that are interested. This is not an area in which the department has a chance to become distinctive.

**Implement the Integrate Graduate Studies (IGS) Program as the predominate pathway in the Department of Communication Sciences for pursuing a clinical masters degree and clinical certification. By 2012 the department will enroll and graduate 4-6 students from the IGS program each year.**

The Department of Communication Sciences will become distinctive as a department that offers a clinical masters degree program for very strong students who want to obtain their master's degree and clinical certification in a total of five years of college. There are several strategic advantages for focusing on the IGS program as a **primary vehicle** for the clinical masters degree:

- Prospective undergraduate students will be attracted to Case to major in communication sciences because we will have one of the few programs in the country where the focus will be on graduating with a master's degree and clinical certification in 5 years.
- Because students will graduate with their master's degree in 5 years, this will negate the cost of our masters degree program, which is expensive relative to other programs in the state and region.
- A focus on IGS students will significantly cut down on the number of master's degree students that the faculty will need to advise. Currently, there are a total of approximately 20 master's degree students (10 per class) enrolled in the program. In the new model, there would be a total of 4-6 fifth year IGS students at any one time. In addition, there would also be 4-6 IGS students in each of their third and fourth year of undergraduate studies. The difference here will be that only very strong students will be admitted to the IGS program, and the faculty will develop close mentoring relationships over the five year period that the students are enrolled in the program.

**Increase number of undergraduate majors in Communication Sciences from a current size of 5, to 20 students per year over the next 5 years.**

The Department of Communication Sciences will become distinctive for providing undergraduate majors in communication sciences a foundation of skills that prepares them well for a clinical career or a career in research. The distinctive features will be rigorous course work, the opportunity to participate in interdisciplinary research, and the IGS Program.

U.S. News and World Report ranks speech-language pathology as one of the 25 Best Careers for 2007 and beyond. Starting salaries for SLPs is \$55k-\$60. When all of these factors are

combined, the department should have no problem attracting 20 strong students to major in the department each year. However, in order to obtain these numbers, the department will need to work closely with the Office of Undergraduate Admissions to ensure that prospective students are informed about the distinctiveness of the program and the opportunity to pursue a rewarding and lucrative health-related career.

**Build Plan A (thesis) Masters Degree Program to an average of 2 students per faculty member over the next 5 years.**

The Plan A master's degree program will primarily serve students that conducted undergraduate research and want to continue their research training but do not desire or are not ready to pursue a Ph.D. Although some of these students may be undergraduates that majored in communication sciences, we anticipate that the majority will be students from other fields including engineering, computer science, the biological sciences, cognitive sciences, psychology, and other related disciplines. After obtaining their master's degree, we anticipate that some of these students will pursue career opportunities in industry, including opportunities involving speech synthesis and recognition technology, virtual immersion technology, functional magnetic resonance imaging technology, and others. Other students will go on to pursue their Ph.D., either at Case or other major Ph.D. program in communication sciences.

**Build Ph.D. Program to an average of two students per faculty member over the next 10 years.**

The Department of Communication Sciences will become known as THE PLACE to be if you are a student who wants to pursue a Ph.D. by directing skills and technology expertise acquired in other disciplines to biologically and clinically related topics involving normal and disordered speech. The department is uniquely positioned to achieve this distinction for several reasons:

- The department's location within Case Western Reserve University provides it several advantages including, a rigorous research environment, excellent research and technology infrastructure, and strong undergraduate students to draw into the Ph.D. program from many different disciplines.
- The department has a core faculty of three who are doing cutting edge, technology driven, interdisciplinary research. Collectively, these individuals will serve as a magnet for attracting additional faculty of the same caliber and for recruiting high quality students from other disciplines into communication science related research.
- The department has a reputation that goes back over 30 years of producing many of the research leaders in the discipline.

**Increase the department's full-time staff size from 1 to 2.**

The department's staff currently consists of one full-time department administrator and a part-time work-study student. In order to effectively implement the strategic plan described above, the department chair and faculty will need at least another full-time staff person to provide the myriad of support activities associated with various elements of the plan. Adequate staff is especially important to the probability of successfully implementing the strategic plan outlined above due to the small size of the faculty.

