

Comments submitted by Professor Michael Casby, Communicative Sciences & Disorders  
RE: Request for a Moratorium on Admission to the Bachelor of Arts Degree in Communicative Sciences and Disorders

December 7, 2009

To: University Committee on Academic Policy

As you are aware, the Dean of the College of Communication Arts and Sciences at Michigan State University has recommended the elimination of the Department of Communicative Sciences and Disorders, and its undergraduate major, to the Provost of MSU. This is extremely troubling action in these troubled times, -- from which there will be recovery. We must be careful not to destroy or damage very important aspects of the present that will indeed aid in the recovery, and thereafter. It is our understanding that this is a *proposal*, and that this is now a time of *consultation*, and not one of *finalization of decision*. With this in mind, we submit the following in support of the continuation of the Department of Communicative Sciences and Disorders, its undergraduate and graduate degree programs at Michigan State University.

The Department of Communicative Sciences and Disorders educates and trains speech-language pathologists for work in: schools, at all levels; hospitals; rehabilitation centers; private practice; etc.; working with those with speech, language, voice, hearing disorders, as well as those with stroke, autism, pervasive developmental disabilities, mental retardation, etc. It enjoys a significant level of support from the citizens, see for instance:  
[www.ipetitions.com/petition/keepcsdatmsu/signatures.html](http://www.ipetitions.com/petition/keepcsdatmsu/signatures.html)

Virtually, if not literally, every intermediate school district, hospital, rehabilitation center, family, etc. in Michigan (and the nation), has great need for more speech-language pathologists. Likewise, virtually, if not literally, every intermediate school district, hospital, rehabilitation center, family, etc. in Michigan has greatly benefited from the outstanding knowledge and skills of an MSU-educated speech-language pathologist.

At this important time in the nation's and Michigan's economy, graduates of this program are all about jobs, jobs, jobs. They get in-state, tax-paying jobs; and work to habilitate and rehabilitate those with disabilities to allow them also to be employed, tax-paying citizens.

The elimination of the Department will most likely lead to a loss of funds for MSU. Students, majors will go to another university for the speech-language pathology major, not just to another MSU major. The department's enrollment has more than doubled over the past few years, with students seeking out the major.

The proposed elimination was done without prior discussion, consultation with students, faculty, staff, faculty advisory committee, or other important stakeholders.

The department has not had a permanent chairperson over the past few years, and it has struggled without the benefit of a someone who would give leadership, voice, and advocacy to its important needs and development. A 2004 external review recommended several administrative

support actions to strengthen the Department, but unfortunately, they have not been implemented or forthcoming.

- Over 43 million people in the United States have communication impairments.
- Communication impairments affect the most vulnerable in our society – the young, the aged, the poor, the disabled.
- By all indications, trends, and rating systems there is a dire state and national need for speech-language pathologists and audiologists.
- The professions of speech-language pathology and audiology demonstrate tremendous growth opportunities. The U.S. Bureau of Labor rates both speech-language pathology and audiology among the highest need professions, and reports an expected need for a 36% increase in the next decade.
- Graduates get good, well-paying, rewarding, contributing, tax-paying professional positions. The employment rate is virtually 100%+, given that most graduates have a choice of positions; and many, many positions continue to go unfilled.
- The Department is ranked in the top quarter of such programs in the country, with markedly fewer resources than average.
  - Nationally, on average per program:
    - the undergraduate enrollment is ~175 -- MSU's ~285.
    - the master's degree enrollment is ~55 -- MSU's ~65
    - the doctoral degree enrollment at MSU was approximately 7-10; the national median for such programs.
    - there are ~14 institutionally supported faculty -- MSU's 8.
    - there are ~5 institutionally supported clinical supervisors --MSU's 0.
    - the pass rate on the national certifying exam is 76% -- MSU's 98%
- The Department has had national peer review and been awarded national accreditation from the Council on Academic Accreditation of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association.
- Departmental faculty and academic staff are engaged across the University's mission and vision of multidimensional excellence in teaching, service, and research.
- Faculty are involved in distance learning and online initiatives.
- Faculty are actively involved with numerous trans-collegiate projects and programs to include: cognitive sciences, education, infant and early childhood studies, genetics, radiology, epidemiology, physics, etc.
- The Department has several overseas' initiatives to include study abroad activities, and humanitarian based projects in Mexico for example.
- Departmental faculty and academic staff are actively involved at the professional levels with such groups as the Michigan Speech-Language-Hearing Association, the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, the Council for Exceptional Children, the National Black Association for Speech-Language, and Hearing, etc.
- A 2004 external review recommended several administrative support actions to strengthen the Department, unfortunately, they were not implemented.
- The Department is among the last in faculty size, budget, administrative support, and program investment in the Big 10. All of this, of course, directly negatively affects research activities, grants, publications for example. Nevertheless, after years of

disinvestment, the Department is among the top echelon for students, enrollments, national test scores, admissions, placement, student awards, faculty recognition, strength of curriculum, education, training, academics, service learning hours, employability, etc. Even with the years of disinvestment, the Department is noteworthy when compared to other programs nationally.

- The faculty has had extramural funding from the NIH and the U.S. Department of Education, as well as from numerous private sources.
- It presently holds extramural funding from the NIH, the NSF, and private sources.
- Ph.D. students in the program have received numerous prestigious grants and awards from extramural and intramural programs, (i.e., NIH, Bamford-Lahey Foundation, American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, American Speech-Language-Hearing Foundation, Michigan Speech-Language-Hearing Association, MSU Cognitive Sciences Program).
- The Department's students are among the highest in GPA, and honors' college enrollment.
- Undergraduate, masters and doctoral students have been recognized with local, state, and national awards.
- Faculty have received local, state, and national recognition.
- The Department provides real-life academics-in-action externships providing thousands of student-service learning hours to the state each semester.
- The Department uniquely serves the very important land-grant/outreach mission and vision for Michigan State University. There are thousands of service contact hours annually via the unit's on- and off-campus practicum education and training facilities and activities.
- Unlike many other programs in the College and University, ours is unique in its teaching, research, and service missions. There is little, if any replication, redundancy etc. Michigan and the nation need more speech-language pathologists, many, many more than many other majors.
- The Department is, and should be recognized and supported as, core to the MSU mission and its guiding principles of: advancing knowledge and transforming lives, assisting people in gaining access to an improved quality of life, advancing diversity, and making people matter within the community.