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April 26, 2002

To: Lee Huntsman
Provost

From: Marsha Landolt 
Dean and Vice Provost

Re: Department of Speech and Hearing Sciences review

Summary and recommended action

At its meeting of April 25, 2002, the Graduate School Council met with members of the Department of Speech and Hearing Sciences review team, the Chair and Associate Chair of the Department, and the Divisional Dean for Science of the College of Arts and Sciences. The Council commended the Department for its remarkable success in managing the dual missions of clinical training and scholarly research. It recommended continuation of all degree programs in the Department, with its next review in 10 years (2011).

I concur with the Council's recommendations and comments. The self-study, report of the review committee, and departmental response are attached.

Background

The Department of Speech and Hearing Sciences offers B.S., M.S. and Ph.D. degrees. It is unusual in the College of Arts and Sciences in that it is responsible for preparing speech and hearing professionals for careers in practice as well as meeting the research and scholarly expectations of a major research University. The review team found that the Department meets its dual mission well; the outside members of the team rated the professional programs as among the top 5 in the U.S. The Department enjoys an outstanding reputation for its research and for the quality of its Ph.D. graduates. Both programs focus on clinical problems, with the goal of improving therapy for those with

speech or hearing disorders. The Department currently enrolls 118 undergraduate and post-baccalaureate students, 59 clinical Master's students, and 35 Ph.D. students. The Department has approximately 30 faculty members including clinical supervisory staff. These faculty have a successful history of partnering with other units in both research and education. Members of the review team were very impressed by the highly collegial and supportive atmosphere of the department.

The review team suggested that the Department do more to recover clinic costs from those receiving services. At present, the clinic is subsidized by salary recapture and other research-generated funds. This is at least partly justified by the importance of the clinic to the clinical research conducted by the faculty and graduate students. However, it is not unreasonable to shift more of the financial burden to clinic clients. Since some of the services are provided by students, it may not be appropriate to set fees to the community standard. The Department may benefit from the experience of other clinical units in this regard.

The review team suggested that the Department shift more of its clinical training to external sites. The Department said that it sees particular value in providing as much professional training as possible in its own clinic so that faculty can directly supervise and guide students. It noted that students mature professionally in an environment in which practice innovations are evaluated and introduced through the research activity of the faculty. In addition, it indicated that external sites are already used to their capacity and that additional use would require compensation, particularly given the increasing cost-recovery challenges in health care fields.

The Department is adapting to local and national research trends. In that vein, the Center for the Mind, Brain and Learning presents both an opportunity and a challenge to the Department. The Center could offer an outstanding research compliment; it could also cause a diversion of faculty attention to activities not consistent with Departmental objectives. Careful attention will be required to ensure that the Department defines and collects the benefits that are expected from shared appointments with the Center.

On the national scene, the entry degree for audiology professionals is shifting from a Master to a doctoral degree (AudD). The Department is planning for this transition and is likely to require a modest increase in faculty number to accommodate the change.

The Graduate School Council was impressed both by the quality of the Department and its programs. It was also impressed by the Department's precarious state. The dual mission of this small department requires most faculty to fulfill both professional educational roles (relating classroom teaching to practice, mentoring in the clinic) as well as to establish research programs that successfully compete for NIH funding (departmental culture increasingly expects faculty to maintain a consistent record of extramural funding). The field itself is small and there is a national shortage of practitioners. There is also a shortage of professionally qualified individuals who wish to enter Ph.D. programs. Currently, there are approximately 175 open faculty positions in

this field, so the small number of Ph.D. graduates is quickly employed. This makes it less likely that Ph.D. graduates receive the postdoctoral training that is needed to afford the greatest chance of success when competing for NIH funds. The result is that few potential candidates for a position at UW will have the necessary compliment of professional and research skills. The Department currently has two unfilled positions and faces the constant threat of losing faculty to lucrative practice opportunities in the area. In addition, since the Department has done a very good job of mentoring junior faculty, it also faces the threat of losing them to competing universities. This unusual combination of circumstances suggests that the University should pay particular attention to retaining junior faculty who are on successful career paths.

c: Richard McCormick, President
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