Review Committee Report for Capstone Certificate in Communication Sciences & Disorders

Date submitted: May 20, 2019

Review Committee Members:
Christa Olson, GFEC Representative
Eric Raimy, Chair
Lauren Ritters

Summary of the activities of the review committee and materials reviewed

Review committee members met with key leadership for the Capstone Certificate in Communication Sciences and Disorders on May 8—department chair Katie Hustad, certificate program director Rita Kaushanskaya, and graduate programs coordinator Amanda Talbert. On May 10, 2019 the committee held an open meeting for graduate students—one current student was able to attend and share their experiences with the committee. In addition, the committee reviewed the self-study materials for the CSD department as a whole and for the Capstone Certificate specifically and also met with Associate Deans Gloria Mari-Beffa and Elaine Klein to hear the College’s perspective on the program.

Evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the program

The Capstone Certificate in Communication Sciences and Disorders meets a specific professional need: it provides an organized suite of pre-requisite courses needed by students who are interested in pursuing graduate work in communication sciences and disorders (including the high-demand masters in Speech Language Pathology) but whose undergraduate degrees did not prepare them for admission to those highly competitive programs. The Capstone Certificate has been in existence for five years and—in that time—has had an impressive placement rate for its graduates. Overall, the review committee finds the Capstone Certificate to be a strong program that meets the needs of its students and provides a high quality, face-to-face academic experience consonant with the expectations of a UW-Madison program.

Recommendations for future directions

The Capstone Certificate and Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders will both have new leadership in the coming academic year. Given how important the program director’s investment is to student experience, the review committee urges the department to choose a new program director with care. The Committee is satisfied that the previous program directors have created structures that will allow for a smooth transition, but also recognize that finding the right person to direct will be essential. An effective and committed program director is one of the key aspects of the strength of the face-to-face character of the capstone.

The review committee does not recommend that the department pursue an online capstone at this time. Launching an online program that would equal the quality of the face-to-face program would require significant investment of resources and it is unclear whether the market needs
additional online programs. In contrast, the face-to-face program is nearly resource neutral yet provides an excellent, intensive training experience for students. Because Capstone students enroll in existing courses, the relatively small size of the Capstone program is not a problem and it is able to be flexible based on need. We believe the current resources CSD is committing to the Capstone Certificate program (in the form of the faculty program director’s time) is a smart and sensible investment for the financial benefit accrued to the department.

We do encourage the department to invest some energy in advertising the Capstone Certificate. We believe that promoting the program, emphasizing its face-to-face model and close faculty supervision as particular strengths, will ensure its future strength and success. Active outreach to colleges, including tribal colleges and HBCUs, could stabilize enrollment around the desired size of 10-15 students.

We also recommend that the program consider advertising the availability of work study positions for Certificate students. Both program faculty and the student interviewee mentioned that hourly work in faculty labs is of benefit to the students when they apply for graduate programs and provides highly-engaged workers to the labs. In addition, the extra income for students can help off-set the costs of the program. One obstacle for students deciding to pursue a face-to-face program rather than an online program is the higher cost in both time and money. Creating more opportunities for students in the Capstone Certificate program to have hourly positions in labs could help students financially and also act as a high quality professionalization activity which can be marketed as a strength of the program.

A final aspect that would be beneficial for the Capstone Certificate program to explore would be how to differentiate the Capstone Certificate from the actual UG CSD degree in some manner. Based on interviews, the committee understands that the target clients for this program are people seeking a high quality program to prepare them for future graduate work in SLP. Thus, these students may expect (or want) more from the academic experience than the standard undergraduate one. Possibilities in this area that may not be too costly in time or resources are ensuring participation in a lab experience, offering easier access to direct observation and interaction with practicing clinicians, and a capstone student journal club or other reading group.

Overall, we are very impressed with the success, quality, and administration of the Capstone Certificate in Communicative Sciences & Disorders program. The best path to continued and improved success is to further cultivate the present face-to-face model and maximize the unique learning opportunities that this mode of instruction offers.
Self-Study for Capstone Certificate in Communication Sciences & Disorders

Date submitted: January 15, 2019

Primary Contact: Margarita Kaushanskaya, PhD

Department: Communication Sciences & Disorders

School/College: Letters & Science

1. Program Description and Context
   
   Include program requirements, mission, learning outcomes, and relationship with other units

A. Program Description

The UW-Madison Certificate in Communication Sciences and Disorders is offered to students who have completed, or will complete, an undergraduate degree in a field other than Communication Sciences and Disorders, and who wish to prepare themselves for admission to a graduate training program in Communication Sciences and Disorders. The certificate is designed primarily for students who wish to pursue a clinical graduate degree (Master’s degree in Speech-language Pathology, or AuD in Audiology), but is also appropriate for students from other fields who wish to pursue a research graduate degree in Communication Sciences and Disorders.

B. Program Requirements

The Capstone curriculum comprises 24 credit hours of required coursework across 8 courses in the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fall Semester</th>
<th>Spring Semester</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CSD 201: Speech Science (3 cr.)</td>
<td>CSD 371: Pre-Clinical Observation of Children and Adults (3 cr.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSD 202: Normal Aspects of Hearing (3 cr.)</td>
<td>CSD 425: Auditory Rehabilitation (3 cr.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSD 240: Language Development in Children and Adolescents (3 cr.)</td>
<td>CSD 440: Child Language Disorders, Assessment and Intervention (3 cr.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSD 315: Phonetics and Phonological Development (3 cr.)</td>
<td>CSD 699: Independent Study (1 cr. From CSD318, craniofacial module)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSD 320: Introduction to Audiology (3 cr.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All coursework is delivered face-to-face on campus. Most Capstone Certificate students will take all eight courses (plus the 1 credit of CSD 318 for the total of 25 credits), but in some cases one or two courses may be waived depending on coursework taken previously, during the
undergraduate degree; the minimum number of credits required for the certificate is 18 (i.e., at least 6 of the courses listed above must be taken).

To qualify for enrollment in CSD 371 (Pre-Clinical Observation; second semester of the Capstone sequence), students must earn a 3.0 grade-point average across three “gateway” courses (CSD 201, CSD 202, CSD 240). Capstone Certificate students who do not earn a GPA of at least 3.0 across these three courses will not be allowed to enroll in CSD 371 (Spring semester), and therefore will not be able to earn the Certificate, although they can (if they choose) continue to take the remaining program coursework.

In addition, in order to be able to enroll in the Spring semester courses, the Capstone students have to earn a 3.0 grade-point average across all the courses taken in the Fall semester. Capstone Certificate students who do not earn a GPA of at least 3.0 across the Fall courses are not eligible to enroll in the Spring semester courses.

C. Program Mission

Our Capstone program has the solitary mission of preparing students who have bachelor’s degrees in other fields to apply for graduate study in speech-language pathology or audiology through a 2-semester on-campus program.

D. Learning Outcomes

1. Obtain basic foundational knowledge of normal aspects of speech, language, and hearing
2. Obtain a broad based understanding of the range of speech, language, and hearing disorders
3. Understand general principles of assessment and intervention in speech, language, and hearing disorders
4. Gain observational clinical exposure to a range of patients with speech, language, and hearing disorders.

E. Relationship with other Units

The Capstone Program shares a close connection with our Undergraduate Program, since the Capstone students take our Undergraduate courses. However, there is no additional instructional cost or instructional load associated with the program. Overall, the increase in enrollment for courses that capstone students take is up to 20 additional seats, which are reserved. All courses are large lecture courses, so the addition of 20 seats has a negligible impact on instruction. Revenues from the Capstone program are used to hire TAs, so our Undergraduate Program realizes a significant benefit.

2. Demonstration of Need and Recruitment/Outreach
   Include populations targeted, data to demonstrate need, and efforts to recruit/inform students

A. Populations Targeted
The populations targeted by the Capstone program are individuals who have Bachelor’s degrees from disciplines other than Communication Sciences & Disorders. The backgrounds of Capstone students therefore vary widely (Linguistics; Psychology; Education; Music; etc.). The vast majority of Capstone students are WI residents, although every year the Capstone program does enroll 2-3 out-of-state students who are attracted to the program because of the Department’s standing.

B. Data to Demonstrate Need

There is an increased need for speech-language pathologists in the United States (Squires, 2013), and projections suggest that in 10 years’ time, there will be a 27% increase in job openings and employment for SLPs (Edgar & Rosa-Lugo, 2007). A slightly different estimate is provided by the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics' Occupational Handbook, 2014–2015 edition, which projects that speech-language pathology employment is expected to grow by 21% from 2014 to 2024. Both projections indicate that the growth rate for SLP employment opportunities is much faster than the average for all occupations. This scarcity of SLPs is a nationwide concern because most SLPs are employed in school settings, and when schools cannot employ enough qualified individuals the students' needs either go unmet, or students are served by untrained persons.

Although the bottleneck in the production of practicing SLPs is at the level of the graduate program rather than undergraduate programs, Capstone programs like ours contribute to increasing the pool of highly qualified candidates who compete for admission into graduate programs in Speech Language Pathology and Audiology, thus enhancing the overall quality of the profession. There is clearly a need for Capstone programs in Communication Sciences and Disorders, with most Departments in the country offering such Post-Baccalaureate programs to students whose undergraduate degrees are in fields other than CSD. Unfortunately, statistics for other departments’ programs are unavailable, and it is impossible to run a comparison between our Capstone program (in terms of the number of students enrolled) and other Capstone programs. The fact that we continue to enroll a healthy number of Capstone students despite wide availability of alternative programs (both on-site and on-line) speaks to the continuous need for this program.

C. Efforts to Recruit/Inform Students

Our Department’s web site is our main recruitment tool for the Capstone Program. The program is also advertised on the School of Continuing Studies website:

https://advanceyourcareer.wisc.edu/capstone-certificates/communication-sciences-and-disorders/

Both sources provide information to students who are already interested in the program, and in general, our strategy to date has not included active recruitment of students to the program. Our enrollment numbers over the first 5 years of the program were consistent (fluctuating from 14 to 20), and we did not see the need for active outreach.
However, as our enrollment numbers did decrease significantly in the last year, part of our strategic plan (see below) will include active recruitment of students, with the goal of providing information about the fields of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology to undergraduate students in other fields (including Psychology, Linguistics, Education, etc.), and at institutions that do not have an undergraduate program in Communication Sciences & Disorders.

3. Program Administration and Resources
   Include a description of academic administration and a description and evaluation of the fiscal model (if appropriate)

A. Academic Administration

The program is administered by the School of Continuing Studies, but all admissions, day-to-day and career advising, progress monitoring, and Capstone certificate award decisions are under the purview of the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders.

**Administrative Point of Contact:** Amanda Talbert, the Department’s Graduate Studies Coordinator, serves as the main administrative point of contact for all Capstone Students. Her duties include: Collecting application materials; forwarding application materials to the Capstone Program Director; informing students of admissions decisions; ensuring that all incoming Capstone students have access to their required courses; organizing the Capstone Orientation schedule; ensuring that the Capstone students can register for additional courses required by ASHA; monitoring of academic records at the termination of the Fall and the Spring semesters. Ms. Talbert maintains regular contact with the Capstone Program Director, appraising her of student progress, and of any issues that Capstone students bring to her that are not administrative in nature.

**Capstone Program Director:** Dr. Margarita Kaushanskaya, a professor in Communication Sciences and Disorders, serves as the academic advisor to the Capstone students. She is also in charge of admissions decisions, orientation, one-on-one and group advising, and generally oversees the day-to-day business in the Capstone program.

**Department Chair:** Dr. Katie Husted, professor and chair in the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders, monitors the success of the Capstone Program, based on Ms. Talbert’s and Dr. Kaushanskaya’s reports. She makes final decisions about any changes or exceptions made in the administration of the program.

B. Description and Evaluation of the Fiscal Model

Capstone students attend regularly scheduled undergraduate courses in our department to earn the certificate; thus, our Capstone program does not impose any additional costs on our department since students take courses that are already being offered to our undergraduate students. With no increased instructional load or cost associated with the program, the program is purely a source of revenue for us.
Our revenues from the Capstone program after the university’s tax and before the hiring of TAs are as follows:

2014: $229,328  
2015: $149,329  
2016: $117,396  
2017: $163,775  
2018: $135,301  
2019 (projected): $94,812

The Capstone program has consistently generated substantial revenue for us in each year of its operation. This revenue has been used for capital expenses, faculty retention packages, and small raises for several faculty and staff members.

The capstone program supports 4 TA positions (of 6 total) for the department. TAs provide important teaching supports for instructors and are an important source of funding for our PhD and MS/PhD students.

4. Advising and Student Services

Include processes for monitoring student progress to completion

A. Advising and Student Services

Dr. Kaushanskaya as the Capstone Program Director, is the main advisor to all the students in the Capstone program. The advising structure for the Capstone students includes both group and individual advising sessions. The group advising sessions are scheduled as follows:

August: Introduction to the Capstone Program (Orientation)
September: Introduction to the Graduate School Application Process
October: Graduate School Application Check-In and Updates
March: Graduate School Decisions
April: Debriefing and Solicitation of Feedback

Dr. Kaushanskaya also blocks 2 hours every week for individual advising (this block of time is shared by undergraduate and Capstone students, but is mostly utilized by Capstone students). Topics for individual face-to-face advising include the following:
- Graduate school application strategies (individualized to each student’s academic record and goals)
- Writing of the graduate school application essay (involves reading the essay and providing feedback on multiple drafts)
- Advice on selection of letter writers and solicitation of letters of recommendation
- Advice on research, volunteer, and clinical opportunities in the field
- General advice on different programs in Speech-Language Pathology, their emphases, and their reputation
- Differences between clinical training programs and doctorate training programs
- Career options and career advice
-Examination of “failed” application packages (for students who were not admitted to any graduate school), and formulation of the application strategy for the following year

In addition to the advising structure set up by Dr. Kaushanskaya, the Capstone students have access to the advising services in the School of Continuing Studies, and to the Undergraduate Advising sessions in the Department, that are run by our Undergraduate Advisors. Most Capstone students also take advantage of advising offered by our chapter of the National Student Speech Language Hearing Association (NSSLHA). Finally, Capstone students also frequently solicit advice from other faculty in Communication Sciences and Disorders (see detailed list of faculty participants under “5”).

**B. Process for Monitoring Progress to Completion**

We have both formal and informal mechanisms in place to monitor students’ progress. Our **formal process** involves careful attention to students’ grades in the courses they take in the Fall semester. Once the Fall semester grades are posted, Ms. Talbert lets Dr. Kaushanskaya know whether (a) any student has received a grade lower than a B in the average of the three “gateway” courses (CSD 201, 202, and 204) or (b) across all the Fall courses. If a student receives such a grade, they are contacted and informed that (a) they will be unable to register for CSD 371 (Clinical Observations) in the Spring Semester, or that (b) they will be unable to continue in the Program. At the end of the Spring semester, Ms. Talbert once again checks all student records to ensure that all the students completed all the required Capstone coursework, and apprises Dr. Kaushanskaya of any cases where coursework is missing. Most of the time, the missed coursework occurred as the result of an administrative error (a waved course was not flagged as such).

Our **informal process** begins at Orientation in August, when Dr. Kaushanskaya makes it very clear to the students that they own the responsibility for their success in the Capstone program. One of the most important take-away messages is that students experiencing difficulties in any of their courses have many options: Their first step is talking to Dr. Kaushanskaya. They are also encouraged to talk frequently to their Instructors and Teaching Assistants, to form study groups, and to take advantage of peer tutoring. Many of the Capstone students attend Dr. Kaushanskaya’s advising hours for such a purpose. When a student shares a concern about their grade in a particular class, Dr. Kaushanskaya formulates a plan together with the student, and encourages the student to speak to the course Instructor. Dr. Kaushanskaya then regularly checks in with the student, to ensure that their plan is working.

In the 5 years of the Program’s existence, only 3 students left the program due to poor performance.

5. Faculty/Staff Participants
   *Include a list of participating faculty, instructional staff, administrative staff with their role and department affiliation noted*
Katie Hustad (Professor and Chair; Department of Communication Sciences & Disorders): General oversight of the Capstone Program; research mentor/supervisor

Margarita Kaushanskaya (Professor, Department of Communication Sciences & Disorders): Capstone Program Director; Instructor for CSD 240; research mentor/supervisor

Benjamin Parrell (Assistant Professor, Department of Communication Sciences & Disorders); Instructor for CSD 201

Ruth Litovsky (Professor, Department of Communication Sciences & Disorders); Instructor for CSD 202; Head of Undergraduate Advising; research mentor/supervisor

Michelle Ciucci (Associate Professor, Department of Communication Sciences & Disorders): Instructor for CSD 318; research mentor/supervisor

Courtney Seidel (Clinical Associate Professor, Department of Communication Sciences & Disorders): Instructor for CSD 371

Audra Sterling (Assistant Professor, Department of Communication Sciences & Disorders): Instructor for CSD 440; research mentor/supervisor

Susan Ellis Weismer (Professor, Department of Communication Sciences & Disorders): Instructor for CSD 440; research mentor/supervisor

Kimberly Mueller (Assistant Professor, Department of Communication Sciences & Disorders): Research mentor/supervisor

**Instructional Staff**

Carrie Rountree (Visiting Assistant Professor, Department of Communication Sciences & Disorders); Instructor for CSD 210 (often taken by Capstone students in addition to required coursework); Instructor for CSD 371

Mianisha Finney (Visiting Assistant Professor, Department of Communication Sciences & Disorders); Instructor for CSD 315

Viji Easwar (Visiting Assistant Professor, Department of Communication Sciences & Disorders); Instructor for CSD 320; Instructor for CSD 425

**Administrative Staff**

Amanda Talbert (Graduate Studies Coordinator; Department of Communication Sciences & Disorders): General administrative support for the Capstone Program
Michael Block (IT Specialist; Department of Communication Sciences & Disorders); General IT support for the Capstone program

Timothy McCarty (Department Administrator; Department of Communication Sciences & Disorders); Financial analysis for the Capstone program

Rhonda Jacobs (Program Assistant; Department of Communication Sciences & Disorders); scheduling of classrooms for Capstone program meetings and advising sessions

6. **Student Enrollment**  
*Include total number of students enrolled/declared in the program compared to program enrollment goals; address low enrollment policy (if applicable)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Admitted to Capstone Program</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completed Capstone Program</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applied to UW for grad school</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admitted to UW for grad school</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attended UW for grad school</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7. **Curriculum**  
*Include evidence that required courses have enrollment capacity to certificate progress and completion*

Capstone students attend regularly scheduled undergraduate courses in our department to earn the certificate; thus, there is no increased instructional load or cost associated with the program. Overall, the increase in enrollment for courses that capstone students take is up to 20 additional seats, which are reserved. All courses are large lecture courses, so the addition of 20 seats has a negligible impact on instruction.

8. **Assessment**

| Curriculum Map  
(Where) |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Capstone Certificate Program Courses</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obtain basic foundational knowledge of normal aspects of speech, language, and hearing</td>
</tr>
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<td>Gain observationa l clinical exposure to a range of patients with speech, language, and hearing disorders.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
and hearing disorders

| CSD 201 | x |
| CSD 202 | x |
| CSD 240 | x |
| CSD 315 | x | x | x |
| CSD 318 | x | x |
| CSD 320 | x | x |
| CSD 425 | x | x |
| CSD 371 | x | x |

**Assessment Planning (How)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method for assessing learning (at least one direct method required)</th>
<th>Average grade of B or better across 201, 202, and 240.</th>
<th>Response to likert-type questions on exit questionnaire</th>
<th>Response to likert-type questions on exit questionnaire</th>
<th>Grade of B or better in CSD 371</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Timetable for assessment activity (at least one activity each year; all outcomes reviewed in a 3-year cycle)</td>
<td>Annually upon completion by each cohort of CSD 201, 202, 240</td>
<td>Annually upon completion of certificate</td>
<td>Annually upon completion of certificate</td>
<td>Annually upon completion of CSD 371</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*For examples of direct and indirect methods of assessment, see the UW Madison Assessment website.*

**Assessment Review and Reporting (So What)**

1. **Who is responsible for assessment?** (Identify a team, including at least one faculty member, who will coordinate the implementation of the plan on an annual basis):
   
   Rita Kaushanskaya
   
   Katherine Hustad

2. **What is the plan for review of the assessment information?** (At minimum, review will take place at an annual meeting of the program faculty and staff; note that at this meeting the program may want to review enrollment information, course progression, completion, and other features of the student experience. This is also a good time to review and update the certificate proposal or implementation form):
Assessment information will be collated when student complete the Capstone program in the spring semester each year. Results will be discussed at the annual faculty retreat in August of each year.

3. What is the plan for production of annual summary report? (A summary of the materials forms the basis of the discussion at the annual meeting, the content of the discussion, and any recommendations):

The collated assessment information will be distributed to the faculty and staff at the annual faculty retreat in August. Discussion of this information will take place at the meeting, and the content of the discussion as well as any recommendations will be recorded by Rita Kaushanskaya, who will then produce the annual summary report, and submit it to the Chair of the Department.

4. How will recommendations be implemented? (explain the general process by which recommendations will be implemented):

Because our Capstone Program comprises a subset of the courses that our regular undergraduate majors take, changes to courses based on capstone student feedback alone are not possible without impacting the entire undergraduate program. However, evaluation results from the capstone program will be considered as part of program evaluation for our undergraduate program in CSD.

9. Program Completion
Include comments on number of certificates awarded annually relative to program goals; for capstone certificates include placement of “graduates.”

Program goals are not framed in terms of the number of certificates we would like to award. Instead, we see our mission as rigorous training and extensive, hands-on advising to the students who do enroll in our program, to prepare them for graduate school admissions.

We have not collected data on how many students actually went on to attend graduate school at any institution between 2013-2016, but we do have data on how many Capstone graduates ended up attending UW-Madison for graduate school in speech-language pathology or audiology. These rates of admission (25 to 45%) are not as high as the rates of admission for our own undergraduate majors (50 to 60%), but considering that our MS program in Speech and Language Pathology is one of the top three programs in the country, these rates showcase the great degree of success of our Capstone students to compete for graduate admission.

We also have data for the Capstone students who attended the program in 2016-2017, and in 2017-2018. For the Capstone class of 2017, of the 19 students who completed the Capstone certificate, 18 were admitted into graduate schools in Speech and Language Pathology or Audiology (95%). For the Capstone class on 2018, of the 15 students who completed the program, 14 applied to graduate schools (one student chose to take a gap year), and of these, 10 were admitted into graduate school in Speech and Language Pathology or Audiology (71%). These rates far exceed the general admissions rates for Speech Language Pathology...
Master’s Programs (the estimates range from 17% to 20%, but it is difficult to obtain accurate numbers since most students apply to multiple schools).

10. Overall Analysis of Self-Study and State of the Program
   Include recommendation and proposals for academic or administrative improvements

   For the first 5 years of its existence, the Capstone program has been quite successful. We have consistently enrolled 14-20 individuals in the program, and we have successfully placed a large number of individuals who have completed the program in Graduate Programs in Speech and Language Pathology or Audiology. Assessment of student knowledge (both formal and informal) revealed excellent student outcomes, and assessment of student satisfaction has, for the most part, also produced rather positive results.

   From the Department’s perspective, the Program has yielded a number of benefits. First, it adds highly-trained students to the pool of potential, qualified student applicants in the field, thus addressing the desperate shortage of Speech and Language Pathologists, especially in the school systems. Second, the quality of the Capstone students, for the most part, is rather high – these are highly motivated, highly capable individuals, who generally do very well in the undergraduate courses they take in our Department. These students are also very interested in the material, and do not hesitate to speak up in class. The consequence of this is that the level of student engagement in our undergraduate courses has improved, and generally, the instructors who teach the courses that enroll Capstone students report more dynamic classrooms, and higher-level effort by the undergraduates because of the presence of the Capstone students in the classroom. Third, the program is a revenue generator for us. Because of the program, we have been able to offer TA positions to our PhD and MS/PhD students. This provides our students with valuable teaching experience, and gives us some flexibility with respect to student funding. Of course, the courses benefit from TA involvement. We have also been able to use the funds generated by the Capstone program to supplement start-up packages for newly-hired tenure-track faculty.

   The current administrative structure for the Capstone program serves it quite well. The program is not large, and a single faculty member who functions as the main advisor to the students, together with the administrator who assists with all the logistics associated with the program, are sufficient. Exit surveys from the Capstone students have been used to fine-tune the advising schedule and to incorporate advising on career choices. Students also get a lot of individualized advising and attention, and that has worked well.

   Moving forward, we aim to build on the Capstone program’s strength and to address two main challenges: dwindling student enrollment and students’ competitiveness for graduate school.

   **Challenge 1: Student Enrollment**

   Our numbers have gone down significantly in the past year. We attribute it to the fact that most CSD departments in the country and in the state offer such Post- Baccalaureate programs. Many of these programs offer on-line and evening courses, in contrast to our
Capstone program, which functions in the context of the Undergraduate curriculum, with all of the courses offered in daytime and on campus. Therefore, these alternative programs offer more flexibility to returning students who have held full-time jobs after they graduated with their Bachelor’s. Many of these alternative programs are also more affordable than our program, although it is important to point out that with federal student aid available to the Capstone students for the first time in 2018, our program’s numbers may go up next year.

We have a few short-term and long-term strategies aimed at addressing decreased enrollment. In the short term, we will need to undertake focused recruitment, targeting students who attend smaller schools that do not house a CSD department, as well as targeting students in departments that produce undergraduate students who may be interested in CSD (Psychology; Education; Special Education; Child Development and Family Studies; etc.). An on-line as well as an on-the-ground recruitment campaign has been discussed. We will begin posting our success rates and testimony from the Capstone students who have graduated from the program on our website. We have also considered the possibility of hosting an annual Open House in the department that would introduce students and the community to the field, to the clinics, and to the research being accomplished in the department. We have discussed participating in career fairs, both at the UW and other universities/venues. Finally, the School of Continuing Studies tracks and follows up on all the students who express an interest in the program, and it may be worthwhile to become more aggressive in reaching out to these students.

In the long-term, the Department has begun discussing the possibility of an on-line Capstone program, to replace or to supplement the on-campus program we are currently offering. Such a transition would involve a sizable upfront investment, but we anticipate that it would also attract a much larger number of students. If we are correct in our interpretation of the causes behind the drop in the enrollments (i.e., if this is due primarily to the wide availability of on-line programs), then implementing an on-line program at UW-Madison may yield a large number of enrollments (since the demand is certainly there).

We are also considering a possibility of implementing a Speech Language Pathology-Assistant (SLP-A) program that could be offered to the enrolled Capstone students. SLP-As are support personnel who, following academic coursework, fieldwork, and on-the-job training, perform tasks prescribed, directed, and supervised by ASHA-certified speech-language pathologists. In 2009, 42% percent of school-based SLPs and 32% of health-care based SLPs reported that there was one or more SLP support personnel employed at their facility (ASHA 2009 Membership survey), and these numbers have gone up since then. SLP-A may be an attractive intermediate step in a student’s trajectory towards a Master’s degree in Speech and Language Pathology, or an excellent back-up plan (in case of an unsuccessful graduate school application) for the Capstone students. SLP-A programs generally are 1 year in length, requiring completed coursework equivalent to an undergraduate degree in Speech and Language Pathology (which our Capstone students already get), and successful completion of a minimum of 100 hours of supervised field work or clinical experience. Implementing an SLP-A program would therefore largely mean designing the supervised clinical experiences for the students. Such a program may be an excellent recruitment tool and it may also generate significant revenues for us. It would be feasible to complete the
SLP-A program simultaneously with the Capstone program; however, it would also be possible to offer it as a free-standing program to students who are not interested in pursuing a graduate degree in Speech and Language Pathology.

**Challenge 2: Capstone students’ competitiveness for Graduate School Admissions**

While the number of our Capstone students who gain admission into graduate programs in Speech and Language Pathology and Audiology is rather impressive, certainly not all Capstone students gain admission into graduate programs. The challenge, of course, is that the admissions decisions are based largely on two factors: Applicants’ undergraduate GPA, and Applicants’ GRE scores. At the time Capstone students apply to graduate programs (Fall semester, their first semester in the program), their Fall grades are not posted yet, and indeed, many programs treat the Capstone GPA differently from the Undergraduate GPA.

We have no control over these factors, and therefore, our job is two-fold: (1) to ensure that the students whose GPA and GRE scores place them at the lower end of the scale understand the reality of their situation, and apply very strategically to the schools that have the history of admitting students with their scores; and (2) assist the students with the pieces of the application where there is room to improve (i.e., resume; statement of purpose; letters of recommendation). Generally, both of these have been under the purview of the Capstone Program Director, and managed through group and individual advising. The students are also encouraged to attend the NSSLHA meetings on graduate school admissions, and to make use of other faculty members’ expertise.

In order to increase our students’ competitiveness for graduate school admissions, we have considered the following strategies: (1) Mandatory individual advising (currently, only the students who seek the advice and feedback on their application materials get it; we are considering making this a requirement for the Capstone program); (2) More aggressive strategies for placing Capstone students in research labs and/or community programs and clinics to gain experience in the field; (3) Statement writing boot-camp (the students get a lot of feedback on their statements, but it may be helpful to get them together as a community early in the Fall semester and then continue to meet as a group to share drafts/feedback).