



COUNCIL OF ACADEMIC PROGRAMS IN  
COMMUNICATION SCIENCES AND  
DISORDERS

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Dear President, Chancellor and Board of Trustees, University of Knoxville,

Our executive board of the Council of Academic Programs in Communication Sciences and Disorders, the academic organization representing undergraduate and graduate programs in speech-language pathology, audiology, and speech and hearing sciences, has just learned of the possible closing of the nationally ranked program at the University of Tennessee. I just read

<http://chancellor.utk.edu/announcements/20080604.shtml> . There was a collective sense of horror among our executive board and we felt that we must write to you and express our dismay and concern and offer to help in any way you deem appropriate. The Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology Program at the University of Tennessee is one of the historically oldest programs in the country, and one of the best. There will be an outpouring of national alarm if this does come to pass.

As a dean myself, I do understand that decisions about closing programs is a local decision, involving many university, system, state and regional issues, of which we are not informed. But I did want to highlight the fact that the professions of speech-language pathology and audiology are listed on every regional and national list of critical workforce needs in terms of personnel shortage. Additionally, the Council of Academic Programs and the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association has a long history of task forces/white papers documenting the critical shortage of research scientists in communication sciences and disorders. (They have titles such as “Crisis in the Discipline,” <http://www.asha.org/NR/rdonlyres/BBAD71FC-9EE0-4C09-A8DF-D9AF6C45F5B5/0/CrisisInTheDiscipline.pdf> .) There are currently many programs supporting researchers and doctoral students to help alleviate this critical shortage of Ph.D.s in the discipline, including the programs of NIH, NIDCD, supporting doctoral students, post docs, and new faculty, targeted for our discipline.

I do not know if your university has some reservations about this department being in Arts and Sciences. One of our outstanding researchers once said that communication sciences and disorders (CSD) “sits at the intersection of the social, behavioral and physical sciences,” indicating that this discipline could be in any number of academic units. I have worked at four universities and CSD has been a school of education, school of allied health, school of health and human performance, and college of arts and sciences, with none of these units being inappropriate! Depending on the strengths of the faculty and the focus of the program, an academic home may differ.

Another critical issue for this program is its impact on economic development, health and wellness in the region. The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) has looked at the impact a speech and hearing clinic has on the many citizens it serves each year. You have a nationally known clinic director at UT and you serve many,

many people in the Knoxville area and surrounding communities. The cumulative effect those services have on citizens' abilities to maintain employment and succeed in school or the workplace is worth millions. I am sure your state university, just like mine, measures these outcomes. The academic program at UT in CSD, also led by a nationally known researcher, includes a long list of prolific scientists who have had an impact on the economy of the region and the nation. Looking down the list of faculty researchers and their areas of research, I see that they combine the arts and sciences for health and wellness research—great examples of the intersecting disciplines.

If further discussion is helpful, I am willing to talk to anyone at the University of Tennessee. I am willing to discuss this issue by telephone or, if it would be helpful, to discuss in person. I am willing to come to Knoxville. This issue is critical to our discipline; we cannot afford to lose this program. Our entire board, representing all academic programs in the United States and several foreign countries, is very, very concerned. We appreciate your thoughtful consideration of our concern.

Sincerely,

Celia R. Hooper

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