Two-Year Progress Report
Speech Communication Program (BA)
December 2015

The below report summarizes:

- actions taken since submission of the program report;
- recommendations not acted upon, but for which action is planned;
- recommendations no longer considered appropriate;
- new ideas or initiatives, not included in the report; and
- other relevant information.

This report was prepared under the direction of the Acting Chair with input from faculty members in the Speech Communication program.

Action taken since submission of the program report:

The Speech Communication program report was submitted in March of 2013. The report was prepared by Michael Dorland, School of Journalism and Communication, Carleton University, and Thomas K. Nakayama, College of Arts, Media and Design, Northeastern University.

Since that time, the following actions have been taken:

- Recommendation two, increase the faculty by two positions.

In the past two year period, the Speech Communication program has hired three tenured or tenure-line faculty, and two definite term lecturers (one for a three-year term, and the other for a one-year term). In part, these hires were a response to concerns raised in the program review, which strongly recommended that two full-time faculty positions be hired, and in part these positions have been created because Speech Communication was invited to play a role in the university wide English Language Competency Initiative, and specifically provide SpCom courses to Math Faculty students. The hiring of these five faculty partially achieves the report’s recommendation, as these positions are in part shared with the larger English Language Competency initiative. The need for new faculty in Speech Communication is still a concern, as the unit is still experiencing pressure to teach an increasing number of students, both within

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the Faculty of Arts (e.g.: SpCom 111 to Accounting students), and because the SpCom courses offered to the Math Faculty (SpCom 100, 223, 225, 227, and 228) are over-subscribed. Currently, the department relies on five active tenure line faculty members in a program with approximately 160 majors. A sixth tenure line faculty member in the program is currently on leave with an unspecified return date, a situation over which neither the department nor the Faculty of Arts has any control.

- **Recommendation three, ensure slow and controlled growth for the program.**

With the increased number of faculty have also come additional requirements such as providing SpCom courses to the Math Faculty through the English Language Competency initiative; so, in the past two years there has been a continual effort to manage growth and change well. Students in the Faculty of Arts show interest in the program, suggesting a strong potential for further growth in enrollment. However, the current level of resources, and especially the lack of office and meeting space in the Modern Languages building, does not support such growth. It is also worth noting that curricular changes approved at the Undergraduate Advisory Group and implemented over the past two years have served to attract new students into the major.

- **Recommendation four, related to growth of the Speech Communication program and courses outside of the department (i.e., that in other departments in the Faculty of Arts and in other faculties), centrally involve those in the Speech Communication program in this growth.**

See above (outline and rationale, recommendation three). The program’s offerings are popular in other faculties as well as within the Faculty of Arts. Speech Communication has seen marked increases in student majors over the past two years, and this is consistent with the trend of higher enrollments in communication programs in the United States and in Canada. As noted above, such growth requires resources. Further, by strongly linking growth plans to wider efforts, such as the English Language Competency initiative, the outcomes will benefit the program, department, faculty, and university.

- **Recommendation five, further integrate Dr. Shannon Hartling and Mr. Tim Paci into work of program and department.**

In 2013, shortly after the program report, Dr. Hartling and Mr. Paci’s contracts with the university changed from Definite Term lecturers to that of Continuing Term Lecturers. Dr. Hartling and Mr. Paci play an important role in, and make significant contributions to, the Speech Communication program, and are fully integrated into program meetings and practices. Over the past two years, Mr. Paci and Dr. Hartling have made significant contributions to the program in the areas of Service, and given their in-depth knowledge of and familiarity with the December 2015
program, this contribution has been welcome and necessary. With the increase of new faculty in Speech Communication, Mr. Paci and Dr. Hartling have provided an important resource of knowledge and understanding; however, their role in the development of curriculum and other service commitments could be enhanced and supported with contracts that would allow for a greater percentage of their time spent in service (e.g.: reduced teaching and increased service for a specific period of time, with specific service areas identified).

- **Recommendation six, within the department as a whole, continue integrating three disciplinary programs (i.e., Speech Communication, Drama, and Digital Arts Communication).**

In keeping with departmental conversations and priorities, over the past two years, the Speech Communication program has considered and implemented various initiatives that explore the possibilities for cross-program work within the department, related to teaching, research, and service. In fall 2013, the department held a department wide and program specific orientation event for students, which brought all students in the department together. Given existing resources, faculty in the Speech Communication program have engaged in further integration with faculty in the two other units when it supports a) the work of the department overall; b) the efforts of the Speech Communication program as a whole; and/or c) the research and teaching of the individual faculty member. An example of such an initiative happened in the winter term of 2014: entitled *Small Acts of Repair Toward Mental Health: Information and Conversation*. This was a symposium co-directed by Andy Houston (Drama) with Jennifer Simpson (SpCom), to work in support of the Drama unit’s term production, entitled *From Solitary to Solidarity: Unraveling the Ligatures of Ashley Smith*. This symposium included invited experts to speak about mental health issues and mental health awareness at the University of Waterloo and in the broader Waterloo region. It brought together a number of stakeholders who work in various capacities toward the promotion of mental health awareness, including faculty from across the University of Waterloo, and the Director of Counseling Services on campus.

Also, in the fall term of 2014, a Collaboration Committee was established with the mandate to investigate ways in which the three programs of our department can better work together, including the development of joint curriculum and joint research initiatives. An example of the latter is Dr. Jill Tomasson Goodwin’s LITE Seed grant, entitled *Learning Innovation and Teaching Enhancement*, which includes representation from all three programs in the department.

- **Recommendation seven, recognize the potential the Speech Communication program holds in regard to Faculty of Arts enrollments.**

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Please see the responses to recommendation three and four. In their report, reviewers stated that the Speech Communication program “has an enormous potential contribution to make to the Faculty of Arts and to Waterloo University [...] and has the potential to increase (or stop the declining) enrollments in the Faculty of Arts.” Faculty in the program agree that through intentional and strategic efforts, the Speech Communication program may well be able to contribute to marked growth and retention in both the program itself and in the Faculty of Arts more widely. These efforts and their consequences would clearly have relevance to the university, and also require additional resources. In the past two years, the Speech Communication program has demonstrated a willingness to serve, both at the faculty level, toward better communication capacity, and at the university level, through initiatives such as the English Language Competency initiative. The Speech Communication program has also developed various initiatives to better communicate its curriculum and pedagogical strengths to potential students, for example:

- **Website redesign.** A departmental subcommittee, active in the last two years has substantively redesigned the departmental website. These efforts resulted in significantly updated and improved Speech Communication program pages, as well as improvements to the overall site.
- **Elimination of courses no longer offered.** Faculty have identified courses that are no longer offered in the Speech Communication program, and these courses have been deleted from the university calendar.

**Recommendations not acted upon, but for which action is planned:**

- **Recommendation one, change the name of the Speech Communication program.** In the 2013 report, the reviewers noted that the name of “Speech Communication” can lead to confusion, and does not necessarily represent the breadth of the Speech Communication program. The unit responded to this concern, stating: “The Speech Communication program at the University of Waterloo is closely aligned with disciplinary traditions and trajectories in the United States, and is quite different from nearly all communication programs in Canada. The Communication program at Cape Breton University is the only one in Canada that parallels the program at UW (in terms of disciplinary focus and related to scholarly and pedagogical areas of study). The name of “Speech Communication” in a disciplinary sense conveys very well the program’s intellectual priorities and scope, and clearly distinguishes the program from others in Canada.” The unit has discussed the possibility of a name change in several meetings in 2015, and by the end of the year a sub-committee was formed to research the possibilities and make a recommendation to the unit in 2016.

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Recommendation five, further integrate Dr. Shannon Hartling and Mr. Tim Paci into work of program and department. The reviewers' report states that both Dr. Hartling and Mr. Paci might be given more research time. Dr. Hartling and Mr. Paci each have a contractual teaching load of eight courses annually, with an appointment of 80% teaching and 20% service and no allowance for research.

Recommendations no longer considered appropriate:

Not applicable.

New ideas or initiatives, not included in the report:

In 2014, Speech Communication, along with the Department of English, St. Jeromes College, and the EMLS program at Renison College undertook an initiative to design, deliver, and manage communication and writing courses for the Faculty of Math. Within the Speech Communication program, SpCom 100, 223 (a first level of courses) as well as 225, 227, and 228 (a second level of courses) have been offered to Math students through a designation self-placement process. As of the time of writing this report, this initiative has enjoyed three terms of success in that our courses are popular with Math students keen to improve their communication skills, the designated self-placement process has worked well, and preliminary reports show improved performance of Math students who have taken SpCom courses in their Co-op placements.

Moving forward, three areas of concern have been identified with respect to the Faculty of Math initiative: First, processes and roles regarding the design and delivery of these courses needs to be clarified. Second, an evaluation and assessment of how our resources are being used should happen, and a decision made about whether the program has the appropriate resources for the size and complexity of this initiative. And third, questions about assessment of both the program and individual courses have recently come to the fore.

In relationship with the above initiative, Speech Communication faculty (Jennifer Simpson and Shana MacDonald) serve on SCLECI (Steering Committee, English Language Competency Initiative). Members of SCLECI are interested in the development of a program assessment working plan that supports the successful implementation of the foundational outcomes passed by Dean’s Council in May 2015.
Other relevant information:

In the past two years, Speech Communication courses have proven to be popular with students across the university. The popularity is beginning to translate into higher enrolment numbers in first and second year courses, and the need to employ a greater number of sessional instructors. This is putting pressure on the department and the program’s resources.
Date of next program review: July 1, 2019

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Chair/Director

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Faculty or Administrative Dean

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Associate Vice-President, Academic
(For undergraduate and augmented programs)

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Associate Provost, Graduate Studies
(For Graduate and augment programs)