

ANNUAL REPORT

2008-2009

SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION SCIENCES & DISORDERS

FACULTY OF MEDICINE

Submitted by:

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Acting Director

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Section I – Description of Unit

Mission statement

The mission of the School of Communication Sciences and Disorders is to advance our understanding of human communication and its disorders and to promote excellence in scholarship as well as in professional service. This is achieved by providing a challenging multidisciplinary learning environment and engaging in scholarly activities that not only advance basic and applied knowledge, but that will ensure our place among the international leaders of the field.

Activities & Objectives

The School provides both professional and research training in communication sciences and disorders through its M.Sc. (Applied), M.Sc., and Ph.D. degrees. The goal of the M.Sc. (A) program is to educate the next generation of well-prepared and innovative Speech-language pathology professionals by providing enriched classroom training, clinical laboratory activities that enhance the transition from theory to practice, and outstanding clinical practicum experiences.

We are also committed to providing continuing education activities for speech and hearing professionals in the community and to working together with the Ordre des Orthophonistes et Audiologistes du Québec (OOAQ) to maintain the quality and integrity of the professions in Québec.

The objective of our research degrees is to develop leading researchers and scholars who will go on to train future investigators in the field of communication sciences and disorders and who, through their research, will advance our understanding of the processes of human communication and its breakdown. Interdisciplinary interactions are at the core of our research training approach, which includes preparation to conduct both fundamental and clinically-applied investigations.

Academic Staff

Shari Baum, Ph.D. James McGill Professor (on sabbatic leave)
Jeanne Claessen, M.A. Faculty Lecturer (Head of Clinical Program)
Laura Gonnerman, Ph.D. Assistant Professor
Vincent Gracco, Ph.D. Associate Professor
Aparna Nadig, Ph.D. Assistant Professor
Marc Pell, Ph.D. William Dawson Scholar & Associate Professor
Linda Polka, Ph.D. Associate Professor
Susan Rvachew, Ph.D. Associate Professor and Acting Director
Karsten Steinhauer, Ph.D. Canada Research Chair (Tier II) & Associate Professor
Elin Thordardottir, Ph.D. Associate Professor (on sabbatic leave)

Section II – Past Year’s Activities

Teaching and learning

- The faculty continued to implement minor curriculum adjustments in keeping with the outcome of a review of curriculum that was conducted in December 2007 by the faculty with input from representatives of our graduate students, our community of clinical educators and the Ordre des Orthophonistes et Audiologistes du Québec. Specifically this year one course was renamed and reoriented and a new course was added to the program and all courses in the applied program were subjected to minor adjustments in order to ensure appropriate coverage of cranio-facial disorders and dyslexia and other neurodevelopmental disabilities. The new course on cranio-facial disorders will be open to students in the Faculty of Dentistry.
- Dr. Rvachew wrote a proposal with input from the School of Occupational and Physical Therapy, the Montreal Children’s Hospital and the Lester B. Pearson School Board to create a summer school program for children with mild multiple handicaps that would serve as an internship opportunity for applied students in both our schools. The proposed program would provide training in multi-professional and evidence-based practice for an underserved population of children. The proposal was submitted to MELS in response to the Action 6 RFP entitled ‘Start-up Programs in Health’.
- The School implemented a plan to honour our alumni with two new Alumni Awards. Ms. Ayala Manolson (M.Sc. degree granted June 1973) was awarded the Distinguished Alumni Award for Professional Leadership for her tremendous contribution to the speech-language pathology profession and to families of children with communication disorders throughout the course of her career. Her most notable accomplishment is the founding of the Hanen Centre that provides family-centered resources to speech-language pathologists in over 50 countries.
- The Distinguished Alumni Award for Research Leadership was awarded to Martha Crago, who with three degrees from McGill University, has had a distinguished career as a researcher and academic administrator and is currently serving as Vice President (Research) at Dalhousie University. Dr. Crago has devoted herself to excellence in the education of graduate students, has published books on her work on the impact of culture and bilingualism on language use, development and disability, and has received special recognition for work with Aboriginal communities in northern Canada.
- In concert with the inauguration of the Distinguished Alumni Award program, the School initiated regular contacts with alumni through electronic and printed media, informing them of school events and requesting news of alumni accomplishments. One of Dr. Crago’s former students, Dr. Fauzia Abdalla, reported that she was named as "the professor who had the most impact on our education" by her own students as they received their B.A. degree in communication disorders in Kuwait this year.
- Dr. Nadig, Dr. Gracco and Dr. Pell formed the recruitment committee and as one of their activities created a new series of web-pages for the School’s web-site to better inform prospective graduate students about our research degree programs. Dr. Nadig was filmed as a participant in the graduate recruitment and outreach video that was produced by the office of Graduate and Post-doctoral Studies. Committee members attended the graduate

and postdoctoral studies office's workshops on "Strategic Enrolment Management" and had a departmental consultation on this topic.

- Dr. Marc Pell, the Graduate Program Director, initiated a new procedure for admissions to the research degree programs that ensure multi-year guaranteed minimum funding support for all new students who are admitted.
- The School continues to collaborate with the departments of Linguistics, Psychology, and Integrated Studies in Education in the inter-disciplinary doctoral program in Language Acquisition (LAP).
- Dr. Susan Rvachew initiated regular meetings with Dr. Maureen Simmonds (Director, School of Occupational and Physiotherapy) and Dr. H  l  ne Ezer (Director, School of Nursing) for strategic planning meetings, with the primary concern for the future being the need of all three schools for larger, safer and more appropriate spaces to ensure high-quality clinical training facilities for students in our applied programs.
- The School continues to rely on a number of sessional lecturers, generally specialist clinicians from the community, who are in the best position to educate our M.Sc. (A) students in numerous practically-oriented courses.
- The School continues to participate in new initiatives in Interprofessional Education within the health sciences.
- Dr. Linda Polka attended the Options Schools Conference with Martha Perusse, Director of the Montreal Oral School for the Deaf, in order to explore opportunities to collaborate in the development of continuing education in aural rehabilitation.
- Dr. Karsten Steinhauer's student, Kristina Kasparian, was awarded a Dr. Richard H. Tomlinson Doctoral Fellowship for the academic year 2009/2010.
- Ms. Isabelle Alain received the Canadian Association of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists Student Excellence Award.
- Ms. Sarah Roy won the William V. Victor Memorial Award for the best research work and final report in the Winter 2008 Student Research Bursary Program (Faculty of Medicine).
- During the academic year 2008/2009, 6 students received the Ph.D. degree, 1 student received the M.Sc. degree and 18 students received the M.Sc.(A) degree. An additional 28 students successfully completed the applied program and will receive their M.Sc.(A) degree in fall 2009.

Honours, awards, and prizes conferred upon unit staff members

- Dr. Marc Pell successfully renewed his William Dawson Scholar award and has been selected to be nominated for an NSERC Steacie Award.
- Dr. Karsten Steinhauer's Canada Research Chair in Neurocognition of Language (Tier 2) was renewed and he subsequently achieved tenure.

- Dr. Shari Baum holds a James McGill Professorship and was elected president of the Montreal chapter of the Society for Neuroscience.
- Dr. Vincent Gracco was appointed Director of the Centre for Research in Mind, Language and Brain.
- Dr. Linda Polka was elected as a full member of the Acoustical Society of America.
- Ms. Darla Orchard, a Professional Associate, won the Canadian Association of Speech-Language Pathology & Audiology's (CASLPA) Mentorship Award.
- Ms. Elaine Pelland-Blais, a Clinical Educator, won the School's Award for Excellence in Clinical Education.

Research

- The faculty continue to publish in internationally well-recognized venues, with 29 articles and chapters published in 2008 and another 23 published in the first few months of 2009 or currently in press; among the leading journals, faculty published in *Brain Research*, *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology*, *Cognition*, and the *Journal of Speech, Language, & Hearing Research*. A benchmarking review of publication rates in our field revealed that our number of publications per professor is 4 times the average for comparable schools in Canada and twice the rate of our closest competitor.
- Faculty members have presented invited addresses at numerous events throughout the world (including in Canada, the US, the U.K., France, Germany, and Iceland,).
- Faculty supervised 18 doctoral students and 7 post-doctoral fellows during the year, many of whom have a number of papers published or in press, and have presented their work at numerous international conferences.
- Funding continues to be quite strong for our field, with approximately \$1.29 million administered in the School during the 2008-09 academic year and an additional \$.57 million in new funding obtained in the spring of 2009; faculty are co-investigators on grants held elsewhere, amounting to another \$2.8 million for the past year.
- Dr. Vincent Gracco's first year as Director of the Centre for Research on Language, Mind and Brain was marked by several new outreach initiatives within the research community and for the general public; Dr. Gracco presented a brief to the national consultation on the National Strategy for Early Literacy on behalf of the CRLMB that outlined the health and economic costs of illiteracy and highlighted the need for increased funding for literacy research; all faculty members are Principal Investigators within the interdisciplinary Centre; Dr. Karsten Steinhauer has served as leader of the Neural Basis of Language Axis; Dr. Rvachew is leader of the Speech Modeling Axis.
- Dr. Marc Pell continues his collaboration with leading investigators at the Max Planck Institute of Human Cognitive and Brain Sciences (Leipzig) and initiated collaborations with the University of New South Wales and the University of Leeds. Dr. Karsten Steinhauer continues his ongoing collaborations with researchers at Georgetown

University, as well as at the Max Planck Institute (Leipzig). Dr. Shari Baum is collaborating with colleagues at Brock University, Concordia University, Indiana University, Université de Montréal, University of Ottawa, and UQAM. Dr. Vince Gracco continues his extensive collaborations with colleagues at Haskins Laboratories, the University of Toronto and the University of Connecticut. Dr. Linda Polka continues her collaborations on separate projects with Dr. Robin Panneton at Virginia Tech, Dr. Thierry Nazzi at CNRS (Paris), Dr. Suzanne Curtin at the University of Calgary and Dr. David McFarland at the University of Montreal. Dr. Elin Thordardottir continued her collaborations with colleagues in Iceland and initiated new collaborations at Université Paris 8, Newcastle University and University of Alberta. Dr. Susan Rvachew has formed a team of specialists in phonology, language impairment, neurology, genetics, biostatistics and trial design, linking McGill with the Universities of British Columbia, Wisconsin-Madison, Minnesota, and Case Western Reserve that is working to create a network of clinical sites for conducting randomized control trials and long-term follow-up studies of children with phonological disorders.

- Whereas our research equipment is state-of-the-art thanks to several CFI grants received by faculty members over the past few years, our lab facilities (i.e., the physical plant) are less than ideal. Space is extremely constrained and we are unable to accommodate additional equipment or the establishment of novel procedures in certain domains that require dedicated facilities. Space is currently shared by several investigators, accommodating multiple procedures and technologies, and requiring frequent rearrangement of the lab space; this undoubtedly reduces our productivity unnecessarily and has influenced our ability to recruit new faculty and doctoral students in the past several years.

Involvement in the Community

- Dr. Elin Thordardottir served as a member of Review Committee CSD9 of the ANR (Agence nationale de recherche), which met in Paris in December 2008 and March 2009 and as a member of the editorial board of 'LIA, Langues, Interactions, Acquisition'.
- Dr. Susan Rvachew served on the Directing Committee, Early Childhood Learning Knowledge Centre, Canadian Council on Learning; Speech Wait Times Project (CASLPA); Essential Competencies Working Group CASLPA); Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research Health Investigator Advisory Committee; and the Program Committee (Speech Sound Disorders in Children), American Speech-Language-Hearing Association Convention, 2009.
- Dr. Laura Gonnerman served as a Panel Member, National Science Foundation, Graduate Research Fellowship Program, February 13-15, 2008, Washington, D.C., USA, and as a Member of the CIHR Synapse Youth Connection program and as a NSF Graduate Research Fellowship Program outreach mentor/resource person for McGill University
- Dr. Linda Polka served on the Editorial Board of Canadian Acoustics, the Organizing Committee for the ASA 2nd Special Workshop: Cross-language speech perception and variations in linguistic experience and as a member of the Site visit team for National Science Foundation Science of Learning Center grant (University of Washington, Seattle) June 2008.

- Dr. Vincent Gracco served as a member of the Joint Committee—Affiliation Contract between McGill University and Constance-Lethbridge Rehabilitation Centre, and served on the Fellowships Evaluation Committee for the 2009-2010 NSERC, Life Sciences & Psychology competitions.
- Dr. Shari Baum is a member of the Accreditation Board, Council for the Accreditation of Canadian University Programs in Audiology & Speech-language Pathology (Co-chair 2008-2010) and of the College of Reviewers, Canada Research Chairs Program.
- Dr. Marc Pell is a member of the Fonds de la recherche en santé du Québec (FRSQ) Comité d'évaluation postdoc clinique.
- Dr. Aparna Nadig served as a reviewer for the Boston University Conference on Language Development, 2008
- Dr. Karsten Steinhauser organized the *2nd International Symposium on Language, Mind and Brain: Mechanisms of Learning, Brain Plasticity and Critical Periods.*

APPENDIX I**PUBLICATIONS – 2008**url: <http://www.mcgill.ca/scsd/research/>

Shari Baum, Ph.D., Professor
Laura Gonnerman, Ph.D., Assistant Professor
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Linda Polka, Ph.D., Associate Professor
Susan Rvachew, Ph.D., Associate Professor
Karsten Steinhauer, Ph.D., Associate Professor
Elin Thordardottir, Ph.D., Associate Professor

PUBLICATIONS – 2008

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