



**ANNUAL REPORT**  
**2014**  
SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION SCIENCES AND DISORDERS  
FACULTY OF MEDICINE

Submitted by:  
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## Unit Overview

The School of Communication Sciences and Disorders (SCSD) is an inter-disciplinary, research-intensive teaching unit focused on human communication and its disorders. Our teaching and research missions are in line with those of the Faculty of Medicine and the University at large, focused on fundamental and applied research and education in cognitive and behavioural neurosciences, multilingualism, and clinically-relevant investigations in communication disorders. The SCSD has numerous links to other units both within the Faculty of Medicine and across the University.

This year witnessed the historic relocation of our School from Beatty Hall, where we operated between 1970-2014. With the support of the Faculty of Medicine, our relocation to 2001 McGill College has provided a vital opportunity to: update teaching and research facilities in the School that will foster new levels of excellence and innovation; design learning spaces that enrich graduate training and student life; incorporate therapy rooms that can be used in clinical teaching and activities that support members of the Montreal community who live with communication impairments. These actions that improve the School's resources respond satisfactorily to recommendations raised in the course of our National Accreditation review (2011-12) and McGill Cyclic Unit review (Fall 2013).

## Research and publications

All tenure-track faculty members in the School hold national and/or provincial funding to support their research programs, and participate actively in interdisciplinary Quebec-funded research networks (e.g., Centre for Research on Brain, Language, & Music; Centre for Interdisciplinary Research in Rehabilitation of Greater Montreal). In addition to extensive international collaborations, SCSD researchers have rich ongoing partnerships with scholars in several McGill departments—Neurology, Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery, Biomedical Engineering, Physical & Occupational Therapy, Psychology, Educational and Counselling Psychology, Linguistics, and Music—bridging topics in four different Faculties at McGill (Medicine, Science, Education, Arts).

Research highlights of 2014:

- SCSD faculty members successfully obtained major operating grants from federal and international funding sources, acting as principal or co-investigator on **3 new grants valued at over \$3.0 million in new operating funds** (listed below); continuing grants totalled more than \$6.0 million;
- During the reference period, **SCSD faculty members published 37 chapters and refereed articles** in leading international journals. A full list of major scholarly works published in 2014 is posted at: <http://www.mcgill.ca/scsd/research/publications>;
- Dr. Vince Gracco served as Director of the *Centre for Research on Brain, Language, and Music*, and Dr. Elin Thordardottir served as Director of Research of the *Centre for Interdisciplinary Research in Rehabilitation of Greater Montreal* (CRIR), Institut Raymond Dewar
- Drs. Baum and Pell held ongoing appointments as James McGill Professor in recognition of their research programs;

- Several SCSD faculty members gave **invited keynote addresses and/or workshops** to scientific or professional audiences on the international stage. For example: Dr. Linda Polka gave invited presentations on the nature of early speech development in the Czech Republic and Japan; Dr. Elin Thordardottir gave lectures on the topic of bilingual language development and intervention in children in Switzerland, the Netherlands, and as part of a continuing education program to Speech-Language Pathologists throughout Quebec; and Dr. Steinhauer was a keynote speaker at an international symposium on “Second Language in the Brain” in Greenwich, UK.

#### NEW GRANTS AWARDED IN 2014 (Peer-Reviewed)

1. Awardee: M. Wagner (PI) and **M. Clayards** (Co-app)  
Source: SSHRC Insight Grants  
Title: Breaking into the Acoustic Stream: The role of allophonic patterns in processing language  
Value: \$240,750, 2014-2017
2. Awardee: **V. Gracco** (PI), T. Ito, D. Ostry  
Source: NIH National Institute on Deafness and other Communication Disorders Operating Grant  
Title: Somatosensory function in speech perception  
Value: USD \$275,000, 2014-2016
3. Awardee: L. Mongeau (PI), **N. Li** (Co-PI), and S. Thompson  
Source: NIH National Institute on Deafness and other Communication Disorders Operating Grant  
Title: Design, construction, and evaluation of implants for vocal fold alteration and reconstruction  
Value: USD \$2,681,114, 2014-2019

#### Teaching and learning (graduate) – 2014 Highlights

A total of 25 students graduated with the MSc (Applied) degree with specialization in Speech-Language Pathology and 3 students were granted the Ph.D. degree in Communication Sciences and Disorders.

**Our professional training program with specialization in Speech-Language Pathology remains one of the most selective graduate programs at McGill.** Demand for our Master of Science (Applied) program in Communication Sciences and Disorders remains extremely high; we reviewed 363 applications in 2014 and admitted 23 students in September 2014, with a mean entering CGPA of 3.77/4.0.

**McGill SCSD continues to be the leader in advanced research training in our field in Canada.** In 2014, we received 13 applications for the PhD program and admitted three new students (yielding a total of 25 students registered in our PhD program, more than 50% international). McGill remains the largest PhD program in our field in Canada and the overwhelming choice of international students who seek advanced research training in Communication Sciences and Disorders in Canada.

**SCSD faculty members co-operate extensively in teaching and research student supervision with other McGill departments.** Kelly Root was actively involved in developing the new curriculum for Inter-professional Education (IPE) within the Faculty of Medicine, while 4 faculty members (Baum, Gracco, Pell, Steinhauer) supervised graduate students enrolled in the Integrated Program in Neuroscience. Drs. Gonnerman, Nadig, Polka, Rvachew, Steinhauer, and Elin Thordardottir provided instruction and/or research supervision within the inter-disciplinary Language Acquisition Program, in collaboration with Linguistics, Psychology, and Integrated Studies in Education. SCSD faculty also (co) supervised McGill undergraduate and graduate students in Cognitive Science (Bachelor of Arts and Science Program), Psychology, and Linguistics.

### **Further progress following our Cyclical Unit Review**

The School continues to examine recommendations raised by the review committee during our Cyclical Unit Review in 2013; many of the most serious concerns (e.g., inadequate research and teaching facilities, shared learning spaces for graduate students) have now been satisfied with our relocation in July 2014 and new investments in our teaching and research infrastructure. The August 2014 arrival of Dr. Nicole Li, who has expertise in voice disorders, also serves to address long-standing areas of weakness in the clinical teaching expertise of the SCSD faculty, while building new bridges between the SCSD and adjacent teaching units in the Faculty of Medicine (Otolaryngology, Biomedical Engineering).

### **Involvement in the community - 2014 Highlights**

Academic and Professional Leadership:

- SCSD faculty provided academic leadership in our field both nationally and internationally. Seven faculty members (Baum, Gonnerman, Pell, Polka, Rvachew, Steinhauer, Elin Thordardottir) served as journal Editors or on Editorial Boards of major journals in our field (e.g., *Journal of Communication Disorders*, *Frontiers in Psychology*, *Frontiers in Language Sciences*). As well, SCSD faculty were invited to sit on grant review panels for the CIHR (Nadig), NSERC (Gracco), National Science Foundation (Gonnerman), and Agence nationale de la recherche, France (Elin Thordardottir);
- As Director of the Centre for Research on Brain, Language, and Music, Dr. Gracco organized events designed for the Montreal research community and for the general public, including the *Distinguished Lecture Series* for researchers in the Montreal community;
- In conjunction with continuing education workshops in Quebec, French language assessment tasks for children developed by Dr. Elin Thordardottir have been distributed free of charge to close to 100 speech-language pathologists.

### Outreach programs:

- Under the supervision of Kelly Root, the SCSD ran a successful pilot project in Winter 2014, in collaboration with the Cree Health Board and the Montreal Children's Hospital, to **provide speech and language assessments to members of the Cree Nation at Chisasibi** using tele-health;
- For the second year, SCSD students provided **free hearing screenings** to members of the McGill and Montreal communities, led by SCSD faculty member Sophie Vaillancourt. Approximately 400 individuals were screened and provided information about hearing loss and prevention during a two-day event held at the McIntyre Medical building in March 2014.
- SCSD students also provided free hearing screenings to children in two Montreal-area elementary schools, and worked with Speech-Language Pathologists in Montreal School boards to provide an 8-week intensive intervention program for children with phonological (speech sound) disorders (organized by S. Vaillancourt);
- Under the supervision of K. Root, the SCSD continued a successful partnership with the *Association québécoise des personnes aphasiques* to provide **free clinical services in Speech-Language Pathology for more than 60 English-speaking Montrealers who live with aphasia**, an acquired impairment that affects language (e.g., following a stroke);
- The School disseminated information on the nature of communication disorders, professional services, and clinical training and student research initiatives at the School through its *Speaking of Language* newsletter. This newsletter is written by SCSD students in consultation with Dr. Rvachew and distributed to the wider SCSD and Montreal clinical communities. Details may be found at: <http://www.mcgill.ca/scsd/newsletter>.

### Milestones

- The School was relocated to new facilities at 2001 McGill College, 8<sup>th</sup> floor, allowing significant improvements to our infrastructure for professional teaching, research, and clinical activities that involve the community;
- Dr. Nicole Yee-Key Li joined the SCSD faculty in August 2014 with a tenure-track appointment as Assistant Professor in the School, with simultaneous appointments as Associate Member of the Department of Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery and the Department of Biomedical Engineering;
- Drs. Elin Thordardottir and Linda Polka were promoted to the rank of Professor.

### Honours, awards, and prizes

- Dr. Susan Rvachew received the Eve Kassirer Award for Outstanding Professional Achievement from Speech-Language and Audiology Canada (awarded May 2014).