



**ANNUAL REPORT
2017**

**SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION SCIENCES AND DISORDERS
FACULTY OF MEDICINE**



Communicate. Connect. Thrive.

Submitted by:

Marc D. Pell, PhD
Associate Dean and Director

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Unit Overview

The School of Communication Sciences and Disorders (SCSD) is a research-intensive teaching unit focused on human communication and its disorders, with strong inter-disciplinary ties to units both within and outside the Faculty of Medicine. Our teaching focuses on graduate-level professional training in Speech-Language Pathology and advanced research training in this field. We are conducting clinically-relevant investigations on the nature of communication disorders across the lifespan and both fundamental and applied research that informs issues in child development, the neurocognitive basis of human communication, multilingualism, literacy development, personalized medicine in voice care, among others.

In 2015-2016, the School undertook a Strategic planning exercise focused on improvements to our educational programs and enhancing the quality and visibility of our research. Our five-year plan has four main objectives: 1) to transform our MSc (Applied) program to a *competency* (rather than knowledge) based curriculum, to better prepare our students for entry-to-practice and future leadership roles as Speech-Language Pathologists; 2) to create more diverse, enriched educational opportunities for professional students in their internships; 3) to enhance opportunities for research students in the School that better prepare them for a diverse array of academic and non-academic careers; and 4) to strengthen ties with Canada's Indigenous and cultural communities in the areas of communication sciences and communication health. Many of the activities highlighted in this report demonstrate ways that we are implementing our 2016-21 Strategic Plan, by modernizing our educational programs, optimizing the quality of the learning environment, and building constructive relationships within the community that promote Communication Health.

Research and publications

SCSD faculty members continue to secure competitive funding to support their research programs, while playing leading roles in international research collaborations and Quebec-funded research networks (e.g., Centre for Research on Brain, Language, & Music; Centre for Interdisciplinary Research in Rehabilitation of Greater Montreal, with Dr. Elin Thordardottir serving as Director of Research at the Institut Raymond Dewar site).

Research highlights of 2017:

- SCSD faculty members were awarded new operating grants as principal/co-investigator from federal, provincial, and private sources totaling more than \$1.2 million (approximately \$1,000,000 new funds administered in the School, see list below). The interdisciplinary *Centre for Research on Brain, Language and Music*, co-founded by Dr. Shari Baum, was also successfully renewed for another six years (\$2,880,000);
- Eleven tenure-track SCSD faculty members **published 35 refereed articles** in leading international journals. Approximately half of these contributions featured SCSD students as the principal author. All major scholarly works published in 2017 are posted at: <http://www.mcgill.ca/scsd/research/publications>;
- SCSD student, AJ Orena, won the prestigious Raymond H. Stetson scholarship in Phonetics and Speech Science from the Acoustical Society Foundation, in recognition of the high quality of his PhD dissertation research;
- Dr. Rvachew's reputation in the area of literacy development and the use of digital technologies led to the release of two new speech therapy Apps in 2017, and she gave keynote lectures on this topic at several international events.

NEW GRANTS AWARDED IN 2017 (>\$5,000)

1. Awardee: **Elin Thordardottir (PI)**
Award: SSHRC Insight Grant, \$239,346, 2017-2022
Title: *Long term outcomes of bilingual children learning French: Impact on school and everyday communication*
2. Awardee: **Marc D. Pell (PI)**
Award: SSHRC Insight Grant, \$318,592, 2017-2022
Title: *Social factors in vocal emotion communication*
3. Awardee: **Shari R. Baum (PI)**
Award: NSERC Discovery Grant, \$125,000, 2017-2022
Title: *Phonetic processing in bilingualism*
4. Awardee: **Shari R. Baum (PI)**
Award: FRQSC Team Grant, \$316,000, 2017-2021
Title: *Multilinguisme: les défis et les impacts cognitifs et socio-culturels*
5. Awardee: **Shari R. Baum (Co-Applicant)**
Award: FRQNT/FRQSC Programme de Regroupements stratégiques, \$2,880,000, 2017-2023
Title: *Centre for Research on Brain, Language and Music*
6. Awardee: **Marc D. Pell (Co-Applicant)**
Award: FRQNT Team Grant, \$205,210, 2017-2020
Title: *Contribution de l'ocytocine au traitement émotionnel de la communication vocale*
7. Awardee: **Aparna Nadig (Co-Investigator)**
Award: Centre for Research on Brain, Language and Music, \$6,000, 2017-2018
Title: *Variation in the university student population's use of referring expressions*
8. Awardee: **Nicole Li-Jessen (PI)**
Award: Centre for Research on Brain, Language and Music, \$6,000, 2017-2018
Title: *Quantifying vocal fatigue and its recovery in voice acting*
9. Awardee: **Susan Rvachew (PI)**
Award: Private donor – Ruth Ratner Miller Foundation, \$6,329, 2017
Title: *Clinical Research in Child Phonology Laboratory*

Teaching and learning (graduate) – 2017 Highlights

In 2017, a total of 26 students graduated with the MSc (Applied) degree with specialization in Speech-Language Pathology, one student graduated with the MSc (with thesis), and four students were granted a Ph.D. degree in Communication Sciences and Disorders.

The School's second annual "Prospective Students Day" in March 2017 was a huge success, with active participation from current SCSD students and staff, who provided program information and demonstrated facets of professional practice in Speech-language Pathology to prospective students and members of the community.

Professional training in Speech-Language Pathology:

- Our professional training program in **Speech-Language Pathology remains one of the most selective graduate programs at McGill**. In 2017, we reviewed 328 applications and welcomed 28 students from across Canada, with a mean entering CGPA of 3.83/4.0;
- With the leadership of Dr. Rvachew and Ms. Root, we continued to make excellent progress on our multi-year plan to transform the MSc (Applied) program to a **competency-based professional curriculum**;
- We designed and implemented a new course, "Genetics in the Practice of Speech-Language Pathology", in collaboration with the Department of Human Genetics;
- We launched an ambitious pilot project aimed at providing services to adults living with chronic aphasia—an acquired impairment of language often caused by strokes. The "Adult Outpatient Teaching Clinic" provides an opportunity for English-speaking individuals in the Montreal community to receive individual and group therapy without charge, while providing rich learning experiences for our MSc(A) students;
- We designed/implemented a new on-line Training Platform for our Clinical Educators to enhance the quality of clinical supervision students receive during their internships;
- The SCSD participated actively in the development and delivery of **Inter-professional education within the Faculty of Medicine**, and remains a key stakeholder in the expanding Office of Interprofessional Education, represented by Ms. Root.

Research training in Communication Sciences and Disorders:

- McGill continues to be recognized as a **leader in advanced research training in our field in Canada**. In 2017, we received 15 applications for the PhD program and admitted three new students (yielding a total of 16 students registered in our PhD program, > 50% international). SCSD professors also supervised four Postdoctoral fellows and five graduate students registered in the Integrated Program in Neuroscience;
- SCSD professors **co-operate extensively in teaching and research student supervision** with several McGill departments in different Faculties: Linguistics, Psychology, UGME, Neurology/Neurosurgery, Otolaryngology, Biomedical Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, as well as providing training opportunities to UG students in Cognitive Science (Bachelor of Arts and Science).

Involvement in the community – 2017 Highlights

Academic and Professional Leadership:

- In line with our Strategic Plan, the SCSD continues to expand its involvement and services provided to the Cree in Chisasibi, Northern Quebec, and other First Nations communities. In 2017, two MSc(A) students conducted their spring internships in Chisasibi, and Ms. Vaillancourt and Ms. Burger each visited the community to build relationships, provide supervision, and for service consultations. The SCSD also participates actively in McGill' Eagle Spirit Camp (summer 2017);
- SCSD students continue to provide free services and information to the public about Speech, Language, Voice, Hearing and Swallowing disorders at community events located on campus and in Montreal-area hospitals and schools. For example, our students participated in a two-day "Hearing screening" event held on campus in January 2017 (supervised by Ms. Vaillancourt); nearly 400 individuals of all ages had their hearing screened and around 20% received a referral for formal hearing assessment. McGill also held its third annual World Voice Day event in May 2017;
- In conjunction with a community group, Project 10, Dr. Nicole Li-Jessen and SCSD students provided free Voice Workshops to transgendered individuals living in Montreal, and published related information on Wikipedia;
- In April 2017, the SCSD organized a two-day course on Pediatric Swallowing, with over 100 people from the local and international professional community in attendance;
- 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;
- SCSD faculty members continue to provide academic leadership in our field nationally and internationally. The majority of SCSD faculty members are serving as journal Editors/ Editorial Board members of major journals in our field (e.g., *Journal of Communication Disorders*, *Attention, Perception and Psychophysics*, *Frontiers in Psychology*, *American Journal of Speech & Hearing Research*). Ms. Root serves on the National Accreditation Board for Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology.

Milestones

- Dr. Noémie Auclair-Ouellet, whose work focuses on the nature of acquired language disorders of vascular or neurodegenerative origin, joined the SCSD faculty as Assistant Professor in August 2017;
- Ms. Mariska Burger joined the SCSD academic staff as a full-time "Clinical Education Associate", appointed at the rank of Faculty Lecturer (Professional).

Honours, awards, and prizes

- Dr. Elin Thordardottir received the 2017 Editor's award from the *Canadian Journal of Speech Language Pathology and Audiology* in recognition of the quality and high impact of her article, "Long versus short language samples: A clinical procedure for French language samples";
- Dr. Nicole Li-Jessen, a CRC (Tier 2) award holder, received the Rosemary Wedderburn Brown Prize from the Faculty of Medicine in recognition of her research innovation and potential.