

**ANNUAL REPORT  
2009-2010**

SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION SCIENCES AND DISORDERS  
FACULTY OF MEDICINE

Submitted by:

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Interim Director

15 February 2011

## 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 at the graduate level 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 (serving as Associate Dean, Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies, 2010-11)

Meghan Clayards, Ph.D., Assistant Professor (joint appointment with Linguistics)

Laura Gonnerman, Ph.D. Assistant Professor

Vincent Gracco, Ph.D. Associate Professor

Aparna Nadig, Ph.D. Assistant Professor

Marc Pell, Ph.D. Associate Professor & William Dawson Scholar

Linda Polka, Ph.D. Associate Professor

Susan Rvachew, Ph.D. Associate Professor (on sabbatic leave, 2010-11)

Karsten Steinhauer, Ph.D. Associate Professor & Canada Research Chair (Tier II)

Elin Thordardottir, Ph.D. Associate Professor

Anne Vogt, M.Sc. (A). Faculty Lecturer (Coordinator of Clinical Education)

### ***Executive Summary***

A review of our activities over the past 19 months shows that the School of Communication Sciences and Disorders is entering a phase of transition and renewal in its 48 year history. This is exemplified by three events that occurred during the reference period: our faculty engaged in a Strategic planning exercise to articulate our vision and priorities in teaching, research, and outreach for the next five years; we welcomed a new faculty member, Dr. Meghan Clayards, who is jointly appointed with the Department of Linguistics; and, after serving eight years as Director of the School, Dr. Shari Baum resigned in August 2010 to assume a new position as Associate Dean of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies. As Interim Director, I have the honour to summarize the School's achievements during 2009-10. The contents of this report highlight our unique strength as one of the most inter-disciplinary units at McGill, one that serves as a bridge between four different Faculties (Medicine, Science, Arts, Education) and several teaching units at McGill, and beyond.

One of our major initiatives during 2009-10 was to develop a Strategic Plan for the period 2010-2015, in parallel with a similar process within the Faculty of Medicine. All SCSD faculty participated, yielding a series of recommendations from three faculty workgroups (Research, Student Life and Learning, Infrastructure). We intend to strategically develop our strengths in specific research areas (Bilingualism, Human Communication Neuroscience, Applied Research), to enhance the quality and breath of our clinical training program, and to increase enrolment in our PhD program by 50%. The fully-developed plan was adopted in December 2009.

Under *Teaching and Learning*, we began new initiatives to improve professional teaching and learning at the School; for example, we formed a new advisory council to focus attention on our clinical education objectives and to strengthen links with our community of clinical educators. We developed a summer camp, "Camp Leapfrog", to foster inter-professional education opportunities for our students, while providing needed services to the community. As well, SCSD faculty participated actively in trans-disciplinary teaching programs at McGill (Language Acquisition Program, Integrated Program in Neuroscience) while providing supervision to a growing number of research/PhD students in the School.

Under *Honours and Awards* and *Research*, our faculty members continue to excel in terms of the quality/quantity of research publications produced in our field, tri-council funding, and all faculty maintain visible, international-calibre research programs that are recognized by their peer communities. Our accomplishments in research continue to be enriched by the inter-disciplinary Centre for Research on Language, Mind, and Brain (CRLMB). In terms of *Involvement in the Community*, SCSD faculty contributed to many scholarly organizations/panels related to granting agencies, conferences, and editorial boards, both nationally and internationally. We were actively engaged in outreach to the clinical and lay communities, for example, through publication of the *Speaking of Language* newsletter and through the organization of a public lecture series by the CRLMB.

An ongoing challenge we face is a lack of functional and physically-accessible space in Beatty Hall. This obstacle, which has been highlighted in previous reports, prevents us from achieving our full potential as teachers and researchers, limiting our ability to innovate; if not addressed, this will mitigate our potential to fully realize our strategic goals as a unit.

## Section II – Past Year’s Activities

### *Teaching and learning*

• A total of 55 students graduated with the MSc (Applied) degree, 1 student obtained the MSc (Research) degree, and 5 students were granted the Ph.D. degree in Communication Sciences and Disorders during 2009-2010.

• The demand for training in Speech-Language Pathology at McGill remains very high. During 2009-10, we received 297 applications to our MSc (Applied) program for 27 available slots. The mean GPA of our September 2010 incoming class was 3.83/4.0. Our MSc (A) program remains one of the most selective graduate programs at McGill.

• We made significant gains in our efforts to grow our PhD program, admitting 11 new PhD students during this time period (9 of these students were recruited internationally). The McGill SCSD is both the oldest and the largest research training program in Communication Sciences and Disorders in Canada, with 21 PhD students and two Postdoctoral Fellows currently enrolled. More than half of our currently enrolled doctoral trainees are International students.

#### New Initiatives to enhance graduate teaching:

• To enhance the quality of teaching/learning activities in clinical education at the School, a new position of Director of Clinical Education was created in September 2009, with Dr. Susan Rvachew assuming this important mandate.

• Under Dr. Rvachew’s leadership, the SCSD established a “Clinical Education Advisory Council” in May 2010 and agreed upon its Terms of Reference. The council is composed of key members of the SCSD (Director and Coordinator of Clinical Education, Chair of the Curriculum Committee) and members of the clinical community (representative of part-time teaching staff, community S-LPs who serve as clinical educators to our students). The main objectives of the council are to: 1) strengthen links between SCSD faculty and community S-LPs/institutions that provide services to individuals with communication disorders; and 2) promote knowledge transfer between the clinical and research communities, and create opportunities for applied/translational research projects that involve partnerships between the SCSD and clinical sites in the Montreal area. The Council began semi-annual meetings in June 2010.

• Ms. Vogt helped to develop an on-line module entitled “Advanced Supervisory Practice”, in collaboration with Nursing, Social Work, and Occupational Therapy, to facilitate the online training of clinical supervisors from different professional disciplines.

- Under the direction of Dr. Rvachew and Ms. Vogt, the SCSD ran a successful summer school program in August 2010 for children with mild, multiple handicaps, in collaboration with the School of Occupational and Physical Therapy, the Montreal Children's Hospital and the Lester B. Pearson School Board. This program, named "*Camp Leapfrog*", created a valuable internship opportunity for applied students in both of our schools, while providing training in multi-professional and evidence-based practice for our students in the context of an underserved population of children. This program was funded by MELS in response to the Action 6 RFP entitled 'Start-up Programs in Health'.
- The faculty implemented minor curriculum adjustments following a curriculum review in December 2007, where we received broad input from representatives of our graduate students, our community of clinical educators, and the Ordre des Orthophonistes et Audiologistes du Québec. The content of one course (*Language Processes*) was updated, and areas of overlap between three additional courses were successfully addressed.

• All SCSD faculty and staff members took part in a dedicated workshop on *Professionalism*, sponsored by the McGill Centre for Medical Education and moderated by Richard and Sylvia Cruess, to promote greater awareness of issues related to professionalism and to facilitate the teaching of professionalism within the School (December 2009).

### Co-operation in Teaching and Research Supervision

- The School continues to benefit from the clinical expertise of a number of sessional lecturers (community Speech-Language Pathologists), who share their specialized knowledge to our M.Sc.(A) students in several practically-oriented courses.

SCSD Faculty co-operate extensively with other teaching units at McGill and at other institutions in teaching and research supervision activities:

- Drs. Gonnerman, Nadig, Polka, Rvachew, Steinhauer, and Thordardottir provided instruction and/or research supervision as part of the inter-disciplinary doctoral program in Language Acquisition program (LAP), in collaboration with the departments of Linguistics, Psychology, and Integrated Studies in Education.
- Drs. Baum, Gracco, Pell, & Steinhauer participate in the Integrated Program in Neuroscience, providing research supervision to graduate students enrolled in that program. At the IPN Retreat in September 2010, Dr. Vincent Gracco organized a scientific session on "Neuroscientific Approaches to the Study of Human Communication" to promote knowledge of these issues within the McGill neuroscience community.

- Several members of the School supervised/co-supervised McGill undergraduate and/or graduate students registered in Psychology, Linguistics, Educational and Counselling Psychology, and Arts and Sciences (Cognitive Science program). Many faculty also co-supervised students registered at other institutions (e.g., Université de Montréal, Université de Grenoble (France), Max Planck Institute for Human Cognitive and Brain Sciences (Germany)).
- Drs. Clayards and Nadig organized a reading group (*Group on Reference Intonation and Pragmatics*), with faculty members from Psychology and Linguistics, for students and researchers in all three departments to discuss theoretical and methodological issues of common interest. This group is attended by many of our faculty and PhD students and is hosted by the Centre for Research on Language, Mind and Brain.
- Dr. Elin Thordardottir taught a two-week graduate course in her area of expertise at the University of Iceland, where there is a severe shortage of Speech-Language Pathologists and few instructors with knowledge of language development and developmental disorders in Icelandic (November 2010).
- Drs Nadig and Steinhauer taught guest lectures in courses in the department of Psychology, Dr. Elin Thordardottir taught a lecture in the School of Physical and Occupational Therapy, and Dr. Gonnerman was a guest lecturer at the University of Southern California.
- Dr. Gonnerman was a member of the McGill Medical School admissions committee.

### ***Honours, awards, and prizes conferred upon unit staff members***

#### Distinctions in Research:

- Dr. Marc Pell received a Chercheur-boursier «Senior» award (2010-2014) from the FRSQ to pursue his research on how Parkinson's disease affects communication and social cognition (July 2010).
- Dr. Vincent Gracco was elected Treasurer of the newly-formed Society for Neurobiology of Language, and is a member of the conference organizing committee.
- Ms. Kristina Kasparian, a PhD3 student supervised by Dr. Steinhauer, received the prestigious Dr. Richard H. Tomlinson Doctoral Fellowship to pursue her studies during the 2010-11 academic year.

### Distinctions in Clinical Practice/Supervision in Speech-Language Pathology:

- Ms. Colleen Timm, a Clinical Educator at the SCSD and current Director of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology at the MUHC, won the School's Award for Excellence in Clinical Education (April 2010).
- Mr. Daniel Dickson, an M.Sc.(A)2 student in our program, received the Canadian Association of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists 2010 Student Excellence Award (April 2010).
- Ms. Guila Baer and Ms. Corinne Toupin, M.Sc.(A)1 students at the SCSD, received awards from the Montreal League for the Hard of Hearing and the IODE for their dedication to issues about hearing impairment and deafness (Feb 2010).

• Ms. Karen Evans (M.Sc. degree granted 1987) was awarded the SCSD Distinguished Alumni Award for Professional Leadership for her tremendous contributions to the profession of speech-language pathology which have spanned over 30 years. During her career, Ms. Evans worked clinically with both children and adults, developing new assessment protocols and treatment techniques, and was involved with building the vision of the Montreal Fluency Centre, a not-for-profit pediatric clinic in Montreal. The award ceremony was attended by members of the clinical community and new graduates of our M.Sc. (A) program (November 2010).  
For further details: [www.mcgill.ca/scsd/news/alumniawards](http://www.mcgill.ca/scsd/news/alumniawards)

### ***Research***

#### Distinguished research appointments:

The School is proud to include three faculty members who hold research chair awards, which increase the stature and visibility of the School's research mission at McGill and on the international stage:

- Dr. Baum is a James McGill Professor for her research on speech processing subsequent to focal brain damage;
- Dr. Pell holds a William Dawson Scholar award for his research on emotional processing and communication in healthy and disorders adults;
- Dr. Steinhauer holds a Canada Research Chair (Tier II) in the Neurocognition of Language.

- Dr. Meghan Clayards received a new, joint appointment as Assistant Professor in the SCSD and the Department of Linguistics in September, 2010. Dr. Clayards conducts research on speech perception, online auditory word recognition, acoustic phonetics and learning.
- Dr. Gracco continues his appointment as Director of the Centre for Research on Language, Mind, and Brain.

#### Research contributions and productivity:

- SCSD faculty continue to be successful in attracting high funding levels for our field from agencies in Québec and from all three Canadian funding councils (CIHR, NSERC, SSHRC), with approximately \$1.33 million administered in the School during the 2009-10 academic year. Faculty are also co-investigators on many grants held elsewhere (amounting to over \$2.5 million in addition).

- The faculty continue to publish in internationally well-recognized venues, with 38 articles and chapters published during the reference period. Faculty published in a broad array of leading journals, including *Brain Research*, *Cognitive, Affective & Behavioral Neuroscience*, *Developmental Science*, *Journal of the Acoustical Society of America*, *Journal of Communication Disorders*, *Neuropsychologia*, and *NeuroImage*, among others. A recent benchmarking review of publication rates in our field revealed that our number of publications per professor is approximately four times the average for comparable schools in Canada.

- Faculty members have presented invited addresses and workshops at numerous events throughout the world, including in Canada, the US, the U.K., France, and Germany.

#### Collaboration:

- All SCSD faculty members are Principal Investigators within the interdisciplinary Centre for Research on Language, Mind, and Brain; in addition, Dr. Steinhauer has served as leader of the Neural Basis of Language Axis and Dr. Rvachew is leader of the Speech Modeling Axis.
- Dr. Steinhauer became an Associate Member of Brams, the International Laboratory for Brain, Music, and Sound Research, a research centre jointly affiliated with the Université de Montréal and McGill.
- Dr. Elin Thordardottir was appointed a Chercheur regulier at the Institut Raymond-Dewar and at the Centre de Recherche Interdisciplinaire en Réadaptation du Montréal Métropolitain (Fall 2010).

All faculty members are pursuing their own innovative research programs that involve national and international collaborations:

- Dr. Baum is collaborating with colleagues at Brock University, Concordia University, Indiana University, Université de Montréal, and UQAM;
- Dr. Clayards collaborates with researchers in the department of Linguistics;
- Dr. Gonnerman collaborates with researchers at McGill, the Université de Montréal, Dalhousie University, and the University of Southern California (USA);
- Dr. Gracco collaborates with colleagues at Haskins Laboratories (USA), where he is a Senior Research Scientist, and with researchers at the University of Toronto and the University of Connecticut (USA);
- Dr. Nadig collaborates with McGill researchers in Psychology and Educational and Counselling Psychology, as well as with the UC Davis MIND Institute (USA);
- Dr. Pell is collaborating with investigators at the Max Planck Institute of Human Cognitive and Brain Sciences (Germany), the University of New South Wales (Australia), and the University of Essex (UK);
- Dr. Polka continues her collaborations with colleagues at the Université de Montréal, University of Calgary, Virginia Tech (USA), and CNRS Paris (France);
- Dr. 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, to create a network of clinical sites for conducting randomized control trials and long-term follow-up of children with phonological disorders;
- Dr. Steinhauer collaborates extensively with researchers in other departments at McGill (Linguistics, Psychology), UQAM, Brock University, Georgetown (USA), and in Europe (e.g., Max Planck Institute for Human Cognitive and Brain Sciences, Leipzig);
- Dr. Elin Thordardottir collaborates with colleagues at Université Paris 8 (France), Newcastle University (UK), the University of Alberta, and is collaborating on a new research project with the Reykjavik Public School Board (Iceland).

• Owing to the success of our faculty in obtaining research funding, including several CFI grants in recent years, our research equipment is state-of-the-art. However, our lab facilities (i.e., the physical plant) are inadequate for our needs. Some of our research space has been designated as unusable (e.g., due to problems with humidity, water damage, and temperature control) and most of our research space is not physically accessible to special populations involved in our studies (e.g., elderly patients with physical limitations, parents with young infants in strollers). This constrains our ability to accommodate additional equipment and to establish novel procedures in emerging research domains that will require new, dedicated facilities. Our space limitations unnecessarily threaten our productivity and our ability to achieve excellence in certain endeavours, while reducing our ability to recruit doctoral and postdoctoral trainees, as well as new faculty.

### *Involvement in the Community*

- The SCSD, under the supervision of Ms. Vogt, partners with the *Association québécoise des personnes aphasiques* to provide free clinical services in Speech-Language Pathology for English-speaking Montrealers who live with aphasia, an acquired impairment that affects language (e.g., following a stroke). This “satellite clinic” provides group and individual therapy to individuals with aphasia who would otherwise not receive these services, while providing clinical placement opportunities for our M.Sc. (A) students. The size of the English-speaking aphasia group has doubled, to almost 60 patients, during the reference period. This project is sponsored in part by the Health Canada “Retention of Health Professionals” fund.

Members of our faculty served the academic community in a variety of important ways through appointments on editorial boards, review panels, and by accepting key roles in scholarly or professional societies:

- Dr. Baum is president of the Montreal chapter of the Society for Neuroscience and is on the editorial board of *Applied Psycholinguistics*. She is a member of the Accreditation Board, Council for the Accreditation of Canadian University Programs in Audiology & Speech-language Pathology and of the College of Reviewers, Canada Research Chairs Program;
- Dr. Gonnerman served as a Panel Member for the National Science Foundation, Graduate Research Fellowship Program, and as a member of the CIHR Synapse Youth Connection program;
- Dr. Gracco is Associate Editor of the *Canadian Journal of Speech Language Pathology* and on the organizing committee for the Neurobiology of Language conference;
- Dr. Nadig participates and provides assessments in conjunction with the research group of the Montreal Children’s Hospital Autism Spectrum Disorders Program;
- Dr. Pell served on a CIHR grants review panel and is on the editorial board of *Frontiers in Language Sciences*;
- Dr. Polka served on the Editorial Board of *Canadian Acoustics*, was a guest editor for the *Journal of Phonetics*, and was a member of the Faculty of Medicine Strategic Planning committee (Life Cycle Design Group);
- Dr. Rvachew is serving as Conference Chair of the 2011 Canadian Association of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists meeting to be held in Montreal in April 2011. In addition, she is Associate Editor of the *Journal of Speech, Language, and Hearing Research* (Language section), and was on the Program committee of the 2009 American Speech-Language-Hearing Association convention;
- Dr. Elin Thordardottir served on a review committee for the Agence nationale de recherché (France) and is on the editorial board of ‘*LIA, Langues, Interactions, Acquisition*’.

- Ms. Vogt organized and hosted a number of continuing education activities on behalf of the SCSD which were designed for our clinical educators and other health professionals living in the Montreal community:
  - A presentation on Lessac Madson Resonance Voice Training (in collaboration with the MUHC);
  - A presentation on dealing with stress and student supervision (in collaboration with the McGill Schools of Nursing, P&OT, and Social Work);
  - A workshop on hearing screenings; and
  - A presentation of “Child Word Finding” (in collaboration with the Fluency Centre of Montreal).

### Communications and Outreach

- Under the directorship of Dr. Gracco, the Centre for Research on Language, Mind and Brain organized events designed for the Montreal research community and for the general public. Dr. Gracco organized the “*Latest on Language*” series of public lectures that touched on topics of public interest, such as language acquisition, bilingualism and reading. He also organized the *Distinguished Lecture Series* for language researchers in the Montreal community.

- M.Sc. (A) students in the SCSD independently mobilized to support charitable organizations in the community to increase awareness for these causes and to raise funds:
  - In April 2010, 23 M.Sc. (A) students took part in the “Light the Night Walk—Taking Steps Toward Cures”, a fundraiser for the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society of Canada. Our students raised \$4500 for the cause and received a prize for being the second largest team to participate in the event.
  - In 2010-11, our M.Sc.(A) students organized to raise money for the “Smile Train” foundation, whose mission is to provide surgeries for children in developing countries who have cleft palate or cleft lip. The students organized a screening of a related film and conducted fundraising activities in support of the Smile Train foundation, raising over \$2500 to date.

- The School continues to provide basic information on the nature of communication disorders and professional services, as well as specific details about clinical training and student research initiatives at the School, through its *Speaking of Language* newsletter. This newsletter, which is published approximately three times per year, is written by SCSD students in consultation with SCSD faculty members (Drs. Rvachew and Elin Thordardottir) and then distributed to the wider SCSD and Montreal clinical communities. (see: <http://www.mcgill.ca/scsd-newsletter/>).

## APPENDIX I

PUBLICATIONS – 2009-2010 (url: <http://www.mcgill.ca/scsd/research/>)

**Shari Baum, Ph.D., Professor**

**Meghan Clayards, PhD., Assistant Professor**

**Laura Gonnerman, Ph.D., Assistant Professor**

**Vincent Gracco, Ph.D., Associate Professor**

**Aparna Nadig, Ph.D., Assistant Professor**

**Marc Pell, Ph.D., Associate Professor**

**Linda Polka, Ph.D., Associate Professor**

**Susan Rvachew, Ph.D., Associate Professor**

**Karsten Steinhauer, Ph.D., Associate Professor**

**Elin Thordardottir, Ph.D., Associate Professor**

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**APPENDIX II**

**CONSULTING ACTIVITIES**

**2009-2010**

Name of Faculty Member	Number of Days			
	Private Sector Consulting	Public Sector Consulting	Other (Please explain)	Total
Gracco, Vincent	Haskins Laboratories, New Haven, CT – 1 day per week to maintain research activities associated with grant from the National Institutes of Health			