

**Proposal for a
Communication Disorders Minor
In the School of Health Sciences**

CIP Code: 51.0201 Communication Disorders, General

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A. Minor Objectives

The following section summarizes the nature and focus of the proposed minor. This summary indicates the objectives of the minor and describes the knowledge and skills students will acquire. In addition, it provides the conceptual framework for the minor with supporting peer-reviewed evidence.

The current proposal summarizes the need for a Minor in Communication Disorders. A minor in Communication Disorders would benefit students interested in an advanced degree (M.A. or M.S.) leading to certification as a speech-language pathologist. A minor in Communication Disorders would also benefit students who wish to supplement their current majors with study in the field of typical and atypical human communication. While any student might be interested in expanding their knowledge in these areas, a minor in Communication Disorders would especially complement studies in health, education, and social sciences.

The purpose of the proposed minor is to offer a more student-centered approach to undergraduate coursework in Communication Disorders. It would offer students the opportunity to complement their primary area of study while also exploring career opportunities in communication disorders.

Offering a minor option would also be beneficial to transfer students. Under the current curriculum, transfer students often come to Stockton with their foundational courses completed, but have limited time to complete the Bachelor of Science in Health Sciences (BSHS) core courses along with the current Pre- Communication Disorders (Pre-CD) concentration courses (using the traditional 4-year degree timeframe).

If the proposed minor is approved, the Pre-CD concentration within the BSHS major will be phased out. Future students in the BSHS major would have the option of enrolling in the General BSHS concentration along with the Communication Disorders minor. Students in any other major (e.g., Psychology, Language and Culture Studies, Education) would have the option of completing their major as well as the Communication Disorders minor.

A Need to Diversify Students Accessing Communication Disorders Courses

The proposed Minor in Communication Disorders could serve as a way of attracting diverse students to the field of speech-language pathology. According to Dr. Travis Threats, chair of St. Louis University's Department of Speech, Language and Hearing Sciences many first-generation minority students are aware of healthcare careers such as nursing but may not be aware of careers in communication disorders (O'Neil, 2023). According to Threats, this lack of awareness leads to both limited numbers of diverse students entering career preparation programs as well as equity issues in healthcare.

It is now common knowledge that the population of the United States, including New Jersey is diversifying. According to the most recent [United States Census data](#), population characteristics for New Jersey are as summarized below:

Race and Hispanic Origin	
White alone, percent	71.1%
Black or African American alone, percent (a)	15.3%
American Indian and Alaska Native alone, percent (a)	0.7%
Asian alone, percent (a)	10.3%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone, percent (a)	0.1%
Two or More Races, percent	2.4%
Hispanic or Latino, percent (b)	21.5%
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino, percent	53.5%
Population Characteristics	
Veterans, 2016-2020	313,928
Foreign born persons, percent, 2016-2020	22.7%

Table Source: <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/NJ?> . The symbol before the numerals in the right-hand column indicates estimated data.

What do these data imply?

The racial, ethnic, and gender demographics of students in undergraduate programs in Health Sciences do not align with the population demographics of New Jersey.

Why is this important?

Cultural and linguistic barriers between clients and healthcare providers can result in reduced quality of care. As summarized by Bijoyaa and Mohanb (2021)

A diverse CSD workforce can improve access to services and reduce health care disparities for diverse populations. The increasing diversity of the workforce begins with recruiting and training a diverse student body in CSD academic programs. (p.755)

(The acronym CSD in the above quote refers to Communication Sciences and Disorders, a term commonly used to describe educational programs in speech-language pathology, audiology, and speech and hearing sciences.) Supports can be built into undergraduate programs to help students identify their diversity assets in preparing for careers and graduate study (Guiberson & Vigil, 2021).

According to the demographic profile of certificate holders published by the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) for the calendar year 2021, 88.9% of certified audiologists in New Jersey identified as white and 96.6% as Non-Hispanic. Among certified speech-language pathologists in New Jersey, 93.2% identified as white while 94.6% identified as Non-Hispanic.

Current programming

Currently, the School of Health Sciences at Stockton University offers a Bachelor of Science in Health Science (BSHS) with a Concentration in Pre-Communication Disorders (Pre-CD). [The BSHS degree with](#)

[the Pre-CD Concentration requires](#) 80 credits in the major area and 48 credits in the General Studies area. These credits include seven core courses (28 credits) for the Bachelor of Science in Health Sciences major, in addition to lab science courses in Biology and Chemistry (10-15 credits). For the pre-CD concentration, the students complete ten courses specific to the Pre-CD concentration (including PSYC 3323-Developmental Psychology: Childhood and Adolescence). The tightly prescriptive nature of the Pre-CD concentration in the BSHS major has not allowed students to complete optional upper and lower-level cognate courses, which would typically allow for student choice within the curriculum of the major. To elaborate, the Bachelor of Science degree requires 80 credits in the major area. For Pre-CD students in the BSHS, the 80 credits consist of 28 credits in the BSHS core curriculum, lab science courses, plus 40 credits in required coursework for the Pre-Communication Disorders track. Students in the General track of the BSHS complete the 28 credit core along with required lab science courses and are able to select cognate courses to complete the credit requirement for the BS degree.

Currently, to be admitted as a student to the BSHS program, students must meet specific mathematics requirements. As stated on the program website:

Students who do not meet the mathematics requirement may request to the Admissions Office a Conditional Admission to the BSHS program General Concentration.

In summary, the current requirements of the BSHS Pre-CD Concentration restrict access to students who do not meet the admission criteria to the BSHS. The current concentration also does not allow for student choice of cognates toward their BSHS degree. The current structure also makes it challenging for students from other majors to access the Pre-CD courses as electives as content is often tailored to students who have declared a Pre-Communication Disorders concentration within the BSHS and HLTH courses have been restricted to BSHS majors.

Offering a minor in Communication Disorders instead of the current Bachelor of Science in Health Sciences /Pre-Communication Disorders track has the potential to increase student diversity for the following reasons:

1. Increasing student choice by offering students the opportunity to broaden their knowledgebase about human communication while completing varied fields of study.
2. Enabling students from diverse fields of study the opportunity to complete prerequisites courses that permit students to pursue graduate programs in Communication Sciences and Disorders.
3. Admission barriers to accessing pre-CD specific courses in the Bachelor of Science in Health Sciences would be removed for students completing a minor.
4. The minor could also be used in marketing areas of study to potential undergraduate students, including those not interested in a Health Science major, but who are interested in communication disorders. This opportunity could potentially increase both overall student enrollment as well as increase diversity of students within the minor.
5. Collaboration among faculty teaching in the proposed minor, the Minor Coordinator, Academic Advising, and precepting faculty across the University would promote the

minor as a complement to their liberal arts education as well as a potential career gateway for students in a variety of programs/majors. Students could also “sample” courses in the minor to see if the content aligns with their interests.

Alignment with Stockton University’s Strategic Plan

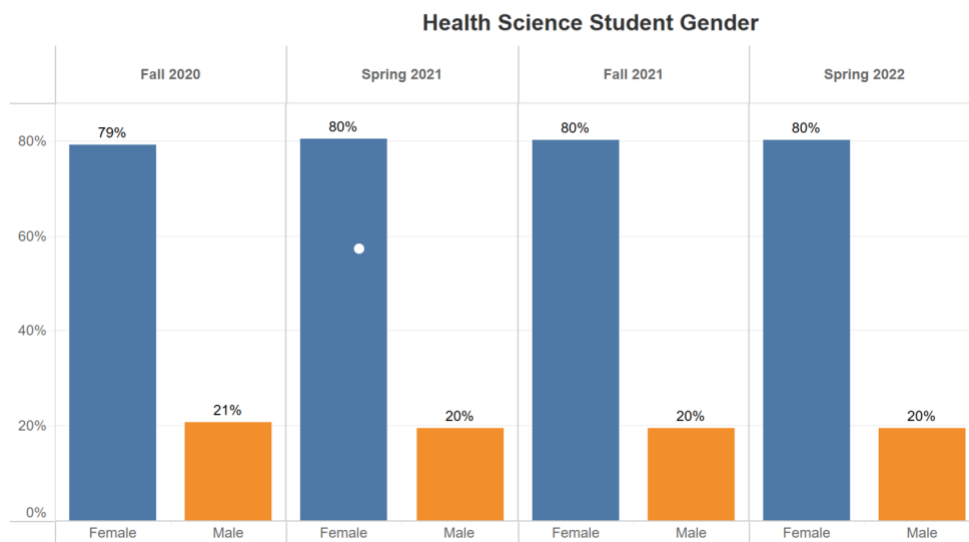
The planning committee members emphasize that adoption of this minor aligns with the following University Focus Areas:

1. Inclusive Student Success

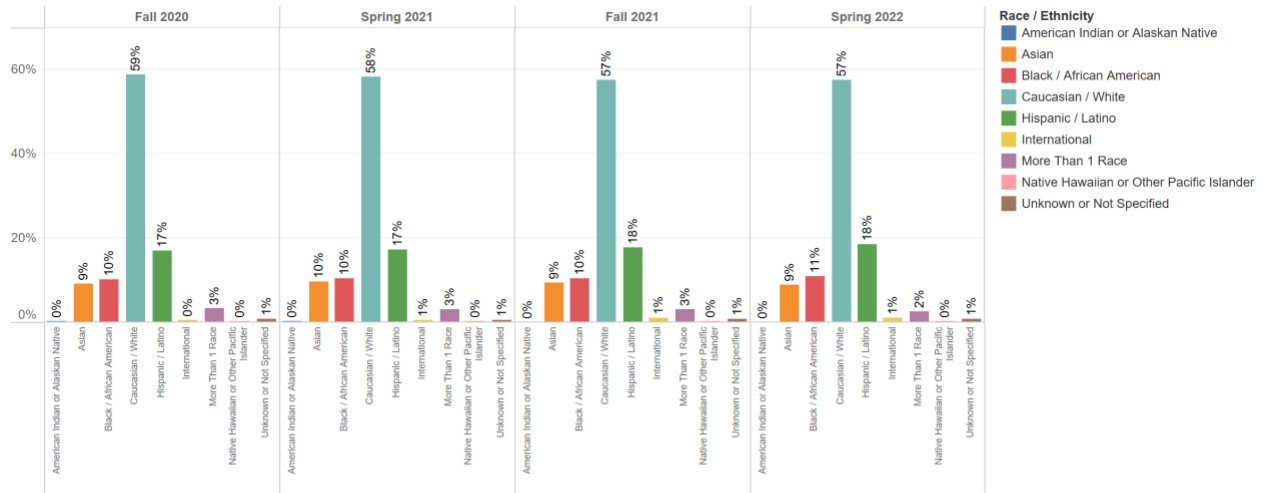
Current demographic data on race, ethnicity, and gender in Health Sciences

According to data provided by Stockton’s Office of Institutional Research for Academic Year 2021-2022, there was an average (across semesters) of 1,128 students enrolled in undergraduate programs in the School of Health Sciences. Among these were 140 Pre-CD students.

Data on student gender within the School of Health Sciences provided by the Office of Institutional Research (which is limited to binary gender indication) is summarized below:



Race/Ethnicity Chart



% of Total Number of Records for each Race / Ethnicity broken down by Terms. Color shows details about Race / Ethnicity. The data is filtered on Major Program, Matriculation Status, Class Level, Gender, Gender, Major from Param filter and Level. The Major Program filter keeps multiple members. The Matriculation Status filter keeps 1. The Class Level filter keeps First-Year, Sophomore, Junior and Senior. The Gender filter keeps Unknown, Male and Female. The Gender filter keeps Unknown, Male and Female. The Major from Param filter filter keeps 1. The Level filter keeps Undergraduate. The view is filtered on Terms and Race / Ethnicity. The Terms filter keeps Null, Fall 2020, Fall 2021, Spring 2021 and Spring 2022. The Race / Ethnicity filter keeps no members.

Review of the above data indicates that the majority of students in Health Sciences programs are white females.

2. Strengthen academic programming.

The proposed minor also aligns with the University’s **Strategic Area of Focus 3.2**, particularly,

Goal1: Review existing curricula and experiment with new academic programs and respond to emerging fields and pedagogical opportunities.

Stockton has a long history of offering undergraduate students’ study in the areas of speech-language pathology and audiology. From 1974-2011, Stockton offered an undergraduate degree in Speech Pathology and Audiology (SPAD). At that time, graduates were able to work in the public schools with a bachelor’s degree. As the entry level degree for the field of speech-language pathology became a master’s degree, Stockton successfully began the Master of Science in Communication Disorders (MSCD) degree, phasing out the undergraduate SPAD degree. At that time, a track in Pre-Communication disorders was offered in the Bachelor of Science in Health Sciences (BSHS) for students wishing to later apply to graduate school for speech-language pathology.

The faculty committee offers the minor as a means of more adequately responding to both student needs, as well as a call by the professions for an increase in diversity among professionals in the field of communication disorders and sciences. Speech-language pathology, in particular, remains a field with projections for job growth, according to [the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics](#) (2022). The job outlook through 2031 is an increase of 21% (much faster than average) with a median salary of \$79, 060 per year. As mentioned earlier, foundational knowledge in typical and atypical human communication would also complement study and enhance the skill set of students from other majors across the university as well.

B. Evaluation and Learning Outcomes Assessment Plan

The learning outcomes for the minor includes the following.

1. **Students will demonstrate knowledge of basic human communication and swallowing processes, including the appropriate biological, neurological, acoustic, psychological, developmental, and linguistic and cultural bases.**

Learning objective 1 is derived from the current *Certification Standards of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) Council on Clinical Certification in Speech Language-Pathology and Audiology*.

Assessment: This learning outcome will be assessed formatively through course assessments (exams, projects, student presentations, reflections, etc.) that correspond with the curricular component of the objective (e.g., child language development; anatomy and physiology of speech and hearing.)

2. **Students will be able to explain how diversity issues are integrated with an understanding of human communication as well as disorders of human communication.**

All courses within the minor will have at least one learning objective that relates to the contemporary professional issues of cultural humility, diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Assessment: This learning outcome will be assessed formatively through course assessments (exams, projects, student presentations, reflections, case studies, etc.) that correspond with the curricular component of the objective.

3. **Students will identify post-graduation opportunities that utilize their coursework and learning experiences in the Communication Disorders Minor.**

Assessment: This objective will be assessed through:

- a. Documentation in Degree Works or other precepting tools by the Minor Coordinator.
- b. A project completed by students in the capstone course which reflects a cumulation of their learning. The project will be developed at the discretion of the capstone course instructor but may include: a student portfolio, student reflections/essays, a student-developed plan for post-graduation transition, or other pedagogically appropriate measures of student learning that allow the student to demonstrate this desired learning outcome.

C. Justification and Need

This information has been integrated above in the section on Minor Objectives.

D. Students

This information has also been integrated above in the section on Minor Objectives. Based on data from the most recent academic year, there are approximately 150 students enrolled in the Pre-Communication Disorders track of the BSHS. The planning committee anticipates that this

number will increase, if the minor is approved, based on the reasons explained earlier in this proposal. A review of the spring 2023 course offerings in Pre-CD courses showed 220 scheduled seats for the 6 courses that would align with the requirements for the proposed minor.

Following spring pre-registration (but prior to new student and transfer registration) there were 100 available seats remaining. This suggests that an optimal student enrollment for the minor, given current resources, would be between 150-200 students.

Should the Communication Disorders Minor be approved, upon implementation of the Minor, the BSHS Pre-CD track would no longer be offered to students. Any students already enrolled in the BSHS Pre-CD track, at that time, would be permitted to complete their degrees as outlined in Degree Works (or a comparable tool utilized by the University at that time).

E. Program Resources.

Faculty.

Faculty teaching in the Communication Disorders Minor would include:

- Health Science faculty qualified to teach courses in the content areas. These faculty currently include:
 - Dr. Ameer Shah, Professor of Health Science
 - Dr. Diane Laverty, Assistant Professor of Health Science
- Graduate faculty in the Communication Disorders Program (MSCD) who are interested in teaching undergraduate courses in addition to their expected teaching assignments in the MSCD program. This does not necessarily indicate that these courses would be an overload. These faculty currently include:
 - Dr. Stacy Cassel, Associate Professor of Communication Disorders
 - Dr. Phillip Hernández, Associate Professor of Communication Disorders
 - Dr. Monika Pawlowska, Associate Professor of Communication Disorders
 - Kelly Maslanik, Non-tenure Track Instructor
- Qualified adjunct faculty as needed would also teach. Adjunct faculty who currently teach the listed courses on a regular basis include:
 - Kristopher Cleary
 - Dr. Marjorie Fox
 - Lindsay Laielli

Leadership

The Proposed Minor would require a Minor Coordinator who would perform the following tasks in collaboration with the Dean of the School of Health Sciences:

- Work with faculty to ensure that courses are regularly offered.
- Monitor enrollment in the minor.
- Work with Academic Advising to create Curriculum Sheets and enter courses into Degree Works.
- Work with University Relations and Marketing, the Office of Student Enrollment, and Academic Advising to market the Minor of potential students.

- Along with faculty teaching in the Minor, conduct assessment.
- Engage in three-year program review.

There is currently an Associate Chair for the Pre-Communication Disorders track within BSHS. Thus, there would be no significant budget change in moving from the Pre-CD track to the Communication Disorders minor.

F. Requirements for Achieving the Minor

The minor would consist of the following courses. These courses, selected from the current Pre-CD track, are those which would provide the most complete overview of the principles of typical human communication as well as disorders of human communication. These are also the coursework areas most commonly required as prerequisites for Communication Science and Disorders graduate programs. As many graduate programs require a course in Biology as well as one in either Physics or Chemistry, students in the minor would be expected to complete those requirements outside of the minor requirements. For students in majors held in NAMS or HSCI, this would be part of their lower-level cognate requirements. For students in other schools, those courses could be counted in ASD course requirements. For transfer students who have completed a Biology and/or a Physics or Chemistry course at another institution, the science courses would no longer have to align with those required for the BSHS degree. While the concentrations within the different majors attempt to include all graduate pre-requisite courses, it is common that there may be courses specific to individual graduate programs that are not prescribed in the concentrations. Students within the minor will be advised to investigate the specific pre-requisite requirements of the individual graduate programs to which they intend to apply. Based on student and faculty interest, additional courses may be periodically offered as electives in the Health Sciences (e.g. HLTH 3122, Audiology).

Course Number	Course Name	Credits	Prerequisites
HLTH 1103	Anatomy and Physiology of the Speech and Hearing Mechanisms	4	None
HLTH 2104	Phonetics	4	None. Not Open to Freshmen.
HLTH 2106	Speech and Hearing Science	4	HLTH 2104 with C or higher.
HLTH 2119	Introduction to Communication Disorders	4	None (Current prerequisites of HLTH 1101 and HLTH 1241 to be removed)
HLTH 3115	Speech and Language Development	4	HLTH 2104 with C or higher.
HLTH 4103	Capstone: Guided Clinical Observations	4	HLTH 2119 with C or higher. Open to Juniors and Seniors Only.

Total credits required for Minor: 24

References

- American Speech-Language Hearing Association (n.d.). 2020 Standards and Implementation Procedures for the Certificate of Clinical Competence in speech-language pathology. Retrieved on November 13, 2022 from: <https://www.asha.org/certification/2020-slp-certification-standards/>
- Guiberson, M. & Vigil, D. (2021). Speech-language pathology graduate admissions: Implications to diversify the workforce. *Communication Disorders Quarterly*, 42, 3. 145-155.
- Mohapatra, B. & Mohan, R. (2021). A proposed framework for increasing racial and ethnic diversity in communication sciences and disorders programs: The REAP Model. *Perspectives of the ASHA Special Interest Groups*, 6. 755-767.
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- United States Census Bureau. (n.d.) Quick Facts New Jersey. Retrieved on November 13, 2022 from: <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/NJ>