

Submission date: February 10, 2020

Program/s in this review: Speech-Language Pathology PBCT

Specialized accrediting agency (if applicable): N/A

Campuses where the program is delivered: Anchorage

Members of the program review committee:

- Margaret Spencer, Term Assistant Professor (Chair), ANC
- Ellen Brigham, Term Assistant Professor, ANC

1. Centrality of Program Mission and Supporting Role (700 words or less)

Relevancy

The mission of the Speech-Language Pathology (SLP) Post-Baccalaureate Certificate Program is to prepare speech-language pathologists for lifelong success by providing an excellent student-centered learning environment to prepare them for professional careers and advanced study in speech-language pathology. The program's mission aligns with that of the School of Allied Health, College of Health and UAA by supporting UAA's commitment to serving the higher education needs of the state and its communities by providing training in highly technical and skilled occupations to meet the healthcare needs of the people of Alaska.

UAA has the only Speech-Language Pathology (SLP) programs in Alaska. The SLP programs include the Speech-Language Pathology Post-Baccalaureate Certificate (Post-Bac), Speech-Language Pathology Minor and the M.S. in Communication Sciences and Disorders program affiliated with East Carolina University (ECU). The SLP Post-Bac cannot be evaluated in isolation. A Master's degree and clinical certification are the minimum requirements to practice as a certified SLP. All accredited SLP Master's degree programs require students who hold a Bachelor's degree in another discipline to complete core SLP courses prior to application for graduate study. The SLP Post-Bac is a 24 credit program that enables such students to obtain the prerequisite SLP courses for ECU as well as other graduate programs nationally. The Post-Bac shares 6 courses with the SLP Minor which enables undergraduate students to also obtain the required coursework for graduate study. UAA has the only program in Alaska that enables Alaskans to remain in state for training in this field.

The Post-Bac is the primary vehicle for those with a degree in another area to obtain the prerequisite speech-language courses needed to apply to graduate study in Speech-Language Pathology (SLP). The Post-Bac aligns with *UAA's mission to serve the higher education needs of the state of Alaska*, the *UAA 2017 Strategic Plan Priority A: Strengthen and Develop the Total UAA Instructional Program* and the *UA Academic Master Plan Goal 4 to develop and enhance programs in response to state needs in education and healthcare*.

Support for Other Academic Programs

The Post-Bac courses do support other programs – see **Utilization of Courses by Other Programs** in section 2.

Sources of extramural support and funding for the program

The Alaska Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and Related Disabilities (LEND) grant covers 15% of one faculty position per academic year for participation as LEND SLP faculty. The LEND grant is supported by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The grant is currently in its second five year cycle.

Partnerships with outside agencies, businesses, or organizations

UAA Summer Speech-Language Clinic

- Partners with Anchorage School District (ASD) and the local community while serving as a clinical training site for Alaska cohort graduate students.

- Supervised graduate students provide speech-language services to 90-135 local Alaskans, aged 2 through 80+ in a 6-week program in a school site provided by ASD.
- Faculty salaries for the Clinic covered by Alaska Department of Education & Early Development Discretionary Special Education Grants since 2010.

ASD Tuition Assistance program:

- ASD provides tuition assistance for many paraprofessional employees enrolled in the SLP Post-Bac and Affiliated Graduate program in return for a service commitment

High Demand Job Designation

The Post-Bac prepares students for a high-demand career in Alaska. Due to the severe shortage of certified SLPs in Alaska, hospitals and school districts are forced to hire travelers who are here for short assignments and have roots outside of Alaska; this contributes to a high employee turnover rate. Supporting data follows:

- According to recent projections from the Bureau of Labor statistics employment of SLPs will grow 27% from 2018-2028 (much faster than average), adding about 41,900 new jobs. Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, *Occupational Outlook Handbook*, Speech-Language Pathologists, on the Internet. (<https://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/speech-language-pathologists.htm> visited *January 24, 2020*)
- 2017/18: Anchorage School District reported a need to staff ~11 vacant positions and Fairbanks North Star Borough, 7. Other school districts around the state also reported significant vacancies.
- 2015: Alaska Health Workforce Survey indicated that 84% of the nearly 900 employers who responded to the survey reported difficulty filling speech-language pathology positions.

2. Program Demand (including service to other programs), Efficiency, and Productivity (7 year trend; 1400 words or less)

Program Demand

The **SLP Minor** was developed to address the shortage of SLPs in both education and healthcare. The Minor is a path to graduate study in SLP. It also enables students in related majors to obtain information that will facilitate service delivery for individuals with speech, language, and/or hearing impairment.

- Fall 2014 COE initiated the SLP minor
- Fall 2016 the SLP minor was added as an option for the pre-professional track of the College of Health B.S. in Health Sciences

There have been a number of inquiries from students attending UAS and UAF requesting to declare the SLP Minor offered by UAA as it is the only undergraduate SLP program in the state. At this time that is not possible. SLP is a very high need field in Alaska and as the Minor courses are fully distance delivered, this option should be considered.

The **SLP Post-Bac** program was initiated Spring 2015 to provide a pathway to graduate study for candidates holding a degree in another field.

A pre-prospectus was recently approved for development of an AAS for speech-language pathology assistants (SLPA) leading to State of Alaska SLPA licensing. Both Anchorage and Matanuska-Susitna school districts have expressed an interest in supporting such a program due to significant need.

Program Data Points

Seven year degree and/or certificate awards trend, Credits per Degree (Average Credits Earned) and Internal Demand:

Not all students taking the courses are enrolled in the Post-Bac. Enrollments outside the major significantly exceed enrollments in the Post-Bac. The IR charts do not account for course utilization by other programs nor the 12 graduate internship credits (See **Table 1**). Enrollments also include Minors, professionals seeking to meet

recertification requirements, students taking undergraduate electives and non-degree seeking students taking classes to meet graduate school requirements.

Course pass rates: Data indicates 94.9 % in total.

Enrollment/Full Time Equivalent Faculty (FTEF): Data indicates the SCH/FTEF average for SLP (448) is significantly higher than the College of Health (COH) average (341).

Utilization of Courses by Other Programs:

EDSL A201 Foundations of Communication Disorders

- *Required for the SLP minor*
- BSHS Pre-Professional Track – SLP
- Elective for other majors
- Continuing education for recertification
- Required for proposed Speech-Language Pathology Assistant program (SLPA)

EDSL A301 Anatomy & Physiology of Speech & Hearing

EDSL A302 Phonetics

EDSL A303 Language Development Across the Lifespan

EDSL A401 Phonology & Articulation Development & Disorders

EDSL A402 Audiology

EDSL A403 Aural Rehabilitation

- *SLP Post-Bac*
- SLP Minor
- BSHS Pre-Professional Track – SLP

EDSL A 410 Speech Science

EDSL A411 Neurological Foundations of Speech & Language

- *SLP Post-Bac*
- Additional requirement for Minor students planning to apply to a Master’s program in SLP

EDSL A695A Beginning Internship

- SLP graduate clinical course 4 credits

EDSL A695B Advanced Internship

- SLP graduate clinical courses – total 8 credits

3. Program Quality, Improvement and Student Success (1500 words or less)

Specialized Accreditation

The American Speech-Language Hearing Association (ASHA) does not accredit undergraduate programs, however the SLP Post-Bac program adapted the ASHA-mandated assessment plan to guide the development of student learning outcomes. Students earning a SLP Post-Baccalaureate Certificate complete a program of study that includes academic coursework sufficient in depth and breadth to achieve the specified knowledge and skill outcomes that are linked to the ASHA 2020 standards.

Currency of the Curriculum

The curriculum is current. The program is only a few years old and maintains alignment with ASHA Standards. The proposed AAS SLP Assistant curriculum is currently in the curriculum approval process.

Innovative Program Design

Distance delivered evening courses meet the needs of traditional and non-traditional students and working professionals throughout Alaska. The Post-Bac successfully prepares students for acceptance into graduate programs in SLP, as evidenced by the 94% acceptance rate into SLP Master’s degree programs. Students who successfully graduate from Master’s degree programs in SLP will be qualified to work as fully certified SLPs in Alaska. The Post-Bac

meets the needs of the non-traditional students changing careers. The average graduate age was 31.4 in 2017 and 34.2 in 2018 with a range from 24-62 years.

Program Assessment

The Post-Bac Program Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) assessment shows consistent high performance on key assessments. Key assignments and exams were collected on Blackboard and scored based on rubrics that related to the SLOs based on ASHA standards. Consistently 85% or more of students scored at 80% or higher on the key assessments. The original criteria called for $\geq 90\%$ of students to score 80% or better. Only Post-Bac students in each class are included in the assessment, which limits the number of students used for outcomes assessment. The program has found that even one student with a score below 80% could put the group performance below required criteria. Therefore, it was determined that a benchmark of 85% of the students (a change from $\geq 90\%$) would be a more realistic criteria and the program plans to change the benchmark. Course pass rates of 94.9% support overall high performance.

The Post-Bac was designed as a two year program. Based on student feedback, the course sequence was modified to enable students to select either a one or two year rotation. Feedback has been very positive. Students have reported that the sequence “makes sense” and they appreciate the opportunity to apply to graduate school sooner. Students are also able to modify the pace of the program even further, which meets the needs of non-traditional students.

The Post-Bac program has resulted in a high acceptance rate into graduate SLP Master’s degree programs (94%). Of 23 graduates to date, 13/14 (93%) were accepted to UAA’s affiliated program with ECU, 5 students reported acceptance into other accredited graduate programs, and 4 were not able to be tracked. All currently enrolled in the affiliated program with ECU are reported to be in good standing (GPA of 3.0 or better).

Informal feedback on “how well the post-bac prepared you for graduate study and any suggestions for improvement.” was solicited by program faculty from 18 program graduates who were known to be enrolled in SLP graduate programs and for whom email addresses were available. There was a 50% response rate (9/18). We have highlighted some student responses (full responses available upon request). Student feedback supports the currency and rigor of the Post-Bac curriculum.

“... I have...a 3.88 GPA which I credit entirely to the post-bac program. The master's program is expanding upon the knowledge that we gained at UAA. I believe that we have been very well prepared for graduate level courses.” (ECU/Alaska cohort)

“I have a 4.0... The post-bac at UAA prepared me very well for graduate school. The research article reviews that we completed at UAA were very helpful. We obviously go through and evaluate a lot of research at the graduate level and it was great to be introduced to that... I took Neuro Foundations class and...now that I am in the aphasia class at ECU, the anatomy and physiology portion is just review. The study guide/chart that we made in Anatomy and Physiology at UAA will also be incredibly useful.” (ECU/Alaska cohort)

“As a nontraditional student, I was able to finish the post-bac in 1 year while maintaining a job...I feel like the leveling classes brought me up to speed in order to dive deeper into subjects as a grad student, I went in with a solid foundation to build on.” (ECU/Alaska cohort)

“I enjoyed the concise nature of the Post-Bac and loved that I could complete it in just a year... by the end of my Post-bac, I felt ready to take on the next level.” (ECU/Alaska cohort)

“The Post-Bac was very helpful to my graduate studies. I felt particularly prepared...as the graduate courses jumped into the next level assuming we knew the basics.” (ECU/Alaska cohort)

“I feel like the SLP Post-Bac system did a great job preparing me for my graduate study. I am so grateful for the option of an online program.” (SLP graduate student at Western Kentucky University)

Student Success and Accomplishments

Yearly individual advising is encouraged and group advising is conducted in classes and posted on Blackboard. Students are referred to the Writing Center and Care Team when needed. The course pass rate for the Post-Bac was 94.9%.

As of August 2019, 57 Alaska Cohort students successfully earned a M.S. in Communication Sciences and Disorders from East Carolina University. All passed the praxis exam and 52/57 (91%) accepted initial positions in Alaska. At this time, approximately 80% remain in Alaska. Currently 20 students are progressing through the graduate program.

High Impact Practices:

Students in the Post-Bac and Minor complete research article reviews in several courses. Student feedback has indicated that this is good preparation for graduate study, "We obviously go through and evaluate a lot of research at the graduate level and it was great to be introduced to that." Group projects and Case Studies encourage collaborative team building and integration of information from current and prior courses to clinical scenarios. A student noted, the Post-Bac allowed her "to dive deeper into subjects as a grad student, I went in with a solid foundation to build on."

At the graduate level SLP students participate in clinical experiences in the UAA Clinic as well as schools, private clinics, developmental, and medical settings around Alaska. The **UAA Summer Speech-Language Clinic** enhances the School of UAA's partnership with Anchorage School District and the local community. As part of the graduate clinical training program, free speech-language services are provided annually to 90-135 Alaskans, aged 2 through 80+ in a 6-week program. Referral sources include Infant Learning programs, Anchorage School District, Providence Hospital, ANMC, the VA Hospital, the Alaska Brain Injury Network and Southcentral Foundation. The Clinic has an excellent reputation in the community as evidenced by written evaluations and the existence of a significant waitlist for services each year. The Clinic has been supported by Alaska Department of Education & Early Development Discretionary Special Education Grants since 2010.

Graduate Student Leadership/Honors include:

- Researching and establishing the first Alaska chapter of the National Student Speech-Language Hearing Association (NSSLHA) at UAA and assuming executive positions within the club
- Alaska Speech-Language Hearing Association (AkSHA) President's Award for Service to the Association
- AkSHA Award for Service on the Graduate Student Council

Alumni Honors and Leadership Roles include:

- AkSHA President's Award for service to the Association
- AkSHA Red Lantern Award for outstanding contributions in rural Alaska
- Service as AkSHA executive officers, committee chairs, and committee members
- Anchorage School District Instructional Lead for Speech-Language Pathology

4. Program Duplication / Distinctiveness (300 words or less)

UAA offers the only SLP programs in the State of Alaska.

5. Summary Analysis (500 words or less)

Program Strengths Include:

- Unique program in AK that addresses a high needs occupation in developmental and health settings and Alaskan schools
- Post-Bac and Minor provide pathways for undergraduates at UAA and those with degrees in other fields to obtain the necessary coursework to apply to graduate programs in SLP
- SCH/FTEF average for SLP (448), significantly higher than the COH average (341)

- Program Utilization:
 - Enrollments outside the major significantly exceed enrollments in the Post-Bac
 - Six Post-Bac courses are shared by the Minor and several would be electives for the proposed SLPA AAS
- Rigor and currency of the Post-Bac courses
- High course pass rate and high acceptance rate to graduate study
- Completers show strong performance at the graduate level
- Students and alumni have held leadership positions in AK
- Accessible to students around the state
- Evening accessibility for working and non-traditional students
- Meets the needs of the non-traditional students changing careers (average graduate age was 31.4 in 2017 and 34.2 in 2018 with a range from 24-62 years)
- Options for completion: course sequence was modified based on student feedback to provide completion in 1 or 2 year rotations with positive feedback from graduates. Students are also able to pace the program further to meet the needs of non-traditional students. Advising is offered to guide students in the optimal course selection.
- UAA Summer Clinic provides clinical training, community engagement, and community service

Opportunities for Expansion:

- Recent relocation of the program to COH will enable the use of Post-Bac & Minor courses as electives for other programs to provide an opportunity for interdisciplinary training
- Investigate offering the Minor across all UA institutions to enable students around the state to apply to graduate study in SLP upon earning their Bachelor's degree
- Move forward with SLPA program proposal

Recommendation:

The expedited review committee for the Speech-Language Pathology programs recommends the program be **continued**, and considered for **enhancement** by moving forward with the AAS SLPA program and the possibility to offer the minor across all UA institutions.