

**Undergraduate Certificate in Speech-Language Pathology *Assistant***  
**Proposed by the Department of Speech and Hearing Science, CLAS**  
**February 2010**

Contact: Catherine Bacon, Clinical Associate Professor

**Description of proposed program:**

The proposed certificate program in speech language pathology would prepare students to practice as speech-language pathology assistants (SLPAs) as defined by the American Speech Language and Hearing Association (ASHA) and the state of Arizona Department of Health Services. Currently there is a shortage of qualified personnel to provide speech and language services to individuals with communication disorders in the state and across the nation. SLPAs can increase the availability, frequency and efficiency of speech-language pathology services in all practice settings, including schools, hospitals, clinics, home health care, long-term care, and other settings. The use of assistants is a well established practice for other core rehabilitation professions such as occupational and physical therapy. As of February 2010, the state of Arizona began licensing SLPAs to help address the critical need for speech and language therapy services.

The proposed 15 credit hour SLPA certificate would provide the additional coursework and clinical training that students majoring in Speech and Hearing Science or persons already holding a bachelor's degree in Speech and Hearing Science would need to be licensed as SLPAs and thus contribute to filling the need for therapy services for adults and children who have a wide variety of speech, language, swallowing, and voice disorders. The undergraduate program in Speech and Hearing Science at ASU provides a rigorous basic scientific background to understand the fundamental processes and disorders, and diseases of speech, language, and hearing. The proposed SLPA certificate program would enhance the quality of the undergraduate student experience and provide clinical training to prepare students to work under the supervision of a certified, licensed speech-language pathologist (SLP). Coursework for the SLPA certificate would cover clinical methods, treatment of communication disorders, and professional issues and ethical considerations for the SLPA. Internships in schools, hospitals and clinics would provide field-based clinical training including 100 hours of clinical interaction required for SLPAs.

The SLPA certificate program would allow certificate holders to work in the field of speech-language pathology prior to pursuing a graduate degree. Graduates of the certificate program would be eligible for SLPA licensure and for positions working under the direction of an SLP in schools, clinics and rehabilitation agencies that provide speech and language services. Without this training, there are very limited job opportunities for persons with a bachelor's degree in Speech and Hearing Science. The entry level degree for SLPs is a master's degree, plus clinical fellowship year.

The Department of Speech and Hearing Science at ASU is in a unique position to address the critical shortage of speech and language services in the state and to expand the quality of the undergraduate experience by providing the SLPA certificate program. There is an overwhelming interest in the certificate by the undergraduate speech and hearing majors at ASU (see survey results). The clinical training sites and supervision needed for the SLPA certificate are currently in place for the master's degree SLP program and can be expanded for the SLPA clinical training program without compromising the graduate SLP program (see letter of support from Kelly Ingram, Director of ASU Speech and Language Clinic). Finally, there is

strong community support for ASU to provide a certificate program for SLPAs (see letters from Rohno Geppert, State Licensing Program Manager, Arizona Department of Health Services; Lisa Andrew, Comprehensive System of Personnel Development Arizona Department of Education, and Amy Heck, Program Director for the SLPA program at Estrella Mountain Community College). The proposed SLPA certificate addresses the overall mission of ASU to provide innovative quality training programs for high-need populations in Arizona.

### **Certificate Eligibility and Admissions Procedures**

The certificate program will be completed by ASU students majoring in Speech and Hearing Science during their last two semesters of undergraduate coursework. Students who have completed 15 credits in Speech and Hearing Science coursework with at least a 2.75 grade point average in those courses are eligible to apply. Applications will also be accepted from students who have completed a bachelor's degree in Speech and Hearing Science or Communication Disorders from a program accredited by the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA), providing their grade point average in the major was at least 2.75.

Students will be recruited through announcements in undergraduate Speech and Hearing Science courses; the Speech and Hearing Science undergraduate advisor; and announcements through the ASU chapter of the National Student Speech-Language-Hearing Association.

Applications will be submitted with transcripts and a resume to the SLPA committee by Jan 15<sup>th</sup> each year. The committee will review the applications and students will be notified of admission to the SLPA certificate program by March 1st. Students may begin the SLPA program in either the fall or spring semesters and will complete the SLPA certificate in two semesters (e.g., fall and spring semesters before graduation or spring and fall semesters for those students graduating in December).

### **Certificate Requirements (15 hours)**

Certificate requirements will include coursework and clinical training to provide the student with the knowledge and skills required to practice as an SLPA. The courses and clinical training will be based on the guidelines recommended by ASHA and the Arizona Department of Health Services. This includes course work in normal processes of communication (e.g. normal speech, language, communication and hearing development; phonetics)), cultural and linguistic factors in communication, and an overview of communication disorders, all of which are part of the required coursework for undergraduate speech and hearing majors. In addition, ASHA and Arizona licensure recommends instruction in workplace behavior and assistant-level service delivery practices. Coursework in assistant-level service delivery practices may include technical practices for SLPAs as well as professional issues and ethics.

#### *Coursework required for the SLPA Certificate*

- SHS 402: Clinical Methods and Treatment of Communication Disorders (3 credits)

This course introduces students to clinical methods and treatment of communication disorders typically utilized by speech/language pathologists and audiologists. Opportunities are provided for students to learn methods for eliciting therapy targets and to apply critical thinking to plan communication therapy. The emphasis is on problem solving clinical situations rather than formulating a scripted method of intervention. Real

therapy cases are used to generate clinical questions and teach clinical techniques for the treatment of disorders in articulation, phonology, fluency, aphasia, language, voice and dysarthria. Structured observations of audiology and speech/language pathology services will be completed to allow students to earn 25 ASHA clinical clock hours of observation.

- New course request SHS 473: Implementation of Treatment Plans for Individuals with Communication Disorders (3 credits)

This course will introduce students to the roles and responsibilities of the SLPA. Students will learn to follow written treatment plans, individualized education programs, individual support plans or protocols developed by the supervising speech language pathologist. Opportunities will be provided for students to learn methods for screening speech, language and hearing, and provide treatment assistance, including documenting patient progress toward established objectives. The course explores the applications of the theoretical and scientific information to clinical settings (evidence-based practices). The emphasis will be on how to conduct therapy while following the supervisor's instructions through the treatment plan. Actual therapy cases will be used to teach clinical techniques for the treatment of all types of communication disorders affecting individuals across the life span. A portfolio of resources, techniques, therapy activities and guidelines will be developed by each student as part of the course.

- New course request SHS 483: Professional Issues and Ethical Considerations for the SLPA (3 credits)

This course will address professional issues and ethical consideration for the SLPA working in public schools, hospitals, clinics, home health, long-term care, and other settings. Applicable state licensure laws and rules regulating the practice of speech-language pathology will be presented. Students will develop skills needed to relate to clients/patients in a supportive and professional manner, to maintain confidentiality, to communicate professionally in oral and written formats, and to follow health and safety precautions. Cultural and linguistic factors impacting treatment will also be explored.

#### *Required Clinical Interaction Field-Base Learning (6 credits)*

Students will be required to complete two semesters of clinical internship, SHS 484 (3 credits each semester). ASHA recommends, and the AZ Department of Health Services requires, fieldwork experiences for learning the job responsibilities and workplace behaviors of the SLPA. These internship experiences will be completed in a school or clinic setting to fulfill the 100 hours of clinical interaction required for licensure as a SLPA. The clinical practica training will be completed under the supervision of a certified, licensed SLP as required by the Arizona Department of Health Services and ASHA:

Twelve of the 15 credits for the SLPA certificate must be completed at ASU. A minimum grade of "B-" is required for a course to count toward the certificate. The same course may be used to fulfill multiple graduation requirements.

## **Program Administration**

If approved, the certificate will be administered by the Department of Speech and Hearing Science. Program oversight and administration will be the responsibility of the Certificate Program Director in coordination with the Certificate Program Committee. The SLPA Certificate Program Committee, composed of the Director, SHS undergraduate advisor, ASU Speech and Language Clinic Director, one academic faculty member and one additional clinical faculty member will form the Department of Speech and Hearing Science committee. The SHS undergraduate advisor, together with the SLPA certificate program coordinator, will advise and verify completion of the SLPA certificate. Student's transcripts will be reviewed by the Certificate Program Director and the department advisor, who will notify the registrar's graduation office of successful completion of the SLPA certificate.

### ***Certificate Director/Coordinator***

A Certificate Program Director will be hired to coordinate the clinical internship placements and to teach the courses specific to the SLPA certificate. Catherine Bacon, Clinical Associate Professor, Speech and Hearing Science, will act as interim director until a Certificate Program Director is hired.

### ***Certificate Committee***

Kelly Ingram, Director of ASU Speech and Language Clinic  
Tiffanie Flores, Academic Success Specialist, Speech and Hearing Science  
Shelley Gray, Associate Professor, Speech and Hearing Science  
Catherine Bacon, Clinical Associate Professor, Speech and Hearing Science

### **Supporting Faculty**

Shelley Gray, Associate Professor, Speech and Hearing Science  
Julie Liss, Associate Professor, Speech and Hearing Science  
Maria Adelaida Restrepo, Associate Professor, Speech and Hearing Science  
Heather Harris Wright, Associate Professor, Speech and Hearing Science  
M. Jeanne Wilcox, Professor, Speech and Hearing Science  
Jean C Brown, Clinical Professor, Speech and Hearing Science  
Dawn Cosgrove Greer, Clinical Associate Professor, Speech and Hearing Science  
Addie Lafferty, Faculty Research Associate, Speech Language Pathology  
Denise Stats-Caldwell, Clinical Associate Professor, Speech and Hearing Science  
Shereen Thomas, Faculty Research Associate, Speech Language Pathology

### ***How does this new plan fit in within the strategic plan/direction for the college?***

The SLPA certificate supports the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences commitment to social embeddedness. Since SLPA licensure requires coursework unique to Speech and Hearing Science, the Department of Speech and Hearing Science would be the only academic unit impacted by this proposal.

### **Projected Resources and Funding**

Program fees are required to generate revenue to support the personnel required to teach the additional courses and to provide clinical supervision and coordination of the program. The

courses proposed for the certificate include knowledge and skills as specified by ASHA for SLPAs and therefore must be taught by master's level SLPs with clinical knowledge and professional experience. Arizona's SLP licensure law requires a master's degreed licensed SLP to be present during service delivery and to provide direct supervision and oversight of the clinical interaction of the SLPA candidate and the clients served. The student preparing to be a SLPA must be trained to conduct speech and language screenings, provide direct treatment and document patient progress for all types of human communication disorders affecting individuals across the lifespan. As a result, master's level, ASHA certified, licensed SLPs will be needed for supervision of all students enrolled in the SLPA certificate program. Program coordination is necessary to insure quality training across the variety of school, hospital and clinical settings in which an SLPA may be employed. Program fees have been calculated to cover the salary of the SLPA Certificate Program Coordinator and any other expenses of the program.

## Student Interest and Support: Survey Results

To assess student opinions regarding interest in the SLPA certificate program, an electronic survey was sent to approximately 300 students who are currently majoring in Speech and Hearing Science in October 2009. One hundred and sixty students responded to the survey. The responses for the following questions were collected:

***The Speech and Hearing Science (SHS) department at ASU is considering a Speech-Language Pathology Assistant certificate program. This program would provide additional training and the 100 hours of clinical interaction required to obtain an Arizona speech language pathology assistant (SLP-A) license.***

**How much would you, personally, be interested in an SLP-A certificate program?**

**76.1% responded "very interested" or "interested"**

**6.8% responded "somewhat interested" or "a little interested"**

**7.1% responded "not interested at all"**

**How much do you think other (present and future) SHS students would be interested in an SLP-A certificate program?**

**84.5% responded "very interested" or "interested"**

**14.9% responded "somewhat interested" or "a little interested"**

**0.6% responded "not interested at all"**

***SLP-A training requires additional clinical supervision, how much would you expect an ASU SLP-A certificate program to cost?***

**24.5% responded \$2500-\$2000 per semester**

**23.9% responded \$1500-\$1999 per semester**

**27.7% responded \$1000-1499 per semester**

**12.3% responded \$500-\$999 per semester**

**11.6% responded under \$499 per semester**

**This table includes some of the open-ended comments provided by the survey respondents:**

<i>I think this is a great idea!</i>
<i>I would be interested!</i>
<i>If ASU currently offered the SLP-A certificate program I would definitely apply to it no matter what the cost.</i>
<i>I think that students should still be encouraged to pursue their Master's degree, but if for whatever reason that is not possible, this would be a good alternative.</i>
<i>I think it would be helpful even as an undergraduate to have the 100 clinical hours offered which is required to get licensed as an SLPA</i>
<i>No matter how great the financial burden, I would be very interested in obtaining a SLP-A certificate. I feel as though offering this kind of certification for Speech and Hearing Sciences majors would offer us all a jump-start on our bachelors and master's degrees. Also, having this certificate would benefit us personally in our chosen fields of SHS, because we would be able to work in our field of choice much earlier. Having some sort of certification would allow us to obtain internships and perform hands-on training in SHS much earlier than is currently</i>

<i>possible.</i>
<i>I think this would be a good program to have that offers another option to all Speech and Hearing science majors.</i>
<i>I think that an SLP-A program would be very beneficial to our program. ...I do appreciate the department's effort to incorporate some type of clinical opportunity for us by considering an SLP-A program. A clinical based program like the SLP-A certificate program is long overdue at ASU for those of us who wish to pursue careers as practicing Speech Pathologists.</i>
<i>I believe that a SLP-A certificate/program can offer a very good opportunity for students who do not want to pursue SLP Master's Degree due to many reasons; its nice to have other options available.</i>
<i>I think it would be a great idea - I've looked into transferring in order to attain the SLP-A certification</i>
<i>I am very interested in a cert. program because I would like to work in the field to gain some experience and gauge my interest before applying to a grad program.</i>
<i>I would love this program to be offered so that people can get real experience in the field before continuing to grad school. If there is anyway this could be offered in the near future please let me know!</i>
<i>The speech and hearing programs, majors/careers are very much in demand worldwide. I think ASU should give its speech &amp; hearing majors thorough information on certification and training even it means for us majors to pay more for our future success and goals. I strongly believe it is the school's responsibility to provide us with complete, adequate certification and training because we know we will benefit from these awareness/ procedures no matter what. This is a very competitive career and students majoring in this field should be given the priority, chance and the consideration to get in the masters program. Thank you for this survey.</i>
<i>I think it would allow individuals a different option, if becoming a SLP is difficult</i>
<i>I would love to be part of an opportunity like this and be able to gain clinical hours and experience</i>
<i>PLEASE offer this program!!!</i>
<i>1. I think it is a great idea to support the community shortage in this way. 2. I think many of my contemporaries who are looking to come back to work after being stay at home moms would like to have this option.</i>
<i>I am in the process of getting my 100 hours now, and if this program had been available I would have definitely used it and it would have made things a lot easier! I'm excited and look forward to the program for future students.</i>
<i>I believe that it would be a good program to have.</i>
<i>It would be nice to get additional university observation hours.</i>
<i>Adding a certificate program would really help those that want to be assistants with their bachelors degree.</i>

The responses collected from the current SHS students show that there is obvious interest in, and enthusiasm for, an SLPA certificate program. The responses also indicate that the proposed fees would not be perceived as excessive and would not dissuade students from applying for the program.

February 19, 2010

Speech-Language Pathology Assistant (SLPA) Certificate Program  
Speech and Hearing Science

This is a letter of support for the Department of Speech and Hearing Science offering a Certificate Program for those wishing to become Speech-Language Pathology Assistants. This is a very important offering for the department in our commitment to alleviate the shortage of Speech-Language Pathologist in Arizona and throughout the United States, especially in public schools. The department will be able to provide space for the Program. The department advising resources will also be able to fully support the students in the SLPA Certificate Program. The department can support all of the non-salary operational expenses for a coordinator of and any lectures in the Program. The requested program fees for the Program will allow for the salary costs associated with any new staffing to be covered with the assistance of department funds. Thus, the Department of Speech and Hearing Science can fully support the SLPA Certificate Program based on its own resources and those that will accrue from program fees.

Sincerely,



William A. Yost, PhD  
Chair and Professor  
Speech and Hearing Science

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February 12, 2010

Re: SLPA Certificate Program

Dear Committee for Undergraduate Certificate Review;

The purpose of this letter is to offer the support of the Speech and Language Clinical program in the Department of Speech and Hearing Science for the addition of a Speech-Language Pathology Assistant (SLPA) training certificate to our current Bachelor's degree. I believe the SLPA program is essential to the state's ability to provide adequate services to individuals with speech and language disability. I do not anticipate any difficulty with finding adequate training placements for the SLPA students in the SLPA program, especially if the SLPA coordinator is able to do regular site visits to assess and support the students.

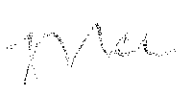
As Clinical Director of Speech & Language Services at Arizona State University, I oversee all clinic placements and maintain the affiliation agreements that we have with outside agencies. We currently have a total of 55 affiliation agreements with local agencies. These agencies include school districts (22), Hospital and Adult Rehab facilities (15) and state or private practices (18). The contracts with the school districts represent a total of 461 schools. This includes 349 elementary schools, 60 middle schools and 52 high schools. Only a portion of these sites will have speech-language pathologists to supervise the assistants but at a minimum it is well over 100 sites. I also anticipate that each of the private practices would welcome the SLPA students. Our Master's program places approximately 18 students in a school setting and an additional 18 in a non-school placement each semester for a total of 36 placements. The supervisor's responsibilities for our Master's students far exceed the responsibilities they will have with the SLPA students. There is no reason to believe that our current placements will be compromised in anyway by the addition of the SLPA placements. Furthermore, I believe many sites will be delighted at the opportunity to have an assistant in training to assess before they open up an employed position to the individual. This type of recruitment happens frequently within our Masters program and can be a favorable situation for both the student and the site.

The proposal to provide a SLPA training program at ASU has great potential and will benefit the community by adding services for individuals with speech and language needs. It will also be a great opportunity for our undergraduate students to gain employment in the field of their choice even if they do not go on to do a Masters' degree. I am fully supportive of this proposal and I am happy that we already have affiliations in place that will allow us to place the SLPA students without much administrative paperwork. Please contact me if I can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,



Kelly Ingram, M.S. CCC-SLP  
ASU Speech and Language Clinic, Director  
Clinical Associate Professor





State of Arizona  
Department of Education

Tom Horne  
Superintendent of  
Public Instruction

February 19, 2010  
Cathy Bacon  
Department of Speech and Hearing Sciences  
Arizona State University

To Whom It May Concern:

The Arizona Department of Education, Exceptional Student Services (ESS), is pleased to support your proposal to provide a certificate program for Speech and Language Pathology Assistants (SLPAs). The need for certified SLPAs was identified through our latest Attrition Survey data which has shown that as of October 1, 2008, there were 163 people serving as speech assistants in schools, with only 110 of them certified as SLPAs or Speech Language Technicians (SLTs). Data also revealed that during the same time period, there were 176 Speech and Language Pathologist (SLP) vacancies. By creating this certificate program, it will contribute to our ongoing efforts to ensure speech and language services are available to meet the needs of Arizona's children by highly qualified SLPAs. Currently Arizona does not have a state university that offers the 100 clinical hours necessary to become an SLPA.

Through the Exceptional Student Services, State Personnel Development Grant (SPDG), the ASU PEP program continues to play a vital role in supporting school-based SLTs in advancing their education to become school-based SLPs. We value this partnership and hope to continue fund this project even after the SPDG ends, as ESS is committed to meeting the needs of all students with disabilities. It is with great hopes that your proposal receives the funding and support necessary to begin this work. We believe this project will result in producing well-qualified SLPAs that will benefit the work force in schools.

Sincerely,

Lisa Andrew  
CSPD Director  
Exceptional Student Services  
Arizona Department of Education

***Division of Licensing Services  
Office of Special Licensing***

150 North 18<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Suite 460  
Phoenix, Arizona 85007  
(602) 364-2079  
(602) 364-4769 FAX

JANICE K. BREWER, GOVERNOR  
WILL HUMBLE, INTERIM DIRECTOR  
Arizona Department of Health Services

February 12, 2010

RE: Establishment of a SLPA Certificated Program at ASU

To Whom It May Concern:

Arizona, like the rest of the nation, is experiencing a critical shortage of speech-related service providers. There are approximately 2,400 licensed speech-language pathologists in Arizona by the Department of Health Services (Department). Our licensees provide speech-related services in private practices, for-profit agencies, local educational settings, state-supported institutions, rehabilitative settings, and medical settings.

These critical services enable adults with disabilities, stroke victims, and individuals with traumatic brain injuries to remediate, and in some cases, overcome their communication deficits which greatly increase their capacity rejoin the workforce, and interact with society in meaningful and productive ways. These services greatly enable speech-language impaired children in their ability to learn and develop adaptive methods for functioning within their familial, educational, and social settings and have been proven to contribute profoundly to their developmental progress.

In 2006 the Legislature passed a bill into law giving authority to the Department to establish licensing and regulation processes for Speech-Language Pathology Assistants (SLPAs). In 2009, while the rulemaking process was moving forward, the Director of the Department permitted the Office of Special Licensing to begin to issue SLPA licenses to qualified applicants. The licensing qualifications germane to this discussion include:

Completion of a 60 semester credit hour SLPA training program or equivalent from an accredited college or university that includes a minimum of 20-40 semester credit hours of speech-language pathology technical coursework and 20-40 semester credit hours of general education; and

Completion of a minimum of 100 hours of clinical interaction (i.e., a fieldwork practicum that is supervised by a licensed SLP) that does not include observation.

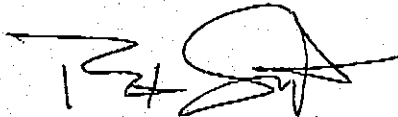
Thus far Arizona has only two Department-approved SLPA training programs, which are offered by NAU and Estrella Mountain Community College. Although the Department has received well over 200 applications for SLPA licensure, the Department has issued only 165 licenses. This is due to applicants holding an undergraduate degree in a speech-related discipline failing to meet the qualifications noted above. Unfortunately, most undergraduate degrees do not include sufficient hands-on clinical course content and

none appear to include any offering of practicum options in which they would obtain the 100 hours of direct clinical interaction.

The Department is in support of the creation of a SLPA certificated program at ASU as it would provide a 3<sup>rd</sup> source of qualified applicants for licensure, which in turn, will greatly enhance the ability of schools and agencies that provide speech-related services to use SLPAs. Having more licensed SLPAs will improve the ability of schools to meet Federal and State requirements and to provide treatment to students in a more cost-effective manner, while also reducing waiting lists for agencies that provide speech-related services.

Please do not hesitate to contact the Department at the Office of Special Licensing should you have further questions about the need for this type of training program, the benefits it would offer to your undergraduate students, or how it would positively impact the critical shortage of speech-language service providers within our state.

Sincerely,



Rohno Geppert, MPA  
State Licensing Program Manager  
ADHS/Office of Special Licensing  
(602)364-3046  
[gepperr@azdhs.gov](mailto:gepperr@azdhs.gov)



**ESTRELLA MOUNTAIN  
COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

February 18, 2009

To whom it may concern:

Over the past ten years, the shortage of qualified speech language services providers has increased both in Arizona and nationwide. On December 25, 2009 the rules and regulations for the Speech Language Pathology Assistant (SLPA) licensure statute were published in the Arizona Administrative Register with a rule effective date of February 1, 2010. On January 6, 2010, Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS) made a ruling approving SLPA's as registered providers effective for February 1, 2010. In light of these recent changes as well as the shortage of speech-language providers, the need for licensed SLPA's has increased with the state of Arizona. Students graduating from our state universities are lacking some requirements to apply for both the licensure and AHCCCS registration.

Estrella Mountain Community College offers a SLPA training program; however we do not have the ability to offer only these missing components to undergraduate students holding a bachelor's degree in Speech and Hearing. At this time no program exists to help address the deficiencies that these undergraduate students need to become a licensed provider within the state. I am in support of ASU offering a SLPA certificate program for undergraduate speech and hearing students to allow them the opportunity to meet these requirements.

If you need additional information please feel free to contact me.

Thank you for your consideration,

Amy Heck, MA CCC-SLP  
Program Director/Speech Language Pathology Assistant Program  
Occupational Education  
Estrella Mountain Community College  
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602-373-3136

