

A COMMITMENT TO JUSTICE, EQUITY, AND RESPECT FOR DIVERSITY OF ALL KINDS

*Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders
California State University, Fullerton
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Note: The faculty and staff within the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders wish to acknowledge the COMD graduate students who took the first step in moving our department to the drafting of this statement in August 2020. We applaud you for your commitment, courage, and passion to make a difference in our department and this world. Thank you!

Over the last 30 years, the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders (COMD) has made a commitment to addressing and advancing issues of diversity as they relate to the diversification of our COMD student, faculty and staff community, delivery of just, equitable, and quality services to diverse client populations, establishment of a strong multicultural clinical and academic curriculum at both the undergraduate and graduate levels and graduation of culturally competent, sensitive and aware clinicians. Most recently, the Department has established a Multicultural Speech-Language Pathology specialty certificate to enhance our students' ability to conduct culturally responsive and inclusive research.

However, several events over the last year, including the murder of George Floyd on May 25, 2020 and the attempted insurrection at our nation's Capitol on January 6, 2021, have caused each of us to reflect deeply on some questions and obvious realities that are both very personal and very painful. Over the last few years, we have also witnessed a growing close presence of racial, religious and other forms of hatred as well as violence that took the life of individuals such as our professional colleague, Reverend Sharonda Coleman-Singleton, a speech-language pathologist, member of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) and South Carolina Speech Language Hearing Association who was gunned down by a white supremacist during a bible study meeting in 2015 at her church.

Over the last year, as a country and a global world, we have also witnessed the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic which has helped us to recognize that we actually have more in common with each other than we realize and that we are all interconnected. However, we acknowledge as well the disproportionate impact that this health crisis has had on some of our global, national and COMD communities more than others.

In light of these events, we agree on a personal as well as collective level that we need to strive to be better and to do better by becoming more educated and informed individuals who are sensitized to the differing as well as shared needs, differences and realities of each other. We agree to strive toward the ideals of justice, equity and inclusion. We will work to become more aware of our conscious and unconscious biases, prejudices, and acts of discrimination through ongoing self-reflection and education. We know that each of us, from time to time, engage in words, actions, or non-actions that result in the marginalization, dehumanization, or othering of others. We promise to act in ways that minimize these behaviors while holding ourselves accountable when they do take place.

We recommit to our association's ASHA (2016) Code of Ethics which asserts that, as professionals, we: 1) "shall not discriminate in the delivery of professional services or in the conduct of research and scholarly activities on the basis of race, ethnicity, sex, gender identity/gender expression, sexual orientation, age, religion, national origin, disability, culture, language or dialect" (Principle of Ethics 1, Rule of Ethics C) and 2) shall not discriminate in "relationships with colleagues, assistants, students, support personnel, and members of other professions and disciplines on the basis of race, ethnicity, sex, gender identity/gender expression, sexual orientation, age, religion, national origin, disability, culture, language, dialect, or socioeconomic status" (Principle of Ethics IV, Rule of Ethics L).

We voice our support for our association's "Response to Racism" position statement (ASHA, 2020) which "explicitly condemns systemic racism and oppression" and commits to "rooting out the systemic inequities that exist in our communities—within our professions, our schools, and universities and workplaces" as well as its statement on the Capitol Hill Violence incident (ASHA, 2021, January 8) which "categorically condemns the violent, destructive and deadly attack on the U.S. Capitol and our democracy."

As members of our association and Cal State Fullerton community, we reaffirm, as well, our commitment to civility as a shared responsibility of our department, expressing respect for others. We commit as well to always engage in civil discourse where all perspectives and beliefs are heard even when we disagree.

Finally, we commit to the development of an annual department action plan with input from the various stake-holders and voices within our COMD community to ensure that the principles outlined in this statement are put into action. We also pledge to say what we mean and mean what we say. We promise to live our lives in harmony with each other from this point forward.

References

- American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (2021, January 8). *ASHA Statement on Capitol Hill Violence* [Position Statement]. Retrieved from: <https://www.asha.org/news/2021/asha-statement-on-capitol-hill-violence/>
- American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (2020). *Response to Racism* [Position Statement]. Retrieved from: <https://www.asha.org/policy/response-to-racism/>