



Council of Academic Programs in Communication Sciences and Disorders

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From the CAPCSD Board of Directors

Date: June 30, 2025

To: Council on Academic Accreditation in Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology (CAA) Board of Directors

From: Council of Academic Programs in Communication Sciences and Disorders (CAPCSD) Board of Directors

RE: Proposed Changes to Accreditation Standard 3.4 A/B

Dear CAA Board Members,

The CAPCSD Board of Directors respectfully submits this formal response to the proposed changes to CAA Accreditation Standard 3.4 A/B regarding diversity, equity, and inclusion in academic training programs.

CAPCSD's Position and Commitment

CAPCSD represents academic programs across the nation that are dedicated to preparing the next generation of speech-language pathologists and audiologists. Our organization maintains an unwavering commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB), as formalized in our CAPCSD DEIB Statement, which commits us to "dismantling systemic racism, discrimination, elitism, and oppression" and supporting programs in recruiting students and colleagues who represent the diversity of our communities and populations served.

This commitment is not merely aspirational but is integral to our core organizational values:

- **Excellence:** We believe that upholding the highest standards of academic excellence requires preparing students to serve all populations effectively and equitably
- **Visionary Leadership:** Our leadership demands we forge pathways for sustainable growth that includes and advances all members of our discipline

- **Collaboration:** True collaboration means working together to support the diverse needs of our member institutions and the communities they serve

Context and Concerns

We understand that the proposed changes to Standard 3.4 A/B are being considered in response to state legislative requirements in some jurisdictions. However, we are deeply concerned about the potential implications of weakening standards that were thoughtfully developed and implemented in 2023 following extensive input from the profession. These standards emerged from critical advocacy by ASHA members—particularly influenced by the Black Lives Matter movement and health disparities highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic—calling for more systematic preparation of students to provide equitable and inclusive services.

The populations served by our graduates are increasingly diverse, and the health disparities affecting communication disorders disproportionately impact marginalized communities. Removing or weakening standards that ensure students are prepared to address these realities would be a disservice to both our students and the communities they will serve.

Recommendations

We respectfully urge the CAA Board to consider all available options that would allow programs to maintain their commitment to preparing culturally responsive practitioners while navigating complex legal environments. Specifically, we encourage you to:

1. **Recognize the professional imperative** to prepare practitioners who can address health disparities and serve all members of society with competence and cultural humility
2. **Consult broadly** with member programs, professional organizations, and legal experts to identify creative solutions that uphold both educational excellence and legal compliance
3. **Explore alternative language** that preserves the intent and substance of current standards while addressing legal concerns in affected jurisdictions
4. **Consider flexible implementation approaches** that allow programs in different legal environments to demonstrate compliance through various means while maintaining core educational objectives
5. **Maintain the educational integrity** of standards that ensure graduates are prepared to serve diverse populations effectively

Our Commitment Moving Forward

CAPCSD remains committed to supporting our member programs in maintaining excellence in education while navigating these challenging times. We will continue to provide resources and guidance to help programs fulfill their educational missions and prepare graduates to serve diverse populations effectively.

We believe that creative solutions exist that can satisfy both educational imperatives and legal requirements, and we stand ready to collaborate with the CAA in developing approaches that preserve the essential elements of quality education in our field.

Thank you for your consideration of these important matters. We look forward to continued dialogue and collaboration as we work together to ensure the highest standards of education in communication sciences and disorders.

Respectfully submitted,

CAPCSD Board of Directors