

CLEVELAND STATE UNIVERSITY

Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders

Executive Summary of Strategic Plan

AY 2020- 2021 to 2025 – 2026

Date of Summary: June 2024

OVERVIEW OF THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION SCIENCES AND DISORDERS

Since the pandemic, there have been so many changes in the Department of Communication Sciences and Cleveland State University. For historical context, it is important to summarize all of the changes in each of the annual Strategic Plan Executive Summaries.

The Speech and Hearing Program (SPH) officially changed its name to the Communication Sciences and Disorders (CSD) Program in August 2021. This change allowed the program to align with the profession's national naming trends by focusing on communication and its disorders.

Secondly, CSU implemented a campus-wide re-organization plan called CSU 2.0. This was an aggressive, growth-oriented plan for building a stronger, more focused institution after emerging from the global pandemic. Under this plan, the university's seven colleges were reduced to five, plus the College of Law, and one new college was established, the College of Health.

The CSU Communication Sciences and Disorders Program was formerly housed in the School of Health Sciences (SHS). The School of Health Sciences was situated within the College of Sciences and Health Professions (COSHP). The COSHP was the second largest of the University's seven colleges and had five departments: Biological, Geological, and Environmental Sciences; Chemistry; Mathematics; Physics; Psychology; and one school, the School of Health Sciences.

In 2022, the former School of Health Sciences programs transitioned into independent departments within the College of Health. This new structure houses a range of health-related disciplines, including the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders, Department of Health Sciences and Human Performance, Department of Music Therapy, Department of Occupational Therapy, Department of Physical Therapy, School of Nursing, and School of Social Work.

When the CSD program became a department in the College of Health, Myrita Wilhite was appointed Chair of the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders. While serving as Chair of the Department, Dr. Wilhite still assumes all of the duties of the Program Director.

The CSD Program met unusual challenges in the spring semester of 2020 when the world struggled to survive during a global pandemic. The clinical services transitioned to a teletherapy service delivery model. Courses were also taught remotely. We have learned valuable lessons as we continue to emerge from the pandemic. One lesson we learned was that the teletherapy option was ideal for some clients, while others were not as successful in making progress in the teletherapy environment. Students also learned new skills as they learned to provide quality, evidence-based clinical services virtually. The teletherapy caseload continues to grow.

Like most institutions of higher education across our country, Cleveland State University is facing unprecedented enrollment declines and financial instability. Since the summer of 2023, CSU has been evaluating its financial model to address a national trend of declining enrollment. The University is pursuing several initiatives to reduce expenses by Fiscal Year 2029 and will strategically invest in areas to strengthen the quality of the CSU experience. As part of these efforts, the University will make reductions and adjustments to staffing and programming to serve a smaller student body. CSU must adapt to this enrollment decline to continue serving as Cleveland's only public, urban, research university. Following Board approval at a Special Meeting of the Board held on April 8, 2024, CSU began a Voluntary Separation Incentive Plan (VSIP) for eligible faculty and staff. Every Department on campus will be impacted by faculty who choose to voluntarily separate from the university. Six of the eight faculty members in the Department of CSD and one Administrative Coordinator are eligible for the VSIP. We are

holding our collective breaths to determine how we will move forward. The University's administrative leadership stated, "CSU is confident that it will emerge from this process with a solid foundation for its future as Cleveland's only public, research-focused institution that creates excellent learning opportunities for all students. CSU intends to leverage technology and recognized industry tools and partnerships to strengthen its reputation and focus on the future economic, cultural, and workforce needs of the region." (<https://www.csuohio.edu/orfs/orfs-faq-section>).

STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

The Strategic Plan for the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders (hereafter, "CSD" or "Department") is intended to guide short- and long-term activities and decisions over a five-year period. The most recent Strategic Plan covered AY 2015-2016 to 2020-2021. The new Strategic Plan covers AY 2021- 2022 through 2026 – 2027.

The strategic planning process is fluid and continues to evolve over time due to various circumstances and faculty reviews. The strategic plan in place from 2010 to 2016 continues to be reviewed and is still undergoing modification. Some goals have been met, others were no longer appropriate, and others need to be continued.

The process for the 2020-21 Strategic Plan included a review of the Program's current Strategic Plan (2010); review of the evidence prepared for the SPH Program's 2019 ASHA CAA re-accreditation site visit and a review of minutes from annual Program retreats. The process also included a review of the program's goals, plans, and needs that were discussed at the annual retreats. The annual Program Assessment reports were also reviewed. Annual Program Assessments are prepared according to the guidelines of the CSU Office of Student Learning Assessment. The strategic planning process also included a review of client satisfaction questionnaires from the Speech and Hearing Clinic, and a review of student surveys, course evaluations, and qualitative data provided from the annual "Status of the Class" meetings for first-year graduate students.

The process for this current strategic plan also utilized the (SPHE) Strategic Planning in Higher Education Framework (Tromp & Ruben, 2010). Briefly, the SPHE framework consists of seven major planning phases that include many of the aforementioned tools that were implemented. The first phase included reviewing and revising the Department's mission, vision, and values. The Department's faculty then began the process of reconsidering the vision and mission of the Department. The University and the newly formed College of Health revised their mission statements to be more concise. This first step led to the creation of new mission statements. Below are the missions of the University, the College of Health, and now the Department of CSD.

The mission of the university includes **empowering students, creating knowledge, engaging communities, and shaping our world.**

The mission of the College of Health is **to inspire innovation and inclusivity, promote health equity and wellness, and educate with excellence**

The mission of the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders (CSD) is **educational excellence, promote innovation, and support our community.**

The mission aligns with that of the institution and the College of Health. Our vision statement and goals remain the same. We will need continuous updates to the annual Executive Summary of the Strategic Plan. Other steps in the strategic planning process include: identifying major stakeholders and their needs, expectations, and satisfaction levels; scanning the environment by considering the social, economic, political, technological, and cultural environment, identifying strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT analysis), identifying/revising the department's goals, formulation of strategies and action plans, creating a plan, and translating goals, strategies, and action plans into meaningful and measurable outcomes and milestones.

The Departments in the College of Health are key components of CSU's mission to provide healthcare degree programs to serve Northeast Ohio, where medical care is the largest employer in the region. The new College of Health will be instrumental in securing CSU's vision as an

anchor institution in the region. The College of Health strives to participate fully in CSU's efforts in education, research, community outreach, and workforce development.

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders (CSD) is educational excellence, promote innovation, and support our community.

VISION STATEMENT

The Department of CSD at CSU will be recognized as the leader in providing excellent, innovative, diverse, and collaborative educational experiences and clinical services in communication sciences and disorders within the region and global society.

Mission Statement - CSU Speech and Hearing CLINIC

The CSU Speech and Hearing Clinic's service mission is to improve the quality of life for people with communication difficulties by providing excellent, client-centered, and comprehensive speech, language, and hearing diagnostic and therapy services in a cost-effective manner that involves family members in the therapeutic process.

The Clinic's educational mission is to promote excellence in clinical training that emphasizes advocacy, evidence-based practices, and cultural competence as preparation for a career in speech-language pathology.

We will revise the Clinic's mission statement during the fall retreat 2024.

DEPARTMENT GOALS

The Department of CSD has established seven overarching goals to attain our vision. These include:

1. To equip a diverse undergraduate student body with the knowledge of basic human communication processes and the critical thinking skills that enable students to compete

as superior candidates for admission to graduate study in communication sciences and disorders or other fields

2. To provide excellent graduate education that meets or exceeds the professional standards for clinical certification and state licensure and that prepares future speech-language pathologists to provide optimal care and enhance the quality of life for individuals with communication disorders
3. To prepare future speech-language pathologists to fill diverse roles in the profession, work with integrity, and collaborate with families and other professionals in a variety of work settings
4. To provide students with clinical and research opportunities that deepen their understanding and appreciation of evidence-based practices and inter-professional collaborations
5. To equip students to attain leadership roles in clinical settings in the community, region, and global society by promoting skills in effective communication, critical thinking, and clinical reasoning and to encourage participation in research and life-long learning
6. To provide high quality and innovative clinical services in speech, language, and hearing assessment and intervention, along with preventative care, to members of the community
7. To prepare culturally competent clinicians to serve diverse populations

LONG-TERM STRATEGIC GOALS AND ACTION OBJECTIVES

Long-Term Strategic Goal 1: Provide excellent education that meets students' needs for pre-professional development

Action Objectives:

1. Continuously review curriculum to align coursework and clinical experiences with the needs of the community and the trends in the profession of speech-language pathology, addressing emerging considerations and opportunities
2. Partner with community agencies to provide educational and clinical opportunities for students
3. Expand opportunities for students to experience health care and educational field placements, pediatric and adult settings, private practices, and other diverse clinical opportunities.
4. Review the need for course revisions, additions, deletions

5. Expand the academic course offering for electives (i.e., Advanced AAC course, Cognition, TBI, and Communication Disorders)
6. Continue to seek student feedback via course evaluations, Status of the Class meeting, exit surveys, and other opportunities
7. Continue to provide students with regular meetings with their advisors and improve upon the documentation process of advising meetings
8. Encourage 1:1 faculty: student mentorships
9. Explore mechanisms for providing on- and off-site clinical supervisors with training, support, and skills enhancement
10. Maintain state-of-the-art technology in academic classrooms, clinics, and labs
11. Include content related to cultural and linguistic diversity in all relevant courses
12. Incorporate prevention in all clinical and academic curricula
13. Infuse professional practice competencies in the curriculum in every academic and clinical course
14. Expand course offerings that meet the University diversity requirement and the general education requirements

Long-Term Strategic Goal 2: Ensure the strength and viability of the Department.

Action Objectives:

1. Maintain ASHA accreditation.
2. Seek approval for the addition of a Distance Education component to complement the Existing residential program.

The addition of a Distance Education component would be predicated upon:

- ASHA/CAA approval of the Distance Education application
- Obtaining an appropriate and corresponding number of academic faculty and clinical faculty
- An appropriate and corresponding number of clinical supervisors
- An appropriate and corresponding number of administrative staff
- An appropriate and corresponding number of clinical placements
- An appropriate and corresponding number of CSU Speech and Hearing Clinic clients and contracts.

3. Re-establish the Advisory Board to seek strategic advice and direction from experts in the Profession. Since returning to campus after the pandemic, we have lost touch with our Board.
4. Review admissions and performance standards for students in order to recruit highly qualified students.
5. Determine strategies for addressing personnel shortages (faculty, administrative staff, and clinical supervisors).
6. Continue to build strong affiliation agreements with community agencies that provide diverse field placements and observation experiences for students.
7. Continue to pursue contracts for clinical services with community agencies.
8. Continue collaborations with the CSU College of Education and Human Services
9. Revive the role that the Department plays in the professional development of speech-language pathologists and other professionals in the community by providing continuing education opportunities, professional lecture series, etc.
10. Obtain ASHA CEU Provider status
11. Pursue elevation of the status of full-time clinical professional staff members to faculty lines (i.e. Clinical Faculty or Professors of Practice)

Long-Term Strategic Goal 3: Enhance the Department's scholarship of research.

Action Objectives:

1. Enhance and integrate academic and clinical faculty and student research projects
2. Develop a forum for interested faculty to discuss research ideas and methods
3. Encourage and support projects that attract internal and external funding.
4. Explore research that will meet local agencies' research, service, or programmatic needs (e.g., speech-language program [department] development, progress monitoring, and program evaluation).
5. Explore opportunities for collaborative research
6. Encourage students to complete Master's theses

7. Encourage undergraduate students to participate in research and develop posters to present research findings

Long-Term Strategic Goal 4: Maintain a diverse student body and learning environment and student experiences

Action Objectives:

1. Promote diversity and a culture of inclusion in every aspect of the Department of CSD.
2. Continue to review, refine, and implement an active recruitment strategy for attracting and increasing the number of students in the Program from underrepresented minority groups
 - Continue reserving a minimum of five graduate program spaces for qualified, talented CSU undergraduate and post-baccalaureate students. This is not race-based admissions. It applies to ALL CSU undergraduates and post-baccalaureate students.
 - Encourage all undergraduate students to participate in NSSLHA
 - Team with university pipeline programs (MC² Program, McNair Scholars Program, etc.) to inform students about careers in communication sciences and disorders
 - Offer to present topics to entry-level courses such as Introduction to Health Sciences about the profession

Long-Term Strategic Goal 5: Develop an Inter-professional education (IPE) model of teaching and learning that is consistent with the workforce requirements for multidisciplinary collaboration across the professions

Action Objectives:

1. SLP Faculty and staff will continue to participate in IPE courses and initiatives within the College of Health.
2. The Department will foster team teaching across the curriculum with other education and health professionals
3. Participate in IPE teams within the university to develop a practice model that supports IPE clinical education and practice
4. Develop IPE research ideas and projects

Long-Term Strategic 6: Improve the quality of life for individuals with communication disorders in the region and global society by expanding and improving outreach opportunities for students participating in the Speech and Hearing Clinic

Action Objectives:

1. Expand the role of CSU Clinic in early intervention
2. Develop and incorporate service learning initiatives
3. Infuse prevention of communication disorders in the clinic and academic curriculum
4. Enhance current outstanding clinical placement sites.
5. Explore international, sustainable service learning projects.
6. Explore advocacy opportunities for individuals with communication disorders through partnerships with local and state community members and agencies.
7. Expand the development of support groups for individuals with communication disorders and their families.

SUMMARY AND CLOSING

The Department of CSD is in a state of transition. Even as we face the challenges of declining enrollment in the undergraduate program, we continue to recruit and maintain enrollment benchmarks in the MA Program in Speech-Language Pathology. We are making considerable progress towards our goals as we continue to strive for excellence in education and service provision. During the academic year of 2023-24, the Department has made gains in the following areas that specifically relate to each Long-Term Goal:

Excellent Education

Curricula are continuously reviewed to align coursework and clinical experiences with the needs of the community and the trends in the profession of speech-language pathology, addressing emerging considerations and opportunities.

The Department has expanded its partnerships with community agencies to provide educational and clinical opportunities for students including community early childhood centers, the Cuyahoga County Juvenile Detention Center, Cuyahoga County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities, and the Cerebral Palsy Association.

Students are also invited to assist with social skills intervention in the summer with private practitioners who serve children with Autism Spectrum Disorder.

Professional practice competencies are infused into the curriculum of every academic and clinical course.

Strength and Viability of the Department

We continue building strong affiliation agreements with community agencies that provide students diverse field placements and observation experiences.

We are applying for the addition of a Distance Education component for the Department.

The Department of CSD continues to be supported by granting faculty appointments. Currently the composition of the faculty is as follows:

- 1 Professor (full professor) Tenured
- 1 Associate Professor – Tenure Track
- 3 Associate Clinical Professors – 1 Tenured, 2 Tenure Track
- 2 Professors of Practice (non-tenure track)

These changes from “staff” to faculty have strengthened the Department and allowed its members to fully participate in the governance of the College and the institution.

Enhance Scholarship of Research

The faculty remains research-productive. Moreover, the number of theses submitted for the exit requirement has increased. Research projects at the graduate and undergraduate levels continue to expand as students represent the department in a variety of scholarly functions.

Two faculty members are listed as co-primary Investigators for a grant that was submitted in May 2024 to the Department of Justice. The grant, A Continuum of Care for Girls to Reduce Risk Factors Associated with Juvenile Delinquency, was for funding to improve an existing program offered to the Cuyahoga County Juvenile Detention Center. If awarded, it will provide over \$500,000 in funding.

Maintain a diverse student body

The Department of CSD continues to attract students from diverse backgrounds. We continue to show an increase in the number of male and international students.

IPE Education

We continue to collaborate with all units in the College of Health to make IPE a cornerstone of our mission and clinical practice.

Two faculty members from the Department collaborated with faculty from the School of Nursing on a research project: "The Holistic Effect of Complementary Interventions in Reducing Stress in College Students." A research article has been submitted for publication.

Improve the quality of life for individuals with communication disorders

We continue to provide excellent services to individuals across the lifespan for individuals with communication disorders. We have expanded our teletherapy services for assessment and intervention.

Undergraduate and Graduate students follow a best practice model to select a need for service, find community partners, align the service experience with educational goals, manage the project or program, and foster reflective learning throughout the process.

The following is a summary of those activities:

- **Silver Threads Book Club** --Student engagement was maximized this academic year with undergraduate and graduate students who participated in a Service Learning project at the Fatima Family Senior Center in Cleveland, Ohio. Students planned activities around a "Book Club" designed to minimize cognitive impairment due to the natural aging process. The Seniors selected the books with the help of the student clinicians and clinical supervisors. The students ask questions that involve critical thinking, auditory memory, and higher cognitive processes.
- **Lexington Bell Language Stimulation Group**-- Students worked under the supervision of licensed and certified speech-language pathologists to provide language stimulation to young children from 2 years to 6 years old at a neighborhood early childcare center. Students developed lesson plans geared towards immersing the young children in a language-rich environment. Topics included themes about the weather/ seasons, planting vegetables, and community helpers.
- **The Teen Girls Project – Cuyahoga County Juvenile Detention Center**--The Clinic Administrator secured a Memorandum of Understanding with the Cuyahoga County Juvenile Court System. There is evidence in the literature that many juvenile offenders also suffer from communication disorders, often left untreated. The idea is to provide assessment and intervention to strengthen communication skills among teenage girls who are in the juvenile detention center. Hopefully, this will lead to a decline in recidivism.

This Service Learning initiative has also sparked interest in developing Social Communication groups for elementary school children. Research has shown that children, particularly children in lower-performing school districts comprised of children from low socioeconomic homes, have a higher rate of language and learning problems and are more likely to become a part of the school-to-prison pipeline (Stanford, 2020; Stanford & Muhammad, 2017).

The Department is excited to incorporate specific initiatives addressing advocacy, prevention, and early intervention.

The Department of CSD is in a period of significant growth and transition. The challenges that face higher education institutions will continue to force our faculty and leadership to be innovative, creative thinkers. The Department leadership is up for the challenge. We wholeheartedly believe that we are poised to achieve our mission of being recognized as the leader in providing excellent, innovative, diverse, and collaborative educational experiences and clinical services in communication sciences and disorders within the region and global society.

Respectfully submitted,

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