

**Department of Communication Sciences and
Disorders**

Strategic Plan January 2020 – December 2025

Preamble

The Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders (CSD) at Georgia State University was founded in 1974 as the Communication Sciences and Disorders Program. The Communication Sciences and Disorders Program was one of three programs within the Department of Educational Psychology, Special Education and Communication Disorders until June 30, 2018. Reflective of the transformative nature of Georgia State University, the Program was elevated to a department on July 1, 2018 and is currently known as the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders. CSD has been continuously accredited by the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association/Council on Academic Accreditation since 1993. At the time of the preparation of this document, CSD has five full-time academic faculty members, five full-time clinical faculty members, two joint faculty members, and three administrative staff members. The Department is evolving and continues to prove its robustness by looking toward the future and exploring new directions for science, teaching, and clinical practice in speech-language pathology.

As we look forward to the next five years (2020 – 2025) CSD seeks to mirror the University's goals of promoting innovation, accelerating research focused on health, and building on our existing strengths. Our vision is to be recognized as a dynamic department that is focused on the needs and challenges of urban communities, excelling in scholarship and preparation of highly trained clinical speech-language pathologists and academic researchers. We seek to embrace the opportunities of the 21st Century in all of our endeavors. Our **mission** is to offer a high-quality graduate program, which prepares students to implement evidence-based services across the scope of practice in speech-language pathology, and to educate PhD scholars

who make significant contributions to the research base of the profession. We will accomplish this by providing state of the art instruction and cutting-edge research that maximizes interdisciplinary collaboration across the university, the nation, and the world.

The Strategic Plan that follows includes goals and initiatives that will enhance our graduate program, build our research infrastructure, and expand our involvement in post-baccalaureate or undergraduate education.

Goal 1: Staffing commensurate with peer and aspirational Universities. Appendix A presents the staffing profiles of Universities that have been identified by the current CSD faculty as our peer and aspirational programs/departments. These data illustrate the significant staffing shortage of the CSD department at GSU compared to these programs/departments, most of which have similar structures and student enrollment. Specifically, staffing concerns exist at all levels in the CSD department at GSU, including academic and clinical faculty, and department-specific administrative support. With the change to department status some additional staff and faculty have been added, but does not come close to addressing the shortage that we face. Continued growth will not be possible until we increase the size of the faculty to allow us to maintain the high quality research, academic and clinical preparation for which we are known nationally and in the community. In addition, service is an important part of the work that we do as departmental faculty and good citizens of our College and University. The current faculty size in CSD makes it very difficult for us to honor the committee assignments and representation required beyond our department. Accordingly, we will continue to focus on working with College of Education and Human Development (CEHD) and departmental leadership to adequately increase staffing in our rapidly growing program to support continued growth.

Initiative 1: Increase number of tenure track research and clinical faculty hired in CSD at GSU. An updated staffing proposal will be developed by the CSD faculty and presented in Spring, 2021 to the CEHD Dean illustrating our current staffing compared to the potential for growing the number of students in our Program. This updated document will drive goal-setting and establish targets for faculty hiring for the next five years. Further, this document will provide an important self-study for the CSD Program faculty.

Initiative 2: Increase administrative support for the CSD program at GSU. Since our last strategic plan and our elevation to a department we have increased our administrative support to include a business manager and two administrative specialists, for a total of three administrative support persons. These individuals support the entire department, both the academic and clinical education programs. This level of support will be insufficient to manage any changes in student enrollment in either the Master's or PhD programs, and the concomitant changes that would result in our Clinical Education program.

Key Performance Indicators Goal 1:

1. Increasing Faculty:

- a. Targeted research and clinical faculty will be approved by the College and Departmental leadership.
- b. The number of PTIs required to teach academic and clinical courses will be decreased by 50%. This decrease can only occur with increases in faculty numbers.

2. Increasing Administrative Support:

- a. An Admissions Coordinator will be hired to manage the increased applications for enrollment in CSD, both in the Master's and newly established doctoral program.

- b. An administrative assistant will be hired to support the increased administrative load presented by higher student enrollments, as we grow our doctoral and satellite training programs.

Status 2020: See Appendix A for current staffing levels of CSD at GSU compared to last strategic planning in 2016.

Goal 2: Developing a 21st Century recruitment and enrollment plan. Traditionally graduates of our Master's program have been highly sought after by employers from a variety of contexts serving pediatric and adult populations. Though a significant number of students apply to the Master's program every year, the pool of diverse and qualified applicants is small. Looking toward the future, we believe we need to develop recruitment strategies designed to attract diverse, high performing students from across the country. In addition, we anticipate being able to accept PhD students into the doctoral program beginning in Fall, 2021. Recruitment efforts will be critical for establishing and maintaining stable enrollment at the doctoral level.

Initiative 1: Write two federally-funded training grants to capitalize on current collaborations at GSU. We propose to write both a graduate and a pre-doctoral training grant to develop specialized preparation programs at GSU that exploit our expertise and location in downtown Atlanta. We will use these programs to develop recruitment materials designed to attract both high quality MS and PhD students.

Initiative 2: Collaborate with CEHD Communications staff to develop recruitment materials for attracting geographically and racially/ethnically diverse Master's students. This will include distributing materials to minority serving institutions that have undergraduate CSD programs.

Key Performance Indicators Goal 2:

1. Training Grants:

- a. Federal funding for a multi-year Master's level training grant will be sought and obtained.
- b. Federal funding for a pre-doctoral training grant will be sought and obtained
- c. Recruitment materials will be developed to market the GSU training grants and the opportunities they present for graduate and doctoral education.

2. Diversity of applicants:

- a. Data will be collected annually demonstrating changes in out-of-state applications and enrollments. These data will be used to develop a plan for the next admissions cycle, designed to increase/maintain geographic and ethnic/racial diversity.
- b. Recruitment materials will be developed and distributed that are designed to attract students outside of GA. In addition, these materials will be distributed to minority

serving institutions throughout the United States to increase and maintain ethnic and racial diversity as we attract students to our programs nationally.

Status 2020:

- See Appendix B for 2019-2020 data, including total number of applicants, number of out-of-state applicants, and numbers of racially/ethnically diverse students (baseline data).
- **Update:** A Master's level training grant has been submitted and was awarded in September, 2020. Applicants will be admitted in Fall, 2021.
- **Update:** Recruitment materials were developed in the form of two videos: 1) "Say it in 60" was developed by the CEHD to highlight the department and the discipline for prospective applicants; and, 2) A video highlighting the clinical education was created for use in our Fall information sessions, and has been uploaded onto our website for viewing by prospective applicants.

Goal 3: Strengthening the research infrastructure in the Communication Sciences and Disorders Program. In order to build a strong research infrastructure in the CSD program it is imperative to include students at all academic levels in the research enterprise: undergraduate, Master's, and PhD. More importantly, targeting students at all levels will be critical for developing a strong research culture in CSD that will strengthen our national recruitment efforts at the MS and PhD levels.

Initiative 1: Establish a Ph.D. Program in Communication Sciences and Disorders at Georgia State University. A proposal for establishment of a PhD concentration in CSD is currently being considered by the University. Our goal is to accept students into this program beginning in Fall, 2021. A PhD in CSD is critical for expanding the research base of the Program, for contributing to the research base of the discipline, and for enhancing our national reputation.

Initiative 2: Develop an infrastructure/course focus to support Master's level research. If the CSD program is to develop into a stronger research program it is important to encourage research at the Master's level. Doing so, enhances our program and reputation and allows identification of strong researchers who may be good candidates for the PhD in CSD. As guided by our previous strategic plan, master's students are now able to complete thesis credits to fulfill their elective requirement. In order to increase the number of theses completed by master's students, research faculty members will continue to encourage students to participate in their research labs.

Key Performance Indicators, Goal 3:

1. **PhD Program:**
 - a. **Update:** Institutional approval for a doctoral program was obtained in August 2020. Applicants will be admitted in Fall, 2021.
 - b. Recruitment materials developed to market the new PhD degree program.
2. **Master's Research:**

- a. Each research faculty member will chair to completion at least one master's level thesis in CSD during the strategic plan cycle.
3. **Undergraduate Research Participation:**
- a. Each research lab will participate in the undergraduate assistantship program in order to increase undergraduate research participation in CSD.

Status 2020:

During 2020, two students were involved in thesis work with two successfully defending their theses. Five undergraduate students were in two different research labs. Recruitment materials are currently being developed.

Note: Whereas these numbers represent an important beginning, several students opted out of theses as they were concerned with maintaining their course and clinic loads while also completing a thesis. During this strategic planning cycle the faculty will develop strategies for making the thesis both an attractive and a realistic option for students in our rigorous M.S. degree program.

Goal 4: Continued development of creative and innovative clinical opportunities that provide MS students with opportunities to engage with the community and ensure they are CF-ready upon graduation. The Clinical Education program currently provides a range of experiences for students. We are committed to increasing access to and training with the urban clinical experience that our Master's level students seek.

Initiative 1: Develop additional, robust clinical experiences in screening, evaluating and treating clients in CSD 7910 (on-campus practicum). The on-campus clinic is the initial clinical training context for our students. We receive consistent, positive feedback about the preparation of our students. We are aware that SLP is evolving. We are committed to developing in our students the 21st Century skills needed to become competent clinicians. Accordingly, we will need to increase our use of technology and expand the services we provide to include those that our community needs.

Initiative 2: Develop interdisciplinary partnerships. GSU is a large, urban campus that is home to many related disciplines both in the health sciences and beyond. In their employment settings our students will become members of teams that are designed to comprehensively meet the needs of the clients served. During this cycle of the strategic plan we will seek partnerships with related departments on the Atlanta and Perimeter campuses designed to provide mutually beneficial experiences for GSU students.

Initiative 3: Continued development of off-site clinical opportunities. The majority of students in the CSD program choose GSU in order to gain experiences with urban populations that characterize the city of Atlanta. Our goal is to have more students choose employment contexts that focus upon meeting the needs of child and adult urban dwellers who often present

with complex needs and challenges. In order to provide these experiences we will need to expand the currently rich and diverse experiences offered.

Key Performance Indicators, Goal 4:

1. On-Campus practicum

- a. Investigate and extend the use of simulations and standardized patients in all areas of clinical education.
- b. Develop and implement an aural rehabilitation program for pediatric and/or adult clients in our Atlanta SLH Clinic.
- c. Upgrade the recording/observation technology in the entire Speech-Language-Hearing Clinic.

2. Interdisciplinary partnerships

- a. Explore partnerships with other programs/departments on campus (e.g., occupational therapy, physical therapy, social work, counseling) and develop interdisciplinary educational and clinical opportunities.

3. Off-site clinical opportunities

- a. Expand community based clinical experiences that provide opportunities for students to work in high need, urban communities.
- b. Continue to diversify part-time and full-time internship experiences to provide students opportunities to work with children and adults in urban settings.
- c. Develop and implement an aural rehabilitation program for pediatric and/or adult clients in our satellite clinical settings.

Status 2020:

In reviewing clinical education objectives in the previous strategic plan, all goals were addressed and met:

- Several clinical experiences were developed both on and off campus, including establishing a satellite clinic at the Clarkston Campus of GSU Perimeter College.
- We implemented a web-based platform for tracking student clock hours and housing documents (began using Typhon in 2018). This was a major goal for Clinical Education.
- Clinical faculty have met with faculty in the Byrdine College of Nursing and Health Professions and facilitated discussions during their inter-professional seminar course, CNHP 3200/6200. Additionally, CSD faculty members serve on the board of directors for the Physical Therapy and Wellness Clinic. Finally, the Director of Clinical Education is exploring joint clinical endeavors with the Psychology and Occupational Therapy clinics.
- The clinical sequence was reviewed and several changes were made. Specifically, we increased the variety of part-time placements and expanded internship sites. We added or expanded several group experiences to provide opportunities for students to work in high need communities.

- Longstanding issues with inadequate space were resolved with the complete renovation of the eighth floor.

Goal 5: Increased integration of graduate, undergraduate and post-baccalaureate CSD education.

At GSU, there is no undergraduate program in Communication Sciences and Disorders. Students interested in pursuing a master's degree in CSD typically major in other disciplines, (e.g., Speech Communication, Psychology) with an interdisciplinary minor in Communication Sciences. Currently, undergraduate GSU students who are admitted to the graduate CSD program still enroll with many of the prerequisite courses missing. The undergraduate advisement process does not identify interested students until very late in their program sequence (typically junior or senior year), and they are unable to finish all prerequisite courses before applying to graduate school. Introducing the field of communication sciences and disorders through advising and career information during freshman/sophomore years will provide students with an opportunity to make career decisions early (as well as strengthen their applications when applying to graduate school).

Initiative 1: Identify undergraduates with CSD interest during freshman/sophomore years. An ongoing goal has been to develop a more collaborative relationship between the Department of Communication, from which many of our GSU applicants come, and the College of Arts and Science Advising center so that students are identified earlier. We will continue working to develop strategies designed to facilitate this process.

Initiative 2: Support students with CSD interest after they are identified. Students identified early enough can be offered shadowing and observation opportunities in CSD and provided information and multi-year research opportunities in the labs of CSD faculty. If the transition for these students is to be easier and facilitate success in the graduate program this will need to be a priority for the CSD department at GSU in collaboration with the students' undergraduate departments.

Key Performance Indicators, Goal 5:

1. **Undergraduate Advising:**
 - a. Develop a biannual information session about CSD, that includes CSD faculty, before students get started in basic science as well as major and/or minor coursework.
 - b. Create, in collaboration with Speech Communication, a “major map” focused on CSD that includes the timeframes within which each course must be taken in order to ensure that all prerequisites are completed. This will include development of a mechanism for ensuring timely updates on both ends, including academic advising and course scheduling.
2. **Support for UG students:**
 - a. Inform Speech Communication faculty of CSD-sponsored information sessions offered in Fall semesters during application season.

- b. CSD faculty participate in information sessions via the University Advisement Center and COAS advisement in Spring semesters that identify advanced freshmen and sophomores with interest in CSD.
- c. Develop a transparent space on the CSD website that lists the template of course numbers, titles, and semesters that prerequisite courses are offered
- d. Develop shadowing, observation and research opportunities for UG students interested in CSD and enrolled at GSU.

Status 2020:

- The Interdisciplinary Minor in Communication Sciences was developed to help undergraduate students become competitive candidates in graduate programs in CSD. The Minor was approved and began in the Fall Semester of 2017. To date, it has an enrollment of about 60 students.
- The Department of Communication (in the College of Arts and Science (COAS)) has two faculty members teaching undergraduate courses, advising students, and working with the COAS advisement office. The number of sections of SCOM courses offered that are prerequisites for the CSD Program has expanded and stabilized with courses offered each semester. SCOM 4440 (Speech Science) has been added to meet the need for a prerequisite science-based course.
- The CSD department has increased its offerings of Hearing Sciences and Disorders and Anatomy and Physiology for Communication. As a result, an increased number of GSU undergraduate students who have been admitted in the graduate program in the last three years have been enrolling in the 2-year program.
- The Department of Communication faculty members (in COAS) have offered information sessions about the CSD MS Program requirements to students taking SCOM courses that are prerequisites for the CSD Master's Program.
- In January 2017, a process was developed to allow undergraduate students to get academic credits for volunteering in the labs of CSD faculty. This goal has not been met yet and we are identifying ways to make it easier for faculty to implement the credit bearing course. UG students have also been competitive for the undergraduate fellowships offered by the Center for Research on the Challenges of Acquiring Language and Literacy (RCALL) and have received funding to work in the labs of CSD faculty.

Appendixes

A & B

Forthcoming