

Communication Sciences and Disorders Program

Strategic Plan January 2017 – December 2019

Preamble

The Communication Sciences and Disorders Program (CSD) at Georgia State University was founded in 1974. The Program 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, the Program has four full-time academic faculty members, three full-time clinical faculty members, and two joint faculty members with plans in place for expansion of the faculty. The Program is one of three programs within the Department of Educational Psychology, Special Education and Communication Disorders. Reflective of the transformative nature of Georgia State University, the Communication Sciences and Disorders Program has evolved 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 three years (2017 – 2019), the Program 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 program 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 and the nation.

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. These data illustrate the significant staffing shortage of the CSD program at GSU compared to these programs, most of which have similar structures and student enrollment. Specifically, staffing concerns exist at all levels in the CSD program at GSU, including academic and clinical faculty, and program-specific administrative support. Accordingly, we will focus on working with College and departmental leadership to increase staffing in our rapidly growing program.

Initiative 1: Increase number of research and clinical faculty hired in CSD at GSU. An updated staffing proposal will be developed and presented in early Fall, 2017 to the Dean and Department Chair illustrating our current staffing compared to the growing number of students in our Program. This 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 the administrative support for the CSD program at GSU. Currently, we have one administrative support person who divides her time between Program and departmental duties. This level of support will be insufficient to manage changes in student enrollment in both the Master's and PhD program, and the significant changes expected 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 ##%.

2. Increasing Administrative Support:

- a. An Admissions Coordinator will be hired to manage the increased applications for enrollment in CSD.
- b. An administrative assistant, part- or full-time, will be hired to support the increased administrative load presented by higher student enrollments.

Status 2016: See Appendix A for current staffing levels of CSD at GSU and of peer and aspirational CSD programs.

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 qualified applicants is small. Looking toward the

future, we believe we need to develop recruitment strategies designed to attract high performing students from across the country.

Initiative 1: Implement use of the common application, CSDCAS. CSDCAS is a web-based application platform designed specifically for CSD programs nationwide. We believe that participation in this platform will increase the breadth and quality of applicants to the CSD program at GSU

Initiative 2: Write a federally-funded training grant to capitalize on current collaborations at GSU. We propose to write a training grant to develop specialized training programs at GSU that exploit our expertise and location in downtown Atlanta. We will use these programs to develop recruitment materials designed to attract high quality MS and PhD students.

Key Performance Indicators Goal 2:

1. Improve depth and quality of applicants.

- a. Data will be collected demonstrating an increase in out-of –state applications and enrollments;
- b. The average GPA and GRE of CSD students will increase above current (2016 – 2017) levels

2. Training Grant

- a. Federal funding for a multi-year training grant will be obtained.
- b. Recruitment materials will be developed to market the GSU Master’s program and training grant.

Status 2016:

- **See Appendix B for 2016-2017 data, including total number of applicants and number that did and did not meet admissions criteria**
- **See Appendix B also for GRE and GPA averages for 2016 – 2017 admissions season.**

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 research endeavors: 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, 2018. 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. Currently students who decide to pursue a Master's thesis must add thesis course credit to their Master's program plan that is already filled with required coursework. As a result the thesis is not currently a very attractive option for many students. We will explore options for introducing more flexibility into the Master's curriculum in order to provide support for students interested in participating in research.

Key Performance Indicators, Goal 3:

1. **PhD Program:**
 - a. Institutional approval for doctoral program will be obtained;
 - b. Recruitment materials developed to market the new PhD degree program.
2. **Master's Research:**
 - a. A thesis course will be added to the current curriculum that allows MS students to pursue a thesis for course credit over multiple semesters;
 - b. A capstone option will be explored for all CSD students who do not choose the thesis option.
3. **Undergraduate Research Participation:**
 - a. An undergraduate research course will be added to the CSD course offerings that allows undergraduate students to pursue research for course credit over multiple semesters;
 - b. Research labs in the CD Program will report an increase of 1-2 undergraduate student volunteers participating in research projects.

Status 2016:

Over the course of the previous strategic plan period (2012 – 2016) Three students opted to write Master's theses and one undergraduate student completed an undergraduate honors thesis in CSD.

Goal 4: Re-imagine our clinical education model to accommodate the increased enrollment in our program and insure that our students are CF-ready upon graduation.

Initiative 1: Determine new clinical experiences that can occur on-campus and off-campus as part of CSD 7910, including exploring the ideal number and type of clinical experiences for CSD students to insure they achieve program and CFCC clock hour requirements, demonstrate all KASFA skills competencies, and are CF-ready upon graduation

Initiative 2: Determine creative solutions to space issues and investigate new options for clinical space that are convenient and feasible for clients, students, and clinical faculty.

Key Performance Indicators Goal 4:

1. Clinical Experiences:

- a. Development and Implementation of at least 3 new clinical experiences that can occur on-campus.
- b. Development and Implementation of at least 2 new clinical experiences that can occur off-campus.
- c. Implementation of a web-based tracking system for all students' clinical documents for both on-and off-campus clinical experiences.
- d. Development and Implementation of a satellite campus of the Speech-Language-Hearing Clinic at the Georgia State University Clarkston campus.
- e. Development of a proposal outlining an alternative to our current clinical sequence based on data regarding our students' clinical experiences and clock hour distributions.

2. Space Issues:

- a. Investigation and use of alternative spaces for clinical experiences and student work space in the CEHD building and in other locations on the downtown Atlanta campus.

Status 2016:

See Appendix C for current clinical sequence. The current clinical sequence was designed for a target enrollment of 20-22 students per cohort group with a total enrollment of approximately 25-28 students in CSD 7910 each semester. The sequence is outlined in the program's student handbook and presented in Appendix B. Our current clinical sequence includes a pre-clinic experience (CSD 7630), three semesters of CSD 7910 (primarily on-campus with one part-time experience the third semester and a diagnostic rotation) and two full-time internship experiences. Currently, all students are required to complete an internship in the school setting and an internship in an adult-based medical setting. For some students accruing evaluation experiences has been a challenge and this will continue to be a challenge with a larger enrollment.

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

A large number of students who apply to our Communication Sciences and Disorders program come from disciplines other than CSD. These students must take prerequisite courses in order to successfully complete the graduate program. Currently undergraduate students at GSU who are interested in the graduate program enroll with many of these prerequisites missing. Although the coursework is available at GSU, it is often difficult to enroll in the courses, and many students attempt to do so very late in their undergraduate program sequence and cannot finish them all before applying to graduate school. Providing undergraduate courses to introduce the field of communication sciences and disorders during freshman/sophomore years will provide students with an opportunity to make career decisions early (as well as strengthen their application when applying to graduate school).

Initiative 1: Identify undergraduates with CSD interest early.

- a. Develop an annual information session about CSD before students get started in A&S coursework.
- b. Develop a template of prerequisite course numbers, titles, and semesters offered to distribute to all students in the Speech Communication undergraduate major at GSU

Initiative 2: Develop more collaborative relationship between A&S advising and CEHD Office of Academic Assistance.

- a. Develop a mechanism for ensuring timely updates on both ends, including academic advising and course scheduling
- b. Develop shadowing and observation opportunities at the UG level, including in the CSD graduate clinics.

Key Performance Indicators, Goal 5:

1. **Minor in Communication Sciences:**
 - a. Number of students enrolled in the Communication Sciences minor is expected to increase every year;
 - b. Create recruitment materials to be distributed to students through the Department of Communication and the COAS Office of Academic Assistance.
2. **Prerequisite courses:**
 - a. GSU Speech Communication majors interested in CSD are expected to complete all CSD prerequisite courses as part of their undergraduate coursework.
3. **Recruitment:**
 - a. Information sessions about the CSD Program will be offered every other week in Speech Communication department;
 - b. The information sessions will be coordinated with tours of the Speech Clinic in the CEHD.
4. **Participation of Undergraduate Students in CSD research labs:**
 - a. Speech Communication majors will be able to obtain course credit by volunteering in CSD labs through the Internship course.

Status 2016:

1. In 2014, the Department of Communication a Lecturer to teach CSD/SCOM courses. Since then, there has been a significant increase in the number of sections of SCOM courses offered that are prerequisites for the CSD Program.
2. On October 2016, the first Information Session was held focused on Communication Disorders in the Department of Communication that targeted Freshman, Sophomore, and Junior students.

3. 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 it is in effect starting in the Fall Semester of 2017.

5. Undergraduate students have had the opportunity to volunteer in the labs of CSD professors and in January, 2017 a process was developed to allow undergraduate students to get academic credits for volunteering in the labs of CSD professors.