

Murray State University Graduate Program in Speech-Language Pathology (MS)

Strategic Plan

December 13, 2012

Communication Disorders Program College of Health Sciences and Human Services Applied Health Sciences Department

Background:

The Graduate Program in Speech-Language Pathology offers the Master of Science degree. The program is designed to provide superior academic and clinical education in order to develop professionals prepared to provide clinical services for individuals with communication disorders. The Graduate Program in Speech-Language Pathology at Murray State was first accredited in 1982.

The Council on Academic Accreditation in Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology (CAA) of the American Speech-Language Hearing Association (ASHA) accredits graduate programs that prepare individuals to enter professional practice in audiology or speech language pathology.¹ CAA has adopted six standards as necessary conditions for accreditation of eligible graduate education programs. Compliance of all standards is a minimum requirement for accreditation.¹ This document is in response to **Standard 1.3**: *The program develops and implements a long-term strategic plan.*

The plan must be congruent with the mission of the institution, have the support of the university administration, and reflect the role of the program within the community. Components of a plan may include long-term program goals, specific measurable objectives, strategies for attainment, a schedule for analysis, and a mechanism for regular evaluation of the plan itself and of progress in meeting the plan's objectives. The plan and the results of the regular evaluation of the plan and its implementation must be shared with faculty, students, staff, alumni, and other interested parties.

The Graduate Program in Speech-Language Pathology program's strategic plan was determined by faculty input and relevant university administrators. The faculty began by completing an analysis of program strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT Analysis). This information was used as a basis for discussion that generated program goals and subsequent objectives.

¹ Council on Academic Accreditation in Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology, retrieved http://www.asha.org/academic/accreditation/CAA_overview.htm

Based on review of the program the SWOT analysis revealed:

Strengths

- Caring, dedicated and expert faculty and staff
- Quality of the curriculum
- Quality of the students
- University, College, Departmental and Community support of the program
- Academic faculty participate in service delivery and clinical supervision
- Employer base continues to grow ensuring employment market for graduates
- Strong advising resources
- Student-centered learning
- Partnerships with local schools and medical settings
- SACS accreditation of University
- Clean and safe campus

Weaknesses

- Personnel issues including unfilled lines (1 lecturer/clinical supervisor; 1 Ph.D.)
- Faculty workloads (overloads are impacting scholarly activity)
- Paper documentation methods are outdated for medical record keeping and monitoring student progress
- No plan for assessing material and equipment needs to ensure state of the art materials or planning for future purchases
- No marketing plan for achieving regional recognition of program
- No formal mechanism (other than working with the development office) for maintaining relationships with alumni
- No formal mechanism for recruiting diverse faculty and student body

Opportunities

- To serve additional students and clinical populations
- For interdisciplinary collaborations consistent with treatment and research models as a result of the College of Health Sciences and Human Services restructure and current administration
- For distance learning or alternative instruction
- To increase participation in the Rehabilitation Sciences program at the University of Kentucky
- To develop and maintain connections with alumni
- For the creation of a Graduate Certificate (including Rank 1 standing)
- To enhance use of student assessment results to improve program quality
- To seek additional sources of revenue

Threats:

- Ability to hire doctoral level faculty (2011 HES survey indicated 50% of positions in the discipline went unfilled)
- Decreased funding for higher education at state and national levels
- Economic uncertainty and decline
- Increased competition for top-tier applicants
- Aging infrastructure and lack of plan to modernize (The Speech and Hearing Clinic needs an updated look and there are few signs in Alexander Hall to indicate program spaces)
- Compromising quality while pursuing growth
- 16 KARA reg :Kentucky teacher preparation regulations

Vision Statement:

The Graduate Program in Speech-Language Pathology at Murray State University aspires to be recognized throughout Kentucky and surrounding regions for superior academic and clinical education of speech-language pathologists, provision of clinical services for individuals with communication disorders, and advancement of the development of practitioners and researchers. The vision of the members of the Communication Disorders Program is reflected by our commitment to the values of excellence, service, and collegiality.

Mission Statement: The mission of the Graduate Program in Speech-Language Pathology is to prepare highly competent speech-language pathologists by providing majors quality academic and clinical education in order to prepare students to function within the profession and serve as a resource for communication disorders throughout the region.

The mission statement for the Graduate Program in Speech-Language Pathology aligns with the general missions of the University, College of Health Sciences and Human Services and the Department of Applied Health Sciences with a focus on speech-language pathology. As an accredited educational program student learning revolves around clinical experiences that prepare them to meet the needs of the Kentucky citizenry.

Envisioned Future Scenario in 2022

The Graduate Program in Speech-Language Pathology has developed a streamlined and efficient process for ongoing review of academic and clinical policies and activities that ensure the quality of the program. This includes a mechanism for using objective measures to ensure that the program will attract and admit top-tier students from across the country. Under the guidance of faculty who possesses expertise students will explore both theory and practice in courses that prepare them to meet the needs of the breadth of populations who experience communication disorders. Clinical opportunities will provide students with diverse experiences across disorders, populations and work settings. Students will be prepared for successful careers as well as have a commitment to participation in service and scholarly activities at the local, state and national levels. Alumni will have a desire to work collaboratively with program faculty to contribute to program excellence in a number of ways that ensures the quality and currency of the program. Faculty members will pursue scholarly activities that contribute to the discipline and recognition of the program. The program has grown strategically permitting the recruitment and retention of expert faculty and students. The program is housed in a state of the art facility that affords cutting edge equipment and materials.

For the next academic year, the following focus areas were identified as strategic priorities:

- Personnel
 - Since 2008 the retirement of two faculty members and the absence of a second faculty due to sick leave resulted in academic and clinical supervision overloads by remaining faculty. Data reveals the census for the MSU Speech and Hearing Clinic has increased since 2008 with corresponding increased clinical loads by available supervisors.
- Efficiencies
 - Currently paper files are used for tracking student and client progress and outcomes. Members of the College of Health Sciences and Human Services Advisory Board recommended the switch to a paperless system in order to (a) allow for more effective and efficient tracking of various data (b) decrease costs associated with paper files (c) provide students with real world experiences associated with paperless systems and (d) enhance program assessment due to the inherent ability of most programs to collect a myriad of data.
 - University and program accreditation requirements should be integrated to streamline the process and improve use of assessment results to enhance the quality of the program and increase efficiency.

- Alternative models of delivery and curriculum sequencing at the undergraduate and graduate level may reveal opportunities to alleviate faculty workload and enhance instructional offerings.
- Maintain and enhance clinical education opportunities for breadth and depth.
- Resources
 - At this time there is no strategic plan for growing the program, generating revenue to support such growth or a mechanism for ensuring state of the art technology exists to support instruction. These issues need to be addressed in order to attract top-tier faculty and students as well as ensure recognition for program excellence internally and externally.
 - Equipment and materials for clinical and academic instruction are required for the Murray State University Speech and Hearing Clinic, Augmentative and Alternative Communication Lab, the Language Acquisition and Disorders Lab, and Audiology Suite. The program requires that these resources be continuously updated to reflect trends in practice and improvements in technology in order to provide excellent educational experiences and administrative support for the services and facility.
 - Planning should address mechanisms for strengthening relationships with alumni or better marketing of existing collaborations. Specific baseline data will need to be identified to develop desired outcomes that will enhance relationships with alumni.

The faculty of the Graduate Program in Speech-Language Pathology foresees the following outcomes from strategic planning in the next 2 years:

Outcomes: Personnel

- 1) Hire and support a compliment of seven full time faculty dedicated to the program, with at least 4 tenure/tenure track faculty with terminal degrees all who are committed to excellence in innovative teaching, research and service to the department, university and community.**
 - a. Indicators of Success:
 - i. Fill Lecturer position by January 14, 2013
 - ii. Fill Assistant Professor position by May 1st, 2013
 - iii. Increase the number of referred presentations by faculty by 20%
 - iv. Increase the number of referred publications by faculty by 10%
 - b. Strategies for Attainment:
 - i. Develop recruitment plans
 1. Responsibilities: Members of the search committees will develop a recruitment plan which may include campus visits, ASHA recruitment and recruitment through advertising.

- ii. Develop a plan for support of faculty working on their Ph.D. in SLP or related discipline while meeting needs of the program.
 - 1. Responsibilities: Program Director, Chair and Dean will work together to develop, implement and monitor plan for current faculty to seek and complete a doctoral degree.
- iii. Increase scholarly activity of the faculty of communication disorders by establishing research teams and designate time in work schedules to meet and develop ideas for research; continue thesis mentorship as a pathway to scholarly activity; review faculty loads to ensure time is available for faculty to participate in service, and scholarship.
 - 1. Responsibilities: Graduate faculty in communication disorders will collaborate on at least one project per academic year and will hand pick lecturers to participate. This may include assigning specific roles for completion of the project. Faculty will commit to supporting scholarly activities thru prioritizing time for engaging in scholarly activities which include, writing, revising others work etc. The instructor of CDI 646 will identify strong candidates for thesis work and will discuss with other graduate faculty.

Outcomes: Efficiencies

1) Train faculty, staff and students in the use of electronic data systems to assist students and faculty in the documentation and validation of academic and clinical education as well as service delivery in a meaningful way.

- a. Indicators of Success
 - i. Purchase of electronic records systems, Jan 31, 2014
 - ii. Implementation of system for student records by May, 2014
 - iii. Implementation of system for client records by June 2014
- b. Strategies for Attainment
 - i. Identify a subcommittee of CDI faculty, college technology person, and one alumni to identify potential systems for tracking student data and clinical data
 - ii. Subcommittee will present a short list of options to the CDI faculty
 - iii. The CDI faculty will review 2-3 top tier selections and then make a recommendation.
 - 1. Responsibilities: Subcommittee members will work on this project and report to the Program Director findings. The Program Director will ensure progress and information is presented to CDI faculty as the process moves forward.

2) Continually improve and refine academic preparation of graduate students in Speech-Language pathology using a program review process that is supported and guided by data generated by an effective and efficient program assessment.

- a. Indicators of Success:
 - i. New course and/or course modifications will be proposed, accepted, and integrated into the existing curriculum, ongoing

- ii. Map course objectives with ASHA Standards across graduate curriculum, May 31st 2013
- iii. Align ASHA standards and University SLO's, May 31st 2013
- b. Strategies for Attainment:
 - i. Map SLOs to specific activities /assessment for each course
 - ii. Review and revise learning outcomes for every course to ensure coverage and uniformity of all outcomes
 - 1. Responsibilities: The Program Director will work with the Graduate Faculty to systematically review each of the graduate courses and revise accordingly.

Outcomes: Resources

1) Development of a formal budget and prioritized list with schedule of expenditures to support ongoing education of supervisors and procurement of technology and diagnostic treatment materials.

- a. Indicators of Success:
 - i. Complete a prioritized itemized list of expenditures, Sept 30th 2013
 - ii. Create a schedule for regularly evaluating the equipment/material needs of program, October 30th 2013
- b. Strategies for Attainment:
 - i. Conduct an internal inventory of equipment and resources for the Communication Disorders Program
 - ii. Conduct an equipment and resource assessment of the needs of the Communication Disorders Program to determine the need for new/updated instrumentation, clinical tests, programs and tools
 - 1) Responsibilities: The Program Director and Clinic Coordinator will direct the process, including seeking faculty and supervisor input.

Progress in meeting focus area outcomes will be evaluated each semester by the faculty. The Dean of the College of Health Sciences and Human Services has agreed to review the results of this initial program assessment and provide feedback. The plan and results of the evaluation of the strategic plan will be posted on the program's website. The Strategic Plan in its entirety will be evaluated at the start of the academic year at the first program meeting by the faculty as a whole and the newly formed Communication Disorders Advisory Council. The plan will be reviewed sooner if indicated, should changes in the institution's mission or goals occur, to ensure congruence of program.

Approved December 13, 2012 by Program Faculty

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