



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

### Strategic Plan 2015-2025

#### **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 Master's degree in speech-language pathology at Murray State University is accredited by the Council on Academic Accreditation in Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology (CAA) of the American Speech-Language Hearing Association, 2200 Research Boulevard, #310, Rockville, MD 20850, 800-498-2071 or 301-296-5700. The Graduate Program in Speech-Language Pathology at Murray State was first accredited in 1982.

The 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. 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 Speech-Language Pathology Graduate Program's strategic plan was determined by faculty input and examination of the Murray State University mission and strategic plan which was adopted in June 2015. The faculty completed 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.

## **Results of the SWOT Analysis:**

### **Strengths**

- Caring, dedicated and expert faculty and staff
- Quality of the curriculum
- Quality of the students
- State of the art clinical equipment and materials
- University, college, academic unit and community support of the program
- Independent academic unit
- Participation of academic faculty 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
- Collegial relationships with other universities across the state
- SACS accreditation of University
- Clean and safe campus
- Class size supports student engagement and active learning as well as individualized instruction

### **Weaknesses**

- Personnel issues including unfilled lines
- Faculty workloads
- Limited distance education opportunities for students
- 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 a diverse student body
- Constraints on space and areas of the infrastructure that require modernization
- The rural location of the University creates unique challenges for program growth and student recruitment

### **Opportunities**

- To serve additional students and clinical populations
- For interdisciplinary collaborations consistent with treatment and research models
- For distance learning or alternative instruction
- To develop and maintain connections with alumni
- To enhance use of student assessment results to improve program quality
- To seek additional sources of revenue
- To acquire departmental status on the Murray State University campus

**Threats:**

- Decreased funding for higher education at state and national levels
- Economic uncertainty and decline
- Increased competition for top-tier applicants
- Compromising quality while pursuing growth
- Academic director/program director is on a 9-month appointment, leaving the unit without leadership during the summer months
- Limited funding opportunities for graduate students may negatively impact the quality and diversity of the applicant pool
- Differential tuition structure at the University level may impact our ability to recruit students outside the commonwealth decreasing the quality and diversity of the applicant pool
- Ability to hire doctoral level faculty<sup>1</sup>

**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 disabilities, and advancement of the development of practitioners and researchers. The vision of the members of the Center for Communication Disorders Program is reflected by our commitment to the values of excellence, service, and collegiality. Our culture embeds rigorous training within relevant opportunities to support student success during their time at Murray State University and beyond.

**Mission Statement:**

The mission of the Graduate Program in Speech-Language Pathology is to prepare highly competent speech-language pathologists by providing 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.

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<sup>1</sup> The 2014 CSD Education Survey for the 2013-2014 year showed that of the 83% of institutions providing data, of the 204 faculty searches conducted, 106 were filled with research doctorate in CSD, 12 with a research Doctorate in Another Discipline, 7 with a Clinical Doctorate in CSD, 35 with a Master's in CSD, 15 filled with part-time personnel with or without Research Doctorate, leaving 52 positions unfilled.

## Envisioned Future Scenario in 2025

The Graduate Program in Speech-Language Pathology has enhanced and sustained a culture of academic excellence which provides the highest quality of graduate instruction. We have contributed to improvements in addressing communication development and disabilities across the lifespan that have enhanced the quality of life for individuals across the Commonwealth. We have maintained and promoted a culture of acceptance, diversity, inclusion and engagement among students, faculty, staff and clients. Our faculty and student accomplishments attract top-tier students from across the country. Under the guidance of faculty who possesses expertise, students explore both theory and practice in courses that prepare them to meet the needs of the breadth of populations who experience communication disorders. Students are prepared for successful careers and 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. The program has grown strategically permitting the recruitment and retention of expert faculty and students and is housed in a state of the art facility that affords cutting edge equipment and materials.

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The goals set forth in this plan are aligned with the University vision and strategic plan that focuses on growth with a desire to further the University with accomplishments associated with academic excellence, student success, research and scholarly activities, and engagement. These goals are consistent with the mission of the College of Education and Human Services which is dedicated to the preparation of leaders for successful careers that positively impact communities as advocates and practitioners, through student-centered, authentic and engaging academic programs. Our goals also reflect the integrated activities of the faculty and staff of the Center for Communication Disorders in delivery of the undergraduate and graduate curriculum and the operation of the Murray State University Speech & Hearing Clinic.

### Focus Areas:

- **Advancing a culture of academic excellence:** It is our desire to enhance and sustain a high-quality of curriculum that includes a breadth of clinical opportunities that prepare our current and future students to be competent scholars and professionals.
- **Improving the quality of life for the western Kentucky communities and the commonwealth through engagement:** It is our desire to make contributions to the commonwealth that support and improve the lives of individuals with communication disabilities by meeting critical needs in graduate education and training and access to speech-language pathology and audiology services.

## **Focus Area: Advancing a Culture of Academic Excellence**

Outcome: Hire and support a compliment of nine 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 academic unit, university and community.

Indicators of Success:

- 1) Hire an individual as a regular employee for the lecturer position by July 1, 2016.
- 2) Fill Assistant Professor position by July 1<sup>st</sup> 2016.

Strategies for Attainment:

Work with administration to fill the positions with the strongest applicants. Responsibilities: The academic director will collaborate with the faculty and the Dean, as well as the search committee to develop recruitment plans using a variety of mechanisms as well as oversee paperwork necessary to approve offers and secure candidates.

Outcome: The Murray State University Graduate Program in Speech-Language Pathology is recognized as one of the top programs in the nation for student centered learning and breadth of clinical training opportunities at a regional comprehensive university.

Indicators of success:

- 3) Increased diversity of the graduate applicant pool by 10% for underrepresented groups by 2017.
- 4) Enhance visibility of student and faculty success at the University and State level to increase awareness of the efforts and opportunities to reduce communication disabilities in the commonwealth and beyond by fall 2018.
- 5) Install a state of the art video-recording system in the clinic to use for clinical teaching by fall 2018.
- 6) Use developmentally appropriate integrated case study instruction across the curriculum, with full implementation by fall 2019.
- 7) Attain departmental status for the Center of Communication Disorders by fall 2020.

Strategies for attainment:

In order to promote the MSU Center for Communication Disorders professional training program as one that promotes a dynamic and diverse graduate program committed to student success we will bring together a team to develop a marketing plan. It is important to identify individuals with skill and experience with marketing to collaborate with Center faculty to enhance the brand consistent with the University messaging. Furthermore, time must be dedicated to professional development of full time faculty and adjuncts to ensure teaching excellence and student success. Our strategy should include structured opportunities for students to engage with faculty mentors outside the classroom to develop clinical competency. Responsibilities: To best identify economical, efficient and successful

strategies, the committee composition will include representation from the unit, college and university communications as well as the foundation. After the plan is developed the committee chair will write up the plan to present to the faculty. The clinical and academic activities of the undergraduate program, graduate program and MSU Speech and Hearing clinic are all tightly linked and as such this committee will address the needs of the graduate program as well as those of the Center for Communication Disorders. The Clinic Coordinator will identify options and resources for the clinic recording system, while consulting with the faculty. Additionally, the academic director and clinic coordinator will administer the program that targets a student faculty ratio of 20 to 1 or less for graduate cohorts and 25 to 1 for undergraduate cohorts. The program faculty already agree on the adoption of infusing case study teaching methods across the curriculum. The academic director and other key personnel will develop a plan that meets learning needs of students across the various cohorts using a library of case studies in various ways throughout their academic careers. It will also be necessary to train adjuncts in this method and expectations. Program administration and faculty will work with the Dean of COEHS to advocate and pursue departmental status.

Outcome: Expand clinical offerings to a wider variety of clients, especially those from underrepresented and underserved groups.

Indicators of Success:

- 8) Increase the breadth of clinical experiences provided by the MSU Speech & Hearing Clinic by 20% by fall 2016.

Strategies for Attainment:

The Clinic Coordinator will seek out and negotiate contracts for additional off-site supervision of graduate students to area school districts and other local entities. A priority area of growth is to enhance onsite experiences with the addition of two new clinical opportunities. Opportunities include activities in the area of voice, swallowing, adult rehabilitation, telehealth and underserved pediatric populations. Responsibilities: The Clinic Coordinator and other key personnel will examine data on current contracts, diagnostic groups and geographic regions being used to determine the most appropriate avenues for growth. Engagement with alumni and community partners will be required. This endeavor will also require ensuring adequate staffing for clinical supervision.

**Focus Area: Advancing Knowledge to Benefit Society by Fostering Research, Scholarship and Creative Activities**

Outcome: Develop learning opportunities and research partnerships to increase access to advanced study in the area of speech-language pathology.

## Indicator of Success

- 1) Submit a proposal for a clinical doctorate in speech-language pathology to the CPE by fall 2018.
- 2) Increase on-line offerings of the curriculum by 20% in 2018 to increase access to Murray State University communication disorders program and graduate program in speech-language pathology.
- 3) Increase interprofessional education opportunities for our students and others across campus by 20%.

### Strategies for Attainment:

Develop opportunities for course delivery using online mechanisms to meet the needs of our various student populations (e.g., traditional students, non-traditional, post-bacc, part-time). Align with undergraduate curriculum review using certification standards and practice documents as a guideline. Collaborate with other disciplines on campus to identify potential interprofessional education opportunities. Responsibilities: The Academic Director will lead key personnel in working towards these objectives. The Dean of the COEHS will assist in program development by consulting on the process and advocating for the unit.

Outcome: Conduct and disseminate research that contributes to the knowledge base of communication in individuals with typical development and individuals with communication disabilities.

- 4) Maintain scholarly productivity of faculty and students consistent with University expectations.

### Strategies for Attainment:

The most important element is to maintain faculty workloads that permit time dedicated to scholarly endeavors. Secondly, faculty should continue to work on collaborative projects, particularly those that blend their teaching and research to meld both forms of scholarship. Graduate faculty should pursue assistance as needed for success, this may come in the form of consulting with other professionals, pursuing internal and external funding or seeking out professional development. To the extent the budget will permit, the unit will make efforts to support faculty research and student mentored research that will achieve our strategic plan initiatives. Responsibilities: The Academic Director will monitor faculty workloads and productivity.

Progress in meeting focus area outcomes will be evaluated each fall semester by the faculty. The plan and results of the annual evaluation of the strategic plan will be posted on the program's website.