



Strategic Plan

Our Mission

The mission of the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders at West Virginia University is to recruit, retain and graduate highly qualified pre-professional undergraduate students and entry-level clinicians who will utilize evidence-based practice; adhere to the highest personal and professional ethical standards; employ critical thinking and self-analysis; recognize the value of advanced and continuing education; demonstrate empathy, altruism, and accountability in their clinical practice; and aspire to provide exceptional quality of service for a diversity of persons of all ages with communication, swallowing, and balance disorders in an equitable and inclusive manner.

The Department also strives to further the discipline of communication sciences and disorders as well as the professions of audiology and speech-language pathology by excelling in research and scholarship; by offering quality post-professional doctoral education for students who will assume leadership roles as productive researchers and effective educators; and, by providing excellent diagnostic and rehabilitative services to promote the health and well-being of the people of West Virginia; and by serving as a resource for West Virginia University and the region.

Our Vision

By 2020, the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders will have made substantial contributions to West Virginia University's land grant mission and research prominence by becoming a leader in the education of pre-professional undergraduate students via the preparation of audiologists and speech-language pathologists; by developing educators and researchers who will become the future leaders in the discipline of communication sciences and disorders; by maintaining a faculty actively engaged in regionally, nationally, and internationally recognized research and scholarship; by fostering model clinical facilities to advance the education of students and the well-being of individuals with communication disorders; and by expanding its community outreach efforts and the visibility of its programs and services.

Our Strategic Plan

Informed by our mission, this strategic plan outlines the ways in which the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders intends to achieve its vision for the future. Although our vision statement –as well as those of the College of Education & Human Services and West Virginia University– extends to 2020, we recognize that strategic planning is an ongoing process whereby both its success and relevance must be assessed regularly to address ever-changing internal and external needs. Accordingly, the Department faculty evaluates and, when necessary, revises the strategic plan each academic year at the beginning of the fall semester.

Focus Area 1: Research and Scholarship

The ongoing research activity and scholarly endeavors of Department faculty is essential for providing a meaningful classroom experience, as well as for fostering the development of effective clinical reasoning. As such, the Department values faculty who engage actively in basic and applied research and scientific inquiry; serve as a research mentor and/or collaborator; and contribute to the greater research community both within and outside the discipline of Communication Sciences and Disorders. Enhancing a culture of research is important for furthering the mission of the Department, College, and University; for maintaining the expertise and leadership of the faculty and for implementing evidence-based practice in audiology and speech-language pathology.

Between 2009 and 2014, there have been 86 peer-reviewed publications (including research articles, scholarly reviews, texts, books, and book chapters) authored or co-authored by 90% of the full-time tenured or tenure-track faculty in the Department. Although representing a substantial increase over the previous 5-year period, the Department recognizes the need to provide continued support for research and scholarship.

Goal 1

Enhance scholarship by increasing research impact, quality, and productivity

Note: This aligns with *Goal 1* of the College of Education & Human Services (Increase research productivity and outputs) and *Goal 2* of West Virginia University (Excel in research, creative activity, and innovation in all disciplines).

Objectives

- 1.1 Expand and enhance laboratory facilities and research support services to promote faculty and student research.
- 1.2 Identify research themes that are in accord with faculty expertise and line of research.
- 1.3 Promote undergraduate and professional student participation in ongoing research projects.
- 1.4 Solicit contributions to the Grace Clements Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology Research Endowment and other funds that support Department research.
- 1.5 Attract highly qualified and motivated students to the Ph.D. program in Communication Sciences and Disorders.
- 1.6 Accommodate grant development and high research activity by adjusting annual faculty workload agreements.
- 1.7 Develop an infrastructure for increasing engagement with the intramural and extramural research community while facilitating access to research support services (including statistical consultants, budget consultants, and researcher workshops).
- 1.8 Forge collaborative relationships with researchers across the University to support the varied interests of Ph.D. students.

Focus Area 2:

Student Recruitment, Learning Outcomes, and Professional Development

The quality and vitality of the Department's programs depends critically on its ability to attract applicants who are not only strong academically, but who are also highly motivated and possess superior interpersonal communication skills. It is also imperative that the Department be competitive in recruiting these applicants and fostering professional development that is in keeping with the qualities and aspirations outlined in its mission and vision statements.

Between 2009 and 2014, the number of applications to the M.S. in Speech-Language Pathology and Doctor of Audiology programs has more than doubled and the quality of applicants, especially those who did not attend the Department's undergraduate pre-professional program, has improved markedly (based on undergraduate GPA and GRE scores). Nonetheless, the programs have had inconsistent success at committing the most competitive applicants to them following admission.

Goal 2

Increase the admission of highly qualified, motivated, and culturally diverse students

Note: This aligns with *Goals 2, 3, and 5* of the College of Education & Human Services (Enhance and increase student learning experiences in undergraduate and graduate programs through program creation and expansion and the use of new and emerging technologies; Create an inclusive culture through the recruitment and retention of diverse faculty and student body and continually revitalize the curriculum to include diverse perspectives; Develop and implement a comprehensive enrollment management plan) and *Goals 1 and 3* of West Virginia University (Engage undergraduate, graduate, and professional students in a challenging academic environment; Foster diversity and an inclusive culture).

Objectives

- 2.1 Continue to increase the size and diversity of the applicant pool.
- 2.2 Secure greater and timelier financial aid funding and graduate assistantship opportunities.
- 2.3 Enhance the admission interview experience to help increase the yield rate once applicants are accepted into a graduate program.
- 2.4 Meet annual enrollment targets for the Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology professional programs (M.S. = 25, Au.D. = 8).
- 2.5 Enhance the student experience by expanding the use of problem-based and case-based learning approaches and the application of new and emerging technologies in the clinic, classroom, and elsewhere.
- 2.6 Enhance student advising through efficient use of performance-tracking software (i.e., DegreeWorks, Calipso) and annual student review by faculty.
- 2.7 Annually update recruitment plans and provide faculty time and funds for student recruitment efforts.

Focus Area 3: Cultural Diversity and Global Initiatives

The discipline of Communication Sciences and Disorders and the professions of Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology focus, first and foremost, on human expression and interpersonal communication. As such, the Department strongly supports the College of Education & Human Services' *Diversity Value Statement*:

Advocating and understanding diversity implies attention to various “perspectives, worldviews, lifestyles, language, and communication skills.” This includes social class,

race, ethnicity, religious beliefs, gender, and exceptionality. Attention to diversity or modeling a culture of diversity also implies an understanding and respect of difference, and, within a democratic society, understanding how differences can lead to enrichment of the cultural mix at large. Diversity is strength when it is directed to the common good.

Although West Virginia represents one of the least diverse states in the U.S., the diversity of the population of Morgantown as well as the faculty and student body of West Virginia University has been steadily growing between 2009 and 2014, due in large measure to the efforts of the institution. Morgantown is the fourth largest city in West Virginia and, located only 6 miles south of the Pennsylvania border, is often considered to be, at least culturally, a part of the greater Pittsburgh area. More than half of the students at West Virginia University are international (representing over 100 countries) or from another state (primarily MD, NJ, NY, OH, PA, and VA). Nonetheless, promoting diversity, global perspectives, and emphasizing cultural inclusiveness within the Department and its programs requires an ongoing concerted effort.

Goal 3

Promote diversity, global engagement, and a culture of inclusion

Note: This aligns with *Goal 3* of the College of Education & Human Services (Create an inclusive culture through the recruitment and retention of diverse faculty and student body and continually revitalize the curriculum to include diverse perspectives) and *Goals 3 and 4* of West Virginia University (Foster diversity and an inclusive culture; Advance international activity and global engagement).

Objectives

- 3.1 Continue to expand residency and externship sites to include a greater variety of diverse clinical settings and populations.
- 3.2 Promote international research faculty collaboration, active membership in international organizations within Communication Sciences and Disorders, and participation in international meetings, colloquia, and conferences.
- 3.3 Expand study-abroad opportunities and greater student engagement, both regionally and nationally.
- 3.4 Participate actively in the College of Education & Human Services' *Office for Diversity and Global Initiatives* to stimulate an inclusive community culture.
- 3.5 Recruit and retain diverse students in the Department's undergraduate and graduate programs, especially those from underrepresented and underserved groups.
- 3.6 Recruit and retain diverse faculty and staff, while emphasizing the social relevance of Department programs, research, community engagement, and outreach efforts.

- 3.7 Promote inquiry of issues related to bilingualism, multiculturalism, and global perspectives in undergraduate capstone projects, professional portfolios, theses, dissertations, and scholarly work.
- 3.8 Support opportunities related to cultural diversity and global initiatives in Ph.D. curricula.

Focus Area 4: Community and University Engagement

The West Virginia University Speech Center is located on the eighth floor of Allen Hall. Therapy is conducted Monday through Friday, serving a caseload that includes articulation, adult and child language, fluency, and voice. Therapy sessions are conducted in nine treatment rooms, each of which is equipped with a two-way mirror and monitoring system. The clinic also conducts augmentative communication evaluations as part of its services. There is a video monitoring system and facilities for acoustic and physiologic study of speech and voice disorders. The West Virginia University Hearing Center, located on the third floor, is equipped to provide diagnostic and rehabilitative services related to hearing and balance disorders, including hearing aid fitting. These clinics not only serve a seminal role in the professional development of the Department's graduate students, but also provide much needed habilitative and rehabilitative services to individuals, many of whom would not have been evaluated or treated for their communication disorder otherwise due to a lack of resources or information.

The Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders is collecting baseline data on the number and diversity of clients and patients served in its clinics. There are also ongoing discussions with the College of Education & Human Services regarding clinical facilities, new and innovative technologies, visibility, and community engagement.

Goal 4

Ensure that the clinical services provided by the West Virginia University Speech and Hearing Centers meet the needs of the community

Note: This aligns with *Goal 4* of the College of Education & Human Services (Increase the visibility and impact of the College at WVU, the state of West Virginia, and beyond) and *Goal 5* of West Virginia University (Enhance the well-being and the quality of life of the people of West Virginia).

Objectives

- 4.1 Promote the visibility of clinical services, both within West Virginia University and the non-university community.

- 4.2 Develop communication disorder support groups and expand community screening efforts.
- 4.3 Promote and support faculty participation in community service and outreach.
- 4.4 Promote and support efforts to increase the number and diversity of clients with communication disorders across the lifespan seen for audiological and speech-language services.
- 4.5 Assist clients and their families to receive appropriate services despite financial need.
- 4.6 Provide service to the community through the dissemination of knowledge.
- 4.7 Advocate for individuals with communication disorders through partnerships with local and state community members and agencies.