

# University of Arkansas Communication Sciences and Disorders Program

## Strategic Plan Summary 2020-2025

### Mission and Goals

Our mission is to advance knowledge of speech, language, swallowing and hearing disorders through basic and applied research, graduate clinician training and community service. To accomplish this mission, faculty and M.S. students participate in scholarly research activities, provide clinical services in a state-of-the-art facility and promote community outreach projects.

Our primary goals are to produce innovative scholarly work and train competent speech-language pathologists to provide services to individuals and their families across the life-span.

### Vision Statement

The Communication Sciences and Disorders Program at the University of Arkansas aspires to become a leader in the field of speech-language pathology in the areas of teaching, research and service. Our program aims to disseminate quality interdisciplinary basic and applied research relevant to speech and hearing sciences and related fields. We strive to promote evidence-based practices by educating students through the integration of academic coursework, diverse clinical practicum experiences, research opportunities and service in the community. We expect our graduate alumni to be well known in the community for providing clients with outstanding clinical services.

### Commitment to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

The Communication Sciences and Disorders program at the University of Arkansas is committed to diversity, equity and inclusion in our research, teaching, and clinical practice, as well as in our recruitment and retention of students, faculty and staff. We embrace the strength that can be derived from an environment in which diverse identities and experiences work in tandem toward a common goal of improving communication outcomes for all, including those with marginalized identities. We understand that the world will fully reflect diversity, equity and inclusion only when every person has an effective means to communicate. Therefore, we work to complete rigorous research that enhances the knowledge needed to create such a world and prepare speech-language pathologists with the knowledge and skills to contribute to the creation of that world.

### Values

- We strive to meet our educational commitment by sharing and generating knowledge with students for patients, families, the general public, and collaborating colleagues.
- We strive to improve our community through collaboration, research efforts, and community engagement.
- We accept the challenge and responsibility to advance scientific understanding of communication sciences and disorders through basic and clinical research in collaboration with practicing clinicians in the community.
- We pledge to provide the highest quality of ethical clinical care to the people of Arkansas and to all others who entrust us with their care.

- We commit to foster a positive environment that protects free expression of thought and encourages honesty, openness, and integrity.
- We hold ourselves to the highest criteria of professional and scholarly ethics.
- We recognize that to accomplish our goals we must diligently work together as a team, support and encourage one another, and reward teaching others as we collaboratively share this responsibility.

## Goals

### Teaching and Clinical Education:

**Long term goal:** *Ensure excellence and growth in the CDIS program through teaching, mentorship, advising, and diverse learning opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students. Increase student understanding of professional and ethical issues related to research, academia, and clinical practice by offering consistent training opportunities.*

**Rationale:** It is imperative that students graduating from the CDIS program are well prepared for professional opportunities upon graduation, with all undergraduate CDIS majors who apply for graduate school being accepted into a graduate program of their choice and all students who graduate with a master's degree finding employment in their setting of choice.

### Objectives:

1. Ensure course curriculum and the program of study align with ASHA standards using effective, innovative, and engaging methods.
  - a. **2020-21 Progress:**
    - i. Course syllabi were reviewed. Faculty listed ASHA Standards targeted in courses on course syllabi.
2. Maintain state of the art teaching facilities in ECHP, including a computer lab, research space, and a regular classroom
  - a. **2020-21 Progress:**
    - i. Given the pandemic, teaching facilities, labs, research space and classrooms were used minimally if all this year. Maintenance of all spaces was completed through regular cleaning. Updated equipment for the aphasia research lab was ordered and is scheduled to be installed in the fall of 2021.
3. Support and maintain a high level of outreach and engagement with community partners and alumni.
  - a. **2020-21 Progress:**
    - i. Due to the pandemic, minimal community outreach was possible this year. Faculty, staff and students were innovative during this time and quickly transitioned to providing clinical services via telepractice.
    - ii. Students worked to establish and provide the "RazorReaders" online Youtube channel so school-age students could watch recorded readings of books during the pandemic.



2. Support and maintain a high level of outreach and community engagement by faculty.
  - a. **2020-21 Progress:**
    - i. Due to the pandemic, the Adult Fluency Support Group was unable to meet.
    - ii. The Adult Cochlear Implant Support Group was unable to meet in the fall but transitioned to monthly video conference meetings in the spring.
    - iii. Faculty continued to be actively involved with the non-profit organization, Arkansas Hands & Voices by providing a webinar, serving on the Board, and connecting students to assist with online family programming.
  
3. Increase the value of innovative clinical research through interprofessional collaboration.
  - a. **2020-21 Progress:**
    - i. Faculty were involved in an action-research grant involving the providing of intervention via telepractice for augmentative and alternative communication.
    - ii. Faculty continued leadership, data analysis and scholarly writing through the “Teaming for Transitions” personnel prep grant. Eleven first year graduate students and eight second year graduate students participated in this program that includes interprofessional collaboration between counseling, communication sciences and disorders, and special education.
  
4. Evaluate departmental Honors program and undergraduate research experiences.
  - a. **2020-21 Progress:**
    - i. The CDIS Program currently has 68 undergraduate Honors Students. 24 CDIS Honors undergraduate students graduated in the spring of 2021.
    - ii. Faculty have identified there are far more Honors mentees than CDIS mentors available. Faculty will continue to work to identify steps to improve research experiences while managing faculty capacity.
  
5. Increase opportunities for graduate research experiences.
  - a. **2020-21 Progress:**
    - i. Graduate students were encouraged to complete a Master’s Thesis during all advising appointments. One graduate student successfully defended a thesis in 2021. Three graduate students have theses in progress with plans to defend by the spring of 2022.

## **Diversity & Inclusion**

**Long-Term Goal:** *Promote diversity and inclusion of populations historically underrepresented in the undergraduate and graduate programs to align with ASHA demographics, state demographics, and those in the University of Arkansas System.*

**Rationale:** We subscribe to the same affirmations regarding diversity and inclusion as our governing body, ASHA .... “We affirm the value of diversity and the importance of inclusion, and are committed to ongoing dialogue across cultural lines as a strategy for excellence in serving our members (students), for addressing the needs of an

increasingly diverse society, and as a mechanism for equipping” our graduates “to appropriately meet the needs of their clients, patients, and (future) students.”

**Objectives:**

1. Strategically recruit males and under-represented minorities in undergraduate and graduate programs.
  - a. **2020-21 Progress:**
    - i. The program made an effort to highlight the work of under-represented minorities and males in the undergraduate program and graduate programs through social media posts and nominations for student awards throughout the year.
2. Increase faculty and student awareness of cultural competence to support colleagues and students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.
  - a. **2020-21 Progress:**
    - i. Departmental leadership provided all faculty with a recommended reading list of books related to cultural competence.
    - ii. The undergraduate program started offering a course in “Cultural Diversity in Communication Sciences and Disorders” in the spring 2021.
    - iii. The Program Director provided monthly email updates to all graduate students with opportunities for cultural competence trainings and multicultural opportunities and experiences available on campus.
3. Provide students with a broad range of academic and clinical experiences addressing culturally and linguistically diverse populations.
  - a. **2020-21 Progress:**
    - i. Graduate students track clinical experiences using an electronic software program. In this program they document the culturally and linguistically diverse populations with which they gain experience. All graduate students gained experience with culturally and linguistically diverse populations this year.
    - ii. Faculty made a concerted effort to provide examples, research, and academic content addressing culturally and linguistically diverse populations throughout each semester.

