



UTTyler SCHOOL OF
HEALTH PROFESSIONS

Department of Rehabilitation Sciences

Speech-Language Pathology

Graduate Program

STRATEGIC PLAN

2023-2028

The University of Texas at Tyler
Health Science Center
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SWOC Analysis: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Challenges

The University of Texas at Tyler (UT Tyler) is part of the prestigious University of Texas System that includes 13 institutions located throughout the State. Founded in 1971, UT Tyler today enrolls 10,000 students and consists of five colleges and three schools. The campus features over 200 acres, providing a picturesque location for study and recreation. The University also offers instructional sites at The University of Texas Health Science Center at Tyler and in Palestine, Longview, and Houston. With more than 80 bachelor's, master's and doctoral degree programs, UT Tyler provides a wealth of learning opportunities and dynamic programs. At UT Tyler, most classes are taught by faculty who have terminal degrees, and an average student-professor ratio of 22:1.

The Communication Sciences and Disorders Program was launched in 2019 and has been growing steadily since. The Program is housed in the School of Health Professions, as part of the Department of Rehabilitation Sciences. The Program now has 76 students and is expected to grow at a faster pace when the new graduate program starts. Students who earn the CSD Bachelor of Science degree are accepted at speech-language pathology graduate programs across Texas and nationally. Many graduates work locally as speech-language pathology assistants (SLPAs) while waiting to join graduate school. The few who do not wish to pursue graduate studies in speech-language pathology or audiology either work permanently as SLPAs or pursue careers in related fields including special education, early childhood education, early intervention, mental health counseling, psychology, or nursing.

In July 2021, UT Tyler submitted to the Council on Academic Accreditation in Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology (CAA) the Notice of Intent to Apply for Candidacy Status for a new Master of Science in Speech-Language Pathology. In January 2023, the University submitted the Readiness to Apply for Accreditation Candidacy Status application. In June 2023, the CAA “approved the readiness application with an invitation that it be accepted as the official application.” The program accepted the invitation and is scheduled for a site visit on September 20-21, 2023.

The new SLP graduate program will admit 16 students in its first year and the number will be increased incrementally to 25 by the 5th year. The program and its Speech-Language-Hearing Clinic (SLHC) will be housed in the UT Health Science Center at the North Campus. The UT Tyler Bachelor of Science in Communication Sciences and Disorders Program, which will remain at the Main Campus, will be an important source of student recruitment. Additionally, the SLP graduate program is expected to attract students from around the country.

As part of the University of Texas at Tyler, the new Speech-Language Pathology Graduate Program will enjoy a strategic location and will have access to the University’s vast resources and networks. UT Tyler is the major academic institution in East Texas. Since its merger with the University of

Texas Health Science Center, the University has become the major hub in East Texas for innovative medical research, medical education, and patient care. Students at UT Tyler represent 167 Texas counties, 45 states, and 60+ nations.

Program Capital and Human Resources: The University has supported the SLP Graduate Program from its inception and is firmly committed to growing and sustaining it for the long term. This is evidenced by the approval of the Program’s 5-year budget, which exceeds 4 million dollars, without major cuts. The University recognizes the Program as a necessary component of its medical and healthcare division and has allocated the necessary funds to equip it with the latest diagnostic and treatment resources. The new program will be critical in helping the University achieve its mission as a comprehensive public university, by helping “students, patients, and community members achieve their educational and health goals.”

The program now has 2 full-time faculty members with terminal degrees: 1 Associate Professor and Director of CSD, and 1 tenure-track Assistant Professor. The Program’s approved budget provides for 2 additional faculty lines. One will be hired by August 2024, and the other will be hired by August 2025. Given the size of the program, this faculty plan will be sufficient to deliver the academic curriculum over the first 5 years. Adjunct faculty will be hired as needed. UT Tyler ensures that at least 80% of academic courses are taught by faculty who hold terminal degrees.

The Program will open a Speech-Language-Hearing Clinic by the summer of 2024. The Program plans to hire a Coordinator of Clinical Education and 3 clinical educators. We plan to have plan to hire the coordinator in the summer of 2023. This person will be responsible for the day-to-day operations of the SLHC, coordinating external site placements, and assisting with student supervision as needed. Two clinical educator positions will be filled by August 2024. The Program will re-evaluate its needs in the spring of 2025 and will determine if the 4th clinical educator position should be filled at that time, or if it should be delayed until the number of students in a cohort reaches 25. The 3 clinical educators are expected to meet the Program’s needs during the first 5 years.

Regarding administrative/clerical support, the program now shares 1.0 administrative assistant with the Occupational Therapy Program and plans to hire an additional 1.0 administrative assistant by the summer of 2024 for the SLHC. An additional 0.5 position will be filled if needed. The Program may also add a part-time student worker if needed.

As for equipment and clinical resources, UT Tyler has allocated funding for the latest diagnostic measures and therapy resources to support effective didactic and clinical services, and research. The approved budget includes funding for an audiology booth, digital audiometers, otoscopes, laryngoscopy, and the latest voice assessment lab equipment. Clinical resources will include the latest speech, language, hearing, and cognitive communication diagnostic test batteries and treatment resources.

The goal for the next few years is to grow the Communication Sciences and Disorders Program into a department that will include the graduate program, the SLHC, and the undergraduate program. This will give both programs more visibility and will help them grow faster.

Opportunities: The internal and external environments, the job market for speech-language pathologists, the shortage of speech-language pathologists, and SLP graduate program admissions rates make this an opportune time to establish the new SLP Graduate Program.

According to the most recent ASHA Communication Sciences and Disorders (CSD) Educational Survey: National Aggregate Data Report (2021-2022), SLP graduate programs around the country received a total of 54,573 applications and offered admission to 22,845 (41.6%) applicants. The report also states that programs are filled to capacity (<https://www.asha.org/siteassets/surveys/csd-education-survey-national-aggregate-data-report.pdf>). Even though the acceptance rate does not take in consideration students who apply to and are accepted by multiple programs, it clearly shows the many qualified applicants are turned away because of programs' limited capacity.

The high student demand is accompanied by favorable job market conditions, locally and nationally. In 2023, US News and World Report rated speech language pathology as the 11th best health care career and the 31st best career in the United States, with 34,000 available positions nationally. The career is distinguished by good upward mobility and flexibility, low stress, and a high level of work satisfaction (<https://money.usnews.com/careers/best-jobs/speech-language-pathologist>).

The Bureau of Labor Statistics projects a 5% job growth rate for all professions between 2021 and 2031. For speech-language pathology, however, the rate is more than 4-fold. The data shows that in May 2021 there were 159,800 employed speech language pathologists nationally, and the number is expected to rise to 193,900 in 2031 (<https://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/speech-language-pathologists.htm#tab-6>). The Bureau of Labor Statistics states that "employment of speech-language pathologists is projected to grow 21% percent from 2021 to 2031, much faster than the average for all occupations" (<https://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/speech-language-pathologists.htm#tab-6>).

In Texas, short-term projections for SLP job growth show an 8.4% increase for 2021-2023. Long-term projections for 2020-2030 show a projected growth rate of 37.1% in the State. Thus, the evidence supports the existence of a sustained shortage, continued job growth, and a significant need for new SLP graduate programs, especially in developing areas like East Texas.

According to the ASHA 2021-2022 CSD Educational Survey, 41.6 of SLP graduate programs around the country reported "insufficient clinical placements as having a moderate or major impact on enrollment" (<https://www.asha.org/siteassets/surveys/csd-education-survey-national-aggregate-data-report.pdf>). Fortunately, the UT Tyler SLP Graduate Program will have numerous sites to

choose from. First, in Smith County alone (where the City of Tyler is located) there are 8 school districts, each of which has multiple schools. The City of Tyler alone has over 10 major hospitals, all of which are affiliated with the University of Tyler Health Center. The city has numerous medical, rehabilitation, and SLP private practice sites. The university has a graduate occupational therapy program, a nursing school (which is ranked as one of the best in Texas), and a medical school. In addition, the UT Health Center has multiple hospitals and clinics in Tyler and several neighboring cities and towns and has a large network of affiliated medical and rehabilitation facilities, public schools, and community organizations.

The SLP graduate program will have access to the University's extensive network of community partners including academic institutions, health care facilities, school districts, research facilities, etc. These affiliations will allow our graduate student clinicians to access a wide variety of educational settings, the top medical and healthcare facilities, and private clinics to complete their practicum hours. These university partnerships also enable the program to build its own networks and to reach out to wider segments of the population.

The University's well-equipped clinics and labs will allow the faculty and students to conduct research using advanced technology and to access a wider pool of potential research participants. Program faculty will have access to research tools and labs (including medical and diagnostic equipment including neuroimaging) that are owned by other UT Tyler programs. This will support research and allow faculty to collaborate with colleagues from related programs, including Medical and healthcare, psychology, and education, and counseling programs.

The University has active agreements with over 100 clinical education facilities including hospitals, clinics, public school districts, rehabilitation agencies, and nursing homes. These agreements apply to all medical and health professions programs at the University. This will give the new SLP graduate program a remarkable advantage in terms of the availability of external placement sites and interprofessional collaboration. We anticipate that the available medical and educational external placement sites will far exceed the needs of the program. The wide diversity of these sites will give student clinicians the opportunity to acquire well-rounded practicum experiences across the lifespan and with the full range of populations who have communication and/or swallowing disorders. At this early stage in its development, the SLP Graduate Program has secured agreements with 30 medical and educational sites, and we continue to increase the list.

Furthermore, the Program's Speech-Language-Hearing Clinic (SLHC) will be strategically located at the UT Health Center inside the Family Medicine Unit, which services children and adults. This will guarantee a steady source of referrals. Additionally, it will offer the Program many additional advantages, including interprofessional collaboration with pediatricians, otolaryngologists, psychiatrists, psychologists, nursing staff, etc. The opportunity will also facilitate collaboration on research, teaching, and community-based initiatives.

Thus, institutional support and commitment, available resources, and the favorable internal and external environments provide optimal conditions for establishing the new SLP Graduate Program. The Program is well-positioned to contribute to the health and well-being of East Texas citizens and to the region’s educational, social, and economic development. As such, the Program will help the University in accomplishing its mission.

Envisioned Future and Priorities

The ASHA Future Outlook: Speech-Language Pathology states that “the demand for SLPs will continue to climb as the population and life expectancy increase, and as awareness of early intervention and prevention measures grows” (<https://careers.asha.org/getting-started/future-job-outlook-speech-language-pathology/>). Specifically, the demand will be driven by the 3 major factors:

- A greater awareness of the importance of early identification of communication and swallowing disorders.
- Growth in elementary and secondary school enrollments, including enrollment of special education students.
- The significantly large segment of the population (54 million) who are over 65, which continues to grow and age.

In its 2025 Envisioned Future for the field of speech language pathology, ASHA emphasizes its commitment to ensuring that service providers are highly qualified. The association will continue to emphasize evidence-based practice, interprofessional development, advocacy, collaboration, and the integration of the latest technology into research and clinical practice. The field will continue to promote research and foster research partnerships that contribute to the knowledge base of the discipline (<https://www.asha.org/about/ashas-envisioned-future/>).

The profession of speech-language pathology will continue to emphasize best practices that support the 5 Cs (coherence, continuity, common learning, competence-based practices, and community consciousness), and on curricula that support the “Big 9” competences in speech language pathology. Technological advances will continue to inspire new diagnostic instruments/measures and techniques, and novel therapeutic approaches. Lastly, telepractice, which is now an accepted part of medical and healthcare professions, will continue to expand robustly and facilitate access to services in remote and developing communities across the country. Within this context, the UT Tyler SLP Graduate Program will focus on the following priorities over the next five years:

- Open the Speech-Language-Hearing Clinic and have it fully equipped and functional by August 2024.

- Continue to meet CAA requirements for Candidacy Status, and to obtain Accreditation by 2029.
- Work with the Administration to secure funds for faculty and graduate students to conduct research, and to participate in the ASHA National Convention and other conferences.
- Apply for external grants from local and national foundations.
- Establish and maintain meaningful partnerships with community organizations and institutions including school districts, preschools, hospitals, long-term care facilities, private practices, nonprofit organizations, and other stakeholders.
- Establish Support groups for patients and their families.
- Work with the Administration to ensure availability of sufficient spaces for the Undergraduate Program (at the Main Campus) and Graduate Program (at the North Campus).
- Expand access to external placement sites and establish strong ties with these sites.

Future Challenges

- Continuing to recruit qualified full-time faculty.
- Securing external funding for research, and academic and clinical initiatives.
- Acquiring and maintaining state-of-the art technology resources.
- Enabling our CSD undergraduate students to access the SLHC to complete observation hours and possibly complete practicum hours.
- Providing transportation and opportunities for CSD undergraduate students to interact with graduate students and collaborate with them on research projects and mentoring.

Graduate Program Administration and Governance

The Director of Communication Sciences and Disorders will also direct the SLP Graduate Program and oversee the SLHC. The two programs and the clinic will remain housed in the Department of Rehabilitation Sciences for the next few years. When the two programs grow substantially, that will justify the establishment of a new Communication Sciences and Disorders Department that will house them. Until then, the CSD Program Director will report to the Chair of the Department of Rehabilitation Sciences, who reports to the School of Health Professions Dean. The Program Director and Department Chair are permanent positions appointed by the Dean.

Responsibilities of the CSD Program Director include overseeing day-to-day operations of the Graduate Program and the Undergraduate Program and overseeing the SLHC. Duties and responsibilities include (but may not be limited to) overseeing the graduate and undergraduate curricula, course schedule, faculty recruitment and hiring, faculty evaluations, managing the programs'

budget and allocating program resources, ensuring continuing education for academic faculty and clinical educators, and ensuring that the programs and the SLHC implement all institutional, government, and ASHA regulations. According to policies and guidelines detailed in the University Book of Operating Procedures, “chairpersons/directors and program coordinators shall be qualified for their respective roles in the Division of Academic Affairs.” “Chairs/Directors of Departments: Department chairs are responsible directly to the deans of the respective colleges. Chairs are the leaders of the departments and assist the deans in matters of instructional administration within the colleges. The department chair is responsible for the overall leadership, management, and administration of the department, including:

- Pursuing and achieving departmental excellence in teaching, research, and service;
- Strategic planning and goal setting aligned with similar efforts at the college/school and university level;
- Management and professional development of faculty members and staff;
- Preparation and management of department budget;
- Recruitment, retention, evaluation and promotion of faculty;
- Development of curriculum or appointing qualified program coordinators;
- Communication with faculty and administration;
- Enforcement of applicable regulatory policies;
- Maintaining an environment of collegiality and shared governance;
- Addressing questions, complaints, grievances, and suggestions from faculty, staff, and students;
- Performing other duties as assigned by the dean.
- “Program coordinators oversee essential curricular components, including the appropriateness of content and pedagogy, the currency of disciplinary content, and assessment of effectiveness of the curriculum. Coordinators must be qualified in the field(s) appropriate to the curricular content and academic level of the program. The chairperson/director may assume the role of a program coordinator if he or she is qualified. One individual may be designated as coordinator of multiple programs if qualified for each program. Conversely, a single department/school can have multiple coordinators. Each program coordinator shall be provided a job description and appointments shall be approved by deans.”

All Program faculty and clinical educators are members of the Program’s Graduate Committee, which is responsible for making decision regarding the academic and clinical components of the Program and making recommendations to the Program Director and Department Chair. The Speech-Language-Hearing Clinic staff report to the Coordinator of Clinical Services, who reports to the Program Director.

UT Tyler is a shared-governance public institution. As such, consistent with Accreditation Standard 1.6.4, “program faculty and instructional staff have authority and responsibility to initiate, implement, and evaluate substantive decisions affecting all aspects of the professional education program, including the curriculum.” Additionally, Program faculty and clinical educators have sufficient access to the higher administration and participate in various departmental, college, and University committees.

Strategic Planning Process

The Graduate Program leadership bears the ultimate responsibility for the strategic planning process and ensures that the Program's strategic plan is comprehensive and congruent with the University's missions and goals.

The strategic planning process for the new SLP Graduate program began in 2021. The CSD Program Director conducted the necessary research to gather relevant data and information and draft the plan. The draft plan was then shared with the Department Chair and Dean for discussion and verification of information pertaining to policies and resources. In 2022, the plan was updated after the University revised its strategic plan. The team revised the mission, vision, and goals and ensured that they are congruent with the University's. During the summer of 2023, a team consisting of Program faculty, Interim Department Chair, and Associate Dean for Academic Affairs met to review and update the plan. The draft plan was then shared with the Dean and the Provost for their review and input. When the Program begins and we have a full team of academic faculty and clinical educators, they will all be members of the Program's Strategic Planning and Implementation Committee, which will be led by the Program Director. The Committee will be responsible for implementing all aspects of the plan, monitoring progress, collecting progress data, and conducting the annual plan review. Additionally, when the time come, the plan will include input from graduate students and alumni.

The planning process was transparent, engaged all stakeholders, and involved close work with the administration. Every step of the process involved analysis of individual parts of the plan with reference to the University's plan, institutional and government policies, ASHA Certification Standards, Accreditation Standards, ASHA Code of Ethics, and the Scope of Practice in SLP.

The Program's Strategic Planning and Implementation Committee will regularly collect progress data and information and analyze it during monthly meetings and special planning sessions as needed. This plan is written for 5 years and is intended to guide the Program through its Accreditation Candidacy period. The plan will be reviewed in May of every year, as part of the Annual Program Self-Assessment.

Vision

The vision of the UT Tyler Speech-Language Pathology Master's Program is to provide students with the clinical and academic foundation for entry level preparedness to contribute to the betterment of health, education, and welfare of East Texas communities; and to become an impactful and indispensable community partner.

Mission

The Mission of the UT Tyler Speech-Language Pathology Master's Program is to prepare highly qualified clinicians equipped with the academic knowledge and clinical skills required for the effective assessment, treatment, and prevention of communication and swallowing disorders; and to develop into an indispensable community partner contributing to the health, well-being, and education of East Texas communities and beyond.

Values

- Develop into a distinguished program that provides comprehensive academic and clinical preparation rooted in active learning, critical thinking and problem-solving, self-analysis, self-assessment, ethical and professional standards, accountability, and best practices.
- Be committed to excellence in teaching and clinical practice.
- Foster diagnostic instincts through problem-based critical thinking, self-reflection, and self-assessment.
- Support research-based discovery, interprofessional collaboration, social justice, diversity, community engagement, global citizenship, and evidence-based life-long learning.

Strategic Goal 1

UT Tyler

- Increase student mentorship, experiential learning, and professional development opportunities for students.
- Promote student engagement.
- Increase research experiences to be broadly available to all graduate and undergraduate students.
- Ensure student success through achieving excellence in outcomes assessment
- Increase the number of quality academic and cocurricular programs across all disciplines.
- Be the destination institution for students seeking careers in health professions.

SLP MS

- Provide students with the academic knowledge and clinical experiences required for achieving competency in the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of communication and swallowing disorders across the lifespan.

Action Steps

- Provide a rigorous and up-to-date curriculum that challenges students' thought processes and enable them to develop strong analytical and problem-solving skills, and to acquire in-depth knowledge of and experience with the various disorders of communication and swallowing.
- Provide course assignments that directly integrate academic content and clinical practice.
- Clinical educators will meet with students prior to diagnostic and therapy sessions to provide guidance with planning and ensure that students are fully prepared and can efficiently use diagnostic instruments and therapy materials.
- Clinical educators will debrief with students shortly after diagnostic and treatment sessions to provide effective and sufficient feedback and will follow up to ensure the feedback is fully implemented.
- The Program will review the curriculum annually to ensure that all components are up to date and consistent with best practices, Certification Standards, Accreditation Standards, and institutional and government policies.
- Academic faculty and clinical educators will closely monitor student performance, identify students in need of intervention, and implement an intervention plan as early as possible.

Strategic Goal 2

**UT
Tyler**

- Double research expenditures by 2027
- Increase research experiences to be broadly available to all graduate and undergraduate students.

**SLP
MS**

- Promote faculty and graduate student research by facilitating access to financial and material resources and providing mentoring and opportunities for collaboration.

Action Steps

- The program leadership will work with the University Administration to secure the necessary funds for faculty and students to engage in research and travel to the ASHA National Convention and other conferences.
- The faculty will design course assignments that allow for team participation and collaboration with graduate students from related disciplines (e.g., occupational therapy, neurology, psychiatry, and otolaryngology, special education, psychology, and counseling).
- The Program will encourage faculty to collaborate with colleagues from related discipline on teaching, research initiatives, and community work.
- The Office of Research and Grants will assist faculty in identifying grants and completing grant applications.
- The program will provide students interested in conducting research with the necessary advising and mentoring to enable them to conduct research and will inform them about available research grants and awards.
- Provide research lab space and advanced clinical and research tools that support faculty and student research and create an optimal teaching and learning environment.
- The Program Leadership will work with other departments to facilitate access for our faculty to conduct research at their labs and use their instruments.
- The School of Health Professions will provide the necessary financial and logistic supports for faculty and clinical educators to obtain the necessary training on new technologies, including diagnostic instruments and therapy programs.

Strategic Goal 3

UT Tyler

- Increase research experiences to be broadly available to all graduate and undergraduate students.
- Increase student mentorship, experiential learning, and professional development opportunities for students.
- Promote student engagement

SLP MS

- Create an environment (for students, faculty, clinical educators, and staff) that fosters personal growth, teamwork, and interprofessional collaboration.

Action Steps

- Clinical educators will have opportunities and resources to pursue professional development in their areas of expertise.
- Clinic educators are required to maintain current ASHA certification and State licensure.
- The program will provide clinic educators with release time to enable them to participate in professional development opportunities toward maintaining their ASHA certification, State licensure, and improving their supervisory skills.
- The office of the Dean will support individual and/or small group training sessions on the use of various types of technology that are either already available in the SLHC or may be purchased, to provide students with an optimal clinical experience.

Strategic Goal 4

UT Tyler

- Grow medical education and other health education programs to serve East Texas providers and caregivers.
- Create a culture of accountability and transparency.
- Be a Carnegie Community-Engaged University.

SLP MS

- Develop dynamic partnerships with communities and organizations in East Texas, and provide diagnostic, treatment, and prevention services that are rooted in best practices, accountability, and advocacy for clients and their families.

Action Steps

- The Program's Speech-Language-Hearing Clinic (SLHC) will provide high quality prevention, diagnostic, and treatment services to East Texas communities.
- Student clinicians and clinical educators will counsel clients and their families about the clients' communication/swallowing disabilities to help them understand the nature and prognosis of these disabilities and help them access support groups and available community resources.
- The Coordinator of Clinical Services will coordinate with public school districts in the surrounding communities the participation of our student clinicians in the annual kindergarten screenings.
- The Coordinator of Clinical Services will coordinate with preschools and early intervention programs the participation of our student clinicians in the early identification and treatment of children with communication and/or swallowing disorders and those at risk for such disorders.
- The Program will offer periodic screenings of communication skills within the campus, with the purpose of identifying and counseling individuals who have communication difficulties.
- Student clinicians, faculty, and clinical educators will participate in community health fairs to provide communication, swallowing, and hearing screenings and make the necessary recommendation to community members.
- The Program will provide periodic events on campus for raising awareness about various communication and swallowing disorders and their causes and will provide recommendations for prevention.

- The Coordinator of Clinical Services will coordinate with offices serving English language learners at the University to identify individuals who may benefit from an accent modification program at the SLHC, to improve their access to curricula and enhance their career opportunities.
- The Coordinator of Clinical Services will coordinate with the Office of Disability to engage student clinicians in designing and delivering therapy programs that support individuals with language disorders and/or language-based learning disabilities, with the goal of improving their access to the curriculum and enhancing their life and career opportunities.
- Provide clients, their families, and the public with brochures and literature about the disorders of communication and swallowing, clients’ rights, support groups, and available resources.
- Clinical educators and academic faculty will ensure that students fully understand and implement ethical standards, patients’ rights, Universal Precautions, FERPA and HIPPA regulations, and advocacy for clients and their families.

Strategic Goal 5

**UT
Tyler**

- Foster communication and an inclusive culture among all stakeholders.
- Invest in current faculty and staff, creating a campus culture of belonging.

**SLP
MS**

- Foster a genuine understanding of cultural and linguistic diversity, cultural appreciation, and cultural humility.

Action Steps

- Course syllabi will include at least one learning outcome pertaining to cultural or linguistic diversity that is relevant to the content and context of individual courses.
- Depending on the nature of the course, faculty members will be encouraged to identify and invite expert speakers to provide students with first-hand knowledge about specific cultures or linguistic backgrounds.
- The Program will ensure that the Special Topics course includes a substantial unit on cultural and linguistic diversity.

Strategic Implementation

The Program Director is responsible for overseeing the development, implementation, and monitoring of the strategic plan. The implementation process begins with developing action steps for achieving each goal. Then, during Strategic Planning and Implementation Committee meetings, one or more action steps are assigned to each program employee. The assigned action steps are consistent with the person's position and role in the Program. The individual responsible for implementing an action step is responsible for gathering data/information relevant to it throughout the year and presenting it during monthly meetings, special planning meetings, and the Annual Program Review, which includes a strategic plan review.

During monthly meetings, data/information from all Program employees is analyzed and discussed, and the Committee makes the appropriate decisions. If a goal has been achieved, or relevant changes to the internal/external environment have emerged, the Committee will identify and prioritize the changes that need to be made to the plan and/or Program. For example, if a goal needs to be modified and does not require major resources or lengthy governance procedures, the change will be implemented in the short-term. If the change is not urgent, it may be delayed until the annual Strategic Plan Review.

In addition to the progress data collected throughout the year, the plan's annual review will be guided by the Program self-assessment data gathered throughout the year from stakeholders, including faculty, clinical educators, staff, students, alumni, clients, employers, external site supervisors, affiliated organizations, etc.). This data will be a major source for updating goals, realigning priorities, identifying new areas of focus, and identifying areas that may need additional work.

Strategic Assessment/ Indicators of Success

Progress towards achieving the Program's goals and accomplishing its mission will be measured by the following methods:

- ✓ Electronic surveys and questionnaires completed by internal and external stakeholders, including (but not limited to) students, alumni, external site supervisors, employers, educational administrators, healthcare organizations, educators, etc.).
- ✓ Graduate student exit interviews.
- ✓ Surveys by students, alumni, campus community, school districts, community health and rehabilitation agencies, affiliated organizations, and employers.
- ✓ Annual Strategic Plan Review.
- ✓ Annual Program Self-Assessment.
- ✓ University Assessment of the Program.
- ✓ Strategic implementation data collected throughout the year.

Contingencies

If the Program Director is unavailable for an extended period of time (e.g., due to travel, research, illness, etc.), the Department Chair will assume the responsibilities of directing the Graduate Program. Under such circumstances, the faculty and Coordinator of Clinical Services will report directly to the Department Chair, and the Department Chair will consult with faculty and clinical staff and/or select a specific faculty member to execute specific tasks and duties that are assigned a high priority.

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