

Department of Speech Language Pathology Strategic Plan 2017-2020

Prologue

The vision and mission strategic plan of the Department of Speech Language Pathology (SLP) is an extension of the strategic plan set forth by Saint Mary's College (refer to Sections I and II). The SLP strategic plan adopted for the years 2013-2016 was focused on the creation of the Master of Science degree program in Speech-Language Pathology. This involved developing the curriculum, applying for and receiving approval from the Council of Academic Affairs (CAA) through the American Speech and Hearing Association (ASHA), hiring new faculty and staff, designing and moving into a new facility, developing a community-wide advisory board, developing partnerships with regional agencies, and marketing the program to attract highly qualified students. All these goals were accomplished with the help and assistance of the entire College community. The SLP department supports the fundamental principles as outlined in the strategic plan of Saint Mary's College (refer to Section I, II and III, Boldly Forward 2012-2017). We now move forward with our new strategic plan for 2017-2020 outlined below.

Mission of the Department of Speech Language Pathology

The mission of the Department of Speech Language Pathology is to prepare and educate students who are dedicated to the service of persons from infancy to maturity with communication, cognitive and swallowing disabilities. Students will be capable of interacting effectively in a variety of service and employment settings. This goal is achieved through a curriculum that integrates academic rigor, research methods and evidence based clinical practice all built upon a strong foundation of social responsibility.

Vision

The Department of Speech Language Pathology prepares students with a wide theoretical base for understanding normal development of basic human communication and swallowing processes as well as the nature, causes, evaluation and treatment of disorders of swallowing and communication, including issues pertaining to culturally diverse populations. It provides a variety of opportunities for supervised student clinical education with persons across the life cycle who are delayed or disordered in the development or use of communication, cognitive and/or swallowing. The academic,

clinical faculty and students work together to develop competence in clinical diagnosis and intervention, interactions with families of individuals with communicative impairments, and collaboration with other professionals for effective and efficient team management of persons with complex disabilities. We strive always to value diversity of persons, both in culture and opinion, and encourage an attitude of openness and discovery among students, faculty and staff. Our intent is to always challenge faculty, staff and students to actively involve themselves in meeting the needs of their communities, as highly skilled professionals and good citizens. We strongly promote and instill in the students and each other to value scientific rigor, a spirit of inquiry and use of evidence based practice among future professionals. Our graduates are empowered to function independently as life-long learners, pursuers of social responsibility and ambassadors for the profession.

Goals and Responsibilities

Goal # 1

Enhance and increase the departmental programs

It is our fundamental obligation to provide students with the best possible education in the field of communicative sciences and disorders. In addition to actually providing an excellent educational experience, the Department of Speech Language Pathology (SLP) must also work to increase its national reputation. Our goal is to offer the best undergraduate and graduate education for students and to receive the recognition that such quality deserves.

Recommendations

1. Hire more highly qualified clinical and academic faculty with the needed expertise to further extend and develop the program. Provide specific clinic supervisory training to Clinical instructors.
2. Review, revise and expand the curriculum in both the undergraduate and graduate programs to meet the needs of an ever changing society. Supervisory training program per CAPSCD and ASHA
3. Support and extend student-initiated learning experiences. SLP education is marked by close faculty-student interaction and collaboration. One of our challenges is to make this reality more visible to our students. The Sophia Program's experiential learning requirement and student collaboration with faculty on research or scholarly projects.
4. Reduce the teaching load. Teaching is valued by the faculty and holds primacy of place at the college. Our reputation will rely heavily upon the outstanding performances of both our undergraduate and graduate students. However, the current teaching load, for faculty who teach in both a graduate and undergraduate program is not consistent with our aspirations. By virtue of the level of instruction and the rigor of the program graduate courses require

intense preparation time. In addition, by virtue of the fact that these programs are both preprofessional and professional there is a higher expectation and demand for seeking faculty involvement in student placements in graduate programs and places of employment (i.e. letter of recommendations, advisement on appropriate employment settings and graduate schools, follow up telephone calls etc.).obstacles to the best teaching in both the graduate and undergraduate programs are such things as lack of time to experiment with teaching techniques or innovative materials, such as student learning initiatives; number of advisees in both undergraduate and graduate programs; the nature of the in depth study of graduate courses; Reducing the number of course preparations per year will also afford faculty additional time to explore collaborative projects within the department, across other departments especially in the development of IPE (Integrated Professional Education) as described by CAA and ASHA and with students while pursuing research and scholarship.

5. Conduct External and Internal Evaluation of the SLP programs
Our accreditation through CAA requires that our graduate undergo an internal review aimed at examining the vibrancy of the program and whether we are properly allocating the resources of the college, both human and financial. The purpose of these reviews, like the external reviews, is to ensure that the Graduate program is meeting our students' needs and providing the best education possible. Periodic re-examination of this program and their accompanying resources will be conducted per the guidelines as set forth by CAA. One of the components of the external assessment is the community advisory board which meets quarterly to review progress on the strategic plan and to discuss community needs.

Goal 2

Recruit and retain students

Our first two cohorts admitted 25 students which met our goal for AY 15/16 and 16/17. These students were chosen from an average applicant pool of between 150 to 200 students.

6. Increase our recruitment of top candidates across the country with an emphasis on Indiana. Focus our efforts on those students with high academic achievements and demonstrated experience with various diversities and special needs.
7. . Recruitment and retention of U.S. minority and international students. The presence of persons from the various racial and ethnic groups is an important ingredient in the vitality of our students' intellectual climate and their professional life. Our efforts to recruit and retain students from all racial and ethnic minorities needs to be a focus in the years to come. It is recommended that all of our recruiting material include a statement such as

“Applicants from varied minority and ethnic backgrounds are encouraged to apply”. The presence of international and minority students is important especially because of the emphasis on intercultural competence and sensitivity which is an integral part of the profession and of the college.

Goal # 3

Address a Variety of Infrastructure Needs

With the growth of both the undergraduate and graduate programs we need to plan and prioritize future facility needs.

8. Develop a Departmental Master plan for the department of Communication Sciences and Disorders. To facilitate the cohesiveness of the program both the academic and clinical aspects of the program need to be housed in the same building. This area also needs enhancement of the facility to include lab space and research space. Since the graduate students are non-residential and are on campus for most of the day a specific area or space needs to be designated for their use. In addition the academic area while in proximity to the clinic must be separate from the clinic to preserve professionalism of the space and confidentiality of our clients. If and when the Telepractice component grows there will need to be a separate clinic space to house the equipment needed for the program. The current situation where clients are expected to discuss financial issues in the same space where others are waiting is untenable and a significant infraction of the HIPAA.

Goal # 4

Develop sources of other revenues

The Judd Leighton Speech and Language Clinic at its core is a training clinic for aspiring speech Language pathologists. The burden of a self-supporting clinic is difficult to bear within the constraints of the current insurance market.

9. Develop an endowment specific to the SLP dept. Collaborate with the annual fund department to discuss ways to get our message and mission well known to those in the community and those alumnae who are graduates of our program.
10. Explore alternatives to the fee for service model. Because many families' ability to pay for services has declined, our department needs to explore resources to provide reduced clinical service and possibly free services. Some areas to explore are grants, developing contracts to schools, hospitals, nursing homes and clinics to provide speech pathology services for them at their sites while opening up more opportunities to place our students.

CONCLUSION

Saint Mary's Department of Speech Language Pathology continues to provide the high quality of education that has been its hallmark since the inception of the undergraduate program in 2007.

This education combines rigorous academic study with character formation and a sense of responsibility for communal well-being. This strategic plan for the department will continue to foster the growth and vitality of our students, faculty and staff for years to come.