

2019-2029 CSD Strategic Plan

This 2019-2029 CSD Strategic Plan was developed and approved by the faculty of the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders at Western Carolina University in 2019. It is revisited annually at the Department's Fall Faculty Retreat. During the retreat, faculty have an opportunity to review the Strategic Plan, as is required in Standard 1.5, for the following:

- Congruence with mission and goals of the program and sponsoring institution;
- Role of the program within the community;
- Status of previous goals and objectives;
- Recommitment to upcoming long-term goals;
- Clarification of specific, measurable objectives; and
- Clarification of strategies for attaining goals and objectives.

As deemed appropriate, the CSD faculty will revise the Strategic Plan if it is determined the plan does not meet expectations following review. The CSD 2019-2029 Strategic Plan and a summary of its annual review will be posted as an attachment on the WCU CSD website so that it is available to all faculty, students, staff, alumni, and other interested parties.

Academic and Clinical Excellence

Goal 1 (of 3)— Institute comprehensive curricular assessment to assure alignment with student needs, discipline trends, evidence-based practice, and cultural responsiveness.		
Next Review Period	Baseline Data and Target Outcome	Strategy and Resources Needed
Year 6— (2024-2025)	<p>We have not reviewed the curriculum at this high level of focus and precision.</p> <p>The first target outcome in Year 6 is the verification that the CSD curriculum provides students with the experiences and information needed for graduate admission in regional programs.</p> <p>The second target outcome in Year 6 is the verification that the CSD program matches current evidence-based discipline trends and state-by-state licensure requirements. Identification of gaps in either target outcome will result in additional review periods objectives to address these gaps.</p>	<p>Conduct a review of graduate program admissions requirements for NC and border-state graduate programs to ensure undergraduate curriculum allows students to meet minimum requirements for graduate program admission in these programs.</p> <p>Conduct a review of graduate curricular experiences to ensure they match current evidence-based discipline trends and state-by-state licensure requirements.</p> <p>Resources needed to meet these objectives include time for curricular analysis; feedback from student exit surveys; feedback from clinical supervisors; review of ASHA “Big 9”; enrollment data; student response to instruction data; review of curricula from similar programs regionally and nationally.</p>
<p>Outcome: After review of SLP graduate admissions requirements, it was determined that the primary gap related to eligibility was the lack of a neuroscience of communication course within the undergraduate curriculum. Although neuroscience is covered in the anatomy and physiology of the speech mechanism course, the requirement for these programs was a separate course for this content. Consequently, the department developed a course on this topic and began offering it as a related professional course or elective in the Fall 2024 semester.</p> <p>After review of licensure and certification requirements in NC, SC, TN, and GA (states in which most of our graduates will apply for state licensure), it was determined that the current graduate curriculum does meet eligibility requirements in these states.</p>		

Goal 2 (of 3) — Increase student participation in expressive scholarship.		
Next Review Period	Baseline Data and Target Outcome	Strategy and Resources Needed
Year 6— (2024-2025)	Baseline data will be obtained by surveying faculty on student participation in expressive scholarship, including the rank of the student and the type of engagement. Following the review of these data, the target outcome will be established as a 20% increase of student participation in expressive scholarship. This will serve as an annual goal.	Recruitment efforts of undergraduate and graduate students will be planned by faculty engaging in expressive scholarship. This plan will be implemented during the academic year, and the outcomes of this effort will be assessed. Resources needed include time, independent study opportunities, and marketing funds.
Outcome: At the beginning of the 2024-2025 academic year, there was 1 student expressing interest in research. However, over the course of the year, several student projects were underway. This included one undergraduate pursuing audiology and two graduate students in SLP. All three students have presented their research as a poster at the University’s research event, and one presented at NBASLH in April, 2025. The percent increase from 1 to 3 is 200%.		

Goal 3 (of 3) — Promote program innovation to utilize high-impact practices and evidence-based practice to meet the changing educational needs of students.		
Next Review Period	Baseline Data and Target Outcome	Strategy and Resources Needed
Year 6— (2024-2025)	Following the review of high-impact and evidence-based practices in the classroom in Year 5, it was determined that the CSD program offers students a robust learning experience. However, there is always an opportunity for improvement. The target outcome of Year 6 is increased use of high-impact pedagogical practices for content-based and clinical instruction. A more quantifiable target can be determined after faculty review the to-be-created list of high-impact pedagogical practices, and check the practices currently employed.	With the guidance of the Coulter Faculty Commons, a list of high-impact pedagogical practices will be prepared and distributed to faculty for review and possible implementation in the class or clinic environment. Faculty will be asked to identify the practices currently used, and at the end of the academic year, the process will be repeated to determine if use increased. Resources needed include support of the CFC and faculty time and willingness to conduct changes to their courses and approaches to instruction.
Outcome: Service learning and advocacy were brought into the classroom this year. For example, a new course was developed in participation with School of Health Sciences and the School of Nursing in which undergraduate students in the programs developed and implemented a respite day program for persons with mild-moderate dementia and their careproviders. Also at the undergraduate level, the Clinical Process course included a new advocacy assignment in which the students selected a topic in CSD that was of interest and developed an advocacy initiative related to that topic. For example, one group of students hosted an information table on main campus to share information about autism and strategies for inclusion.		

Student Experience (previously CSD Innovations)

Goal 1 (of 3) — Develop co-curricular experiences that enhance personal and professional development.		
Next Review Period	Baseline Data and Target Outcome	Strategy and Resources Needed
Year 6— (2024-2025)	Baseline data demonstrate that CSD has offered IPE for students consistently for several years. However, this has been more on the graduate side of the program. The target outcome for Year 6 is to continue with the graduate IPE offerings and offer at least 1 undergraduate IPE event during the year.	<p>To achieve this outcome, other units interested in a similar objective will be recruited to co-develop a course that will become a part of the CSD ongoing curriculum for undergraduate students.</p> <p>Resources needed include time and interest of faculty. Teaching release from other responsibilities may be needed, or faculty may be required to teach the course without compensation. This would also require involvement of other departments and completion of the curricular process.</p>
<p>Outcome: The dementia respite course was designed with interdisciplinary education in mind. The goal was to bring students from different majors together allowing them to contribute from their unique perspective of their major. Unfortunately, the numbers were not completed balanced across disciplines, and not all programs were represented in the planning efforts. However, it was a start, and one that had positive evaluations from students participating.</p>		

Goal 2 (of 3) — Integrate student clubs and CSD curriculum into our partnerships for service-learning activities.		
Next Review Period	Baseline Data and Target Outcome	Strategy and Resources Needed
Year 6— (2024-2025)	As this is a new goal, this year will require baseline data collection to determine the current level of involvement of student clubs and CSD curriculum in service-learning activities. After review of these baseline data, the target outcome is the increase of service-learning opportunities through the CSD student clubs and/or CSD curriculum at graduate or undergraduate levels.	Review of syllabi and discussion with faculty and student club officers should provide the needed information to kick off planning for this goal. Faculty and students will be invited to conversations to identify service-learning opportunities that allow faculty and clubs to meet their already established objectives.
Outcome: Engagement of the NSSLHA chapters continues to be minimal. However, two undergraduate classes expanded service learning opportunities and integrated high impact teaching opportunities. It is hoped that these opportunities will continue to develop in the next academic year.		

Goal 3 (of 3) — Implement cultural inclusion initiatives to enhance students' understanding of other ethnicities and cultures.		
Next Review Period	Baseline Data and Target Outcome	Strategy and Resources Needed
Year 6— (2024-2025)	Within the CSD curriculum, there are intentional ways to infuse culturally responsive practice at both the graduate and undergraduate levels. To establish baseline, faculty will review courses to identify how culture is integrated into coursework. This could include review of case studies, reflection assignments, or presentations, as some examples. The target outcome is that following this review all courses will include meaningful elements of cultural inclusion in the course.	<p>After identifying courses needing additional or modifications in culturally inclusive content, faculty will make changes to the curriculum for inclusion.</p> <p>Resources needed to achieve this are faculty time and collaboration with others for course design.</p>
<p>Outcome: Classes continue to integrate many different aspects of diversity through direct instruction, case study assignments, reflection, and discussion. Beyond linguistic, cultural, racial, and ethnic diversity, faculty have also included disability, education, health literacy, religion, family structure, and location, to name a few. Students continue to get content in the classes specific to culturally responsive practice; however, it is an elective for undergraduate and required for graduate students.</p>		

Regional Development and Engagement (previously Facilitating Partnerships)

Goal 1 (of 2) — To establish and build relationships with external community and regional partners to enhance student experiences and support departmental growth.		
Next Review Period	Baseline Data and Target Outcome	Strategy and Resources Needed
Year 6— (2024-2025)	At the start of Year 6, the CSD department has approximately 60 active external clinical placement contracts. Between Year 6 and Year 10, initiatives to increase these numbers will be developed and implemented. During Year 6, the target outcome is the creation of an incentive package for external clinical placements that would include information to facilitate the creation of and maintenance of external clinical contracts.	<p>The clinical placement coordinators will chair a task force responsible for developing an incentive package for external clinical placements.</p> <p>Resources for this strategy include time and money. Developing and engaging a clinical advisory board would relieve some of the time commitment, and those individuals would have good insights into the needs and expectations of external supervisors.</p>
<p>Outcome: Although the CSD Advisory Board met to discuss this goal, the effects of Hurricane Helene and the flooding resulted in the loss of several adult and medical clinical placements. The academic year was a time of rebuilding and not necessarily expanding. However, efforts will continue with revisions to the supervisor handbook and additional continuing education opportunities.</p>		

Goal 2 (of 2) — Develop a next-level continuing education and professional development program that utilizes traditional and alternative credentials, as well as stackable credentialing that integrates tightly with undergraduate and graduate degree programs.		
Next Review Period	Baseline Data and Target Outcome	Strategy and Resources Needed
Year 6— (2024-2025)	The CSD Department already offers the annual Cullowhee Conference (spring semester) which allows SLPs to earn continuing education credits at a reasonable cost and in some cases for free. The department has attempted a Fall symposium that related to neurogenic and medical speech-language pathology, but this has not resulted in registration numbers like the Cullowhee Conference. The target objective for Year 6 will be a 20% increase in registration for the fall neuro symposium compared to the average registration for the last 5 years.	<p>Increasing registration for the Fall neuro symposium will require improved planning and marketing. A taskforce of faculty will meet to plan the event.</p> <p>Resources include time and money for a speaker and registration.</p>
Outcome: The Fall symposium was canceled due to Hurrincane Helene and the flooding that devastated the area. This goal will carryover into next year.		

Inclusive Excellence (previously Supporting Diversity)

Goal 1 (of 3): To host or attend outreach events for NC high school and/or middle school grade students to share information about careers in CSD and educational opportunities at WCU.		
Next Review Period	Baseline Data and Target Outcome	Strategy and Resources Needed
Year 6— (2024-2025)	In Year 5 (2023-2024), CSD participated in MedCat, a summer program that brings high schoolers in WNC to WCU to learn about careers in healthcare and program offerings at WCU. This serves as baseline data to assess progress in Year 6. The target outcome in Year 6 is participation in 2 recruitment events during the year.	<p>To achieve the target outcome in Year 6, the CSD department will develop and approve an UG recruitment plan to be implemented in Years 7, 8, 9, and 10 of the Strategic Plan (revisions annually as needed).</p> <p>As the main objective, the CSD department will increase involvement in recruitment events regionally and across the state from 1 annual event to 2.</p> <p>To achieve this strategy in Year 6, CSD will require marketing funds. CSD will need time to research opportunities to participate in events across the state. CSD faculty will need time and financial support to participate in these events.</p>
<p>Outcome: In year 6, new marketing materials were printed to better represent the undergraduate program here at WCU. We also put together orientation and advising materials for students coming to WCU as first-year students in the major or transfer students. The program was not able to participate in a second recruitment event this year. It did still participate in MEDCAT, however.</p>		

Goal 2 (of 3): To create CSD support/advocacy/mentorship groups for students in CSD that educate about and celebrate equity and inclusivity.		
Next Review Period	Baseline Data and Target Outcome	Strategy and Resources Needed
Year 6 – (2024-2025)	<p>This is a new goal for this category. Therefore, this year’s data will serve as baseline for the evaluation of Year 10.</p> <p>At present, the CSD department does not have an affiliation with any caucus group. The department sponsors a group for equity and inclusion led by faculty and students.</p>	<p>Research the various caucus groups affiliated with CSD professions, ASHA, and/or NCSHLA to create a list of opportunities and the requirements to join the caucus.</p> <p>Affiliation may require funding, and faculty sponsors will need to be identified.</p>
<p>Outcome: The name of the student group sponsored by the CSD program was changed to Belongingness in CSD (B-CSD). Because student involvement in these groups is seldom more than a few students at a meeting, the faculty decided to not pursue the caucus membership, but to continue to develop B-CSD by supporting students through advocacy and education opportunities. This year, the faculty voted to recognize two graduate students as DEI Trailblazers, presenting them with the NSSLHA diversity cords. We intend to continue this initiative in the future to celebrate our students.</p>		

Responsible Stewardship

Goal 1 (of 1): Engage the budgetary process to steward resource allocation, enhance sound investment, and address strategic critical need.		
Next Review Period	Baseline Data and Target Outcome	Strategy and Resources Needed
Year 6 — (2024-2025)	A new approach to tracking budgets was introduced in the beginning of the 2024-2025 academic year. This approach will allow for more accurate annual budgeting of departmental and clinical funds. The target objective is the creation and approval of a budget plan for the year.	<p>This objective will require the CSD administrative assistant to review budget data from the 2023-2024 academic year and list line items that will likely reoccur in this academic year. Included in the list will be an estimated budget amount given expenses of the previous year. Using this information, a budget will be developed by the Department Head and shared with the faculty for discussion and approval during faculty meeting.</p> <p>Resources include information from Banner and Catalytics related to budget. Time for faculty to evaluate and review is also required.</p>
<p>Outcome: The new budgeting software has made tracking and planning much easier. In the summer of 2024, the department head and administrative assistant entered into Power BI (new software) estimates for the upcoming year using data from the previous year. This was discussed with faculty at retreat. Consequently, faculty and students have received considerably more support over the course of the year rather than waiting to spend down funds at the end of the year.</p>		

Employee Excellence

Not reviewed in Year 6.

Vision Advancement (previously Support for HHS and WCU's Strategic Plans)

Goal 1 (of 2): Seek private support through philanthropic gifts and grants to increase support for academic excellence and the student experience.		
Next Review Period	Baseline Data and Target Outcome	Strategy and Resources Needed
Year 6 — (2024-2025)	<p>A strategic marketing and philanthropy campaign will be kicked off this year. Using a variety of means through the department, clinic, and the advancement office, CSD will request donations specifically for student scholarships at least twice a year.</p> <p>The target outcome is the completion of two marketing campaigns in the academic year.</p>	<p>This will require gathering contact information for CSD affiliates and preparation of a marketing packet requesting support. Faculty and student support will also be needed.</p> <p>Resources include time, personnel, and funds for marketing materials.</p>
<p>Outcome: This year, the College of Health and Human Sciences has a new advancement officer, and she has been engaging with our faculty throughout the year to identify our fundraising needs. Using the biannual Communicat newsletter, the department has reached out to more than 100 friends of the program requesting support of our scholarships and Speech and Hearing Clinic. Although specific materials were not created, the Communicat serves as a great avenue to reach possible donors.</p>		