

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Midwestern University Speech-Language Pathology Program – Downers Grove, Illinois

#### Strategic Plan

2022–2027

#### Mission

##### Speech-Language Pathology Program

The Midwestern University Speech-Language Pathology (SLP) Program is dedicated to the professional development of speech-language pathologists to work in a variety of educational and healthcare settings. As clinical practitioners they will serve the communication and swallowing needs of individuals from a variety of cultural, linguistic, and neurologically diverse backgrounds across the lifespan through responsive, compassionate, ethical, and evidence-based practice.

#### Vision

##### Speech-Language Pathology Program

We seek to transform outstanding students into clinical practitioners who dedicate themselves to the highest standards of the profession of speech-language pathology. They will execute the full scope of clinical practice on behalf of individuals from a variety of cultural, linguistic, and neurologically diverse backgrounds across the lifespan through responsive, compassionate, ethical, and evidence-based practice with communication and swallowing disorders.

#### Overview

The Midwestern University Speech-Language Pathology (SLP) Program – Downers Grove, Illinois was first accredited by the Council on Academic Accreditation in Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology (CAA) in 2017 and re-accredited in 2023. The program admitted its first cohort of students in 2013 and graduated its first class in June 2015. Since that time, the program has maintained stable enrollment and strong student outcomes, with cohort sizes ranging from approximately 33 to 43 students per year.

The program currently includes 11 full-time faculty, including 7 academic faculty and 4 clinical faculty, supporting the academic, clinical, advising, scholarship, and service needs of the program. The program maintains an on-time graduation rate of 98%, reflecting consistent student progression and successful completion of academic and clinical requirements.

Clinical education is supported through the Speech-Language Institute (SLI), the university clinic, which maintains a substantial and active clinical training environment. Strategic planning benchmarks identify maintenance of an average clinic census of approximately 350 visits per month, with 25–30 visits per day, supporting broad student clinical exposure across age groups and disorder areas. In addition to university clinic experiences, students participate in community-based mini-rotations and off-campus practicum experiences that expand exposure to educational and healthcare settings and support the development of clinical competence across the scope of practice.

Strategies for program development are outlined in a dynamic strategic plan encompassing the years 2022–2027. The plan includes benchmarks for performance across seven core areas that reflect major domains of program quality, development, and accreditation oversight. Review and revision of the strategic plan are informed by annual outcome reporting, faculty committee work, clinic and academic program review, student and alumni input, preceptor feedback, and strategic faculty discussions. The program also maintains ongoing compliance with accreditation expectations through annual accreditation reporting submitted each year on February 1. The program’s current accreditation cycle is 2023-2031.

### **Targeted Outcomes**

Continuing programmatic accreditation remains a central priority of the Strategic Plan. Annual review and refinement of the Strategic Plan have also identified targeted outcomes in the following areas:

- Accreditation
- Program Governance
- Sufficiency/Development of Faculty and Staff
- Curriculum Development and Student Assistance
- Research Development for Faculty and Students
- Student Admissions
- Sufficiency of Facilities and Equipment

Sample current accomplishments identified and documented by strategic planning:

### **Accreditation**

- The program has maintained continuing accreditation with the Council on Academic Accreditation in Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology (CAA) since its initial accreditation in 2017.
- Program faculty regularly review accreditation requirements, self-study materials, annual outcome data, and supporting documentation to maintain compliance with CAA standards.
- Required annual reporting to ASHA and CAA is maintained on schedule, with annual accreditation reporting submitted each February 1.
- Program outcome data, public disclosures, student records, faculty records, and committee documentation are systematically maintained to support ongoing accreditation compliance and future reaccreditation activities.
- Strategic planning reflects sustained attention to accreditation readiness through regular faculty review of standards, reporting processes, and documentation expectations.

### **Program Governance**

- The program maintains a structured governance process to support effective academic and clinical operations, regular policy review, and continuous program improvement.
- Program manuals, policies, and procedures are reviewed, updated, approved, and disseminated on a recurring basis to support operational consistency and compliance.

- The Speech-Language Institute continues to function as a robust clinical training environment, with strategic benchmarks identifying maintenance of approximately 350 clinic visits per month and 25–30 visits per day.
- The program continues to support student leadership and engagement through a class body organization and a chapter of the National Student Speech-Language-Hearing Association (NSSLHA).
- Student organizations are expected to maintain community engagement, social programming, and documented continuity of activities, supporting student leadership development and program culture.
- The program maintains both an Advisory Board and an Alumni Board, strengthening external input, curriculum relevance, alumni engagement, and professional networking.
- Program leadership meets regularly with faculty, students, and university administration to support needs assessment, decision-making, and sustained program effectiveness.

### **Sufficiency/Development of Faculty and Staff**

- The program maintains a stable full-time faculty complement of 11 faculty members, including 7 academic faculty and 4 clinical faculty, to support teaching, clinical education, scholarship, advising, and service.
- Strategic planning reflects continued attention to faculty sufficiency as clinic census, student enrollment, and program needs evolve.
- Annual faculty development planning supports teaching effectiveness, scholarship, continuing education, promotion and tenure preparation, and service contributions.
- Faculty mentoring and developmental support are built into program operations, including formal and informal support for junior faculty and eligible faculty pursuing promotion and/or tenure.
- The program continues to foster a collegial faculty culture through regular faculty meetings, committee meetings, retreats, and discussion of issues relevant to curriculum, clinic operations, scholarship, and program advancement.
- Faculty training and continuing education are supported to maintain professional certifications, strengthen expertise, and support ongoing compliance with university and professional expectations.
- Strategic planning identifies continued support for scholarly productivity, conference participation, collaborative partnerships, and periodic workload review tied to program outcomes and needs.

### **Curriculum Development and Student Assistance**

- The program continues to review academic and clinical coursework to ensure alignment with program learning objectives, ASHA standards, and CAA requirements.
- Curriculum mapping and review processes are used to evaluate course content, sequencing, and opportunities for revision in support of student learning outcomes.
- The program has identified development of a more formalized summative model for evaluating student competencies, including portfolio-related procedures and documentation.

- Students are provided with a broad range of clinical learning experiences across age groups, diagnoses, and settings within the university clinic and external placements.
- Strategic planning emphasizes increasing the complexity and diversity of student clinical experiences, including simulation, off-site experiences, camps, group interventions, and other unique first-year clinical opportunities.
- Students participate in community-based mini-rotations, strengthening exposure to real-world service environments early in training.
- Academic and clinical faculty communication is recognized as a priority for supporting student growth, early identification of concerns, and coordinated remediation when needed.
- Advisement and student support procedures are in place to monitor student progress and facilitate appropriate intervention when academic or clinical concerns arise.
- Strong student outcomes continue to be reflected in program completion data, including an on-time graduation rate of 98%.

### **Research Development for Faculty and Students**

- The strategic plan identifies research and scholarship as a continuing priority area for program development.
- Faculty are encouraged to participate in writing accountability groups, scholarship-focused discussions, and collaborative research conversations both within the department and across the college.
- The program supports faculty scholarship in basic, clinical, translational, and educational research relevant to communication sciences and disorders.
- Strategic benchmarks include growth in manuscripts submitted, conference presentations, grant submissions, and student participation in faculty-directed research relative to baseline.
- Faculty and students are encouraged to engage in research mentorship, interdisciplinary scholarship, and opportunities supported through university research infrastructure.
- The program continues to emphasize the importance of introducing students early to research processes, scholarly inquiry, and faculty mentorship.

### **Student Admissions**

- The strategic plan identifies annual recruitment of a strong incoming cohort as a major program priority.
- Recruitment efforts emphasize visibility of the program, its distinctive offerings, and the accomplishments of faculty and students.
- Program visibility is supported through the university website, the CSDCAS application portal, admissions events, open houses, tours, outreach activities, and program social media efforts.
- Strategic planning identifies a recruitment benchmark of approximately 400 applications annually, reflecting efforts to sustain applicant volume and selectivity.
- Admissions goals also emphasize matriculation of students with strong academic preparation and strong interview performance.

- Recruitment and admissions planning continue to support enrollment of high-quality candidates while maintaining cohort sizes in the program's established range of approximately 33–43 students per year.
- Strategic planning also identifies scholarship development, expanded student research opportunities, and review of interview processes as supports for attracting and retaining strong applicants.

### **Sufficiency of Facilities and Equipment**

- The program continues to evaluate and maintain the adequacy of facilities needed to support its educational and clinical missions.
- Strategic planning includes ongoing review of clinic, classroom, laboratory, office, and research space needs, with recommendations advanced as needed to support program growth and changes in instructional or clinical demand.
- Program leadership monitors needs related to furniture, space use, and physical resources in the Speech-Language Institute, classrooms, laboratories, and faculty offices.
- The program continues to assess current equipment, tests, clinical materials, instructional resources, and software for adequacy and relevance.
- Inventories of classroom and clinic materials are reviewed and updated to support removal of obsolete items and identification of needed replacements.
- Strategic planning includes development of more systematic coordination of shared resources, tracking of equipment updates, and scheduling for review of software, programs, and major equipment.
- The program also identifies the importance of orienting faculty to available university resources, supporting fuller use of institutional infrastructure across teaching, clinic, and research functions.