

# The Department of Speech Pathology & Audiology Strategic Plan 2024-2028

## ***MISSION STATEMENT:***

The Department of Speech Pathology and Audiology (SPA) at Western Illinois University (WIU) aims to develop students' professional and academic skills to a level which will ensure well-rounded speech language pathologists. These individuals will be capable of high quality service provision to diverse populations over the lifespan and across a range of practice settings as well as being prepared for eligibility for relevant state and national accreditations for professional practice.

## **Department Goals:**

In accordance with the core values of the University, social responsibility and personal growth will be nurtured for the purpose of achieving academic excellence. The SPA Department recognizes the strength in developing lifelong learning skills among faculty, supervisors, staff, and students alike and the contribution that this allows each individual to make in support of the ongoing development of both the program and the profession.

### ● ***Bachelor of Science:***

The goal of the undergraduate program is to provide students with a basic foundation of knowledge of human communication development and disorders across the lifespan. It also promotes student awareness of the knowledge and skills required to interact with typical and atypical populations. Students will be successfully prepared to enter graduate school for the field of speech pathology and/or audiology. Students who do not pursue becoming a speech-language pathologist or audiologist will be prepared to be successful in related fields.

### ● ***Master of Science:***

The goal of the MS program is to further develop and expand on foundational knowledge and skills gained at the undergraduate level. Students will be prepared to enter the profession as critical thinking and problem solving practitioners who are prepared for advanced clinical practice.

The Speech Pathology and Audiology Department (SPA) of Western Illinois University devised an updated strategic plan during the 2023-2024 academic year to address the changing needs of the students, the department, and the University. These include the advances in technology that are directly linked to education and changing clinical practice, meeting the professional standards that continue to develop thus requiring progressive educational models. Additionally, the financial constraints that continually impact resources available to educators and practitioners are addressed. Therefore, the goals set by the SPA Department for the next four years intend to develop optimal conditions which will effectively support the recruitment, retention, and high-quality education of our students at the undergraduate and graduate levels. Effective stewardship of our resources, and strong links with the local community, our professional organization, and clinical practitioners regionally and nationally will ensure that we

continue to expand upon the diverse academic and clinical education we are proud to deliver to our students.

Western Illinois University Department of Speech Pathology and Audiology serves approximately 75-100 students. Most currently we average between 30-40 graduate students and 40-50 undergraduates. Our campus clinic, Western Illinois University Speech-Language Hearing Clinic, serves more than 4,500 individuals on- and off-campus each year. In addition to our full service on-campus Speech-Language Hearing Clinic, we have three current off-campus contracts where our students are providing speech-language services in five educational buildings. We also take students to a day program for adults with disabilities as well as to a local nursing home. These student clinicians are attaining real-world experience under the supervision of one of our own ASHA certified speech-language pathologists.

For the purpose of accomplishing our mission and goals, the department believes in integration of the following:

- Dedication to open communication and a collaborative work environment,
- Shared governance to ensure best practice for the education and supervision of students,
- Life-long learning and adaptability to change,
- Persistent attention to excellence in teaching,
- High-quality clinic practices and services to our community that will include involvement of clients, families, and significant others,
- Continuous updating of technology and support for staff, faculty, supervisors, and students,
- Cultural sensitivity and diversity, and most importantly
- Putting the needs of our clients first to set the highest level of professionalism for our students.

*The following objectives identify the most relevant values of the department and how we intend on meeting the needs of faculty, staff, students, clients, families, and community:*

### **OBJECTIVE #1:**

#### ***Providing Students with the Education and Clinic Experiences that Prepare Them for Becoming Outstanding Service Providers and Advocates for Clients and Families***

- Hire faculty to teach and supervise in the undergraduate and graduate programs who have real-world clinical experiences.
  - Clinical faculty with terminal degrees are crucial to increasing evidence-based clinical practice
- Increase the percentage of the graduate program curriculum being delivered by doctoral faculty to >70%:
  - Transition a Unit B faculty member into a Unit A tenure-track faculty position in 2025-2026 (current Unit B receiving doctoral degree)
    - Meet the requirements set by CAA for doctoral faculty to provide instruction for the majority of the graduate curriculum
  - Fill and replace the Unit B non tenure track position with a faculty supervisor
    - Necessary to continue increasing the number of clients in our clinics to meet the needs of increasing number of students

- Continue to survey our recent grads and our alumni to know where there are gaps in their knowledge and skills when leaving our program
  - Issues during their program that we could improve

**KEY PERFORMANCE FACTORS:**

- % of doctoral faculty teaching graduate program
- Number of clients will increase with added Unit B and clinical Unit A
- Increased faculty leading to increased clients will allow for increased number of students in the graduate program
- Satisfaction surveys of clients and students
- Alumni surveys

**OBJECTIVE #2:**

***Enhancement of Our Leadership in Community Outreach***

- We will continue to serve as a source of knowledge, education, clinical expertise, and advocacy for the community in the area of speech and language disabilities, feeding/swallowing, and hearing
  - Providing outstanding services in the Speech, Language and Hearing Clinic,
  - Expanding clinical offerings to include a wider diversity of clients, especially those from underrepresented and underserved groups,
  - Continuous surveillance of client satisfaction,
  - Collection of outcome measures for clients served by our clinics to assess effectiveness of these services,
  - Conduct additional speech and language screening opportunities in the local community,
  - Conduct additional hearing screening opportunities in the local community, and
  - Increase the number of comprehensive autism evaluations to reduce the number of individuals on the waiting list.
  - **Providing Education and Opportunities in Our Community Outreach**
    - Attend job fairs and school career fairs to educate people about the fields and careers of speech pathology and audiology,
    - Increase the number of student organized events including fundraising, parent support, nursing home visits and support, university activity involvement, and community education
    - Improve involvement of undergraduate students and graduate students (retention) in our student organization, and
    - Increase diversity in the department, at the university, and in the field of communication, sciences, and disorders.

**KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS:**

- Monitor clinic numbers on- and off-campus as reported in EMR data (number of new clients and existing clients, types of services, screenings completed)
- Number of partnerships with community agencies (e.g., school districts, healthcare organizations, community centers, etc.)
- Increased number of undergraduate students and graduate students involved in our student organizations, and

- Increase in the number of student organized events in the community to provide education about communication disorders, neurodiversity, and social issues that need more awareness in our community
- Participation of community members at these events

### **OBJECTIVE #3:**

#### ***Recruitment and Retention of Academically Sound, Diverse, and Highly Motivated Students***

- Through recruitment efforts our team will reach students who are motivated and are looking for a learning environment that will cater to their learning styles and needs:
- Recruitment of strong undergraduate students who will then be accepted to our graduate program
  - Increase the number of undergraduate majors in speech pathology and audiology
  - Increase number of students in the incoming graduate cohort
- Increase the number of ASL minors
  - This minor facilitates in the increase in awareness of the Deaf and hard of hearing communities. Students at WIU who are majoring in LEJA, Health and Medical Sciences, Biology, nursing, Special Ed, education, and many others are feeding into this minor. This is such an important opportunity for our faculty and students to impact these individuals who may never have another opportunity to learn basic concepts regarding communication disorders and communication differences. We will capitalize on this opportunity to provide them important elements of basic foundational knowledge and skills
- RECRUITMENT.
  - Offer students opportunities to have individual visits that are centered around a day-in-the-life of our students
  - Information specific to the prospective student's interests will help us prepare a specialized visit for them and their family
  - Prospective students receive invitations to attend Discover Western events and SPA Days
    - SPA Day is a two hour academic breakout session that occurs during the Discover Western event. Students come to the WIU Speech-Language Hearing Clinic and attend a mini-class that allows them to do a hands-on activity in class with other students, they get a tour of the workrooms, computer labs, speech and hearing clinics including the Sensory Room, they get to observe clients in the hearing and speech clinics, sensory room, be involved in a hearing screening activity, a laryngoscope demonstration, and many other things
    - Graduate students are invited to our fall and spring open houses
      - Mini courses, tours of the facility, observing clinics, meeting with faculty, including the graduate coordinator, and discussing the layout of the program
  - Enhance recruitment efforts for diversifying our student body in our undergraduate and graduate programs

- Increase marketing and messaging to target a more culturally diverse and/or international student population
    - Work with international contacts to increase recruitment (i.e., Canada)
  - Increase involvement of our minority students in the recruitment process
    - Meet with our minority students to determine what we are doing right and what we could be improving on to help them succeed
- RETENTION.
  - Increase student success.
    - Open door policy for students to meet with instructors about courses and clinic
    - Graduate assistants involved in all classes to assist with study sessions, labs, and clinic questions
    - Increased number of group activities that include grads, undergrads, faculty, and staff to encourage a friendly helpful environment for all students
    - Increased involvement in student organizations
  - Increasing the presence of student services available to our students (e.g. counseling, student success center, career center, advising, etc)
  - The department chair and the advisors will reach out when students are struggling and plan accordingly
    - Early warning grades
    - Remediations

**KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS:**

- Admissions data provided to departments each month from the UG Admissions Office
- Registration information provided to departments from Registrar
- Number of students involved in the student organization
- Attendance at Major/Minor Fairs on Campus
- Number of scheduled visits of the counseling center, student success services, and other speakers who can talk with our students about issues that are of interest to them

**OBJECTIVE #4:**

***Provide Outstanding Undergraduate and Graduate Educational and Clinical Opportunities***

- Use assessment data from University annual assessments to monitor student progress and their level of foundational knowledge
  - Increase use of Simucase and Master Clinician for bridging the gap between coursework and clinical thinking
- Oral comprehensive exams each semester of graduate program to help determine student and programmatic strengths and weaknesses
  - Determine the areas that need additional attention and determine how that information can either be incorporated differently in the course and/or can be addressed in other courses, clinic, and/or simulations
- PRAXIS scores to evaluate trends across cohorts and between cohorts
- Continue with assessing students using the Learning Checks in classes

- Contact with internship supervisors to determine if there are trends in strengths and weaknesses that we are able to discuss and make changes to address them
- Bombardment Model of Learning/Intensified Hands-On Experiences
  - Evidence from our assessment data at the UG and graduate level as well as our learning checks has shown that we need to continuously provide opportunities for students to learn the foundational skills
    - Students learn for the exam and not for lifelong learning so we need to provide specific information across multiple classes and provide additional hands-on learning opportunities to help solidify the knowledge and skills

Key Performance Indicators:

- Assessment data
- Comprehensive Exam Data
- PRAXIS Scores
- Increased use of Simucase
- Internship Data from off-campus supervisors
- On-campus supervisors reporting on trends across student learning

**OBJECTIVE #5:**

***Generate Additional Resources That Will Supplement Current Resources***

- Clinic resources drive everything we do and therefore in order to maximize educational and clinical opportunities to best serve our students and our clients
  - Increase the revenue generated by the WIU Speech-Language Hearing Clinic
  - Increase the number of grants received for Western Illinois University Autism Clinic of Excellence
  - Increase revenue generated to continue making improvements to facilities, purchase necessary equipment, supplies, materials, and providing faculty with educational support
  - Maintain our off-campus clinic contracts to provide real-life experience for our students as well as supplement our appropriated budget. These clinic contracts provide our graduate students with diverse experiences.
    - Partnerships with local school districts, skilled nursing facilities, and cooperatives
    - Rural area schools lacking resources and/or professionals to provide services to the children in their district
      - Facilitates in increasing revenue for the department
        - This revenue provides us the means of purchasing the equipment, materials, and support necessary for serving students and clients

**KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS:**

- Number of signed contracts with local school districts
- Amount of dollars received in grant monies
- Ability to purchase what we need for maximizing student learning and client satisfaction

## **OBJECTIVE #6**

### ***Disseminate Policies, Procedures, and Criteria That Are Set Forth By The Department to Comply With Accreditation and Compliance for Successful Completion of Program Requirements and Conferral of BS and MS Degrees***

- Maintain updates to our website with events, clinic calendars, Risk-Management Policies & Procedures
- Improve client and student access of website
  - Increase educational support for parents and caregivers that will help them navigate through early-intervention, schools, long-term care options, and other needs of our families we serve
  - Improve online registration for clients and caregivers
  - Update parent support and student support meeting dates and resources
- Continuous update of clinic manual, graduate handbook, and faculty handbook to communicate changes across the university and department
- Continue to update and report changes to degree plans for graduate students
- Update degree requirements and changes to general education for undergraduates as catalogs change

#### **KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS:**

- Accurately updated website
- Accurately updated clinic, faculty, and graduate handbook
- Student degree plans
- Undergraduate Catalog
- Graduate Catalog