

## **Abilene Christian University**

### **Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders**

#### **Strategic Plan 2020-2025**

##### **VISION**

We believe that communication connects us to God and one another.

Consequently, we are committed to passing on knowledge and skills as well as a love for the profession and the people to whom we minister. We are determined to continue the legacy of forming students' beliefs about God, themselves, others, and the world. We do this through a commitment to know students individually, connect with students where they are, and mentor them in the developmental process toward becoming an excellent professional within the field of communication sciences and disorders.

##### **MISSION**

To equip students with the knowledge and skills in speech-language pathology for ministry to persons with communication disorders through a Christian world view.

##### **CORE VALUES**

Excellence, Community, Passion, Integrity

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The continuing vision of the CSD faculty for growth in the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders is shaped by our firm belief that communication connects us to God and one another. Consequently, we are committed to passing on knowledge and skills as well as a love for the profession and the people to whom we minister. We are determined to continue the legacy of forming students' beliefs about God, themselves, others, and the world. We do this through a commitment to knowing students individually, meeting students where they are, and guiding them in the developmental process. Our core values are reflected in all planning for our work: **Excellence, Community, Passion, Integrity.**

After successful completion of a strategic plan targeting the academic years between 2015 - 2020, the department faculty and staff met in the summer of 2020 to draft a five year strategic plan in line with the missions of the college, the department, and with the current strategic plan of the university. The faculty and staff conceived of seven focus areas for this plan: 1) PROGRAM and CURRICULUM, 2) SPIRITUAL FORMATION ACROSS THE PROGRAM, 3) CLINICAL EDUCATION AND EXPERIENCES, 4) PERSONNEL, 5) SCHOLARSHIP, 6) ALUMNI ENGAGEMENT, and 7) DEVELOPMENT AND ENDOWMENT.

Program issues were: (1) the creation and launching of an accelerated BS-to -MS degree (3+2) track, (2) The review and updating of the graduate curriculum, and (3) the strengthening of a climate of diversity and inclusion throughout the department.

Spiritual Formation issues were: (1) the aligning of student spiritual formation efforts within the department with the university undergraduate spiritual formation program, and the utilization of spiritual formation resources within the graduate program as well.

Clinical Education issues were: (1) the creation and launching, in collaboration with community partners, of hospital pre-externship orientation programs in Dallas and Abilene, and a school pre-externship orientation program in Abilene, and (2) the highlighting of faculty and clinical supervisor expertise to assist in student recruiting and to increase capacity for community services.

Personnel issues were: (1) the maintenance of a fully-staffed faculty of highly qualified individuals in the context of projected needs for faculty expansion in Dallas, and approaching faculty retirements in Abilene.

Scholarship issues were: (1) the launching of a program of release time and research support funding for two faculty members per year, and (2) increasing student engagement in faculty research.

Alumni engagement issues were: (1) engaging alumni to build a broader base of support for the department by offering networking/continuing education opportunities, and creating an alumni organization (Wildcat SLPs).

Development and Endowment issues were: (1) the creation of a department-specific endowment for the purpose of providing significant graduate student scholarships, and (2) the creation of an endowment to support the clinical education programs at the two campuses.

Outcomes and strategies were developed to address each of these focus areas and issues. This plan will guide department work beginning in August 2020.

## FOCUS AREA 1: PROGRAM and CURRICULUM

**Issue 1 - An accelerated BS to MS (3+2 year) program will provide students with a money-saving program option while facilitating recruitment of undergraduate students to ACU and to the department.**

Outcome 1: An accelerated BS to MS-SLP program track is developed and launched with the necessary structure and resources to ensure successful implementation, starting in Fall 2021

### Strategies:

1. Action: Develop course plan and budget/(Terry Baggs and Lynette Austin /Sept. 2020)
2. Action: Identify and advise students with necessary qualifications and interest in participating to be part of the pilot cohort in Aug. 2021 /(Lory Chrane/ Sept. 2020)
3. Action: Obtain undergraduate council approvals from the College of Education and Human Services Academic Council, and the University Undergraduate Academic Council (Terry Baggs/Lynette Austin/Lory Chrane /Nov. 2020)
4. Action: Receive and review applications from pilot cohort (and admit as appropriate) /(Abilene CSD graduate admissions committee /January 2021)
5. Action: Accelerated BS to MS students (undergraduate students) initiate classes in the realigned track / (Abilene CSD faculty /Aug 2021)

**Issue 2 - The graduate curriculum addresses all current areas of practice in sufficient depth to be in alignment with ASHA certification standards and practice standards.**

Outcome 1: New courses are added as deemed appropriate by the faculty to the MS-SLP program, while maintaining a 52 hour degree plan

a. Strategies:

1. Action: Review clinical practicum courses (7 hours) to determine feasibility of reconfiguring hours from those classes to permit inclusion of new required or elective courses / (Terry Baggs/Monica Garcia/Ellen Shutt Feb. 2021). **IF determined to be feasible/desirable, the following actions to be taken:**
2. Action: Generate suggestions for new course offerings in line with new certification and practice standards (Terry Baggs/graduate curriculum committee/ March 2021)
3. Action: Propose curriculum changes (changes to clinical practicum courses and additions) to all CSD faculty /(Terry Baggs/Lynette Austin /March 2021)
4. Action: Determine responsible faculty member(s) to create new syllabi for additional courses / (Lynette Austin / March 2021)
5. Action: Faculty member(s) to create new syllabi for proposed courses/ (CSD faculty / summer 2021)
6. Action: Propose new courses and modifications for clinical practicum classes to academic councils (Terry Baggs/Lynette Austin/ September 2021)
7. Action: New courses taught as scheduled (CSD faculty/ Aug. 2022 and beyond)

**Issue 3 - A climate of inclusion is advanced in the department that attracts, welcomes, and supports students from diverse backgrounds, while providing opportunities for all students to learn from and understand individuals of different backgrounds and viewpoints.**

Outcome 1: Students from diverse backgrounds are supported and encouraged to experience community and connection within the department and the professional SLP community in Abilene.

Strategies: make intentional efforts to extend mentoring and professional community-building opportunities to students of color, as follows:

1. Action: meet with students of color to hear about their motivation and goals for studying CSD, in separate UG and G groups, or in combination, to establish connection points and discuss possible activities such as those listed below/ (Lynette Austin/Lory Chrane/Denise Barnett/Monica Garcia/Brenda Bender/other faculty / October of each year)
  - match students with professionals of color in the community or beyond*
  - assist students in connecting with ASHA-connected opportunities of interest: student membership in the National Black Association for Speech-Language and Hearing, The Hispanic Caucus of the American Speech-Language Hearing Association, ASHA Minority Student Leadership Program*

Outcome 2: Opportunities for learning about diversity and inclusion for all students are embedded in curricular (required) and extracurricular activities.

- a. Strategy: Build opportunities- in classes, meetings of the National Student Speech, Language and Hearing Association, and chapel assemblies- for facilitated discussions and reflection on issues of diversity, inclusion, and social justice to become part of daily practice,
  1. Action: identify appropriate/necessary areas for class or group discussion via conversations with students of color, faculty of color, and the office of diversity education / (Lynette Austin/other faculty / October 2020)
  2. Action: plan occasions and formats for discussion (ongoing)/ (CSD faculty/ Nov 2020)
  3. Action: initiate meetings/discussion opportunities (ongoing)/ (CSD faculty/ Jan 2021)

- b. Strategy: assess the viability of a discipline-specific, undergraduate Cultural Competence course, and build and offer the course as appropriate.
1. Action: identify faculty members to evaluate the need for/feasibility of a discipline-specific course vs. the general education course currently required / (Lynette Austin/UG curriculum committee / Sept. 2021)
  2. Action: if determined appropriate, present a course proposal to the CSD faculty/ (Lynette Austin/UG curriculum committee / Nov. 2021)
  3. Action: as determined by CSD faculty, designate faculty members to create a syllabus for the cultural competence course / (Lynette Austin/ Jan. 2022)
  4. Action: Propose new course to academic councils (Terry Baggs/Lynette Austin/ March 2022)
  5. Action: New course taught as scheduled (CSD faculty/ Aug. 2022 and beyond)

## FOCUS AREA 2: SPIRITUAL FORMATION ACROSS THE PROGRAM

**Issue 1: The department aligns efforts to support undergraduate student spiritual health and growth with the university spiritual formation program, and utilizes similar resources to support graduate student spiritual health .**

Outcome 1: Students engage in completing a spiritual needs assessment

- a. Strategy: identify effective means of engaging students in assessing their spiritual needs across undergraduate and graduate programs
1. Action: Assign a committee of faculty members to explore spiritual needs assessments and identify an appropriate tool or tools to present to the full faculty / (Lynette Austin/assigned faculty / Jan 2021)

2. Action: plan a process of assessment administration/ (Lory Chrane/Terry Baggs/ Brenda Bender/ assigned faculty / March 2021)
3. Action: engage students in spiritual needs self-assessment and the creation of a spiritual development action plan (/assigned faculty / Aug 2021 and ongoing)
4. Action: each semester give students an opportunity to reflect on their spiritual health and growth, and review their plan, during regularly scheduled end-of-term formative assessments (faculty/ end of fall semester 2021 and ongoing)

Outcome 2: Students select from a variety of in- and out-of-department resources in order to nurture their individual spiritual growth and health.

- a. Strategy: Create a list of resources for students to consider for their use/engagement as they seek to address their identified spiritual needs.
  1. Action: faculty and students create list of currently available events, services and resources that students may access as they plan for spiritual growth (Lory Chrane/Jennifer Binkley/ Brenda Bender/other faculty/ Aug 2021 and ongoing)
  2. Action: together with students, seek out and/or create additional resources for meeting identified needs (studies, group meetings, mentoring) (Lory Chrane/Jennifer Binkley/other faculty/ Sept 2021 and ongoing)

### FOCUS AREA 3: CLINICAL EDUCATION AND EXPERIENCES

**Issue 1. Pre-externship orientations strengthen student readiness and confidence prior to clinical practice, and build relationships with community professionals as they participate in planning for and engaging in the development of new SLPs via collaboration with the MS-SLP program.**

Outcome 1: Local hospital systems in Abilene and Dallas collaborate with the MS-SLP program to provide pre-externship orientation experiences

- a. Strategy: Confirm the engagement of Abilene hospital systems in the program per the (already presented) proposal
  1. Action: conference with the director of rehabilitation and the designated preceptor from the hospital SLP service to confirm initiation of pilot program in Abilene in January 2021 and confirm via memo of understanding; otherwise, reinstate the discussion of the program (Lynette Austin/Monica Garcia / September 2020 )
  2. Action: If agreed, initiate orientation program activities per proposal in the spring semester of 2021 (Lynette Austin/Monica Garcia/ SLP preceptor / January 2021)
  3. Action: Evaluate the success of the program via student, preceptor, supervisors, and faculty feedback, and plan for necessary changes (Lynette Austin/Monica Garcia/Jennifer Binkley/ SLP preceptor / Aug 2021)
  
- b. Strategy: Enter into a collaboration with a selected Dallas hospital system to implement the hospital pre-externship, incorporating necessary adjustments indicated by Abilene pilot program feedback
  1. Action: identify potential Dallas partners, and communicate with rehab directors/lead SLPs to establish interest and propose the program (Brenda Bender/Dallas CSD faculty/Lynette Austin / Sept/October 2021)
  2. Action: If agreed, initiate orientation program activities per proposal in the spring semester of 2021 (Brenda Bender SLP preceptor / January 2022)
  3. Action: Evaluate the success of the program via student, preceptor, supervisors, and faculty feedback, and plan for necessary changes (Brenda Bender/Dallas CSD faculty/ SLP preceptor / August 2022)

Outcome 2: Abilene area school-districts collaborate with the MS-SLP program to provide pre-externship orientation experiences (the Dallas program enjoys collaboration with several schools and districts at the time of strategic plan creation).

- a. Strategy: Engage the special education service of a local school district/special education service for the purpose of providing pre-externship orientation in Abilene.
  1. Action: create a pre-externship orientation proposal for the purpose of presenting to school district special education director(s) (Lynette Austin/Monica Garcia/Shealynn Abston / October 2021 )
  2. Action: If agreed, execute a memo of understanding for initiating program activities (Lynette Austin/Monica Garcia/ ISD administrator / spring 2022)
  3. Action: Initiate program activities (Monica Garcia/Shealynn Abston/ISD SLP preceptor / Aug 2022)
  4. Action: Evaluate the success of the program via student, preceptor, supervisors, and faculty feedback, and plan for necessary changes (Lynette Austin/Monica Garcia/Shealynn Abston/ SLP preceptor/ISD administrator / Aug 2023)

**Issue 2: Faculty and clinical expertise attract students and enhances community services**

Outcome 1: Faculty and staff (supervisors') clinical expertise, when highlighted and made available to community members, attracts students and improves outreach to the community

- a. Strategy: Capitalize on faculty specialization areas and supervisors' expertise to develop as a "center of clinical excellence" in targeted areas of practice.

1. Action: Engage faculty in discussions of how faculty expertise could be leveraged to build specific areas of clinical excellence (Terry Baggs/Monica Garcia/Brenda Bender / Nov 2022)
2. Action: Propose areas of clinical focus and a create a plan for faculty collaboration (based on faculty input); secure faculty agreement (Terry Baggs/Monica Garcia/Brenda Bender/Dallas faculty/ March 2023)
3. Action: Create a budget for any needed training and equipment relevant to the areas of clinical focus (Terry Baggs/Monica Garcia/ Brenda Bender/relevant faculty/ May 2023)
4. Action: Write proposals to secure funding for targeted services (Lynette Austin /Brenda Bender/ Nov 2023)
5. Action: As funding is available, launch new clinical services (Lynette Austin/Monica Garcia/Brenda Bender/Dallas faculty / Jan - Aug 2024)
6. Action: Evaluate service outcomes to ensure optimal results (Lynette Austin/ Monica Garcia/Brenda Bender/Dallas faculty / Sept - Oct 2024)

#### FOCUS AREA 4: PERSONNEL

**Issue 1: The department maintains a fully-staffed faculty of highly qualified personnel.**

Outcome 1: A new tenure-track faculty position is created and filled in the Dallas division, for a new faculty member demonstrating expertise in adult populations

Strategies:

1. Action: Propose the addition of the new tenure-track position to CEHS Dean and Provost, including the possibility of supporting a current non-tenure-track instructor to prepare for this role by completing doctoral studies/ (Lynette Austin)

- . 2. Action: Once the position is approved, establish whether it will be filled via support of a current department member or a national search (Lynette Austin/Brenda Bender)
- 3. Action: Depending on the outcomes of the previous actions, establish a timeline for transition of the current department member or the introduction of a new faculty member (Lynette Austin/Brenda Bender).

Outcome 2: The department plans for a seamless transition as faculty members retire, replacing those members with new faculty

Strategies:

- . 1. Action: Discuss the timeline of retirements in the department with the CEHS Dean and Provost, and create a procedure and timeline for hiring new faculty/ (Lynette Austin/ Sept 2022)
- . 2. Action: Initiate steps to shoulder tap potential new faculty / (Lynette Austin/ according to established timeline)

## FOCUS AREA 5: SCHOLARSHIP

**Issue 1: The department provides release time and funding support for faculty research.**

Outcome 1: Two rotating semester course releases, one at Abilene and one at Dallas, for alloting dedicated time for scholarship, become available for the fall 2021 semester.

Strategies:

- 1. Action: Develop and maintain a pool of qualified professionals for adjunct teaching and graduate course facilitation (Lynette Austin/Brenda Bender/Tamaria Tuttle/Aubree Browning/ September 2020 - ongoing)

2. Action: Create a funding plan, in collaboration with Deans of CEHS and GPS (Dallas) (Lynette Austin/ Spring of 2021)
3. Action: Create application and awards process (Lynette Austin/ April 2021)
4. Action: :Initiate program (Lynette Austin/ Brenda Bender / May 2021)

Outcome 2: The department provides funding support for faculty research agendas.

Strategies:

1. Action: Create a funding plan, for equipment/ software/etc, to be used in faculty research, in collaboration with Deans of CEHS and GPS (Dallas) (Lynette Austin/ Spring 2021)
2. Action: Create process by which faculty can apply for funds (Lynette Austin/ Brenda Bender / May 2021)

**Issue 2: The department encourages and supports student engagement in scholarly activities**

Outcome 1: The department engages graduate and undergraduate students in faculty research each semester.

Strategies:

1. Action: Establish faculty interest in engaging research assistants, and determine the number required (Lynette Austin/ Brenda Bender / May 2021)
2. Action: Create a stipend funding plan, in collaboration with Deans of CEHS and GPS (Lynette Austin/ Fall 2021)
3. Action: Create process by which students can apply for work, to begin fall semester 2022 (Lynette Austin/ Brenda Bender / spring 2022)

## FOCUS AREA 6: ALUMNI ENGAGEMENT

### **Issue 1: Engaged alumni provide valuable support to the department and university.**

Outcome 1: On-campus (or virtual) continuing education programs and networking events increase the perceived value of ongoing engagement with the department.

#### Strategies:

1. Action: Establish a faculty committee for planning a yearly event at each campus (perhaps in collaboration with regional SHAs, providing free CEUs and networking opportunities for alumni. (Lynette Austin/faculty/ fall 2022)
2. Action: Initiate continuing education programs (all faculty/ fall 2023)

Outcome 2: An alumni organization provides public relations and fund-raising assistance for specific department initiatives.

#### Strategies:

1. Action: Establish a joint faculty/ alumni committee for the purpose of organizing a WildcatSLPs association (Lynette Austin/Brenda Bender/ faculty/ Fall 2024)
2. Action: Begin accepting members of WildcatSLPs (Fall 2025)

## FOCUS AREA 7: DEVELOPMENT AND ENDOWMENT:

### **Issue 1: A department-specific endowment for graduate program scholarships assists in increasing the diversity of student cohorts.**

Outcome 1: Establish a department endowment which yields sufficient revenue to enable significant tuition scholarships for the graduate cohorts at both campuses

Strategies:

1. Action: Meet with CEHS Dean and development officers to discuss the viability of establishing endowments, and if feasible, establish a plan and timeline. (Lynette Austin/ Fall 2021)
2. Action: Accordingly, engage in fundraising efforts with the intent to commence disbursing scholarship funds by Fall 2025 (Lynette Austin/other faculty as designated/ development office/ 2021 - ongoing)

**Issue 2: An endowment to support the clinical programs enables the department to expand clinical services and supervision in both locations.**

Outcome 1: Establish a department endowment which yields sufficient revenue to enable clinical program and supervision expansion at both campuses.

Strategies:

1. Action: Meet with CEHS Dean and development officers to discuss the viability of establishing endowments, and if feasible, establish a plan and timeline. (Lynette Austin/ Fall 2021)
2. Action: Accordingly, engage in fundraising efforts with the intent to use funds for clinical expansion by 2025 (Lynette Austin/other faculty as designated/ development office/ 2021 - ongoing)