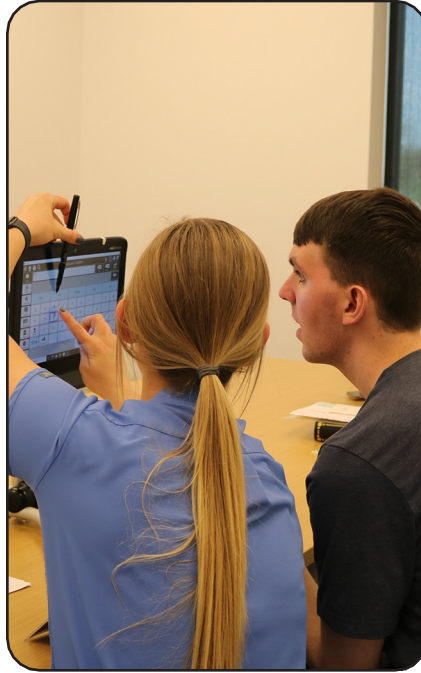


Special Education and Communication Disorders

SECD is dedicated to enhancing the lives of individuals with special needs, their families, schools, and communities.



Maximum Potential
for Learning



Autonomous
Communication



Sensory Access &
Rehabilitation

ENGAGED SCHOLARSHIP THAT IMPACTS NEBRASKA, THE NATION, & THE WORLD

STRATEGIC PLAN 2024-2027

ADDRESSING UNL N2025 GOALS AND CEHS GRAND VISIONS



**COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
AND HUMAN SCIENCES**

*Department of Special Education
and Communication Disorders*

Introduction

The College of Education and Human Sciences (CEHS) at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL) houses the Department of Special Education and Communication Disorders (SECD), which encompasses three programs: Audiology, Speech-Language Pathology (SLP), and Special Education. These programs are nationally recognized for their excellence in training future speech-language pathologists, audiologists, and special educators to serve as practitioners, teachers, and researchers in the fields of communication disorders and special education.

Our strategic plan for the next three years focuses on key priorities: marketing and recruitment of high-quality students; fostering departmental creativity, collaboration, and research; supporting professional and faculty development; ongoing curriculum review for teaching excellence and budget efficiency; and advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion outcomes. This shorter strategic planning period allows us to remain agile and responsive to the rapid changes within our professions.

CEHS operates under a “living strategic plan,” which aligns with UNL’s N2025 plan. The N2025 plan emphasizes the power of individual integrity through every person and interaction, provides resources and opportunities for interdisciplinary work to address UNL’s grand challenges, and underscores the importance of expanding experiential learning. The College’s mission is to enhance the lives of individuals, families, schools, and communities while strengthening the relationships among them.

CEHS’s mission is supported by three grand visions that define its purpose as a people’s college at a land-grant institution: **Thriving Young Children, Comprehensive Health and Well-being, and Strong Communities**. Together, these visions guide our collective aspirations and actions. The programs in Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology align seamlessly with this mission and these grand visions. They advance knowledge and discovery in our professions through exemplary teaching, research, service, and community engagement. These fields bridge education and healthcare, fitting squarely within the College’s first two grand visions. The Special Education program complements the College’s mission as the leading entity at UNL for preparing teachers. As a faculty, we are deeply committed to community engagement, which aligns directly with building strong communities and schools—the focus of the College’s third grand vision.

In early 2023, the programs in Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology created a strategic plan representing a collective approach to advancing research, teaching, and service for individuals with communication differences. This thoughtful process, led by the program directors, is depicted in Figure 1.

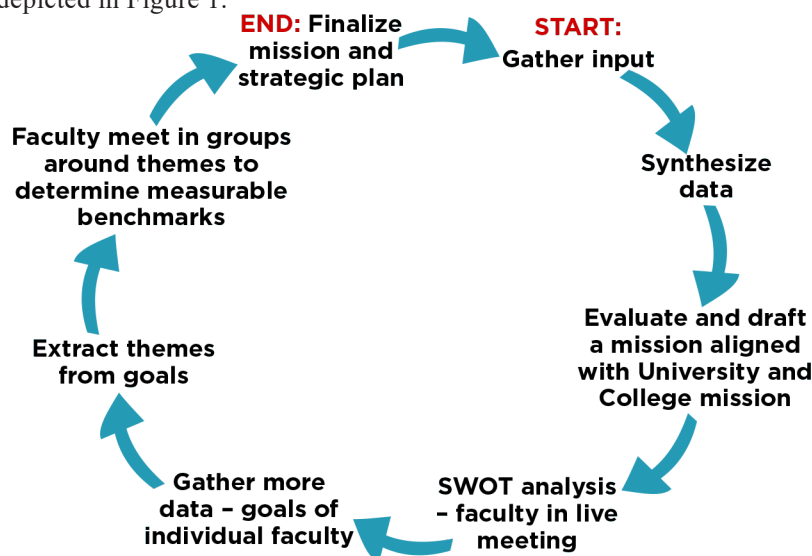


Figure 1: Strategic planning process. Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology, 2022.

Subsequently the programs in Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology created a Strategic Plan that represented a collective approach to serve people with communication differences through research, teaching, and service/outreach. Later in 2023 the Department underwent an Academic Program Review that identified several recommendations. As a result, the recommendations were systematically organized into themes and strategic initiatives were developed. The two plans were similar and across several iterations a comprehensive Department wide strategic plan was developed. The strategic plan was voted on and adopted by the faculty in August of 2024. This comprehensive strategic plan contains components of both planning initiatives. The strategic plan is a living document, allowing for additions and adjustments to align with evolving departmental goals and needs.

¹ University of Nebraska-Lincoln. College of Education and Human Sciences (CEHS), 2022. A Living Strategic Plan-Collective Grand Visions: Growing a People’s College. Retrieved Dec. 29, 2022, from <https://cehs.unl.edu/cehs/cehs-strategic-plan/>.

² University of Nebraska-Lincoln (2022). N2025 Strategic Plan. Retrieved Dec. 29, 2022, from <https://n202.unl.edu/>.

Mission, Vision, Values

Our mission and vision are shaped by the values and culture of our programs, which, in turn, are influenced by the broader university culture that surrounds us. The following section outlines the mission and values of the University, the College, the Department, and, finally, our programs. While our programs have united around these aligned missions, visions, and values, we view this as a living document—one that will evolve as the university and the world continue to change.

University:

The role of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln as the primary intellectual and cultural resource for the State of Nebraska is fulfilled through the three missions of the University: teaching, research, and service. Teaching, research, and service take on a distinctive character at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln because of its status as a comprehensive land-grant university (<https://diversity.unl.edu/recognizing-land>). These traits permit opportunities for the integration of multiple disciplines providing students more complete and sophisticated programs of study. Its land-grant tradition ensures a commitment to the special character of the State and its people. The faculty are responsible for the curricular content of the various programs and pursue new knowledge and truths within a structure that assures academic freedom in its intellectual endeavors. The curricula are designed to foster critical thinking, the re-examination of accepted truths, a respect for different perspectives including an appreciation of the multiethnic character of the nation, and a curiosity that leads to life-long learning. Additionally, an environment exists whereby students can develop aesthetic values and human relationships including tolerance for differing viewpoints.

College:

The College of Education and Human Sciences is dedicated to enhancing the lives of individuals, families, schools, and communities, and to strengthening the relationships among them.

In pursuing our mission, we are guided by shared values that inform every aspect of our work in local, national and global contexts.

- Excellence in all aspects of the life of the College;
- Innovation, creativity, and curiosity as we address the complex issues facing individuals, families, schools, and communities;
- Respect for diverse people, ideas, voices, and perspectives;
- Multidisciplinary approaches to scholarship that integrate teaching and learning, research, scholarship, creative activity, outreach, and service;
- Working together to positively impact the lives of individuals, families, schools, and communities;
- Partnering with people in the community to support the mission and vision of the College of Education and Human Sciences;
- Emphasizing the creation of new knowledge and its application to human and community needs, thereby combining the strengths of a research and land-grant university.

Department:

The Department of Special Education and Communication Disorders has a mission to: Enhance the lives of individuals with special needs, their families, schools, and communities.

SECD Vision:

Our vision is that every individual with special needs will:

- Achieve maximum potential for learning.
- Communicate autonomously.
- Enjoy optimum health and well-being throughout the lifespan.

SECD Values:

Collaboration – We work together across multiple disciplines and scientific fields to find answers to big questions and solve difficult and complex problems.

Collegiality – Our interactions with others are respectful, polite, and professional. Each member's contributions are valued.

Creativity/Innovation – We strive to solve difficult problems to advance the Department's professions of practice. We deal with complex issues facing individuals with special needs or disabilities, their families, schools, and communities.

Dedication – We are passionate about and dedicated to the mission of the Department and College, focused on success in advancing knowledge, training leaders, and serving our clients, their families, and our communities.

Diversity – Our faculty represent diverse perspectives and expertise in research, teaching, and outreach encompassing professions of practice in special education, speech-language pathology, and audiology.

Integrity – We carry out our mission and strive for our goals with the highest level of integrity.

Respect – We respect diverse people, viewpoints, ideas, and perspectives.

Audiology Program Mission:

The mission of the Audiology Program is to prepare students in clinical and research domains related to persons with hearing and balance difficulties.

SLP Program Mission:

The program in speech-language pathology prepares practitioners, researchers, and scholars to work with persons with communication difficulties at all ages, and to advance the understanding of communication processes, communication disorders, and speech and language sciences.

SPED Program Mission:

The program in Special Education prepares educators with the knowledge and skills to improve the academic, social, and life outcomes for children, youth, and adults with disabilities and their families.

Collectively the Department worked together to develop the following definitions of our core values specific to our work within the Department.

Collaboration – We work together across multiple disciplines and scientific fields to find answers to big questions and solve difficult and complex problems. We value and promote interdisciplinary collaboration.

Collegiality – Our interactions with others are respectful, polite, and professional. Each member's contributions matter.

Creativity/Innovation – We strive to answer big questions and solve difficult problems to advance our program's professions of practice and deal with complex issues facing individuals with communication differences, their families, schools, and communities.

Dedication – We are passionate about and dedicated to the mission of the Department and College, focused on success in advancing knowledge, training leaders, developing future providers, and serving our clients, their families, and our communities.

Diversity – We strive for diversity among our faculty, students, and staff, and believe in promoting justice through the understanding of the root cause of disparity. We strive for an inclusive environment that allows diverse members to have input in decision, and we promote an environment that establishes a feeling of well-being for all.

Strategic Plan 2024-2027

As described above the following represents the SECD strategic Plan:

Key:

Red text: SLP/AUD Strategic Plan (S/A SP)

Black text: APR

Blue text: Strategic enhancement goals (additions)

1. MARKETING AND RECRUITMENT OF HIGH-QUALITY STUDENTS

APR Recommendation 1: Systematic Marketing and Recruitment

	Initiative	Measurement of Success	Timeline	Individual(s) Responsible	Resources Required
APR Initiative 1	Strategic Planning by Unit to develop cohesive brand for each program (SLP, AUD, SPED) at each level of education (bachelors, masters, doctoral) as deemed most effective by faculty.	Publication and use of branding on our website and in materials used for recruiting at all levels (Bachelor, Masters, Doctoral). Each faculty member can articulate the brand of their unit at each level of education.	Complete by August 2027	Program Coordinators/Directors Department Chair Program Faculty	Administrative, faculty, and staff time (FTE).

APR Initiative 2	Engage in strategic planning to reimagine how work is completed and reorganize committee structures.	A new committee structure will be in place to help complete the work of the Department. Structure, charge, and responsibility is posed to our Department SharePoint folder. Systems are in place for marketing and recruiting.	Aug-27	Department Chair, Chair's advisory committee, program Coordinators/Directors, program faculty	Administrative, faculty, and staff time (FTE).
APR Initiative 3	Develop a new set of recruiting materials & marketing strategies	Each program will have a stable set of marketing materials available for distribution and use at events.	Aug-27	Department Chair, Program Coordinators/Directors, Public Outreach Associate, Pixel Lab, CEHS Director of Recruiting	Administrative, faculty, and staff time (FTE). Additionally, the Department will need to assign financial resources to the Pixel Lab for the development of materials. Additional (not existing) .5 staff FTE to accomplish and keep the materials and plans updated, current, and consistent. This individual would implement consistent social media and other marketing plans.

<p>S/A SP Goal 1: Reach enrollment targets for AUD (10) and MS SLP (35) programs, and expand revenue streams for teaching</p>	<p>Objective 1: Improve marketing of programs through strategic attention to promoting program strengths focusing on success in advancing knowledge, training leaders, developing future providers, and serving others.</p>	<p>Benchmark 1: 50% growth in social media shares, likes, and follows. Benchmark 2: Investigate use of new software that assists us to better understand how our social media and electronic recruiting is being received. Benchmark 3: Investigate use of CSDCAS (the centralized application service for communication sciences and disorders programs) Benchmark 4: Increase amount of recruiting completed by 50% (high school career days, allied health undergraduate programs, etc.)</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Benchmark 1 lead personnel: Public Outreach Associate, Program Coordinators/Directors Benchmark 2 lead personnel: Public Outreach Associate Benchmark 3 lead personnel: Graduate coordinator, program Coordinators/Directors Benchmark 4 lead personnel: Program faculty</p>	<p>Administrative, faculty, and staff time (FTE). Small budget allocation for materials. Hiring of new Public Outreach Associate. Budget for software if needed</p>
<p>APR initiative 4</p>	<p>Stabilize and where possible increase enrollments in all three programs by utilizing marketing plan and expanding recruitment initiatives.</p>	<p>Develop a form to complete to measure number and outcomes of recruiting events. These forms will be utilized to look at data over time and make decisions about future events.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Department Chair, Student Services Associate, Graduate Chair, CEHS Director of Recruiting</p>	<p>Reassignment of Administrative, faculty, and staff time (FTE). Additional (not existing) .5 staff FTE for recruitment and retention of students Utilize UNL students in recruitment efforts as recommended by APR team. Staff time will be needed to coordinate this effort.</p>

<p>S/A SP Goal 1: Reach enrollment targets for AUD (10) and MS SLP (35) programs, and expand revenue streams for teaching</p>	<p>Objective 2: Evaluate funding needs for students within the AUD, SLP, and SPED undergraduate and graduate programs.</p>	<p>Benchmark: Faculty will evaluate the funding of students within the programs and determine needs/opportunities for growth and use of scholarships and GA/GRA positions by looking at numbers of students funded and total expenditures. This will be compared to size of admissions cohorts.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Department Chair, Graduate Coordinator</p>	<p>Allocation of foundation funds</p>
<p>S/A SP Goal 1: Reach enrollment targets for AUD (10) and MS SLP (35) programs, and expand revenue streams for teaching</p>	<p>Objective 3: Engage in two new recruiting experiences and gather and evaluate outcome data.</p>	<p>Benchmark: New recruitment events offered by August 2025 and evaluation data gathered.</p>	<p>August 26</p>	<p>Department Chair, Program Coordinators/Directors, Program faculty</p>	<p>Faculty and Staff time</p>

<p>S/A SP Goal 3: Increase creativity and collaboration within the Department to ensure the pursuit of knowledge</p>	<p>Objective 4: Increase number of doctoral students by 25%.</p>	<p>Benchmark: Change in percent of doctoral students over a three-year period.</p>	<p>Aug 27</p>	<p>Department Chair, Graduate Coordinator Program, Coordinators/Directors, Program faculty</p>	<p>Administrative, faculty, and staff time (FTE).</p>
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2. FOSTERING DEPARTMENTAL CREATIVITY, COLLABORATION, AND RESEARCH

APR Recommendation 2: Enhance Research/Creative Activity Opportunities

APR initiative 5	Faculty will work to determine where research clusters enhance our research productivity.	Hubs will be identified and documented. This information will be utilized to develop future job descriptions when recruiting hires.	Aug -27	Department Chair, Graduate Chair, Program Faculty	<p>Administrative, faculty, and staff time (FTE).</p> <p>Immediate Hires are needed for a) 1 tenure track research positions in Audiology b) 2 tenure track research positions in SLP.</p> <p>These hires are needed to keep us in accreditation compliance and to have enough faculty to form research hubs.</p>
APR initiative 6	Investigate the development of BA to Ph.D. pipeline.	Conversations will be documented and plans for actionable steps will be added to the Department strategic plan.	Aug-27	Graduate Chair, Department Chair, Faculty	Administrative, faculty, and staff time (FTE).
APR initiative 7	Increase culture of research by reinvigorating Brown Bag series.	This will be measured by the number of Brown Bag sessions held per semester.	Dec-27	Graduate Chair. Graduate Faculty	<p>Discussions are already underway regarding how to begin a brown bag series for Ph.D. students and research faculty.</p> <p>Administrative, faculty, and staff time (FTE).</p>

APR initiative 8	Core Ph.D. curriculum	Core course requirements, recommended electives, and benchmarks will be available to all faculty in the SECD procedural documents on Share point.	Dec-24	Graduate Chair, Graduate Faculty	Some work has already been done to identify a set of core courses, requirements, and benchmarks for the Education Studies and Human Sciences Ph.D. programs. Administrative, faculty, and staff time (FTE).
S/A SP Goal 3: Increase creativity and collaboration within the Department to ensure the pursuit of knowledge	Objective 2: Increase by 25% UCARE (Undergraduate Creative Activities and Research Experience) usage, MHDI (Minority Health Disparity Initiative), and/or student research presentations.	Benchmark: Comparison of report on annual reviews 2024 to 2027.	Aug-27 Ongoing	Department Chair, Program faculty	Administrative, faculty, (FTE).

APR Recommendation 3: Enhance Collaboration					
APR initiative 9	Investigate opportunities to bring faculty together on a regular basis to enhance collaborations.	The Department will attempt at least 2 collaborative activities for faculty to engage in across the next year and evaluate success and continuation.	Ongoing	Department Chair. Department Faculty	Administrative, faculty, and staff time (FTE).
APR initiative 10	Gather baseline data and measure expansion in collaborations occurring outside of the Department. This includes number of interdisciplinary grants.	The Department will track the number of collaborative endeavors by adding this to the annual review data that is collected each year.	Ongoing	Department Chair	Administrative, faculty, and staff time (FTE).
S/A SP Goal 3: Increase creativity and collaboration within the Department to ensure the pursuit of knowledge	Objective 1: Increase research and clinical collaborations.	Benchmark 1: One new research and clinical collaboration by December 2023 Benchmark 2: Form a committee to explore the improvement in research culture by December 2023	Ongoing	Benchmark 1 & 2: Program faculty Led by Program and Clinic Coordinators/Directors	
S/A SP Goal 3: Increase creativity and collaboration within the Department to ensure the pursuit of knowledge	Objective 3: Increase in Department, college, and UNL collaborations.	Benchmark: The number reported on faculty annual reviews increases by 2027	Ongoing	Department Chair, Program Coordinators/Directors, Program faculty	

3. SUPPORTING PROFESSIONAL AND FACULTY DEVELOPMENT (APR & AUD/SLP Strategic Plan)

APR Recommendation 4: Guidelines and Policies for Professional Development

APR initiative 11	Explore opportunities to provide opportunities to advance lecturers	The results of this exploration will be finalized and reported to the Dean.	Fall 2024	Department Chair, Dean of CEHS	Administrative time
APR initiative 12	Assure all faculty who want mentors have them.	Add request for and list of mentors to annual evaluation form to better understand the mentoring needs of faculty. Identify mentoring teams.	Aug- 2027	Chair's advisory committee, Department Chair	Administrative, faculty, and staff time (FTE).
APR initiative 13	Engage in strategic planning to reimagine how work is completed and reorganize committee structures. <i>(This item is also listed under recommendation 1 but this item specifically addresses nominations for awards.)</i>	A new committee structure will be in place to help complete the work of the Department. Specifically identify how to create a system to nominate faculty, staff, and students for awards.	Aug-27	Chair, Chair's advisory committee, Program Coordinators/Directors, Program Faculty	Administrative, faculty, and staff time (FTE).
APR initiative 14	Specific SECD examples will be added to promotion guidelines to provide faculty with more specific guidance on promotion.	A document will be created using UNL and College guidelines which contains specific SECD examples. This will be posted in our Department SharePoint folder.	Dec-27	Department Chair, Chair of Promotion and Tenure committee, Chair's advisory committee, Faculty	Administrative, faculty, and staff time (FTE).

APR initiative 15	Communication and transparency from leadership.	<p>The Department chair will continue to send out frequent updates via a newsletter and other mechanisms. Copies will be placed in the SharePoint folder for reference. The Department chair will work with program Coordinators/Directors, the Graduate Chair, the promotion and tenure committee chair, clinic Coordinators/Directors, and others with leadership apportionments to assure communication is provided to faculty, staff, and students.</p> <p>Each Spring semester, faculty will be surveyed to assess the effectiveness of communication from Department leadership and ensure it meets their needs.</p> <p>The Student Services associate will work with the chair to assure a newsletter is sent to graduate students, undergraduates, and alumni at least each semester. These will be kept in the SharePoint folder for reference.</p>	Ongoing	Department Chair, Student Services Associate	Administrative and staff time (FTE)
APR initiative 16	Centralized resources will be identified and provided to faculty, staff, and students to develop additional professional skills.	<p>During faculty meetings and retreats a series of discussions will be held regarding how to maximize centralized resources. Additionally, these resources will be highlighted in Department communications. These resources will be documented, and resources placed in the Department SharePoint for reference.</p>	Aug-27	Department Chair, Faculty	Faculty and Administrative time (FTE)

<p>S/A SP Goal 1: Reach enrollment targets for AUD (10) and MS SLP (35) programs, and <u>expand revenue streams for teaching</u></p>	<p>Objective 3: Obtain CE provider status and host CE events to determine educational needs of external preceptors and potential badges/certificates</p>	<p>Benchmark: Offer 2 CE events in the first year</p>	<p>Aug-26</p>	<p>Clinic and program Coordinators/Directors</p>	<p>Faculty, Staff, and administrative time (FTE)</p>
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4. ONGOING CURRICULUM REVIEW FOR TEACHING EXCELLENCE AND BUDGET EFFICIENCY

<p>APR initiative 17</p>	<p>Each program will review their curriculum considering the Department's total needs and curriculum updates will be made. The measurement of success column contains items that were specific recommendations for review and will be used as a measurement of change and updates to the curriculum.</p>	<p>Comparison of curriculum in 2024 vs. 2026 will be completed to determine what changes have been implemented. Numbers will include: # of courses sunsetted # of programs sunsetted # of multiprogram courses # Survey of redundancy in undergraduate coursework in SPED Ph.D. curriculum developed # of courses serving multiple programs # of courses identified or created for TA's to complete Identification of opportunities for accelerated pathways (e.g., BA@Ph.D. or BA @MS) if they exist.</p>	<p>December 2026 (large scale review)</p>	<p>Department Chair, Graduate Chair, Program Coordinators/Directors</p>	<p>Faculty and staff time (FTE)</p>
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5. ADVANCING DIVERSITY EQUITY AND INCLUSION OUTCOMES

<p>S/P SP Goal 2: Increase diversity, equity, & inclusion to provide accessible education for all and to ensure the professions reflect the diversity of the people we serve</p>	<p>Objective 1: Every faculty member will attend a workshop on DEI as it relates to recruitment and retention of faculty and students.</p> <p>Objective 2: Investigate attitudes and needs of undergraduate students in our programs by completing a survey.</p> <p>Objective 3: Complete curriculum diversity audit with the assistance of college resources.</p> <p>Objective 4: Faculty will evaluate use of office hours and expand/revise to increase student connection and success.</p>	<p>Benchmark 1: Count of faculty who report attending training on 2024 annual evaluations through strategic planning period with growth toward 100% by 2027.</p> <p>Benchmark 2: Survey completed by December 2025 (will they apply, why/why not; do they have access to the study tools they need)</p> <p>Benchmark 3: 100% of undergraduate- and graduate-level courses are audited for DEI by August 2026.</p> <p>Benchmark 4: Report on annual review through 2027 indicating number of faculty evaluating use of office hours.</p>	<p>Aug-26 and continuing</p>	<p>Benchmark 1: Department Chair, Program faculty</p> <p>Benchmark 2: Student Services Associate</p> <p>Benchmark 3: Program Coordinators/Directors Department Chair, Program faculty</p> <p>Benchmark 4: Associate to the Chair, Chair, Program faculty</p>	<p>College assistance</p>
<p>Strategic Enhancement Goal 1: Faculty will evaluate and adjust the admissions process moving toward a more holistic admissions process.</p>	<p>Faculty will work to create an admissions process that evolves with best practices and moves toward more holistic admissions.</p>	<p>Qualitative narrative on changes to admissions in the 3 programs.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Program Faculty, Program Coordinators/Directors/Directors, Graduate Coordinator</p>	<p>Faculty and Staff time, University support for DEI measures</p>

Programs in Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology

We promote the pursuit of knowledge and discovery in our profession through exemplary teaching, research, service, and community engagement to provide accessible education, clinical service, and communication to everyone.

Special Education:

The program in Special Education prepares educators with the knowledge and skills to improve the academic, social, and life outcomes for children, youth, and adults with disabilities and their families.

*AI was used to edit the text of this document



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