Executive Summary- Strategic Plan 2024

This document represents the combined outcomes of two significant strategic planning efforts: one focused on the Speech-Language Pathology (SLP) and Audiology (AUD) programs, and another stemming from recommendations made during the Department-wide Academic Program Review (APR) process, including both preparation and post-review planning. The combined strategic plan was approved by faculty in August of 2024. To honor the work from both events, we have included outcomes from each, clearly identified using a color-coded key: items in **red** originate from the SLP/AUD strategic planning events, **black** items reflect APR preparation and post-review planning, and **blue** items represent new strategic enhancements.

We view our strategic plan as a living document, responsive to the evolving context of our work. As such, initiatives are regularly added or removed to maintain relevance. All ongoing items will remain active unless explicitly marked as *met and discontinued*. At this time, no initiatives have been retired.

The plan is presented in a table format to track progress over time, with columns illustrating advancements and developments. This structure allows us to measure progress while adapting to emerging opportunities and challenges.

Our Department comprises three programs—Speech-Language Pathology (SLP), Audiology (AUD), and Special Education (SPED)—united in our mission to enhance the lives of individuals with special needs, their families, schools, and communities. We are committed to fostering greater collaboration and adopting parallel processes to maximize the strengths we've developed as individual programs. Together, we strive to create an integrated program that aligns with our mission:

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

Central to this effort is our commitment to **shared governance**, which ensures that all voices within the Department contribute to decision-making and strategic direction. This approach emphasizes adherence to the procedures and bylaws of the NU system, UNL, and the College of Education and Human Sciences, fostering open dialogue and collective responsibility. By upholding these principles, we aim to create a culture of collaboration that empowers faculty, staff, and students to work toward shared goals.

The table below highlights the progress made on SECD strategic plan initiatives in 2024. Organized to track development over time, it provides a clear view of ongoing efforts, newly introduced enhancements, and goals achieved. This format ensures transparency and allows us to assess our progress while maintaining focus on our mission and priorities.

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					
	Objective/explanation	**Measurement of Success**	**Progress Reports**		
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.	**Date/Notes** 1/9/25 SPED has developed three core themes—teach, lead, and discover—representing the primary mission of each educational level (bachelor's, master's, and doctoral). SLP and AUD have initiated discussions about branding during their faculty meetings but have not yet finalized or established a brand at this time.	**Date/Notes**	**Date/Notes**
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 Share Point folder. Systems are in place for marketing and recruiting.	**Date/Notes** 1/9/25 Not addressed this year. Target for 2025 August retreat.	**Date/Notes**	**Date/Notes**

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.	**Date/Notes** 1/9/25 The Department secured funding and approval to hire a Public Outreach Associate. This position was approved in December of 2024. In the meantime, the Chair's office supplied branded T-shirts for recruitment in master's programs. Additionally, students were provided with Department branded stickers for their computers. The college has expanded recruiting material available, and the Department has utilized those resources as a stop gap mechanism.	**Date/Notes**	**Date/Notes**

S/A SP Goal 1: Reach enrollment targets for AUD (10) and MS SLP (35) programs, and expand revenue streams for teaching	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.	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.)	**Date/Notes** 1/9/2025 Last year, we lost our communications specialist and have not yet hired a replacement. Despite this, marketing efforts continued through the Chair's office and the support of a student worker. We now have permission to hire for the position, and interviews are currently underway. For **Benchmark 1**, we ran two giveaways during the fall 2024 semester to increase social media follows. These efforts were successful, with informal comparisons from September to December showing a noticeable increase in traffic. **Benchmark 2**, which involves exploring software to analyze the impact of social media and recruiting efforts, will be initiated once a new Public Outreach Associate is hired. **Benchmark 3** progressed as discussions with CSDCAS and the Graduate College advanced. The Graduate College adopted a new admissions platform that will interface with CSDCAS, allowing us to proceed with its implementation in 2025. **Benchmark 4** was impacted by staffing shortages, limiting recruiting activities. However, we continued to hold open house recruitment events, offering both online and in-person opportunities.	**Date/Notes**	**Date/Notes**

APR initiative 4	Stabilize and where possible increase enrollments in all three programs by utilizing marketing plan and expanding recruitment initiatives.	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.	**Date/Notes** 1/9/25 Enrollment last year for SLP master's was up from 28 to 38 (t.wo year average = 33) Audiology AUD enrollment declined from 11 to 6 (two year average = 8.5). SPED enrollment has been stable and bolstered in part the start of a new apprenticeship program. In 2024 undergraduate enrollment declined slightly 1-5% across programs. Undergraduate projects for 2025 are up based on deposits. Outreach event measurement form to be developed by Public Outreach Associate upon hire.	**Date/Notes**	**Date/Notes**
S/A SP Goal 1: Reach enrollment targets for AUD (10) and MS SLP (35) programs, and expand revenue streams for teaching	**Objective 2:** Evaluate funding needs for students within the AUD, SLP, and SPED undergraduate and graduate programs.	**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.	**Date/Notes** 1/9/25 GRAs were increased by 1.5 this year for master's level students.	**Date/Notes**	**Date/Notes**

			Date/Notes	Date/Notes	Date/Notes
S/A SP Goal 1: Reach enrollment targets for AUD (10) and MS SLP (35) programs, and expand revenue streams for teaching	**Objective 3:** Engage in two new recruiting experiences and gather and evaluate outcome data.	**Benchmark: New recruitment events offered by August 2025 and evaluation data gathered.**	**Date/Notes** 1/9/25 New recruitment events were not initiated in 2024 due to staff shortages.	**Date/Notes**	**Date/Notes**
S/A SP Goal 3: Increase creativity and collaboration within the Department to ensure the pursuit of knowledge	**Objective 4: Increase number of doctoral students by 25%.**	**Benchmark:** Change in percent of doctoral students over a three year period.	**Date/Notes** 1/9/25 Graduate faculty under the graduate chair have: 1) organized brown bag sessions to help grad students understand PhD pathways; 2) encouraged doctoral students to engage with classes to foster interaction; 3) identified strong grad students and discussed PhD options with them; 4) developed SPED doctoral expertise areas and circulated recruiting materials (led by Dr. Ganz and a SPED subcommittee); 5) began initial identification of coursework to support a cohort model for incoming doctoral students; 6) submitted grant applications to support SPED and SLP doctoral training.	**Date/Notes**	**Date/Notes**

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.	**Date/Notes** 1/9/25 Faculty with a focus on AAC have begun collaborations. Additional clusters to be developed.	**Date/Notes**	**Date/Notes**
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.	**Date/Notes** 1/9/25 We have identified one student to pilot an M.S.-to-Ph.D. pathway as an initial step toward establishing alternative entry routes to the doctoral program. As part of this initiative, we plan to budget for a Clinical Fellowship (CF) position in our SLP clinic.	**Date/Notes**	**Date/Notes**
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.	**Date/Notes** 1/9/25 Department has re-initiated Brown Bag Seminars for doctoral students. The topics have been broad to encourage all graduate students to attend (not just Ph.D. doctoral students). We have completed 4 brown bag seminars.	**Date/Notes**	**Date/Notes**

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 SharePoint.	**Date/Notes** 1/9/25 Graduate faculty, under the leadership of the Graduate Chair, have initiated efforts to identify coursework relevant to doctoral students across focus areas, aiming to foster a stronger cohort experience for incoming students. This work is ongoing as we continue to refine and improve our programs. Materials to support this initiative are accessible to graduate faculty via a shared document server.	**Date/Notes**	**Date/Notes**
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.**	**Date/Notes** 1/9/25 Data will be reported in 2025. Annual reviews for 2024 have not yet been submitted.	**Date/Notes**	**Date/Notes**

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.	**Date/Notes** 1/9/25 Faculty engaged in "research lunches." under the direction of Dr. Hughes in 2024. These will continue in 2025. Faculty conducted one research slam in the spring of 2024 and coordinated a student research slam in the fall of 2024.	**Date/Notes**	**Date/Notes**
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.	**Date/Notes** 1/9/25 Data will be reported in 2025. Annual reviews for 2024 have not yet been submitted.	**Date/Notes**	**Date/Notes**
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	**Date/Notes** 1/9/25 **Benchmark 1:** MET - Continue with increasing collaborations at a rate of 1 each for research and clinic per year. This year clinic tried a collaboration with athletics. Research collaborations included AAC focused projects within the Department. **Benchmark 2:** Committee has been formed. This committee will explore starting a speaker series in the next year.	**Date/Notes**	**Date/Notes**

S/A SP Goal 3: Increase creativity and collaboration within the Department to ensure the pursuit of knowledge	Objective 3: Increase in department, college, UNL, and national/international collaborations.	Benchmark: The number reported on faculty annual reviews increases by 2027	Date/Notes 1/9/25 Data will be reported in 2025. Annual reviews for 2024 have not yet been submitted.	Date/Notes	Date/Notes
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.	Date/Notes 1/9/25 The Chair has discussed this with the Dean. While the initiative has not advanced, efforts to advocate and explore will continue.	Date/Notes	Date/Notes
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.	Date/Notes 1/9/25 A call for mentorship was provided in 2023. All individuals who want mentership can request it. We have intitiated some mentorship forms/procedures/guidelines for Research and Teaching. These are initial steps and will continue in the next year. Faculty were asked to respond to this in their 2024 annual review.	Date/Notes	Date/Notes

| APR initiative 13 | Engage in strategic planning to reimagine how work is completed and reorganize committee structures.

(This item is also listed under recommendation 1 but this item specifically addresses nominations for awards.) | 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. | **Date/Notes**
1/9/25 This initiative has not yet been addressed but will be a topic of discussion at the August 2025 retreat. Meanwhile, a group of faculty has collaborated on an application for the system-wide Department teaching award. | **Date/Notes** | **Date/Notes** |
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| 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. | **Date/Notes**
1/9/25 This initiative has not been completed and is ongoing. | **Date/Notes** | **Date/Notes** |

APR initiative 15	Communication and transparency from leadership.	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. Each Spring semester, faculty will be surveyed to assess the effectiveness of communication from Department leadership and ensure it meets their needs (Student Services Associate). 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.	**Date/Notes** 1/9/25 This will be initiated in Spring 2025 with hiring of the new student services associate.	**Date/Notes**	**Date/Notes**

APR initiative 16	Centralized resources will be identified and provided to faculty, staff, and students to develop additional professional skills.	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.	**Date/Notes** 1/9/25 The Department has moved to the use of Microsoft Teams as the location of Departmental documents. Faculty with leadership roles (coodinators/directors) have historically, had their own One Drive folders for organization. The Department is working on moving resources to the Microsoft Teams central location.	**Date/Notes**	**Date/Notes**
S/A SP Goal 1: Reach enrollment targets for AUD (10) and MS SLP (35) programs, and <u>expand revenue streams for teaching</u>	**Objective 3:** Obtain CE provider status and host CE events to determine educational needs of external preceptors and potential badges/certificates.	**Benchmark:** Offer 2 CE events in the first year	**Date/Notes** 1/9/25 We have finalized all documents related to CE providership and are prepared to host our first CE event in 2025. Additionally, we transitioned to a new CE coordinator following the departure of a faculty member.	**Date/Notes**	**Date/Notes**

4. ONGOING CURRICULUM REVIEW FOR TEACHING EXCELLENCE AND BUDGET EFFICIENCY

APR initiative 17	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.	Comparison of curriculum in 2024 vs. 2026 will be completed to determine what changes have been implemented. Numbers will include: # of courses discontinued # of programs discontinued # 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.	**Date/Notes** 1/9/25 The SPED program is working to create a general Master's curriculum and has plans to develop a series of courses in autism that will be available to both SLP and SPED graduate students. We are currently working on the revision and addition of courses for this purpose. In addition, the communication sciences undergraduate major reduced offerings from twice a year to once a year in SLPA 150 (Intoduction to Communication processes and Disorders) and SLPA 250 (Descriptive Phonetics). The faculty will continue to develop and review curriculum. The AUD faculty review their spiral curriculum and make adjustments to teaching and content based on feedback from students through course evaluations and informal discussions.	**Date/Notes**	**Date/Notes**

5. ADVANCING DIVERSITY EQUITY AND INCLUSION OUTCOMES					
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.	**Objective 1: Every faculty member will attend a workshop on DEI as it relates to recruitment and retention of faculty and students.** **Objective 2: Investigate attitudes and needs of undergraduate students in our programs by completing a survey** **Objective 3: Complete curriculum diversity audit with the assistance of college resources.** **Objective 4: Faculty will evaluate use of office hours and expand/revise to increase student connection and success.**	**Benchmark 1:** Count of faculty who report attending training on 2024 annual evaluations through strategic planning period with growth toward 100% by 2027 **Benchmark 2:** Survey completed by December 2025 (will they apply, why/why not; do they have access to the study tools they need) **Benchmark 3:** 100% of undergraduate- and graduate-level courses are audited for DEI by August 2026. **Benchmark 4:** Report on annual review through 2027 indicating number of faculty evaluating use of office hours.	**Date/Notes** 1/9/25 **Benchmark 1 and Benchmark 4** require the collection of baseline data. Faculty will provide responses to these items in their 2024 annual reviews, which are due in January 2025. **Benchmark 2:** This will begin once the Student Services Associate position has been filled. **Benchmark 3:** This has not yet been initiated but is planned for completion by 2027.	**Date/Notes**	**Date/Notes**
Strategic Enhancement Goal 1: Faculty will evaluate and adjust the admissions process moving	Faculty will work to create an admissions process that evolves with best practices and moves toward more holistic admissions.	Qualitative narrative on changes to admissions in the 3 programs.	**Date/Notes** SECD has eliminated the GRE requirement for all master's programs except the thesis-required SPED M.A. Ph.D. programs continue to require the GRE.	**Date/Notes**	**Date/Notes**

toward a more holisitic admissions process.			In 2018, AUD faculty introduced interviews as part of the admissions process. While the Graduate Governance Committees for SLP and AUD retain ultimate authority, admissions now involve the full faculty. AUD faculty have developed and refined feedback forms for interviews and reviews, with ongoing adjustments as needed. The SLP master's program will implement interviews in the 2024 cycle, along with a personal statement rubric and standardized note-taking sheet. All faculty will participate in the process for the first time. SPED faculty updated their personal statement rubric this year to include specific questions and shifted letters of recommendation to serve as supporting evidence rather than scoring criteria. SLP and AUD are considering changes to recommendation letters and personal statement prompts to align with evolving admissions practices.		

*AI was used to edit the text of this document