**M.A. in Speech-Language Pathology Self Study Report**

General information about the program:

1. Brief introduction and history of the program – include dates.

Speech-language pathologists assess, diagnose, treat, and help to prevent disorders related to speech, language, literacy, cognitive functioning, voice, swallowing, and fluency in children and adults.[[1]](#footnote-1) In educational settings, speech-language pathologists collaborate with teachers, special educators, other educational personnel, and families to enhance educational outcomes for students with communication disorders. In health care settings, speech-language pathologists work in conjunction with physicians, social workers, psychologists, nutritionists, and other rehabilitation professionals to help individuals overcome the barriers posed by developmental or health conditions that impact communication and swallowing.

# To be licensed and nationally certified as a speech-language pathologist, a candidate must have a master’s degree from a graduate program accredited by the Council on Academic Accreditation in Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology. Students with any undergraduate major are accepted; provided they have completed coursework in anatomy and physiology of speech, phonetics/phonology, speech and language development, principles of speech sciences, audiology, and clinical management of communication disorders. At the master’s level, students undergo an intensive, two-year graduate academic training in all dimensions of communication and swallowing disorders, including assessment and treatment, as well as participate in 375 hours of supervised clinical experiences.

# During the summer of 2012, the State of Delaware Governor’s Office provided CHS Dean Kathy Matt with $200,000 to support the planning of an M.A. in Speech-Language Pathology. During the fall of 2012, CHS Deputy Dean Susan Hall and Professor Beth Mineo (CoE) held on-campus meetings with professors from other institutions with established graduate programs in speech-language pathology. With considerable input from these content experts, Hall and Mineo developed the Program Policy Statement, Senate Resolution, and Academic Approval form for the proposed degree program. The proposal was approved by the College Curriculum Committee on January 14, 2013.

The University Faculty Senate approved the curriculum for the proposed program at its meeting on April 8, 2013. On October 7, 2013, the Faculty Senate approved a five-year provisional status for an M.A. in Speech-Language Pathology. In order to reflect the nomenclatureused by the majority of programs in the country, the program name was officially changed from Speech-Language Pathology to Communication Sciences and Disorders (CSCD) on March 2, 2015. No change was made to the name of the M.A. degree. On February 5, 2018, the PhD in Communication Sciences and Disorders was approved by the Faculty Senate.

In July 2014, Dr. Aquiles Iglesias was hired as the Founding Director of the program. The accreditation application was submitted to the Council on Academic Accreditation in Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology (CAA) on March 22, 2015, site visit occurred in Dec 2015, and Accreditation Candidacy status was awarded in February 2016. Candidacy status is awarded to any newly developed entry-level graduate degree program that meets all institutional and programmatic eligibility requirements. No students can be accepted into a program until this status is achieved. Candidacy status may be held for no longer than 5 years, subject to approval of the annual progress reports, at which time the program must meet all CAA Standards for Accreditation. The program will be submitting their application for full accreditation in February 2019. The first class enrolled in the fall of 2016 and graduated in May 2018. Since its inception, the program has accepted three cohorts and will be accepting its fourth cohort in the spring of 2019.

1. Explain how the program is compatible with the academic priorities of the University.

One of the academic priorities of the University of Delaware is to recruit talented and diverse graduate students and support their intellectual, cultural, and ethical development as professionals and scholars. The M.A. in Speech-Language Pathology has actively recruited talented individuals who are supported throughout their graduate studies by our outstanding faculty and staff. This program prepares students to become professionals who: a) use a systematic and logical approach in their assessment and treatment of individuals with communication and swallowing disorders across the lifespan; b) base their decision-making on research evidence; client values and beliefs, clinical expertise, ethical standards, and the constraints of the clinical setting; and c) possess the skills to deliver services effectively and efficiently. The 100 percent pass rate of Cohort I on the Praxis Exam for Speech-Language Pathology provides us an indication that our curriculum and instructional approaches are adequately preparing future professionals. One goal of the program is to recruit a diverse student body. Our multilingual/multicultural faculty, our bilingual emphasis program, our active outreach to under-represented minorities, and our direct clinical service to under-represented communities are beginning to yield a student body that is more diverse than the current professional workforce.[[2]](#footnote-2)

The program has been able to attract outstanding faculty members who excel in their teaching, scholarship and service. Their work has been greatly enhanced by our state-of-the-art clinical and research facilities on the STAR Campus. Through their interdisciplinary coursework and with the guidance of our diverse faculty, our students have the opportunity to develop the ability to conduct research that will advance their understanding of human communication and related disorders. Our clinical facility (UD Speech-Language Hearing Clinic) not only serves as a central site where our students develop their clinical skills and translate research to practice, but also provides invaluable service to the community.

1. Curricular requirements, including fulfillment of University, college and departmental requirements.

The M.A. program has been a full-time, two-year, 58 credit hour major. Students attend 6 semesters (fall, winter, spring, summer, fall, and spring). The degree is a combination of didactic and clinical courses. During the first year, students complete 40 credits (32 didactic and 8 clinical credits) and receive their clinical training at the UD Speech-Language-Hearing Clinic, speech-language and hearing screenings at community events, private and charter schools, the Aphasia Summer Intensive program, and the Summer Intensive Child Language Program. During the second year, students complete 18 credit hours (10 didactic and 8 clinical semester hours) and spend a minimum of 30 hours per week at one of our 39 health and externship affiliates (some affiliates have multiple sites) throughout the State of Delaware.

In order to meet additional demands of our ever-increasing scope of practice and accreditation agency requirements, the program will require students to enroll in 60 credit hours beginning fall 2019. During the first year, students will enroll in 42 credits (34 didactic and 9 clinical credits). During the second year, students will enroll in 18 credits (10 didactic and 8 clinical).

1. Results of assessments or evaluations regarding the quality of the program must indicate policies and procedures, how the assessment was used, and how the program changed because of it. What has the program accomplished in order to enhance assessment, particularly focusing on student learning outcomes?

There are a number of external and internal metrics used by the program to assess the quality of the program. One major mechanism used by the program to synthesize our data on program quality is having to complete the annual accreditation report, which requires reporting on the program’s compliance with accreditation standards. This report requires us to address how the program is meeting CAA standards on: Administrative Structure and Governance, Faculty, Curriculum, Students, Assessment, and Program Resources. Within the assessment section, evidence must be provided on how the program conducts systematic formative and summative assessments of the performance of students, progress toward completion of the graduate degree and professional credentialing, program effectiveness, and how the program uses results of these assessments for continuous improvement.

The program has undergone three evaluations by the CAA (original application and 2 annual reports). In our original application, CAA found three out of fifty standards that were not fully implemented: Standard 2.2 Faculty Sufficiency, Standard 3.6 Clinical Education Agreements and Standard 6.2 Facilities. It should be noted that, at the time of the site visit, the program was beginning to recruit faculty members, to develop its clinical externship plans, and to discuss our permanent home in the Tower at STAR. Since our initial site visit, the program has hired 8 faculty members, developed signed agreements with 39 health and educational externship sites, and enhanced its research and teaching facilities with their move to the 5th and 6th floors of the Tower at STAR. The program is presently in compliance with all of the standards for accreditation and will be seeking full accreditation in February 2019.

The Praxis Examination in Speech-Language Pathology is an integral component of the ASHA certification requirement and provides the program with a summative evaluation of the students’ academic knowledge. The exam is taken by students during their last semester or soon thereafter. Results of the Praxis exam for the first cohort (Class of 2018) provided us with an overall assessment of our program. All 26 students passed the exam in their first attempt; with 42 percent of our students scoring above the average performance range of graduates from other programs in the country. Although pleased with the results of our students’ performance, we have implemented “Praxis Exam Prep Sessions” for the second cohort during the winter session of their second year. Our goal for these sessions is for students to better prepare for the Praxis Exam by creating study groups that will review course material and discuss test taking strategies earlier, and with less anxiety, than our first cohort.

All students who graduate complete an exit survey which addresses program strengths and weaknesses. One major area of weakness noted by the students was in the area of motor speech disorders. Due to lack of faculty expertise in this major content area, two adjuncts from other institutions were hired to teach the course during the summer session. Although students were extremely pleased with the instructors, they found the condensed course difficult for content retention. Students also recommended having a faculty member with specific content expertise throughout the year in order to increase their ability to effectively diagnose and treat individuals with motor speech disorders. In order to remedy the situation, the CSCD faculty petitioned for an additional faculty line in the area of motor speech disorders. This position has been approved and the program is presently working on filling the position. The motor speech disorders course will be moved from the summer to the spring session once the position is filled.

Student learning is central to our program and students are required to demonstrate specific competencies prior to graduation. Each course syllabus specifies the knowledge and skill to be gained and the approaches used to assess the specific knowledge and skill addressed. Students are required to demonstrate mastery of all of the knowledge and skills addressed. If a student fails to master specific knowledge or skill, a remediation plan is implemented by the instructor in order to ensure that the student demonstrates competency of the specific knowledge or skill.

All academic and clinical courses are evaluated by the students. The academic course evaluations are reviewed by the faculty members and the program Founding Director. The clinical course evaluations are reviewed by the Director of Clinical Education. These reviews have resulted in some adjustments to course content and instructional approaches. For example, as a result of student evaluations of academic courses, the role of the Master Clinician in co-taught courses has been carefully examined by the faculty in order to ensure that the clinical skills being trained in those courses are more prominent. As a result, clinician-led practice using virtual simulations has been added in all academic courses.

Each year, the program staff holds a meeting with all of the externship supervisors. As part of this meeting, UD staff and faculty discuss ways in which the program can improve the curriculum and instruction. In general, the externship supervisors have been extremely pleased with the quality of the training our students have received prior to their externships. They have also suggested additional content (e.g., assessments, intervention approaches) that are typically used in their particular facilities. The program has made adjustments to ensure these suggestions are incorporated into the coursework.

1. What are the department/unit’s strategies for student advisement?

Each semester, students meet with their assigned faculty advisor to evaluate their progress towards completing their academic and clinical requirements. In addition to their academic university record, advisors monitor students’ progress in achieving the required “knowledge and skills” competencies and clinical hours via a commercially available computer program (Calipso). Advisors are required to discuss the student’s academic record and any areas where the student would need further assistance.

At each of their monthly faculty meetings, the faculty and the Director of Clinical Education discuss students who are having difficulties in either clinical or academic courses. Faculty advisors then meet individually with students who are having difficulties. If appropriate, a remediation plan is discussed and implemented.

6. If applicable, specify if the program meets all accreditation requirements (e.g., ABET, AACSB, APA, CADE etc.).

The program is presently in the Candidacy stage of accreditation by the Council on Academic Accreditation of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. The CAA has a two-step accreditation process and all new programs must go through the Candidacy stage prior to being considered for full accreditation. Typically, programs are in the Candidacy stage until they graduate three cohorts. The CSCD program has only graduated one cohort but will be applying for full accreditation in February 2019. We expect the site visit to occur in the fall of 2019 and then to receive full accreditation by February 2020.

1. Report any changes in the program admission criteria, degree requirements, or subject areas since the program was initiated.

Most M.A. programs in speech-language pathology are 60 credits or above. The CSCD program will be adding 2 credits (from 58 to 60) beginning fall 2019 admits. Our decision to increase the number of hours required is based on the additional knowledge and skills requirements that have been added by our accreditation agency (e.g., Interprofessional Education) and the realization by our faculty that our graduates need more in-depth training in certain areas (e.g., counseling, evidence-based practice).

1. General description of recruiting procedures – include any information for underrepresented populations.

The program participates in the Communication Sciences and Disorders Centralized Application Process (CSDCAS). CSDCAS offers potential applicants the opportunity to apply to multiple programs throughout the country with just one application and one set of transcripts. Participating in CSDCAS allows us to be one of the options for students applying to 60 percent of the M.A.in Speech-Language Pathology programs in the country. Once a student selects our program, faculty and staff actively interact with the students to ensure they complete the application and, if admitted, select the University of Delaware.

The faculty and staff are active participants at the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association annual convention. This convention attracts undergraduate students throughout the country who are interested in gaining further information on graduate programs. The CSCD program also encourages and supports graduate students to attend the convention as “ambassadors” of our program. Faculty and staff participate in the various minority caucuses (National Black Speech Language Hearing Association, Latino Caucus, Asian and Pacific Island Caucus) in order to recruit under-represented minorities. The CSCD faculty and staff also participate in the Council of Academic Programs in Communication Sciences and Disorders (CAPCSD) conference. Although not attended by students, this conference allows our faculty/staff to interact with other faculty members interested in finding other educational opportunities for their students.

The CSCD program conducts Information Sessions every month in the fall, winter, and spring for potential applicants. These Information Sessions usually attract 8-10 students per month, with a large number of under-represented minorities from the Delaware area who are interested in obtaining a degree in speech-language pathology as a second career.

Student Information:

1. Application and enrollment history – provide a tabular summary or graphical representation by year showing numbers of applicants, offers, matriculated, graduated, and dropped out (this data must be confirmed by the Admission’s Office, the Registrar’s Office, the Office of Graduate Studies or the Office of Institutional Research and Planning, as appropriate).

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Year | No. of Applicants | Offers | Matriculated | Graduated | Dropped Out |
| 2016 | 284 | 61 | 26 | 26 | 0 |
| 2017 | 299 | 78 | 23 |  |  |
| 2018 | 235 | 91 | 26 |  |  |

1. Annotated evidence of placement for students who have graduated – indicate how the department facilitates placement.

There is a high demand for M.A. graduates in speech-language pathology. This is a growing field and vacancies exist throughout the country. The lack of speech-language pathologists in Delaware was the primary reason the program was established and financially supported by the State of Delaware. Many of the graduate students received multiple job offers prior to graduation, with some students receiving scholarships or loan forgiveness awards during their program if they commit to work for specific agencies or, in the case of loan forgiveness, to a school district in Delaware. All 26 of the 2018 graduates are presently employed, with the majority having signed contracts one month after graduation. Of our 26 graduates, 15 work in school districts, 7 in out-patient clinics and 4 in healthcare facilities. Seven of our students are employed in Delaware and the rest in Colorado, Georgia, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania.

The CSCD program staff receive on-going employment listings and our part-time clinical staff and collaborating externship supervisors, who work throughout the State of Delaware, keep us informed of openings at their respective sites. Second year students are regularly informed of these openings and are encouraged to apply. In addition, all of our students participate in locally held job fairs. In many cases, students have specific geographical or setting preferences. Our Director of Clinical Education works closely with all of the students in identifying potential job opportunities and assists them in the preparation of their application. Once offered positions, students discuss with the Director of Clinical Education and/or the faculty the strengths and weaknesses of each of their options.

1. Identify sources and levels of financial support for students in the graduate Program and indicate the proportion receiving assistantships\*.

All students in the program receive some form of financial assistance. The majority of the students receive a tuition remission scholarship through the CSCD program. This merit-based support ranges from $35,000 to $60,000 for the two-year program. In addition, some of the students receive traineeship funding though LEND (College of Education) or Lori’s Hand’s (College of Health Sciences). Both of these traineeships pay partial tuition and a stipend. Students who are interested in working in the schools in Delaware also participate in a loan forgiveness program that has been established through the Office of Higher Education, Delaware Department of Education. The program requires students to commit to working in the Delaware schools for 2 years after graduation.

1. Identify demand and competitive factors in the region, nationally or internationally for attracting students – explain how these benefits and/or challenges the program.

There is a severe shortage of speech-language pathologists throughout the US, with a critical shortage in states like Delaware. It is expected that demands will continue to increase over the next decade. Presently, there are 273 M.A. programs in the US, with the majority graduating 20-30 students per year. In addition to the University of Delaware, there are 4 M.A. programs in speech-language pathology in the Delaware Valley region-all in Pennsylvania. In a 60-mile radius, there are 3 additional schools (Southern New Jersey and Baltimore). Of the other 7 schools in the area, only one is housed in a research-intensive institution (R1: Doctoral University-Highest Research Activity). Although the M.A. degree is a clinical (not a research degree) top students are attracted to institutions with high research activity.

Despite being at the Candidacy level of accreditation, the number and quality of the applicant pool is comparable to that of our regional competitors. Our program is, however, becoming stronger and more geographically diverse than other programs in the region (with the exception of Temple University, the other doctoral university with highest research activity). Our ability to attract top quality students has been enhanced by our nationally and internationally prominent faculty, our outstanding state-of-the-art facilities, as well as, a cutting-edge curriculum.

Our strongest challenge is the cost of the program, especially compared to the cost of some of the state institutions in our region. The financial assistance we provide our students has helped ameliorate this problem. As a program, we continue to explore financial opportunities (training grants, research grants, gifts, etc.) to reduce this cost.

1. Identify factors that make this program unique or distinctive compared to similar programs at other institutions.

As noted previously, the M.A. in Speech-Language Pathology program at the University of Delaware is housed in one of the two research intensive institutions in a 60-mile radius. As a function of the university’s research agenda, the program has been able to attract high research-active faculty members that have provided the program high national and international visibility. The strong and diverse expertise of the faculty is one of the most distinctive characteristics of the program.

Although the curriculum is, to a large extent, dictated by our accreditation requirements, the program’s strong emphasis on translational research and the research experience that our students receive, makes us highly unique. All of our courses are co-taught by a research faculty member and a clinician. This co-instruction guarantees that the research evidence presented in the classroom is immediately translated to practice. It also ensures that our research faculty receive input on clinical relevance of the research presented. Students’ capstone projects, required of all students, are evidence-based original projects in which students and faculty members select particular topics of inquiry and produce empirical studies, single case studies, or critically appraised reviews of the literature. Three of the capstone projects from Cohort I are being presented at the 2018 American Speech-Language-Hearing Association Convention.

The M.A. program has a strong inter-professional emphasis and students have the opportunity to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to work in an interprofessional environment. Content knowledge and practical interprofessional experience is a new requirement of our accreditation agency. The program has developed coursework and practical experiences that exceed our accreditation requirements. Activities, such as the Parkinson’s Clinic and the Adult Aphasia Summer Camp, provide students with superior life experiences not typically found in other programs.

The UD Speech-Language-Hearing Clinic is unique in a variety of ways. Unlike most other Speech-Language-Hearing Clinics in Speech-Language Pathology programs throughout the nation, the clinic operates as a free-standing, out-patient clinic that accepts most insurances. Our students receive immediate exposure to coding, billing, and insurance denial appeals; something that rarely occurs in M.A. training programs. In addition, clinic clients must have functional goals and the potential to benefit from skilled speech-language services. Our participation in Medicare has proven to be a very unique and several university clinics throughout the country are attempting to model their clinics after ours. One requirement made by Medicare is that all services must be provided by a licensed and certified speech-language pathologist. This requirement gave us the opportunity to develop a clinical supervision model that is quite unique since it requires students to have 100 percent direct supervision at all times (other university clinics only provide 25 percent supervision). This apprenticeship model has received national recognition and has allowed our clinic to be the only university-based clinic in the country to participate in the ASHA National Outcomes Measurement System (NOMS). The Clinic is also part of our research project on Patient Reported Outcomes. This area is cutting-edge research to practice and has received considerable interest from our national organization as they begin to transition to include patient reported outcomes into the NOMS.

1. Overview of interdisciplinary relationships (if any) – include trends on what students choose for electives.

The field of speech-language pathology is, by its very nature, highly interdisciplinary-drawing from various fields (linguistics, psychology, biology, neurosciences, education, and biomedical engineering) and our students are trained to work in highly inter-professional environments (along with physical therapists, occupational therapists, nurses, school psychologists, physicians, and teachers) depending on their particular work environment. Although focused on communication disorders, our students are provided a broad scientific basis and apply this knowledge in the identification and treatment of speech-language and swallowing disorders.

Students in the M.A. program have no elective courses, all courses are required. They do, however, have an opportunity to delve more deeply into particular areas of interest while completing their capstone project. This year-long project, carried out during the students’ second year of the program, allows them to pursue specific areas of research, often involving other disciplinary perspectives.

1. Characterize whether the facilities available for this program are adequate to support student, faculty, and staff needs.

Our new state-of-the-art facilities at the Tower at STAR, as well as the UD Speech-Language-Hearing Clinic at STAR I Health Sciences Complex, are excellent and are more than adequate to meet the needs of our students, faculty, and staff.

The CSCD program is located within the new Tower at STAR, a state-of-the-art, 10-story research and collaboration facility completed in August 2018. There are multiple meeting spaces within the CSCD program space. All faculty members have individual offices located on the 5th and 6th floors. There are three, fully enclosed and secured 17’ x 9’ lab spaces on the 6th floor (Voice lab, Child Language Lab, and Adult Neurological Disorders) and three large research rooms (sleep lab and control room, child language booth, and eye-tracking room) on the 5th floor. A research suite with 6 private assessment rooms is on the 6th floor. These rooms are shared among several PIs, are reserved for research sessions, and can comfortably accommodate 4–6 individuals. There are additional “touch down” workstations (2’ x 5’) just outside the labs for student volunteers/research assistants.

A large meeting room on the 5th floor, with capacity for 40, is used for instructional purposes. The program also has the ability to reserve large and small conference rooms in the STAR I Health Sciences Complex, as well as, the Tower at STAR as needed.

The University of Delaware Speech-Language-Hearing Clinic is a full-service speech-language pathology clinic with 7 treatment rooms and an audiology suite, located on the UD STAR Campus. The Clinic is staffed by a team of 2 full-time and 26 part-time certified and licensed speech pathologists and 2 part-time audiologists. Approximately 300 unique clients (over 6,500 contact hours) are seen annually.

1. Provide information on other budgetary requirements of the program beyond the typical unit expenses.

The CSCD program maintains a clinic that serves as the first practicum site for all of our first year M.A. students. The clinic is a fee-for-service clinic and accepts Medicare, Medicaid, private insurance and private pay. The clinic is staffed by 26 part-time and 2 full-time speech-language pathologists who serve as clinical supervisors for our M.A. students assigned to the clinic. In addition, the Clinic partially supports a Clinic Director and two administrative assistants responsible for scheduling, billing and collection. Over the last year, clinical revenue has been sufficient to cover staff salaries.

1. Other information of value for the review of the program.
1. Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, *Occupational Outlook Handbook*, Speech-Language Pathologists,
on the Internet at <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/speech-language-pathologists.htm> (visited *July 22, 2018*). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. https://www.asha.org/Articles/The-Changing-Demographic-Landscape/ [↑](#footnote-ref-2)