

## Strategic Plan 2023 – 2026

**Mission Statement:** The Roxelyn and Richard Pepper Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders, situated within Northwestern University's School of Communication, is dedicated to excellence in research scholarship, education, community engagement, clinical services, and innovation, all aimed at making a tangible impact in the real world. Our commitment comprises the following key pillars:

1. **Advancing Knowledge across Translational Tiers:** Our research efforts extend across the spectrum of translational tiers, spanning from fundamental scientific exploration to research with direct relevance and application to communities. We explore the realms of speech, language, hearing, and swallowing, pushing the boundaries of our understanding and harnessing that knowledge to effect positive change in communities.
2. **Exceptional Educational Standards:** We are committed to providing the highest-quality education across all our programs, including undergraduate, graduate, postgraduate, and postdoctoral education. We cultivate innovation and excellence in education, promoting lifelong learning to develop the next generation to excel as scholars, clinicians, educators, and leaders.
3. **Enhancing Lives of Individuals with Communication and Swallowing Disorders:** Our core mission revolves around improving the quality of life for individuals affected by communication and related disorders. Through our research and clinical services, we offer steadfast support and resources to enable full participation in communication and swallowing. Our diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging centered approach seeks to remove barriers and address disparities using evidence-based practices. Additionally, we advocate for enhancing public awareness of these disorders and the critical role of early intervention in prevention.
4. **Fostering Personal and Professional Growth:** We are dedicated to nurturing the personal and professional development of our faculty, staff, and students to continually enhance our operations. Our inclusive and welcoming environment, coupled with a person-centered approach, promotes a sense of belonging, continuous learning, and active engagement for all.
5. **Engaging the Wider Community:** Our goal is to create measurable benefits for our community, employees, students, clients, and their families. We provide

accessible and evidence-based clinical care with a strong focus on client-centered outcomes.

**Vision Statement:** Our vision is to be a leader of excellence and innovation in the field of communication sciences and disorders, setting new standards for research, education, technology, community engagement and clinical practice. In pursuing this vision, we commit to upholding the highest ethical standards, fostering a culture of diversity and inclusion, and continually adapting to the evolving landscape of the fields.

### **Focus Areas, Goals, and Objectives:**

#### **Focus Area 1: Research Excellence and Innovation**

**Goal:** Promote cutting-edge research in the field, encouraging faculty and students to engage in innovative and impactful research projects that contribute to the advancement of knowledge in communication science and disorders.

- **Objective 1:** Increase research, scholarship, and technology translation relative to 2023 levels (indexed in the CSD dashboard) measured objectively via the following indices: total number of federal and foundation grants, total grant dollars, diversity of grant portfolio, peer-reviewed publications, invited presentations.
- **Objective 2:** Recruit faculty in areas currently underrepresented in the department (pediatric audiology, voice, aphasia).
- **Objective 3:** Pursue and secure a National Institute of Health Center Grant in one or two domains of excellence within the department (e.g., precision hearing healthcare, pediatric communication disorders, swallowing and related disorders).
- **Objective 4:** Lead the field of Communication Sciences and Disorders in Open Science practices via an interdisciplinary Statistics and Data Sciences collaborative.
- **Objective 5:** Increase research, scholarship, and technology translation from doctoral students and postdoctoral scholars. Develop pre-review mechanisms to ensure the strongest possible proposals are submitted for review.
- **Objective 6:** Increase the representation of doctoral students and postdoctoral scholars in research-focused careers (baseline 2023).

#### **Science Area 2: Breaking Silos: Interdisciplinary Collaboration, Strategic Partnerships, and Global Outreach**

**Goal:** Encourage collaboration with other departments, programs, and institutions to foster interdisciplinary research and clinical practice, particularly in areas where

communication science and disorders intersect with other fields. Develop strategic partnerships with organizations, foundations, and industry stakeholders to enhance research funding, clinical opportunities, and student support.

- **Objective 1:** Strengthen collaborations with existing strategic partners (Cognitive Science, Developmental Science, Neurobiology, Linguistics, Otolaryngology, Engineering, NU-Medicine) via research collaborations, co-organized symposiums, faculty/clinician scientist hires, committees, and strategic initiatives.
- **Objective 2:** Increased collaboration with strategic partners within the School of Communication (e.g., theater and music theater in the domain of Voice, Communication Studies in the domain of Human-Computer Interface/design, Sound Arts in the domain of auditory perception and neuroscience)
- **Objective 3:** Develop new strategic global partnerships that can provide mutual research and educational opportunities for faculty, students, and postdoctoral scholars.

### **Focus Area 3: Education, growth, and professional development of students and postdoctoral scholars**

**Goal:** Promote a comprehensive support program that fosters academic excellence, career readiness, and personal well-being for students and postdoctoral scholars

- **Objective 1:** Develop pathways for the implementation of competency-based education, the current gold standard in medical education, allowing NU CSD to be the first AUD and SLP program to make strides towards this model. Steps towards this objective include piloting elements of a competency approach to education, seminars hosted by NU CSD, and increased scholarship on the science of learning.
- **Objective 2:** Bolster undergraduate program by increasing the size of program by focusing on appropriate recruitment, develop the groundwork for an accelerated program that ensures students a master's degree upon completion.
- **Objective 3:** Continue curricular revisions focused on scientific writing and statistical coursework for doctoral students.
- **Objective 3:** Pursue and secure a Research Education grant (e.g., NIDCD R25) that can provide tuition support/stipend to students in the professional programs and develop clinician-scientists.
- **Objective 4:** Enhance research administrative support for students and postdoctoral scholars pursuing federal and foundation grants.

#### **Focus Area 4: Faculty and Staff Development**

**Goal:** Support faculty and staff in their professional growth through mentorship, research funding, and opportunities for collaboration, ensuring a vibrant academic environment.

- **Objective 1:** Work with the Associate Dean for Faculty Affairs in continuing to expand commitment and culture of mentorship in faculty and staff development and developing pathways to promotion.
- **Objective 2:** Work with the Associate Dean for Research in continuing to expand commitment and culture of mentorship in research faculty and research staff development and developing pathways for growth and promotion.
- **Objective 3:** Work with the Associate Dean for Administration and Finance in continuing to expand commitment and culture of mentorship in staff development and developing pathways for growth and promotion.
- **Objective 4:** Actively pursue and assume leadership roles on national and international stages in communication sciences and disorders and related fields and contributing to their advancement.
- **Objective 5:** Develop and implement a systematic plan to nominate faculty for various research, education, and service-related awards.

**Focus Area 5: Communication and Alumni Engagement:** Foster connections, enhance internal and external communications with the community and alumni to create a strong network of professionals who can support current students and contribute to the department's success.

- **Objective 1:** Develop and implement a monthly newsletter for internal and external communications.
- **Objective 2:** Develop and implement an Alumni distinguished lecture series. The lecture series involves day-long meetings, research presentations, and informal meetings with students and scholars.
- **Objective 3:** Host annual Open House at the American Speech-Language and Hearing Association (ASHA) Convention.
- **Objective 4:** Leverage and build on existing resources (endowments, centers) to support the department's strategic vision and increase visibility.
- **Objective 5:** Develop and implement continuing education programming for our external partners and preceptors and opportunities to collaborate with NU faculty.

**Focus Area 6: Community engagement, Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging**

**Goal:** Develop and strengthen outreach programs, educational resources, research, and clinical services that support underserved communities

- **Objective 1:** Justice, equity, diversity, inclusion, and belonging as core organizing principles, pervasive across academic curriculum.
- **Objective 2:** Develop and implement a plan for a multi-purpose mobile van that can provide diagnostic and clinical services to underserved communities, and increases visibility of the clinic, department, and the school.
- **Objective 3:** Increase usage of NU downtown space in efforts to expand translational research to communities outside the Northshore.

**Focus Area 7: High-quality Clinical Services:**

**Goal:** Maintain a strong commitment to providing high-quality clinical training to students and services to individuals with communication disorders while also fostering research opportunities within clinical settings.

- **Objective 1:** Create a system for the collection of clinical practice research data that is used for clinical decision making.
- **Objective 2:** Adopt clinical services with the strongest evidence base
- **Objective 3:** Adopt a strengths-based, participatory approach to clinical services.
- **Objective 4:** Increase the number of innovative clinical programs (e.g., in partnership with NU med) that support 1) a greater diversity in patient populations, 2) increase interdisciplinary exposure, 3) increase student clinical hours.
- **Objective 5:** Expand our reach within the Evanston community and beyond to provide increased access to care for underserved communities