**SLHS Strategic Plan
2021-2026**

University of Connecticut

Table of Contents

Introduction

Developing a strategic plan is a critical element to foster growth and development of our unit. It is a plan for the future that is reflective of the needs and vision of Speech, Language, and Hearing Sciences (SLHS) at the University of Connecticut (UCONN). In addition, as a program accredited by the Council on Academic Accreditation in Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology (CAA) we are required to adopt strategic planning to be eligible for accreditation. Further, our plan must "have the support of the university administration, be congruent with the mission of the institution, and reflect the role of the program within the community." The plan reaffirms the mission and vision of the department, prioritizes strategies and reconfirms values to maintain while working towards achieving the vision.

In 2020, SLHS embarked on the strategic planning process. Our previous strategic plan (2015-2020) was extended by faculty vote for one year (2020-201) due to the COVID pandemic. The year long planning process resulted in the document shown here. This document reflects where SLHS would like to be in the next five years.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. **How was this plan developed?**

   A strategic plan is like a road map. It identifies our vision for a better future. It also serves as a guide to the unit's administration on how to achieve those goals. This plan was developed by four working groups (vision/mission, data collection, planning, and implementation) and guided by guidelines from the American Speech, Language, and Hearing Association (ASHA) and the CAA, as well as the UCONN College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (CLAS) Strategic Plan (https://clas.uconn.edu/strategic-plan/).

2. **Who worked on the plan development?**

   The four committees were comprised of SLHS faculty, students, and a representative from CLAS dean's office. The list of committees and members is shown below:

   Vision/Mission: N. McMahon (Co-Chair), J. Tufts (Co-Chair), L. Collins (Student representative) L. Friesen, L. Gonzalez, T. Spaulding, A. Moiseff (CLAS representative), T. Woodruff (Student representative).

   Data Collection: E. Myers (Chair), K. Cienkowski, N. Cruz (Student representative), S. Galligan (Staff), T. Hinchey, A. Garcia-Sierra, R. Theodore (ad hoc member to assist with data collation), K. Wittke

   Planning: R. Theodore (Chair), C. Coelho, N. Gallagher, N. McMahon, A. Moiseff (CLAS representative), T. Yanaway

   Implementation: C. Njuki (Chair), B. Grela, J. McCarthy, J. Mozeiko, E. Skoe

3. **How does this plan look different than other strategic plans?**

This strategic plan was developed by SLHS stakeholders in 2021. It reflects the thinking of the planning committees during the 2020-2021 year. It is the result of a careful review of previous SLHS plans as well as the plans for CLAS and UCONN. While the look and content of the plan is representative of this planning group, some of the elements can be found in all strategic plans, such as: Mission, Vision, Values, Strategic Priorities, Activities and Performance Indicators.

4. **Can the strategic plan be changed?**

The mission, vision, values and priorities of this strategic plan were developed and approved by the SLHS faculty with input from key stakeholders. This plan cannot be changed without faculty approval. This plan represents a shared vision of the future with the expectation that it will be reviewed on an annual basis. Annual goals and work plans based on the priorities may be developed by the unit. These goals and work plans will be overseen by the unit administration (Dept Head, Associate/Division/Clinic Heads, Program Manager).

5. **How will the plan be used?**

Unit administration will use the strategic plan to make decisions and to increase accountability. Decisions should be made that are consistent with the priorities identified by the unit and with the values identified by the unit stakeholders. Additionally, unit administration can use the strategic plan to monitor the performance of the department holding the unit and its members accountable to the larger College and University community. It will also be used to maintain accreditation standards. The strategic plan can be used to recognize successes and to celebrate SLHS's progress towards a better future.

6. **How will it be used by individuals?**

Individual faculty and staff can use the strategic plan to develop their annual goals. Individuals can ask themselves "How can I use my resources to achieve the priorities and activities in the strategic plan?" They can also ask themselves "If this activity is not helping to achieve the priorities set out in the strategic plan, then why am I doing it?"

Strategic Planning Process

This strategic plan represents the five-year planning cycle for SLHS and builds upon the previous strategic plan. The key elements of the strategic planning process are outlined in Figure 1 below. Specific information from each planning group follows.

Figure 1 – Strategic Planning Process (adopted from template at www.fmfmb.com)

How do we measure our achievements and adjust if needed?

STEP 5
Determine Targets, key Performance indicators and track progress

STEP 1
Understand the mission and define the vision

Why do we exist?
Where do we want to be?

Mission and Values

How do we translate strategic priorities into actions? What do we focus on first?

STEP 4
Identify and prioritize activities

STEP 2
Perform a current state analysis

What are our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats?

Where are we now and how do we get to where we want and need to be?

STEP 3
Identify strategic priorities and activities

1. Mission, Vision, Values (Vision and Mission Group)

The strategic planning process reaffirms the mission and vision of the SLHS community, the strategic priorities to accomplish the vision, and reconfirms values to maintain as SLHS works towards meeting the priorities.

- **Vision**

To be a premier program of integrated, high-quality, impactful research, education, clinical practice, outreach, and service in the speech, language, and hearing sciences

As we pursue our vision, we are guided by the following **core values**:

- Fostering a diverse, equitable, and inclusive environment
- Reducing disparities in education, health, and accessibility
- Upholding the highest ethical standards
- Conducting best practices
- Cultivating interprofessional communication, education, collaboration, and practice
- Promoting meaningful innovation

Mission

Our primary mission is to carry out the following activities with the highest integrity and commitment to excellence:

- Conduct and disseminate high-quality basic, translational, and applied research in the speech, language, and hearing sciences
- Educate and support graduate students and postdocs in becoming highly qualified, ethical, and discerning researchers, clinical practitioners, and other professionals in the speech, language, and hearing sciences
- Conduct and disseminate high-quality basic, translational, and applied research in the speech, language, and hearing sciences
- Prepare undergraduate students for graduate study in the speech, language, and hearing sciences with a strong and comprehensive foundational curriculum

Our secondary mission is to carry out the following activities with the highest integrity and commitment to excellence:

- Be role models for the delivery of accessible, compassionate, state-of-the-art, evidence-based clinical care in speech/language pathology and audiology
- Educate and support undergraduate students, regardless of course of study, in developing an appreciation of the speech, language, and hearing sciences

- Support the larger community of speech, language, hearing, and allied professionals, and those in need of their services, via outreach and service at the local, state, regional, and national levels

Summary of Accomplishments from Previous 5 Year Plan

It is useful to include at the beginning of the current strategic plan, key accomplishments achieved during the previous 5 years. Figure 2 presents a summary of SLHS's accomplishments.

Figure 2 - Accomplishments of the SLHS over the past 5-years

- Increase in the number of research grant submissions
- Record number of grant awards (research and training grants)
- Record number of unique clinic encounters
- Two faculty promoted to Full Professor and one to Full Clinical Professor
- Acquisition and renovation of classroom, research, and shared spaces in HBD
- Development of a SLHS Workload and PTR policy documents
- Develop IPE/IPP activities

Progress was also made in the following activities:

- Development and promote DEI activities
- Funding opportunities for graduate students
- Broaden SLHS visibility within CLAS and the University
- Increase diversity of graduate application pool
- Streamline course curriculum
- Increase summer revenue to benefit unit's discretionary funds
- Development and participation in new interprofessional activities

Activities that had significant progress and/or were completed, were not necessarily carried forward into the current strategic plan. Activities that were not completed in the last 5 years and deemed part of the current goals may have been incorporated into the current strategic plan.

2. Current State Analysis (Data Collection Group)

Strategic Planning Process

A current state or SWAT analysis is a review of everything that impacts the unit – either positively or negatively. It considers all assets and opportunities for the unit. It also identifies gaps or vulnerabilities that could impede our success. Figure 3 below outlines the Current State Analysis process (adopted from template at www.fmfmb.com)

Figure 3 – Current State Analysis Process

Strengths	Weaknesses
Strengths on which SLHS wants to build on versus those which provide us less advantages for the future.	Identify weaknesses that are critical to address versus those that are not.
Opportunities	Threats
Identify and select opportunities that are aligned with SLHS mission and vision.	Identify and find ways to lessen threats that may impact SLHS achievement of this strategic plan.

The following is a summary table of the stakeholder response rate to the SLHS strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats survey. It is noted that the response rate was relatively low for all groups except Ph.D. students and faculty (both tenure and non-tenure track). A detailed report of the survey results can be found on the OneDrive under the Strategic Planning folder.

Stakeholder group	Total	Respondents	
		n	%
Students			
Undergraduate students	219	2	1
M.A./Au.D. students	74	12	16
Ph.D. students	11	5	45
Faculty			
Clinical faculty	8	7	88
Research faculty	11	10	91
Staff	5	3	60
Off-campus educators	399	29	7

3. Strategic Priorities and Activities

Based upon the Mission, Vision, Values, Previous 5 Year Prior Accomplishments and the Current State Analysis, SLHS has identified the following Strategic Priorities and Activities.

i.   Priority: Support recruitment, retainment and success of diverse faculty, staff and students in SLHS

This objective supports CLAS Goal 1: Climate, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.

Exemplars to achieve this priority:

- Foster a diverse and inclusive departmental environment on our website and social media by publishing current DEI initiatives, adding welcoming language for inclusiveness, and increasing symbols and pictures of DEI
- Discuss with human resources the mechanisms for including diversity as a preferred qualification for new faculty lines.
- Develop suggested list of DEI training for current and new faculty and students.
- Foster individual faculty's pursuit of expanding knowledge in Diversity Equity and Inclusion through merit incentives for both clinical and research faculty committees.
- Identify and increase current student recruitment efforts to reach more diverse applicant pools.
- Ensure that diversity (both cultural diversity and neurodiversity) is included in graduate, undergraduate courses, and other activities.
- Develop mentorship and networking opportunities for students. Invite alumni to mentor current students. Have mentors reach out to students and emphasize matches for traits identified by students as valuable.

ii.   Priority: Cultivate an engaged environment for promoting increased diversity equity and inclusion for faculty, staff and students in SLHS

This objective supports CLAS Goal 1: Climate, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.

Exemplars to achieve this priority:

- Develop a community standards document to address issues such as workload, DEI and microaggression policies. (Create this as an agenda item at the full first faculty meeting Fall 2021)
- Create formalized mentorship program for junior and mid-level faculty.
- Department head to solicit faculty volunteers to serve as mentors Fall 2021. New hires will be assigned a faculty mentor as part of their onboarding process. Current junior and mid-level faculty can opt into the mentorship program.
- Draft list of potential activities and mentorship responsibilities to include items such as formal teaching reviews, written performance feedback, support with PTR and PR portfolio development, etc.
- Support the efforts of the newly appointed PhD Coordinator to broaden inclusion and recognition of PhD. Students in the department (see goal #3 for PhD Program enhancement objectives)
- Clinical Faculty and Research faculty committees will review their existing workload document to explore inequities, alignment of individuals reported workload with departmental guidelines, alignment of workload document with PR/ PTR doc beginning Fall 2021.

iii.   Priority: Increase innovative research and scholarship

This objective supports CLAS Goal 2: Innovative Scholarship
Current workload was identified as an impactful threat to increased scholarship.

Exemplars to achieve this priority:
- Encourage the Head to advocate for funds to develop a course release program for grants preparation.
- Fall 2021, research faculty will discuss the efforts and resources required to transition to a 2-1 teaching load to promote research productivity and establish ad hoc committee(s) based on discussion outcome.
- Document benefits of reduced teaching loads, increases of productivity, and support, improved departmental coverage of curriculum; collectively, increasing faculty will promote productivity, stable educational activities, and equitable workload.
- Graduate Curriculum committees will evaluate current curriculum with an eye towards potentially reducing teaching workload, without use of adjuncts, such as looking at electives, teaching a course every other year with or without a combined cohort, etc.
- Expand and enhance interdisciplinary initiatives to support research collaborations and IPE/IPP learning opportunities (see also priority vii) Strategic plan Data committee to create survey to capture baseline data on current IPP/IPE activities and interdisciplinary research and will be published on website
- Undergraduate curriculum committee will explore opportunities to expand numbers of undergrads in SLHS courses, through additional W sections, and making current courses count for gen eds, summer courses, etc. To increase graduate funding, which can then support an increase in innovative research. (also see priority vi Program Expansion and priority v. Enhance Ph.D. Program.
- Department Head to facilitate exploration and prioritization of participation in strategic and cluster hires by preemptively developing cluster hire proposals that align with CLAS and UCONN strategic plans

iv.   Priority: Enhance undergraduate program.

This objective supports CLAS Goal 3: Teaching, Learning, and Student Success

Exemplars to achieve this priority:

- Explore opportunities to increase clinical exposure and experiences for undergraduate students.
- Audiology clinical faculty will create opportunities for undergraduate clinical observations.
- Explore opportunities to increase undergraduate exposure to graduate clinical faculty.
- Review intro to CSD 1150 (largest course) course syllabus and first required courses in the major to support recruitment and better understanding of the fields of Audiology and Speech pathology and the various career paths with or without a graduate degree.
- Identify which required SLHS courses capture or could capture above information.
- AuD and SLP Graduate curriculum committees will explore allowing UConn undergraduate early admission to the current M.A. and Au.D. programs so graduate coursework can be initiated earlier.
- Expand access to departmental information previously only provided during information sessions by adding documents to the website that include topics such as steps getting into grad school, what an

audiologist/speech language pathologist is and where they work, related careers, alternate paths for using SLHS degree, etc.

v. Priority: Enhance M.A. and Au.D. program

This objective supports CLAS Goal 3: Teaching, Learning, and Student Success

Exemplars to achieve this priority:

- Evaluate opportunities to streamline course curriculum to allow for a more manageable number of credits, appropriate length of courses, and alignment with clinical opportunities.
- Explore feasibility, faculty workload, and potential benefits of adding an M.A. tracking program.
- Identify ideal clinical teaching schedule that prioritizes 1) patient availability schedule, then 2) reducing long days for students then 3) instructor preferences.
- Explore feasibility, faculty workload, and best practices for developing part-time M.A. and Au.D. programs that could support program entry and completion for more diverse students.
- Increase innovative clinical teaching, such as use of simulation, remote instruction and IPE activities.

vi. Priority: Enhance Ph.D. program.

This objective supports CLAS Goal 3: Teaching, Learning, and Student Success

Exemplars to achieve this priority:

- Investigate funding opportunities, identify existing internal and external sources students may be unaware of, evaluate timeline for when funding is available and publish on website for prospective and current students.
- Increase clinical exposure and experiences for Ph.D. students.
- Discuss making the existing "Clinical Connections" seminar (offered by Eigsti/Myers) a required Ph.D. course.
- Clinical faculty will identify current clinical based opportunities that could include or at least invite PhD students to participate, such as Audiology Grand Rounds, orientation activities, etc. to foster inclusion with the largest program cohort.
- Create a seminar for Ph.D. students but that could be used as an elective for M.A. and Au.D. students (serves goals of developing Ph.D. curriculum, fostering integration among training programs).
- Foster a greater sense of community among PhD students, such as establishing a regular dedicated and protected time to share research ideas, discuss funding and due dates for funding, resources available in different labs, discuss mental health, provide student driven topics.
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vii. Priority: Program expansion

This objective supports CLAS Goal 3: Teaching, Learning, and Student Success
Current workload has been identified as a barrier to program expansion.

Exemplars to achieve this priority:

- Explore feasibility, faculty workload and potential benefits of creating new programs that may enhance diversity of student population and bring in funds for the department, such as SLP-A, Five-year M.A. SLP program, online post-bac programs
- Expand and enhance interdisciplinary initiatives
- Advocate for increased faculty lines in order to strengthen feasibility of program expansion
- Department Head to facilitate exploration and prioritization of participation in strategic and cluster hires by preemptively developing cluster hire proposals that align with CLAS and UCONN strategic plans in order to increase faculty lines necessary for program expansion. (Also see priority iii. Increase innovative research and scholarship)

viii. Priority: Highlight advantages SLHS provides to the institution and the state

This objective supports CLAS Goal 4: Broader Impacts, Service, and Visibility.

Exemplars to achieve this priority:

- List current community partners outside the department and university including clinical and research impacts to the institution and the state and publish on website.
- Highlight strengths of innovative teaching and scholarship by creating a document that lists all interprofessional and interdisciplinary activities and publish on website.
- Create and distribute newsletters to research participants, alumni, etc.

ix. Priority: Broaden impacts to underserved communities in the state

This objective supports CLAS Goal 4: Broader Impacts, Service, and Visibility.

Exemplars to achieve this priority:

- Extend clinical service outreach to Western CT.
- Increase clinical service outreach to underserved communities in general.
- Identify non-clinical service outreach opportunities for faculty to underserved communities.

x. Priority: Cultivate current off-campus clinical site partnerships

This objective supports CLAS Goal 4: Broader Impacts, Service, and Visibility.

Exemplars to achieve this priority:

- Explore off-campus sites as research and clinical partners.
- Incentivize Clinical Educators to maintain partnerships by offering free CEU opportunities, that include access to and integrate faculty research.
- Develop mentoring programs for new Clinical Educators.

xi. Priority: Develop an alumni network

This objective supports CLAS Goal 4: Broader Impacts, Service, and Visibility.

Exemplars to achieve this priority:

- Program manager will expand alumni database, beyond data required to report job status following graduation.
- Full faculty will identify ways to engage alumni in departmental affairs, such as through an Advisory Board and student mentorship program to expand student access to mentors and provide alumni with opportunities to support students beyond clinical supervision.

4. Determination of Key Performance Indicators and Targets

Based on the strategic priority, each activity should have specific key performance indicators that are S.M.A.R.T. - Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Timely, making the vision more concrete by defining how success is measured. Performance indicators are used to monitor progress towards strategic priorities, closing the gap between the current state and the future state, as defined by the vision. They will help track the realization of strategic priorities, measuring the progress towards realizing the vision. Performance indicators should focus on desired outcomes for strategic priorities. Outcomes focus on what difference is being made.

Once SLHS has defined its key performance indicators, targets can be set, which are the value of a key performance indicator at a specific moment in time. Targets can be set on a yearly basis or by the end of the 5-year plan and should focus on outputs or what is being done. In order to keep track of the progress towards achieving the strategic plan and the SLHS's vision, a process must be put in place to monitor progress. A responsible party (ies) should be identified for this process and the frequency of reporting should be specified and should aim to be at least annually or more frequently as appropriate. It is possible that certain activities may need to be revisited due to changes in the internal and external environment and reprioritized depending on the results attained each year.

It is the recommendation of the Implementation Committee that to bring this plan to fruition, the following first steps should be taken at the first full faculty meeting, Department Head will update current faculty service committee assignments and facilitate discussion of:

- Formalizing an Advisory Board, as proposed in the 2016-2021 Strategic Plan.

- Consideration of creating a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion committee with student, alumni, and faculty representation to develop department-wide practices of equity mindedness and engaged inclusivity in order to support increased diversity in the fields of Speech, Language and Hearing.

- Retaining the Strategic Plan Implementation Committee to monitor progress throughout the academic year, with two key check-in points: early Fall semester and late Spring semester (setting the stage in the early Fall for implementation activities that can occur during the academic year and toward the end of the Spring Semester in order to celebrate and share our successes with each other)

- Retaining the Strategic Plan Data Committee in order to collect baseline data required to implement and monitor strategic plan metrics

Strategic Planning Process

- Support upcoming search for a new Department Head by developing an administrative committee of senior faculty to evaluate optimal structure of department administration, clarify/define titles and roles of administrative positions, clarify policies/bylaws to make the process of appointment (and terms) of non-Head positions transparent.

The SLHS Faculty voted unanimously to approve the Vision/Mission of thisStrategic Plan on 9/14/2021.

Strategic Planning Process

Notes:

1. Draft sent to SLHS faculty for review (8/11/2021)
2. Updates to Vision and Planning Committee members (8/11/2021).
3. Final draft of Vision/Mission voted (9/14/2021)
4. Final draft of Full Strategic Plan document to SLHS faculty for review and vote (9/17/2021)