



Eight-Year Program Review IBHE Report Summary:

PROGRAM REVIEW REPORT SUMMARY

1. **Reporting Institution:** Eastern Illinois University
2. **Program Reviewed:** B.S. in Communication Disorders & Sciences
3. **Date:** February 1, 2024
4. **Contact Person:** Rebecca Throneburg, PhD, CCC-SLP, Department Chair
Telephone: 217-581-7447
E-mail: rmthroneburg@eiu.edu

5. OVERVIEW

The Department of Communication Disorders & Sciences offers a student-centered approach to instruction with emphasis on disciplined thinking. Rigorous academic and clinical instruction, research/creative activity, and community service are integrated to prepare students to contribute meaningfully to a diverse society. The department serves the community by providing evidenced-based clinical services to children and adults diagnosed with communication and swallowing disorders. The Department of Communication Disorders & Sciences mission aligns with EIU's mission. Themes of student-centered, rigor, critical thinking/reasoning, excellence in teaching, research/creative activity, service, and preparing students to contribute meaningfully to a diverse society are core values in both.

Historically, the first course in "speech correction" appeared in EIU's catalog in 1947. The Department of Speech Pathology and Audiology was created in 1964. In 1971, EIU's program was one of three accredited programs in Illinois, with only 42 accredited programs nationally. Currently there are 318 accredited programs in the U.S. There are 17 bachelor's degree programs and 17 Master's Degree programs in the state of Illinois under the ISBE headings of Communication Sciences and Disorders, Speech-Language Pathology, or Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology.

Students with the basic study plan in the B.S. degree in Communication Disorders and Sciences typically continue on to graduate study in either speech-language pathology or audiology. In the last five years, we have developed a greater variety of options with intentional advising, minors, and study plans to accompany core classes in Communication Disorders and Sciences. Now, undergraduate students can have a background in communication disorders and clinical reasoning, but apply to graduate school for occupational therapy, physical therapy, school psychology/counseling, physician assistant, medical school, and more. A key factor which distinguishes our program is the opportunity for undergraduate students to enroll in clinical practicum in their senior year. Students prepare for this experience by enrolling in a pre-clinical course and shadowing experience during the junior year. Students obtain these experiences with clients who receive services at the EIU Speech-Language-Hearing Clinic. Most undergraduate programs do not offer clinical experiences, or offer them only to a few students.

Undergraduate students are actively engaged in pre-professional activities, including the National Student Speech-Language-Hearing Association (NSSLHA) local chapter and mentoring in the STEP program for EIU college students with Autism. Students have been awarded prestigious undergraduate scholarships, minority scholarships, and undergraduate research awards. The CDS Departmental Honors program continues to admit 4-6 students per year. Faculty mentor professional involvement in state and national organizations through their publications, presentations, and service as officers and committee members. Current or retired faculty members are presently serving on the Illinois IDFPR Licensure Board for Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology, the executive board of the Illinois Speech-Language Hearing Association (past president and vice president), and the executive board of the 200,000+ membership of the American Speech-Language Hearing Association (president and past-president). Faculty have been recognized with the receipt of awards in teaching, research, and service.

6. MAJOR FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- a. Description and assessment of any major changes in the program/discipline context** e.g., (1) changes in the overall discipline or field; (2) student demand; (3) societal needs; (4) institutional context for offering the degree; (5) other elements appropriate to the discipline in question; and (6) other.:

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics most recent data indicates that the job outlook is expected to grow much faster than average for both speech-language pathology (19%) and audiology (11%) during the 10-year period between 2022-2032. A critical shortage in speech-language pathologists continues across the nation and in Illinois. The Illinois State Board of Education 2023 Unfilled Positions Report indicated there were 354 unfilled positions for speech-language pathologists in Illinois schools. There are also shortages of speech pathologists providing services in the Illinois Early Intervention system. Speech-language pathology is rated at #3 in best healthcare jobs in 2024 by US News & World Report and is consistently in the top 10.

The undergraduate degree in Communication Disorders and Sciences is the traditional pathway to preparation for a master's degree in speech-language pathology or a clinical doctorate degree in audiology. Since a change from a master's degree to the doctorate as the entry level degree for audiologists in 2007, CDS has consistently had 2-3 students per year who successfully apply to and are accepted to these doctorate programs. At the time of the last IBHE program report, we indicated that students with an undergraduate degree in Communication Disorders could no longer work as speech-language paraprofessionals, even in temporary shortage positions in Illinois, as they had in the past. In 2022, the discipline's governing body, the America Speech Language Hearing Association developed certification paths for speech-language pathology assistants with a bachelor's degree or associate's degree. This change is currently being discussed and interpreted with the Illinois Licensure Board for Speech Language Pathology and Audiology (EIU faculty member is on the board) and input is being given by a working group from the Illinois Speech Language Hearing Association (another EIU faculty member is in this group). EIU currently offers most of the required courses for a speech-language pathology assistant as part of the bachelor's degree program. The current debate in interpretation is if required clinical hours need to be obtained in a training program or can be obtained on the job. Another confounding factor is that educational programs for physical therapy assistants and occupational therapy assistants have accreditation. Currently there is no accreditation for assistant programs in speech pathology. The undergraduate program in communication disorders will likely be preparing students who can work as a speech-language assistant with a bachelor's degree or continue on to speech pathology or other graduate professional programs.

- b. Description of major findings and recommendations, including evidence of learning outcomes and identification of opportunities for program improvement**

The undergraduate enrollment was 63-68 in the period between 2018-2022 and increased to 80 in 2023.						
	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
EIU UG in CDS	68	62	63	66	65	80

Departmental Undergraduate Learning Goals and Outcome Data are included in the table below:

<i>Undergraduate Learning Goal</i>	<i>Measures/Instruments and Data</i>
1. Students will demonstrate knowledge of anatomic, physical, and physiological bases of speech, language, and hearing	<p>Mean score on Basic Science section of new updated undergraduate Written Comprehensive Exam which is administered in the CDS Seminar capstone course in the spring of each year.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Target- Mean score above 75% Results- 64%, Not Met. First administration of new more challenging updated comp exam. <p>Mean rating on Alumni Survey re: basic science. Assessment Coordinator and Chair coordinate electronic collection annually.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Target- More than 85% of alumni agree or strongly agree about undergraduate preparation in this area. Results- Normal speech-language development- 100%, Met <p>Mean rating on UG Exit Survey re: basic science. Assessment Coordinator collects electronically from seniors prior to graduation annually</p>

<i>Undergraduate Learning Goal</i>	<i>Measures/Instruments and Data</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target- More than 85% agree or strongly agree about undergraduate preparation in this area on the UG exit survey. • Results-Anatomy- 100%, Met, Acoustic Properties/Speech Sci- 100%, Met
2. Students will demonstrate knowledge of linguistic variables related to normal development of speech and hearing.	<p>Mean score on Normal Development section of UG Written Comprehensive Exam</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target- Mean score above 75% • Results- 70%, Not Met First administration of new more challenging updated comp exam. <p>Mean rating on Alumni Survey re: normal development.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target- More than 85% of alumni agree or strongly agree about undergraduate preparation in this area. • Results-Normal speech-language development- 100%, Met <p>Mean rating on UG Exit Survey re: normal development.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target- More than 85% agree or strongly agree about undergraduate preparation in this area. • Results-Normal Phonological Development- 100%, met; Normal Language Development- 100%, met
3. Students will demonstrate basic knowledge of the nature, evaluation, and treatment for various communication disorders including pediatric language and phonology disorders as well as hearing impairment	<p>Mean scores on Phonology and Child Language sections of UG Written Comprehensive Exam</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target- Mean score above 75% • Results- Phonology Disorders= 84%, Met; Child Language Disorders=74%, Not Met; AAC 97% Audiology/AR= 55%, Not Met <p>Mean rating on Alumni Survey re: disorder preparation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target- More than 85% of alumni agree or strongly agree about undergraduate preparation in these disorder areas. • Results-100% <p>Mean rating on UG Exit Survey re: competence in disorder areas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target- More than 85% agree or strongly agree about undergraduate preparation in this area. • Results-Phonology Disorders= 100%, Met; Child Language Disorders=100%, Met; AAC = 100%, Met; Audiology/AR= 100%, Met
4. Students will demonstrate knowledge of basic principles for clinical evaluation and treatment of communication disorders.	<p>Oral Case Presentation and Paper about client they shadowed and co-treated in CDS 3900. Course instructor each term share with chair/assessment coordinator.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target- Mean above 85% • Result= 90% Met <p>Mean rating on Alumni Survey re: clinical preparation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target- More than 85% of alumni agree or strongly agree about clinical preparation. • Results-100% <p>Mean rating on UG Exit Survey re: clinical competency.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target- More than 85% agree or strongly agree about undergraduate preparation in this area. • Results-Apply clinical treatment principles -100%; Develop independent learning strategies- 100%; Investigate efficacy of dx and tx procedures- 100%
5. Students will demonstrate competence in basic communication skills including speaking and writing	<p>Mean Writing Grade on Diagnostic Report Draft 1 and Revised Final version of Diagnostic Report in CDS 4600 Capstone Course.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target- Mean above 85% • Result= 91%, 94% Met <p>Mean Oral Case Presentation grade in CDS 4600 Capstone Course.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target- Mean above 85% • Result= 95% Met <p>Mean rating on Alumni Survey re: written communication and oral interaction.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target- More than 85% of alumni agree or strongly agree about oral and written communication. • Results-100% met <p>Mean rating on UG Exit Survey re: written and oral communication skills.</p>

<i>Undergraduate Learning Goal</i>	<i>Measures/Instruments and Data</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target- More than 85% agree or strongly agree about undergraduate preparation in this area. • Results- Clinical writing 100%, Oral communication in clinic 100%, Academic writing in courses 100%, Oral communication in courses 100%

EIU is a teaching focused, student focused university. The data below indicates the program is meeting this goal.

- The department faculty have high course instruction and clinical instruction mean ratings from students (4.6-4.7 out of 5).
- Exit survey results of graduating seniors indicate that
 - 91% of seniors felt that CDS faculty fostered a supportive student-centered environment;
 - 96% indicated that CDS faculty seemed genuinely interested in their welfare;
 - 96% reported that CDS faculty were easy to contact; and
 - 86% reported that the department fostered a feeling of community/family.
 - More than 95% of department majors report that they would choose the major and EIU again if they had the choice to make over as a high school senior.

Consistent with EIU and the program's mission of service and contributing to the local community and society,

- CDS undergraduate and graduate students provide speech and language evaluations and treatment for more than 200 individuals each year.
- A significant number of CDS undergraduate students serve as mentors and volunteers in the
 - STEP program for EIU students with Autism,
 - EIU Freshman connection program,
 - Amigos and Friends program,
 - After school programs,
 - Special Olympics.

c. Description of actions taken since the last review, including instructional resources and practices, and curricular changes

We noticed a trend in our undergraduate exit student survey responses. On a question that asked about areas that you would like to learn about that you did not, 88% of seniors reported wishing they had some exposure to the adult/medical side of our field as an undergraduate. The CDS Assessment and Curriculum committee reviewed the recommendations from the American Speech Language Hearing Association about the undergraduate curriculum, which also recommends exposing undergrads to communication disorders "across the lifespan". Based on both of these things, we proposed a new undergraduate course, CDS 4500 Introduction to Medical Speech-Language Pathology, that was offered for the first times fall 2022 and then fall 2023 with very positive feedback from students.

The program offered a two credit course in sign language in the past. We expanded this offering to a two class sequence for majors and as an option for non-majors to meet the world language requirement and improve the ability to build sign language proficiency.

As a recruitment strategy and to make degree completion as accessible as possible, the program developed Direct Admission, Early Admission Accelerated pathways for the undergraduate program into the graduate speech pathology program. This is the first year of offering these options. Some high-achieving high school seniors are offered admission to both the undergraduate and graduate program. They maintain their graduate admission status by meeting undergraduate GPA and core function requirements. For the Early Admission program, when students have completed junior course with a 3.5+ GPA, they can apply for an early admission decision for the graduate program. These students have an accelerated option where the B.S. could be completed in 3 years and the B.S+M.S. within 5 years.

d. Description of actions to be taken as a result of this review, including instructional resources and practices, and curricular changes.

The program will need to continue to monitor and be active in state and national discussions, licensure, and accreditation for speech therapy assistant programs. Clinical and course requirements for licensure and certification will impact undergraduate program decisions in the near future. It would be good if an accreditation process for speech therapy assistant programs is developed nationally, and if so, EIU will also monitor and likely comply.

Comments from the College Dean:

The BS in Communication Disorders and Sciences remains a successful program with rigorous academic and clinical instruction and many opportunities for experiential learning opportunities. The program prepares students to continue on to graduate school in speech-language pathology, audiology, occupational therapy, physical therapy, school psychology, or another medical program. The program should be commended on their increases in enrollment to 80 students in 2023 from 68 in 2018. The program utilizes a variety of methods to evaluate students' learning progress, including written comprehensive exams, clinical competency assessments, and diagnostic reports in their capstone course. They also evaluate students' perspectives through course evaluation forms and exit surveys and have found faculty ratings to be outstanding with a 4.6/5 rating from students on global index scores. The program offers a two course sequences sign language courses that is open to non-majors, and these courses meet the world language requirements in addition to improving the ability to build sign language proficiency. In this program, students provide speech and language evaluations and treatments for more than 200 individuals per year. Undergraduate students have the opportunity to enroll in clinical practicum their senior year through the EIU Speech-Language Hearing Clinic, and most are actively engaged in pre-professional activities. This program and faculty have been recognized for their teaching, research, and service through University or external awards. We are glad that others recognize this program for their exceptional work.

We recommend a decision of **Program in Good Standing**.

VPAA Decision:

- Program in good standing
- Program flagged for priority review
- Program enrollment suspended

VPAA Explanation

51.0201 B.S. in Communication Disorders and Sciences

The summary above outlines the rich and pioneering history of EIU's speech pathology and audiology program. The current B.S. in Communication Disorders and Sciences program produces graduates who evaluate the speech and language of hundreds of individuals in any given year and serve the STEP program for autistic students at EIU and a host of other community programs. The curriculum is thorough and rigorous, the opportunity to complete a senior-year clinical practicum is unique, and the highly-rated faculty are heavily involved in state- and national-level conversations on certifying speech-language pathology assistants and updating accreditation standards. Yet there is a severe shortage of qualified speech pathologists. The undergraduate program is working in conjunction with the graduate program to facilitate faster, more efficient pathways for undergraduates interested in early admission and accelerated master's tracks. The undergraduate feedback revealed student interest in learning more about adult communication disorders.