

REVIEW OF THE M.A., M.S. IN SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGY

Classification of Instructional Program (CIP) Code: 51.0204
Audiology/Audiologist and Speech-Language Pathology/Pathologist

OVERVIEW

The M.A., M.S. in Speech-Language Pathology program at Illinois State University is housed in the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders within the College of Arts and Sciences. The department also offers a minor in communication sciences and disorders, a B.S. in Communication Sciences and Disorders, and a Doctor of Audiology (Au.D.).

At the time of the 2009-2010 review, the M.A., M.S. in Speech-Language Pathology program was named the M.A. M.S. in Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology and offered sequences in speech pathology, bilingual speech-language pathology, and audiology. Since then the audiology sequence of the program has been replaced with the Doctor of Audiology program (established in 2006). The speech pathology sequence was also disestablished, because that plan of study had become the default plan of study for the program. To reflect these changes, the reference to audiology in the program name was removed. The bilingual speech-language pathology sequence was subsequently disestablished, because a separate sequence is not required by the program accreditor to prepare graduates for employment as bilingual clinical providers.

A master's degree in speech-language pathology is required for students to receive the Certificate of Clinical Competence in Speech-Language Pathology from the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA). The degree is also a prerequisite for taking the qualifying examination required for licensure as a speech-language pathologist by the Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation.

The Eckelmann-Taylor Speech and Hearing Clinic at Illinois State University provides services to the public while serving as a training clinic for students enrolled in either the M.A., M.S. in Speech-Language Pathology program or the Doctor of Audiology program. Students in the speech-language pathology program complete at least 400 clock hours of clinical practice through a combination of work at the Eckelmann-Taylor Speech and Hearing Clinic and work at clinical sites external to the University.

The M.A., M.S. in Speech-Language Pathology at Illinois State is one of eight such programs at Illinois public universities and one of 13 such programs at any college or university in the state. The program at Illinois State University is consistently one of the largest among the eight with respect to enrollment and the number of degrees conferred.

Enrollment and Degrees Conferred, 2010-2017

M.A., M.S. in Speech-Language Pathology, Illinois State University

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Enrollment, fall census day	97	101	85	72	73	78	74	69
Degrees conferred, graduating fiscal year*	51	47	78	47	37	33	37	40

* Summer, fall, and spring terms (e.g., graduating fiscal year 2017 consists of the following terms: summer 2016, fall 2016, and spring 2017)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY PROGRAM REVIEW SELF-STUDY REPORT

Program goals

- The program provides students with comprehensive coursework in the discipline of speech-language pathology.
- The program provides students with clinical experiences that develop professional skills needed to work in all clinical settings with diverse clients.
- The program ensures that students understand the evidence-base for the profession and how to provide evidence-based practice.
- The program utilizes input from concerned stakeholders to ensure student engagement in the program and the high quality of experiences offered to students.
- The program prepares students to be employed as qualified and competent speech-language pathologists.

Student learning outcomes

- Students will be able to demonstrate knowledge that covers the breadth and depth of the field of study including ethics of the discipline and multicultural issues.
- Students will be able to write professionally.
- Students will develop and implement evaluation plans that are appropriate for individual clients.
- Students will create and implement treatment plans that are appropriate for individual clients and groups of clients.
- Students will be able to write clinical reports and treatment plans.
- Students will follow the ASHA Code of Ethics in all clinical experiences.
- Students will apply evidence-based knowledge to assessment and evaluations in clinic settings.
- Students will be critical consumers of literature in the field.
- Students will maintain an active voice in appropriate departmental discussions and decisions.
- Alumni will provide the department with feedback regarding satisfaction of education gained through experiences while a student in the program.
- American Speech-Language-Hearing Association's Council for Academic Accreditation (CAA) will approve the program's annual CAA report.
- Faculty, ISU supervisors, and external supervisors will provide ongoing feedback regarding curriculum.
- Students will be employed as speech-language pathologists after graduation from the program.
- Graduates of the program will indicate that they were well prepared for employment as clinical speech-language pathologists.
- Employers of CSD graduates will indicate that program graduates are competent clinical speech-language pathologists.

Curriculum (2017-2018)

Graduation requirements: 57 credit hours, consisting of 39 credit hours of academic work and 18 credit hours of clinical work, plus completion of one of three capstone options: comprehensive examination, independent study, or thesis. Because completion of the program is a requirement for Certificate of Clinical Competence in Speech-Language Pathology, all courses in the program are prescribed; there are no electives. Students start the program in the summer and attend full-time for six consecutive semesters.

Program delivery

The program is offered on the Normal campus.

The program is delivered primarily through a traditional face-to-face format; one course is offered online during the summer to allow students greater flexibility for off-campus clinical placements.

The department has offered short-term study abroad trips to New Zealand/Australia, London/Paris, Spain, Greece, and South Korea. All have been developed since the prior program review. The trips to Seoul, South Korea, have involved providing clinical services to Koreans learning English as a second language.

Department faculty (Fall 2017)

10 tenure track faculty members (1 Professor, 3 Associate Professors, 6 Assistant Professors)

8 clinical supervisors

3 clinical administrators (i.e., Clinic Director/Director of Advisement, Director of Clinical Experiences for speech-language pathology, Director of Clinical Experiences for audiology)

5 part-time non-tenure track faculty members (1.5 FTE)

Classroom instruction and clinical supervision for the department are provided by a team of highly-credentialed tenure track faculty members, clinical supervisors, and non-tenure track faculty members. Of these team members, seven tenure track faculty members, five clinical supervisors, and two of the clinical administrators contribute directly to the M.A., M.S. in Speech-Language Pathology program. Their credentials are described below.

Each tenure track faculty member holds a Ph.D. in their field. All but one tenure track faculty member contributing to the master's program is licensed and credentialed in their field. Tenure track faculty members are responsible for all classroom teaching in the M.A., M.S. in Speech-Language Pathology program. They contribute to scholarship in their specializations through publication of research findings in peer-reviewed journals and through conference presentations. Tenure line faculty members also participate in service activities at the department, college, university, and professional levels. Several faculty members serve on journal editorial boards and some have served on state or national professional associations such as the Illinois Chapter of the National Stuttering Association.

Each clinical supervisor holds a master's degree and is certified and licensed. Some clinical supervisors also teach undergraduate courses. Non-tenure track faculty members hired to teach speech-language pathology must have at least a master's degree. As the number of tenure track faculty members in the department has increased in recent years, fewer non-tenure track faculty members have been needed.

Specialized accreditation

The M.A., M.S. in Speech-Language Pathology program is accredited by the Council on Academic Accreditation in Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology (CAA) of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA). The program was re-accredited on October 1, 2013, for eight years, through September 30, 2021. The next full accreditation review is scheduled for August 2020. The Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders submits annual reports to CAA. Based on its review of the annual reports, the accreditor has determined the M.A., M.S. in Speech-Language Pathology program to be in compliance each year.

Changes in the academic discipline, field, societal need, and program demand

Although the scope of practice for speech-language pathologists has expanded over the years, there have not been significant changes in the fundamental purpose or nature of the academic discipline or field since the last program review. Societal need for speech-language pathologists continues to grow, due in part to population aging. To address that need, the number of jobs for speech-language pathologists is expected to increase in Illinois and nationally at rates higher than the average across all occupations. Colleges and universities are challenged with preparing more speech-language pathologists to address the state and national shortage of applications for those positions. Given these dynamics, Illinois State University has experienced a strong demand from prospective students for its M.A., M.S. in Speech-Language Pathology program since the prior program review. That strong demand is expected to continue throughout the next program review cycle. Increasingly, technology is being used to supplement face-to-face instruction in the discipline. The speech-language pathology program at Illinois State uses technology, such as the online learning management system at the University, to supplement face-to-face instruction with podcasts and discussions. Faculty members have also made use of computerized/online case study services and simulated clients in the simulation laboratory of Mennonite College of Nursing at the University.

Response to previous program review recommendations

The Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders has addressed all five recommendations resulting from the 2009-2010 program review of its M.A., M.S. in Speech-Language Pathology program.

Develop a plan to track the program's graduates in terms of how their pass rates on the qualifying exam (PRAXIS) compare with pass rates of graduates nationally. The department now tracks pass rates online using the Educational Testing Service (ETS) Data Manager and is able to compare its rates with those of other speech-language pathology programs both within the state of Illinois and across the nation.

Hire additional faculty in critical areas of need. Working through the College of Arts and Sciences, the department has succeeded in securing additional faculty lines since the last program review. As a result, the number of tenure-line faculty members in the department has increased from six in 2011-2012 to 10 in fall 2017. The department has attracted applicants for its faculty position openings despite the national shortage of Ph.D. credentialed candidates in the discipline.

Given that the department has a young faculty cohort, the department and college together should develop a strong mentoring plan to support scholarly productivity. Faculty mentoring has been and continues to be emphasized in the department. Mentoring efforts since the last program review include providing new faculty members with appropriate start-up packages and research laboratory space, providing new faculty members with a reduced teaching load during their first two years of service at the University so they can focus on their research agenda, encouraging new faculty members to participate in programs and services of the Center for Teaching, Learning, and Technology at the University, encouraging senior faculty to collaborate with junior faculty on research and teaching initiatives, and encouraging new faculty members to participate in the faculty mentoring series offered by the college.

Work with Milner Library faculty and staff to develop stronger library involvement in student learning. The department has designated a faculty member to liaise with library faculty regarding research resources and services available to department students and faculty. Department and library faculty are collaborating to develop short- and long-term goals for integrating information literacy instruction into the program curriculum.

Develop a formal equipment maintenance plan. The department has compiled and is implementing a plan for maintaining and replacing equipment needed to support student learning and faculty research.

Major findings

Demand for the M.A., M.S. in Speech-Language Pathology program at Illinois State University remains strong. Since 2010, annual applications to the program have ranged from 232 to 329, while the enrollment target for each cohort is 36. Demand for graduates of the program also remains strong, as there is growing societal need for speech-language pathologists. The curriculum continues to be effective at preparing students for work in the field. Over 80 percent of students believe they are well prepared for the required clinical placement, and at least 95 percent of external clinical supervisors rate their students as sufficiently knowledgeable, able and willing to work independently and cooperatively, and exhibiting professional behavior. Rates at which students complete the program in the expected time frame, pass the licensure examination (PRAXIS), and are employed are similar to those rates reported by comparator and aspirational programs. Challenges for the program documented through the program review process include a student-to-faculty ratio higher than those ratios of aspirational programs and classrooms, research laboratories, and clinical spaces that provide less than ideal environments for students, faculty, staff, and the general public.

Initiatives and plans

- Continue advocating for improved facilities for all communication sciences and disorders programs. The department will continue exploring construction of an allied health building that would house clinical facilities of the department as well as academic or clinical facilities of other health-related programs at the University.

- Continue working to decrease the ratio of students to tenure-line faculty members and the ratio of students to clinical faculty members. The department intends to continue requesting funds from the college and central administration for additional clinical supervisors.
- Assess the new curriculum and make changes as needed, using student learning outcomes assessment findings to inform program assessment.
- Continue collaborating with Milner Library faculty in providing access to research resources and services needed to support student learning and faculty research and in further integrating information literacy instruction with the curriculum.
- Establish a sustainable interprofessional education experience (IPE) for students in the program. To that end, faculty members intend to continue working with the Mennonite College of Nursing at the University to integrate a speech-language pathology/nursing IPE into the curriculum and to work with the School of Social Work to pilot an IPE experience that bridges speech-language pathology and social work.
- Continue to enhance operations of the Eckelmann-Taylor Speech and Hearing Clinic with a goal of generating sufficient funds to operate the clinic year round, thereby providing additional opportunities for mentored clinical and research experiences for students.
- Establish a sustainable international/humanitarian outreach experience for students in the program, working with the Office of International Studies and Programs at the University.

PROGRAM REVIEW OUTCOME AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE ACADEMIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

Review Outcome. The Academic Planning Committee, as a result of this review process, finds the M.A., M.S. in Speech-Language Pathology program to be in Good Standing.

The committee thanks the program for a comprehensive and concise self-study report that is critical and forward looking. A particularly noteworthy aspect of the report is the analysis of comparator and aspirational programs and their relevance to the program at Illinois State University. The discussion of facilities in that analysis was informed by program faculty visits to other institutions.

The committee congratulates program faculty for reaccreditation of the M.A., M.S. in Speech-Language Pathology program in 2013 for eight years by the Council on Academic Accreditation in Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology of the American Speech Language Hearing Association. This is a critical achievement because only by completing an accredited program can students qualify for certification and licensure as a speech-language pathologist. The committee recognizes the M.A., M.S. in Speech-Language Pathology program for helping address the national shortage in the profession. The program is the largest such program in Illinois with respect to enrollment and degrees conferred. With an acceptance rate consistently below 30 percent, the program attracts and accepts the most qualified and talented applicants and then prepares them for the profession through a curriculum that blends theory and practice. Over the last three years, graduates of the M.A., M.S. in Speech-Language Pathology program have achieved a 99 percent pass rate on the licensure examination required to practice in the field and a 99 percent job placement rate.

The committee commends program faculty members for their ongoing attention to the program curriculum and co-curricular opportunities. Through the most recent curriculum revision in 2015-2016, faculty added nine courses, deleted nine, and revised eight to maintain a curriculum that is rigorous and relevant. Since 2014, faculty has piloted an interdisciplinary learning experience with Mennonite College of Nursing through which students acquire content knowledge regarding aging individuals and provision of clinical services to them. With regard to co-curricular opportunities, the department sponsors two registered student organizations associated with the discipline: chapters of the National Student Speech Language Hearing Association and the National Stuttering Association. The organizations are involved in numerous professional development and community service initiatives, such as the Special Olympics Healthy Hearing program and community health fairs.

Among its comparator programs at Illinois public universities, the M.A., M.S. in Speech-Language Pathology program at Illinois State has the highest percentage of faculty members who are clinically oriented, based on the requirements for the Certificate of Clinical Competence of the American Speech Language Hearing Association. Faculty members focus on clinically-relevant research and involve their students in that research. In 2016, for example, 11 faculty publications or presentations involved graduate students as co-authors or co-presenters.

The committee commends the department and program for their contributions to the campus and region through operation of the Eckelmann-Taylor Speech and Hearing Clinic. In Fiscal 2017 the clinic scheduled approximately 5,100 appointments for speech, language, or audiology testing or treatment for members of the campus community or general public. Students enrolled in academic programs of the department, including the M.A., M.S. in Speech-Language Pathology, assist with this clinical work to meet clinical requirements for certification and licensure.

Adequacy of clinical facilities for the Eckelmann-Taylor Speech and Hearing Clinic as well as of laboratory space for faculty is identified in the self-study report as an ongoing concern of the faculty. The committee commends the department for maximizing use of its existing facilities while seeking alternatives to better serve clinic clientele.

The committee recognizes use by program faculty of assessment findings to inform and guide curricular and co-curricular improvements. Faculty has developed and implemented a student learning outcomes assessment plan that incorporates direct and indirect assessment methods. The most recent assessment plan enhancement, made by program faculty in 2016, involved aligning Knowledge and Skills Acquisition (KASA) standards of the American Speech Language Hearing Association with the curriculum. Another commendable approach to obtaining feedback to guide program improvements is the Student Advisory Board sponsored by the department. The board is comprised of students from the M.A., M.S. in Speech-Language Pathology program and other programs of the department elected by their peers. The board provides a venue for regular communication involving the department chairperson and students regarding academic programs, policies, student support services, and department initiatives.

Recommendations. The Academic Planning Committee makes the following recommendations to be addressed within the next regularly scheduled review cycle. In the next program review self-study report, tentatively due October 1, 2025, the committee asks the program to describe actions taken and results achieved for each recommendation.

Continue exploring options for upgrading department facilities. A long-term solution to the facility challenges facing the department and its clinic may be relocation of either or both to a newly constructed facility on campus. However, given anticipated levels of state support for capital improvements at its public universities and the substantial backlog of capital improvement projects awaiting funding, such a new facility is not likely to be built within the next decade. Accordingly, the committee recommends that the department continue to work with the College of Arts and Sciences to explore other means of upgrading department facilities. Warranting particular attention is the need for the additional laboratory research facilities for department faculty. The department might explore establishing partnerships with health care or social service institutions in the community to provide off-campus clinical sites that could supplement or replace existing facilities in Fairchild Hall and Rachel Cooper. The satellite audiology clinic at the Normal Township Activity and Recreation Center (ARC) might be one model for off-campus facilities. Other options to consider include working with the college to explore reconfiguration of space in Fairchild Hall and Rachel Cooper or access to it, use of other space on campus, or leasing space near campus. For guidance in exploring ways to upgrade facilities, faculty might also look to aspirational programs that operate clinics through health care facilities either on or near their campus.

Continue the dialogue about increasing graduate assistantships and fellowships. The ability to provide graduate assistantships or tuition waivers to more students would make it possible for the program to attract even more top choice students. In addition to encouraging continued dialogue with the college and university administration regarding centrally-funded graduate assistantship lines, the committee recommends that the program explore ways to engage individual donors and external entities as sponsors of graduate fellowships. Experiences of aspirational programs might help inform this exploration.

Evaluate curriculum changes. The committee agrees that evaluation of the curriculum should be a priority in the coming years given the extensive curriculum revisions made by faculty in 2015-2016 as well as changes in the discipline and profession. The committee encourages faculty to utilize data collected through implementation of the student learning assessment plan to help guide discussion of program effectiveness and potential program revisions. Regarding specific curricular initiatives, the committee concurs with the faculty goal of working toward sustainability of the inter-professional education experience piloted with Mennonite College of Nursing and exploring a similar inter-professional education experience with the School of Social Work.

Investigate ways to increase the number of students selecting the thesis option. Matriculating more students into doctoral programs in the discipline could help address the shortage of candidates for communication sciences and disorders faculty positions at higher education institutions nationwide, including Illinois State University. Accordingly, the committee recommends that faculty investigate ways to make the thesis option in the program more attractive for students, as a way of encouraging more program graduates to pursue doctorates in the field. The committee acknowledges that having more students choose the thesis option could have faculty workload implications that may need to be addressed.

Develop and implement a plan for furthering student and faculty diversity. The committee acknowledges the challenges faced by the department in achieving greater gender and racial/ethnic balance among its students and faculty, including students and faculty associated with the M.A., M.S. in Speech-Language Pathology program. However, it may difficult for the department to achieve greater levels of diversity without having goals and a plan for working toward those goals. Accordingly, the committee encourages the department to establish goals for gender and racial/ethnic diversity among its students and among its faculty members, particularly non-tenure track faculty members and clinical supervisors. The committee further encourages the department to formalize and implement a plan for working toward those goals. The committee recommends that the plan focus not just on outreach and recruitment efforts but also include attention to furthering a climate of inclusiveness. The committee commends efforts already made by faculty in that regard, such as incorporating diversity content in courses and increasing gender and racial/ethnic diversity among its tenure-line faculty.

Develop and implement a plan for engaging alumni. The self-study report identifies expansion of efforts to engage program alumni as a goal for the next program review cycle. The committee concurs. Engaged alumni could benefit the program by mentoring students, helping students with practicum and job placements, providing input regarding the program curriculum, or contributing financially to student scholarships or fellowships. The committee recommends that the department formalize and implement a plan for engaging its alumni. Some elements of such a plan are already in place, such as the university-wide alumni survey and exit surveys administered by department programs. Other strategies that might be considered include developing an alumni database and systematic use of social media.

Implement the plan for expanding collaboration with Milner Library. The self-study report identifies as a goal for the next program review cycle expanding collaboration with Milner Library and its communication sciences and disorders subject specialist to facilitate appropriate use of library resources. The self-study report sets forth a plan for doing so, including identifying appropriate points in the M.A., M.S. in Speech-Language Pathology program curriculum for information fluency instruction. The committee commends the department and library for their collaboration in developing the plan and encourages implementation of it.

Investigate ways to sustain short-term study abroad options. The committee acknowledges faculty efforts to encourage participation in study abroad opportunities by students in the M.A., M.S. in Speech-Language Pathology program. The committee recognizes faculty for organizing short-term experiences that make study abroad possible despite the rigors of the graduate curriculum. The committee supports faculty efforts to sustain those study abroad experiences, particularly those with a speech-language pathology focus.