

Executive Summary of HESP Strategic Plan Update 2026

Our Mission

The Department of Hearing and Speech Sciences (HESP) is committed to advancing communication sciences and disorders through education, research, and service. Our mission is to provide the highest level of education, research, and service in communication sciences and disorders.

Our Strategic Plan will strengthen the department's leadership in teaching, clinical education, research, and community engagement through the dual pillars of promoting diversity, equity, inclusion, and social justice (DEIS) and supporting and recognizing the people who make our program great. It aligns closely with the College's broader strategic goals and is designed to position HESP for sustained local, national, and global impact.

The plan is organized around three interconnected strategic pillars:

Innovating Teaching, Learning, and Student Success

We are committed to advancing inclusive, high-quality education across undergraduate, graduate, and clinical programs. We will strengthen our commitment to DEIS by developing best practices for instruction that meet the needs of our diverse student population in all of our programs. We will support our people by recognizing excellence in teaching and mentorship by providing constructive feedback and publicly acknowledging outstanding performance in the classroom and the clinic. This will be accomplished by targeting the following goals:

1. Educate students to apply critical thinking, evidence-based practice, and foundational knowledge in their clinical and/or scientific practice
2. Develop and disseminate models of education and clinical service for national and international impact
3. Expand opportunities for interprofessional creative activities across campus to foster new cross-disciplinary collaborations
4. Evaluate program requirements and practices to reduce barriers to access and success for students from all cultures, ethnicities, and abilities

Advancing Research and Scholarship

We are committed to pushing the boundary of knowledge in our fields and strengthening the evidence base in our clinical practice. We will promote DEIS by cultivating an inclusive research community by securing funding for students from underrepresented backgrounds, including our diverse local communities in research at all levels, and advancing DEIS in clinical practice. We will support our people by facilitating and publicizing collaborative research within our department, campus, and community that addresses critical issues locally and globally. This will be accomplished by targeting the following goals:

1. Enhance administrative and technical support for faculty seeking extramural funding
2. Expand research engagement among underrepresented groups
3. Encourage collaborations among HESP faculty
4. Enhance publicity and public-facing versions of research findings

Building Partnerships

HESP aims to deepen and expand partnerships across the University of Maryland campus, the broader university system, healthcare institutions, schools, aging-focused communities, alumni, and philanthropic organizations. We will promote DEIS by continuing to foster a culture of inclusion that values diversity and seeks to support individuals from underrepresented and marginalized groups. We will support our people by providing tools and support needed to share their expertise broadly and by engaging with alumni and partners from our diverse community. This will be accomplished by targeting the following goals:

1. Develop and strengthen outreach programs, educational resources, community-based research, and clinical services
2. Maintain, strengthen, and generate ties between HESP and other departments or communities across the UMD campus
3. Develop new ties with the broader University of Maryland System
4. Pursue MOU agreements and collaborative research-practice partnerships between HESP and MD hospitals and medical centers
5. Create a culture of philanthropy and engagement with HESP alumni through sustained relationships
6. Create a culture of partnership, support, and cohesion with all students, staff, and faculty to promote excellence in training, education, and collaboration

Accountability and Review

The strategic plan is action-oriented, with clearly defined goals, timelines, and evaluation milestones extending through 2030. Progress will be reviewed annually during the fall department meeting, with full revision every five years to ensure responsiveness to emerging needs and opportunities.

HESP Strategic Plan Update – 2026

This 2026 Strategic Plan Update presents a cohesive framework for strengthening excellence in teaching, clinical education, research, and community engagement. Each major focus in the plan is intentionally designed to advance diversity, equity, inclusion, and social justice (DEIS) while supporting and recognizing the people who make our department thrive—our students, staff, faculty, alumni, and community partners. Organized around measurable objectives and clear timelines, the plan reflects our commitment to fostering an inclusive, innovative, and collaborative environment. These priorities align closely with the College’s new strategic plan objectives, ensuring that our departmental initiatives contribute meaningfully to broader institutional goals and position HESP for continued leadership locally, nationally, and globally.

Innovating Teaching, Learning, and Student Success

Promoting Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Social Justice

We will strengthen our commitment to inclusive teaching by developing best practices for in-person, blended, and online instruction that meet the needs of our diverse student population. Building on our foundation of integrating DEIS principles into all undergraduate courses, we will extend this work to graduate education and clinical instruction to ensure equitable learning experiences across all programs.

Supporting & Recognizing Our People

The department is committed to recognizing excellence in teaching and mentorship. In addition to regular award nominations and constructive feedback from the chair, we will expand recognition efforts to include public acknowledgment of outstanding faculty performance in classroom and clinical settings.

Goals

- Goal #1: Educate students to apply critical thinking, evidence-based practice, and foundational knowledge in their clinical and/or scientific practice.
 - Revamp graduate orientation to establish shared expectations for critical thinking in both classroom and clinical settings by Summer 2026.
 - Evaluate and refine advising and communication procedures to ensure consistency, clarity, and high-quality academic guidance by Fall 2026.
 - Improve clinical education facilities, equipment, and supplies to reflect state-of-the-art practice by Summer 2027.
 - Diversify clinical learning opportunities by expanding service types, interprofessional collaborations, and outreach to additional populations by Summer 2027.
- Goal #2: Develop and disseminate models of education and clinical service for national and international impact.

- Establish a Center of Excellence in Clinical Education Training by Fall 2028
- Ensure consistently excellent educational experiences across classroom and clinical settings, as reflected in student evaluations by Spring 2027.
- Provide our students at all levels of education with professional development knowledge that will enhance their success after graduation by Spring 2027.
- Goal #3: Expand opportunities for interprofessional creative activities across campus to foster new cross-disciplinary collaborations.
 - Integrate clinical services and training across campus clinics by leveraging shared physical and digital infrastructure by 2030.
 - Develop sustainable structures for interprofessional education (IPE) through collaborations with campus partners, UMMC, and joint hearing/speech clinical activities by 2028.
 - Launch a coordinated AuD/MPH dual degree program in partnership with the School of Public Health by Fall 2026.
 - Apply for interprofessional education and practice grants to support community-engaged participatory research in speech and hearing clinical practice by Fall 2028.
- Goal #4: Evaluate program requirements and practices to reduce barriers to access and success for students from all cultures, ethnicities, and abilities.
 - Evaluate and implement structural and programmatic changes to improve financial support for incoming students by Fall 2027.
 - Collaborate with campus and community partners to reduce academic disparities by Spring 2027.
 - Provide long-term support for students of color, first-generation students, students with disabilities, and other underrepresented groups to promote success in graduate education and beyond by Spring 2027.

Advancing Research & Scholarship

Promoting Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Social Justice

We will cultivate an inclusive research community by securing funding for underrepresented students, leading research initiatives that engage our diverse local communities, and prioritizing research areas that advance DEIS in clinical practice.

Supporting & Recognizing Our People

The department will support faculty, staff, and students in conducting innovative research that addresses critical issues facing local and global communities. We will facilitate collaboration within HESP, across campus, and with external partners to strengthen research impact and visibility.

Goals

- Goal #1: Enhance administrative and technical support for faculty seeking extramural funding
 - Create a sustainably funded administrative position for pre-award and post-award support by Spring 2027.
 - Develop a structured grant development pipeline—including internal peer review, proposal writing workshops, and mock study sections—to increase the number and competitiveness of faculty submissions annually by Fall 2027.
 - Increase access to campus IT and computing infrastructure to support research productivity by Fall 2027.
- Goal #2: Expand research engagement among underrepresented groups
 - Increase the number of presentations above publications among students from underrepresented groups annually through 2030.
 - Develop a structured research mentorship cohort program that pairs students from underrepresented groups with faculty research teams for year-long engagement by Fall 2027, including monthly skill-building workshops, peer-mentoring circles, and opportunities to contribute to abstracts, posters, or manuscripts.
- Goal #3: Encourage collaborations among HESP faculty
 - Increase clinical faculty involvement in research development, grant submissions, student theses and capstones, and research dissemination by Spring 2028.
 - Facilitate cross-cutting research initiatives that lay the groundwork for HESP-focused research centers, including potential NIH P50 mechanisms, by Spring 2027.
 - Create an annual internal seed grant mechanism by Fall 2027 to support collaborative pilot projects that position faculty teams for future external funding by Spring 2029
- Goal #4: Enhance publicity and public-facing versions of research findings
 - Expand the department's use of university marketing and communication resources to increase the number of lay-language articles and public-facing posts annually through 2030.

- Develop a departmental research communication toolkit—including templates for lay summaries, infographics, and community facing briefs—and train faculty and students in science communication best practices by Spring 2029.

Building Partnerships

Promoting Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Social Justice

We will continue to foster a culture of inclusion that values diversity and seeks to support individuals from all cultures, backgrounds, ethnicities, abilities, and sexual orientations. We will prioritize partnerships that tackle challenges within our community and beyond, such as health disparities in speech and hearing, inequities in access to or quality of clinical care, and the need for inclusive departmental practices.

Supporting & Recognizing Our People

Our dedicated faculty, staff, and students are essential in building and maintaining meaningful long-term partnerships. The department will provide the tools and support needed to share their expertise broadly. We will continue to engage alumni or community members/partners with varied backgrounds to demonstrate the importance of incorporating diverse perspectives in program development and service.

Goals

- Goal #1: Develop and strengthen outreach programs, educational resources, community-based research, and clinical services
 - Establish a clinical service partnership with Prince George's County Schools to fill service gap needs and expand student learning opportunities by Fall 2028
 - Identify departmental events suitable for inviting foundation leaders to build philanthropic relationships by Fall 2026.
 - Integrate needs assessments and practices into our training/clinical opportunities to enhance existing collaborations and facilitate new opportunities for clinical training, practice, or research in the local campus community by Fall 2028
- Goal # 2: Maintain, strengthen, and generate ties between HESP and other departments or communities across the UMD campus
 - Continue strong ties with interdisciplinary programs (NACS, LSC, CEBH) through student engagement, research collaborations, joint teaching/cross-listing of courses, and dissemination through 2030
 - Strengthen ties with Athletics, Developmental Science Field Committee, Language & Literacy Research Center, Institute for Systems Research, and

the Maryland Neuroimaging Center, Accessibility and Disability Support Services, Counseling, Career Center, etc., through 2030

- Develop new partnerships with aging-focused communities on campus to integrate speech and hearing health into practice (UMD Center for Aging, UMD Center for Sunshine) through research dissemination and student education opportunities by Fall 2027
- Goal #3: Develop new ties with the broader University of Maryland System
 - Establish partnerships and engagement with UMB, UMMC, and Maryland IHC through presentations, training opportunities, and collaborative grant applications by Spring 2028
 - Integrate hearing and speech interprofessional education into the GAIT and GGEAR program by Fall 2029
- Goal#4: Pursue MOU agreements and collaborative research-practice partnerships between HESP and MD hospitals and medical centers.
 - Develop partnerships with institutions such as KKI, Children's National, and TidalHealth to support clinical training and research by Fall 2030
- Goal #5: Create a culture of philanthropy and engagement with HESP alumni through sustained relationships
 - Enhance alumni newsletters (one per semester) by Fall 2027
 - Identify faculty alumni liaison by Spring 2026
 - Establish an annual alumni-preceptor appreciation event by Spring 2028
- Goal# 6: Create a culture of partnership, support, and cohesion with all students, staff, and faculty to promote excellence in training, education, and collaboration
 - Develop a comprehensive orientation program which lays a foundation of partnership and support in student education and training by Fall 2026
 - Maintain and grow the Sunshine Committee or other initiatives devoted to fostering an inviting and supportive environment through events, staff/faculty/student recognition, etc., through 2030
 - Foster departmental transparency and ensure our internal operations advance the strategic plan through 2030