

THE SCHOOL OF
**Speech, Language, Hearing,
& Occupational Sciences**
UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA

Strategic Plan 2023-2026

UM Design Principles

The University of Montana's (UM) mission, vision, and design principles provide the foundation for strategic thinking and planning. The vision and design principles emerged from work done by the University Design Team in 2020-21. We are a public research institution with doors open to all, built on a 128-year-old promise to transform lives, and create pathways to meaningful success. We embrace curiosity and experimentation to meet the demands of a rapidly changing landscape while preserving the hallmarks of a holistic education. We recognize the unique capacity of each individual to affect meaningful community change and we champion the vital role of higher education to nurture a healthy democratic society. Six design principles (*impact, inclusivity, interdisciplinary, internationalization, inquiry, and innovation*) guide UM's ongoing efforts to be a flagship for the future. Together, these provide a lens through which we continually shape UM as a model for 21st Century public education.

Impact

UM is a platform for vital research and lifelong learning that promotes connections between the classroom, the workplace, and the broader community.

Inclusivity

UM seeks the benefits of diversity and multiple ways of knowing by encouraging the full and equal participation of all.

Interdisciplinary

UM tackles important problems at the intersection of traditional disciplines and diverse perspectives.

Internationalization

UM seeks a global and inclusive understanding of humanity in addressing the world's most challenging problems.

Inquiry

UM is a curious and creative community that generates impactful research and learning.

Innovation

UM recognized that innovation is inherently interdisciplinary and integrative, forged in inquiry and collaboration.

UM Priorities for Action

[Five Priorities for Action](#) provide the framework for institutional strategy at UM. Each priority has associated objectives and strategies that guide actions and provide a foundation for assessment.

Place Student Success at the Center of All We Do

In all of our decisions and actions, we will put the success of our students first. We will maintain an intense focus on student retention, persistence, and success through graduation and beyond.

Drive Excellence and Innovation in Teaching, Learning, and Research

Our curriculum, pedagogy, and research will evolve and adapt to best prepare our students to succeed in a dynamic, uncertain world.

Embody the Principle of “Mission First, People Always”

People make UM successful. We will focus on people’s growth and learning, and on fostering a diverse and inclusive campus.

Partner with Place

We benefit greatly from our natural setting and our connection to our community, state, and region. We will both use and strengthen that asset through collaborative learning opportunities, research, and service.

Proudly Tell the UM Story

We are an institution the world needs to know about. Not just to bring new students here, but also to ensure that people understand the incredible work that happens at UM every day and the transformative impact UM has on students and society.

Mission Statements

UM Mission

The University of Montana transforms lives by providing a high-quality and accessible education and by generating world-class research and creative scholarship in an exceptional place. We integrate the liberal arts and sciences into undergraduate, graduate, and professional studies to shape global citizens who are creative and agile learners committed to expanding the boundaries of knowledge and to building and sustaining diverse communities.

UM Vision

The University of Montana will be a Flagship for the Future, fostering inclusive prosperity and democracy while creating new knowledge and ways of learning.

College of Health Mission

The [College of Health](#) is dedicated to improving the health and quality of life for Montanans, our nation, and our international community. Our mission is to recruit students into the health professions, execute the highest quality education for those students, create new programs to meet the workforce needs of our growing & diverse population, strengthen relationships with rural and urban community partners, lead impactful research, and encourage interprofessional education. We strive to accomplish these goals while promoting student success, celebrating diversity, implementing team-based healthcare

education opportunities, and conducting research with an impact. Our College is home to degree-granting programs in Biomedical & Pharmaceutical Sciences, Integrative Physiology & Athletic Training, Pharmacy Practice, Physical Therapy, Public & Community Health Sciences, Social Work, and Speech, Language, Hearing, & Occupational Sciences.

School Mission & Vision

School Mission

The mission of the School of Speech, Language, Hearing, & Occupational Sciences (SLHOS) is to enrich lives and communities in the rural Mountain West and beyond through meaningful education, research, and service in the speech, language, hearing, and occupational sciences.

School Vision

We will be leaders in improving lives and connecting communities through dynamic research, teaching, and clinical practice.

School Strategic Plan Process

The following strategic plan for the School of Speech, Language, Hearing, & Occupational Sciences (SLHOS) was developed through an iterative process. SLHOS faculty and staff used the University of Montana's current strategy: *A Flagship for the Future* including (1) vision, mission, and design principles, (2) priorities for action, and (3) strategic operating rhythm (described in previous sections) to guide their own strategic planning. This plan exemplifies how the School of Speech, Language, Hearing, & Occupational Sciences is a model of excellence and innovation that embodies the University of Montana's design principles and five priorities for action.

The SLHOS faculty and staff worked both independently and collectively to develop mission and vision statements through multistep brainstorming activities, guided by principles of qualitative research. Faculty and staff then brainstormed measurable and achievable goals for a three-year period of strategic planning (2023-2026) as follows:

- Step 1: faculty and staff independently brainstormed three broad School goals;
- Step 2: in small groups, faculty and staff referred to the goals proposed in Step 1 and brainstormed additional goals for each of the **5 UM Priorities for Action**;
- Step 3: the School Chair reviewed and organized faculty and staff-generated goals to align with the **5 Priorities for Action**; and
- Step 4: in small groups, faculty and staff further developed, refined, and wrote three clear goals with actionable items for each of the **5 Priorities for Action**.

School Priorities for Action

The SLHOS faculty and staff are committed to people and place, and we believe that the place where we live and thrive is through the people that we grow and serve. We are committed to improving the lives of those we serve through increasing access to and quality of two social determinants of health: education and healthcare. We accomplish this by providing services in a variety of settings, such as schools, hospitals, and private clinics. As healthcare professionals, it is imperative that we continue to educate others regarding our value at all university and state levels to ensure we are actively and rightly integrated as a key strategic player in the University's Strategy for Distinction. Our faculty are positive about the future

of the University of Montana and committed to actively participating in the university-identified ways of communicating, creating, knowing, and living associated with communities of excellence. The School of Speech, Language, Hearing, & Occupational Sciences recognizes the need for a comprehensive and integrated rehabilitation center for translational research and clinical education and sees this as an essential priority that will broadly benefit the university and all associated educational and health professions including that of speech-language pathology, audiology, and occupational therapy. We are committed to continuing to be an integral part of inter-professional collaborations and developing innovative solutions to serve our students and community, partner with others, provide high-impact quality training, and conduct cutting-edge scholarship and research.

School Priority 1: Place Student Success at the Center of All We Do

In all of our decisions and actions, we will put the success of our students first. We will maintain an intense focus on student retention, persistence, and success through graduation and beyond.

GOAL 1.1: We will implement proactive student programming to provide all SLHOS students with access to the **resources** needed to prepare for successful careers in healthcare professions.

- ✓ **Action Item 1.1.1:** Invest in SLHOS-specific career service guidance for undergraduate students by (1) developing resources for gap year and bachelor's terminal degree students, and (2) exploring the ability to hire an undergraduate advisor to maximally support fully online students.
- ✓ **Action Item 1.1.2:** Invest in student funding (e.g., conference travel, scholarships, mentored teaching assistantships).
- ✓ **Action Item 1.1.3:** Develop online resources to support student success in and out of the classroom (e.g., student housing, food security, neurodiversity resources).

GOAL 1.2: We will implement proactive student programming to provide all SLHOS students with access to the **mentorship** needed to prepare for successful careers in healthcare professions.

- ✓ **Action Item 1.2.1:** We will develop an internal SLHOS student peer mentorship network, connecting more experienced students with less experienced students across undergraduate and graduate programs.
- ✓ **Action Item 1.2.3:** We will connect our students to state-wide, national, and international mentorship opportunities (e.g., through ASHA, professional organizations, affinity groups, etc.)

GOAL 1.3: We will implement proactive student programming to provide all SLHOS students with access to the **experiences** needed to prepare for successful careers in healthcare professions.

- ✓ **Action Item 1.3.1:** We will designate a School team to participate in pre-freshman experiences.
- ✓ **Action Item 1.3.2:** We will establish unique student experiences (e.g., simulation labs, clinical experiences, IPE experiences, AHEC scholars, elective coursework) that are equitable to both campus and online learners and that allow graduates to be well-qualified in the competitive job market.
- ✓ **Action Item 1.3.3:** We will explore university exchange, study abroad, and international experiences for our students.

School Priority 2: Drive Excellence and Innovation in Teaching, Learning, and Research

Our curriculum, pedagogy, and research will evolve and adapt to best prepare our students to succeed in a dynamic, uncertain world.

GOAL 2.1: We will **support School excellence** in teaching, learning, and research to best prepare our students for success in the healthcare professions.

- ✓ **Action Item 2.1.1:** We will invest in improving and upgrading infrastructure (e.g., space, classroom technology, clinical supervision technology) that facilitates interprofessional education and practice across healthcare professions.
- ✓ **Action Item 2.1.2:** We will invest in SLHOS faculty and staff to provide exceptional interprofessional education and research as follows: (1) finalize hiring of essential faculty and staff for the new Occupational Therapy Doctoral program; and (2) finalize hiring of essential faculty in the area of audiology/hearing sciences to develop excellence in the hearing sciences curriculum.
- ✓ **Action Item 2.1.3:** We will maximize our clinical potential and clinical revenue to support excellence in clinical education by proposing the addition of one non-tenure track Clinical Assistant Professor and increasing interprofessional education/teaching.
- ✓ **Action Item 2.1.4:** We will revise our unit standards to 1) reflect peer input and the addition of the Occupational Therapy Doctoral (OTD) program, 2) contextualize the impacts of research and creative scholarship, and 3) support our non-tenure track lines.
- ✓ **Action Item 2.1.5:** We will explore current graduate admissions best practices (e.g., holistic review, universal design, individual and group interviews) to improve the efficacy and efficiency of our admissions processes for faculty, staff, and students.
- ✓ **Action Item 2.1.6:** We will continue to monitor the growth of the field and assess the need to develop programming and curriculum that may be needed to eventually support a required clinical doctorate.

GOAL 2.2: We will **support faculty excellence** in teaching, learning, and research to best prepare our students for success in healthcare professions.

- ✓ **Action Item 2.2.1:** We will increase opportunities for faculty learning and mentorship to develop faculty excellence in the implementation of evidence-based teaching strategies, instructional design (e.g., accessibility, universal design), and technologies to maximize problem-solving, professional practice, and diversity across curriculum offerings. We will support and mentor faculty in their pursuit of the scholarship of teaching & learning (SoTL).
- ✓ **Action Item 2.2.3:** We will support and mentor faculty in their pursuit of leadership opportunities.
- ✓ **Action Item 2.2.4:** We will foster research and creative scholarship productivity reflective of a Carnegie r-1 doctoral university through the following: (1) recognize and support research and creative scholarship through an appropriate faculty load that can sustain high research; (2) provide competitive start-up packages for new faculty; (3) develop and sustain research mentorship for faculty; provide regular mentorship/faculty workshops; (4) support and value interdisciplinary/interprofessional research collaborations both on campus and beyond; (5) we will mentor new/junior faculty to support strategic plans for leadership, research, and teaching growth; and (6) we will encourage faculty sabbatical exchange opportunities.

GOAL 2.3: We will **support student excellence** in teaching, learning, and research to best prepare our students for success in healthcare professions.

- ✓ **Action Item 2.3.1:** We will assess and refine our **undergraduate curriculum** to maximally address efficiencies, student timing, completion, and retention needs including: (1) reinstating sign language courses; (2) providing unique undergraduate experiences (e.g., undergraduate clinical experiences, co-convened courses); and (3) developing a service-learning requirement that addresses local and remote disparities (e.g., communication ambassadors, communication partners, care-partner relief, peer mentorship).
- ✓ **Action Item 2.3.2:** We will assess and refine our **graduate curriculum** to best support American Speech-Language Hearing Association standards and to capture our unique strengths (e.g., interprofessional education, clinical translational research). We will expand curriculum offerings for doctoral students. We will expand intensive summer clinical experiences and explore short winter session intensive experiences.
- ✓ **Action Item 2.3.3:** We recognize that access to research opportunities is integral to improving **undergraduate student** outcomes. We will develop a clear and visible research pathway for undergraduate students as follows: (1) offer a minimum of 3 undergraduate courses that have enhanced technical/scientific writing opportunities; (2) develop an interprofessional health sciences intermediate scientific/technical writing course.
- ✓ **Action Item 2.3.4:** We recognize that access to research opportunities is integral to improving **graduate student** outcomes. We will develop a clear and visible research pathway for graduate students as follows: (1) work with the college, office of research, and grant funding agencies to increase and graduate assistantships and funding; (2) expand graduate mentorship for theses, dissertations, publications, and professional dissemination experiences.

School Priority 3: Embody the Principle of “Mission First, People Always”

People make UM successful. We will focus on people’s growth and learning, and on fostering a diverse and inclusive campus.

GOAL 3.1: We will advance diversity, equity, inclusivity, justice, and accessibility (DEIJA) initiatives to best support students in the healthcare professions.

- ✓ **Action Item 3.1.1:** We will identify guiding principles of and establish a strategic plan for DEIJA for the School.
- ✓ **Action Item 3.1.2:** We will integrate with diverse student bodies (e.g., Indigenous, LGBTQ+, neurodiverse) and implement strategies to recruit a diverse and international student body for undergraduate and graduate studies.
- ✓ **Action Item 3.1.3:** We will provide resources that support a diverse student body including: (1) developing grant proposals to provide financial supports for students from diverse backgrounds; and (2) supporting students who seek out employment in rural regions post-graduation.
- ✓ **Action Item 3.1.4:** We will review all formal SLHOS documents—including this strategic plan—through the lens of an active anti-racist, anti-bias framework, and make changes as needed.

GOAL 3.2: We will provide systematic and ongoing support for faculty and staff development, growth, and wellness to optimize the unique strengths of all.

- ✓ **Action Item 3.2.1:** We will hire and retain support staff (e.g., online advising, management, marketing, and communications) for optimal student service and faculty effectiveness. We will systematically review and update roles and responsibilities to recognize and support growth and expertise. We will work to retain staff by providing ongoing training, support, mental health support and campus resources, promoting work-life harmony.
- ✓ **Action Item 3.2.2:** We will support all employees to develop strategic plans for career advancement. We will support and mentor non-tenure track faculty in their pursuit of promotion.
- ✓ **Action Item 3.2.3:** We will provide time and opportunities (e.g., expansion of FASST Fridays for clinical providers and preceptors) and invest in continuing education training associated with role statements and demands.

School Priority 4: Partner with Place

We benefit greatly from our natural setting and our connection to our community, state, and region. We will both use and strengthen that asset through collaborative learning opportunities, research, and service.

GOAL 4.1: We will increase interprofessional clinical opportunities to optimally train students in the healthcare professions and to provide service to our regional communities. We will focus on reducing health disparities for rural and underserved communities in Montana and the Mountain West region.

- ✓ **Action Item 4.1.1:** We will explore our ability to increase telehealth services, particularly in areas of high need/low access (e.g., rural communities, tribal communities, medically fragile patients) and pursue interstate telehealth practice opportunities.
- ✓ **Action Item 4.1.2:** We will explore our ability to develop a mobile care unit to connect rural Montanans to speech, language, hearing, and occupational assessment and intervention.
- ✓ **Action Item 4.1.3:** We will consider ways to bring gender affirming voice and communication care to the campus community (e.g., partnering with counseling or other IPE/DEI programs).

GOAL 4.2: We will develop a systematic School affiliate faculty process for committed and consistent externship supervisors, expert guest speakers, facilities, and other professional partners to recognize their contribution to the education, training, and mentorship of students in the healthcare professions.

- ✓ **Action Item 4.2.1:** We will identify and invite committed and consistent partners to become University of Montana faculty affiliates.
- ✓ **Action Item 4.2.2:** We will develop processes and procedures for reviewing, adding, and removing partners as faculty affiliates.
- ✓ **Action Item 4.2.3:** We will increase affiliate participation in SLHOS research activities.

GOAL 4.3: We will explore a fully online graduate speech-language pathology (SLP) program that meets the needs of persons living and working in their communities (e.g., part-time, evenings, weekends, asynchronous).

- ✓ **Action Item 4.3.1:** We will conduct a needs assessment (e.g., focus groups) to determine the demand for a fully online graduate program in speech-language pathology.
- ✓ **Action Item 4.3.2:** We will conduct a financial analysis of the cost of implementing a fully online graduate program in speech-language pathology.

School Priority 5: Proudly Tell the UM Story

We are an institution the world needs to know about. Not just to bring new students here, but also to ensure that people understand the incredible work that happens at UM every day and the transformative impact um has on students and society.

GOAL 5.1: We will increase School visibility with **people who don't already know about us.**

- ✓ **Action Item 5.1.1:** We will designate faculty and staff and work with UM marketing and communications to increase our Social Media presence. We will use these outlets to publicize our research, teaching, and leadership accomplishments. We will translate research/creative accomplishments in digestible snippets of plain language for general public consumption.
- ✓ **Action Item 5.1.2:** We will participate in regional tours and tabling events (e.g., Tribal College Health tour, Rural Montana Conference, High School College Health Tour, Griz Preview Day).
- ✓ **Action Item 5.1.3:** We will create School swag (e.g., t-shirts, stickers, scrubs) with UM branding.
- ✓ **Action Item 5.1.4:** We will hold a public fundraiser for SLHOS to increase scholarship support in our UM Foundation Accounts.

GOAL 5.2: We will Increase School visibility **with current students, faculty, and staff.**

- ✓ **Action Item 5.2.1:** We will enroll UM Students in UM Peoplegrove service.
- ✓ **Action Item 5.2.2:** We will create a regular newsletter for current student events and student, faculty, and staff announcements, awards, honors, publications, etc.
- ✓ **Action Item 5.2.3:** We will increase our internal and external nominations of student, faculty, staff, and alumni awards and honors (e.g., SLHOS Student Choice Awards, UM awards, MSHA awards, ASHA awards, fellowships, leadership programs).
- ✓ **Action Item 5.2.4:** We will apply for funding opportunities through which our story is told during the application process.
- ✓ **Action Item 5.2.5:** We will tell our story by inviting cross-disciplinary participation in our courses.

GOAL 5.3: We will increase School visibility with **alumni, community, and other related organizations.**

- ✓ **Action Item 5.3.1:** We will deepen relationships with organizations (e.g., OPI, OCHE, MSHA, CEC, Western Montana Scottish Rite) and engage in inter-agency collaborations that highlight SLHOS strengths, knowledge, research, and innovations. We will refine and promote programming that supports the needs of our local and state organizations.
- ✓ **Action Item 5.3.2:** We will tell our story by inviting community members to participate in SLHOS-focused dialogues (e.g., SLHOS Research Symposia) and continuing education opportunities (e.g., FASST Fridays, SLHOS Spring Conference).
- ✓ **Action Item 5.3.3:** We will develop an Alumni relations plan that includes: (1) a quarterly newsletter that highlights featured Alumni, (2) homecoming/tailgating event(s), DeWit RiteCare Clinic open house; (3) enrolling alumni in UM Peoplegrove service.