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A Strategic Plan for Engaging Undergraduate Speech Pathology and Audiology Students in the Research Enterprise

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Project Goal

The goal of this project is to develop a strategic plan for the Speech Pathology and Audiology Research Experience, which is a program designed to increase undergraduate student engagement in research activities. The emphasis on undergraduate students is based on the view that the sooner research opportunities are introduced and 'demystified', the sooner students envision this as a viable professional option.

Why WMU?

1. WMU has a long history as a leader in the field of Speech Language Pathology and Audiology. It is one of the oldest programs in the nation and its graduate programs are currently ranked within the top 50 programs nationally (US News and World Report, 2012).
2. SPPA faculty are actively engaged in a wide range of funded and unfunded research programs.
3. WMU offers both undergraduate and professional graduate SPPA programs, which will potentially provide research experiences at a variety of academic levels.
4. The Speech Pathology and Audiology Undergraduate Research Experience clearly aligns with WMU’s new strategic plan.

Potential Gaps and Barriers to Success

1. No clear flowchart for students to follow to get involved, process largely informal, no mechanisms for recording workload associated with supervision, inconsistency in who/what to register for formal credit, no established mechanisms for CITI research training and HSRRP, limited range of options for an UG research experience, no mechanisms for program monitoring
2. Gap/BARRIER 2. Faculty Perceptions
  - Limited funding to support UG research. Faculty time that would be used for other activities, uncertainty about how many faculty will assist in activity. Need for formal research-oriented classes, faculty/staff time to administer the program
  - Gap/Barrier 5. Administrative Support
  - Possible conflicts with other UMW initiatives, possible redundancy with other UMW initiatives, determine fit within the strategic plan of Department, College and University.

Strategic Goals

GOAL 1: Stakeholders will provide direct input on the plan for the Speech Pathology and Audiology Undergraduate Research Experience.

Action Items
1. Survey UG SPPA students at all levels to determine interest in the UG Research Experience.
2. Survey faculty regarding UG involvement in faculty research.
3. Identify faculty interested in participating in the UG Research Experience.
4. Propose project plan to Dean’s Office to determine CHHS interest, as well as possible conflicts and redundancies.

GOAL 2: Undergraduate SPPA students will get greater exposure to faculty research and student opportunities for research engagement.

Action Items
1. Create Colloquium for sharing faculty and student research (initiated by A. Tyler in Spring 2012).
2. Increase awareness of current SPPA student research presentations (e.g. UG Thesis, MA Thesis, Doctoral projects).
3. Use web and written materials to elevate profile of SPPA research labs with a special emphasis on students.
4. Make research experience a valid volunteer experience for students attending to the major (begun in Spring 2012).
5. Include more information about academic careers in various SPPA orientation materials.
6. Investigate the viability of offering an undergraduate SPPA course in research methods.

References