

## Admissions Process—Procedures, and Advisement

(Subject to change based upon review by each year's Admission's Committee)

Communication Disorders and Sciences Program  
Southern Illinois University Carbondale

The SIUC Communication Disorders and Sciences (CDS) program usually has more applicants for the graduate program than it can accept. The reason for this is because the program contains clinical, as well as an academic, requirements, which are established by the CDS Program in order maintain compliance with accreditation requirements established by the Council on Academic Accreditation of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA). The ASHA standards for clinical education in CDS programs set the minimum level of supervision required of faculty to students in training. The number of faculty we employ has a direct relation to the number of students we can accept into the CDS program. Based on our current faculty we were able to accept 24 graduate students for the summer 2024 class.

The standing SIUC CDS Admissions Committee is composed of all CDS TT faculty. NTT faculty may also be appointed by the CDS Program Coordinator.

Because the number of applicants exceeds the number of positions available, the CDS faculty have developed procedures used in the selection process. The sequence of procedures includes:

1. The CDS faculty voted in Fall 2020 to amend their admission procedures. Beginning in admission cycle 2018, SIUC undergraduates with a cumulative GPA of a 3.9 or above at the time of admission were be offered automatic admission to the graduate program without having to submit a CSDCAS application. **In fall 2020, the CDS faculty voted to amend this policy to a cumulative GPA of 3.5 for any SIUC student.** Application to the Graduate School was still be required. Please see the approved written policy in our faculty meeting agenda/minutes for the exact language approved by the CDS faculty.
2. The CDS Admissions Committee determines which applicant characteristics will be used to break 'ties' where two or more applicants are essentially identical in terms of the required data submitted. Potential preferences may be based on applicant characteristics such as gender, cultural or linguistic diversity, or whether an applicant is an SIUC undergraduate student.
3. Because of the sheer number of applications, we conduct an initial screening of all applications based on three pieces of data: (a) grade point average (GPA) and (b) whether the applicant was enrolled in SIUC undergraduate CD courses. We set baseline levels for the GPA and automatically review any applicant who is at or above the baseline level on these measures. **For example, in 2013 the Admissions Committee set the GPA baseline at 3.7 or greater (GPAs are calculated using SIUC Graduate School guidelines, which focus on junior and senior year courses).** Using GPA and SIU status, a Group A is identified and applications in full are reviewed. All remaining applicants are in Group B. Adaptation in years with smaller applicant pool in Calipso: Review all applications in round 1. Move to #9 if we need to reopen our portal. Contact in progress but unverified applicants to let them know we still have openings.
4. An Admissions Committee reviews the Group A files, including each applicant's transcripts /grades, personal statement and application form, GRE scores, letters of recommendation, as well as any additional information we have.
5. Each Committee member independently rates each applicant.
6. The Committee meets to discuss their independent applicant ratings in order to create three groups of applicants: (a) A1: those (approximately 50 applicants) to whom we send offers immediately, (b) A2: those who are placed on a wait list, and (c) A3: those who do not meet our minimum expectations and to whom we send letters of rejection. Each time we send an applicant

an offer (which we send by email through CSDCAS) that applicant has until April 15, or—if the offer is made after April 15—then 1 week, to accept our offer. If an applicant passes on the offer, we send an offer to the next applicant on our offer sequence list until the class is full.

7. The procedures used to determine the offer sequence of those in Group A2 is complex, but is based on procedures similar to those described above for Group A1. The Committee determines the number of applicant files that need to be ranked out of the A2 subgroup. Each Committee member independently rates each applicant in A2 (1).
8. The Committee meets and discusses the A2 (1) group beginning with the highest initial ranking in order to determine the sequence in which we will send offers; changes in ranking may occur due to change in one or more Committee member's ratings. Also, it is possible that the Committee may send offers to those whose offer sequence has been determined, even prior to exhausting the entire A2 (1) list (for example, in 2011 the A2 (1) list consisted of 45 applicants, but once the Committee determined the offer sequence of the first 28 from the A2 (1) group the Committee paused for several weeks before re-convening to continue determining the offer sequence of the remaining A2 (1) applicants).
9. Once the summer class is full, we inform all remaining applicants via email through CSDCAS.
10. If there are spots available once our A1 and A2 lists are exhausted, we may extend our application portal in CSDCAS. We did this in 2022 to yield two additional applicants who received offers.
11. At times email exchanges are used to substitute for in-person admission committee meetings for waitlist applicants or late applicants. The program director initiates those exchanges.

The following is ancillary information related to admissions:

On rare occasions, an individual who has committed to our program will have a change of plans and withdraw prior to the beginning of classes. If this happens, we typically attempt to fill that position with an applicant from the wait list. Our method involves contacting individuals on the wait list using the same sequence methods described above. Sometimes there is very limited time to fill a position, so we usually have to rely on the phone number and/or email of applicants. Therefore, it is important that applicants continue to update any changes in phone number or email with the SIUC CDS Program Graduate Assistant.

Applicants often ask advice regarding what they should do in the event that they are not accepted into a graduate program. We advise them to keep in mind that this is an application to the academic community; the academic community primarily values academics. This means that engaging in a lot of clinical work (e.g., employment or volunteer work with person with communication impairments) will not necessarily improve one's chances for admission to a graduate program. Admissions committees consider primarily grades in courses, GPA, academic letters of reference, Graduate Record Examination (GRE) scores, and special academic pursuits (such as research, special projects, etc.) so if any of those areas are low then it can affect selection.

The GRE was made optional for admissions in 2023. We had made it options in 2021 due to Covid. We reinstated in 2022 and yielded a drop in applications. The program director also received feedback from the admissions committee that indicated the GRE was not as valued as other metrics such as GPA, writing, and letters. The GRE is now optional. The admissions committee may review it, but we use only to help strengthen an application.

Applicants who are not accepted into a graduate program and have grades of "C" in the major should consider re-taking those "C" courses. For example, we have had students in this situation who have come to SIUC and enrolled in undergraduate courses who have substantially improved their grades when re-taking courses, and were eventually accepted into our graduate program.

We also recommend to students who are either waiting to apply to graduate school or do not get an offer to consider employment, volunteer, and other opportunities to connect with speech-language service delivery or with populations served by speech-language pathologists. We have had several

applicants admitted in recent years who spent gap time between undergraduate programs and graduate programs in roles that strengthened their preparation for graduate education by working with or adjacent to the profession.

Another option is to simply wait and re-apply to graduate programs. Expanding the number of programs to which one applies can increase one's chances of acceptance. Do a targeted search of graduate programs; determine which programs are the best match.

Also, some graduate CDS programs (although not at the SIUC CDS program) allow students to enroll in CDS graduate courses as non-declared graduate students. Applicants who complete one or more graduate courses as non-declared graduate students and are then accepted into our (or some other) graduate program need to be aware that graduate programs are not obligated to transfer the previous graduate course work into the new graduate program. At SIUC, applicants must formally request that we accept any previous graduate courses, and we would require submission of a syllabus for each course so we could conduct a file review. We would also require that applicants have KASA (Knowledge and Skills Assessment) information provided by course instructor(s) who taught the course(s) that are being considered for transfer.

Finally, some applicants decide to not pursue graduate education in CDS. Here are some additional considerations for them:

- Entering an educational program in associated human services areas such as English as a second language (ESL), special education, regular education, rehabilitation counseling, rehabilitation administration, behavior analysis, or audiology.
- Obtaining employment as a speech-language pathology assistant. The laws regarding employment of assistants are regulated by each state, so it is impossible to explain the laws for any state other than Illinois in this document. There are also national certification criteria now.

Individuals who hold a bachelor's degree in communication Disorders may be eligible for a license as a speech-language pathology assistant but there are some specific criterion for hours of clinical experience acquired and for specific content. The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association also has national certification for speech-language pathology assistants. Again, there are some specific additional criteria that need to be completed beyond the BS degree.

- Employment in a human services field in a capacity other than speech-language pathology assistant/paraprofessional. Many agencies providing services to individuals with impairments employ persons with bachelor's degrees in human services. These include county care facilities, private rehabilitation centers, public and private schools, and day programs.
  - Also to be employed by a vendor or publisher affiliated with communication disorders and sciences would be a potential avenue of work for a BS degree in CDS.