

Augmentative and Alternative Communication: Research, Clinical Education and Clinical Service Delivery at UCF

According to Assistant Professor Jennifer Kent-Walsh, approximately two million Americans suffer from developmental, acquired and degenerative disabilities, which result in their inability to use speech as a primary form of communication. Augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) systems (e.g., communication boards, computerized voice-output communication devices) provide options for individuals with complex communication needs to achieve their communication potential. Kent-Walsh works daily to make the Department of Communicative Disorders at the University of Central Florida a leader in the field of AAC through research, pre-service teaching initiatives and improved clinical services.

Research

One area of research interest for Kent-Walsh involves validating interventions to teach communication partners how to engage in storybook reading with young children who use AAC. Research has shown that interactive book reading enhances language and emergent literacy skill development in children. However, parents of children with complex communication needs, who require the use of AAC, often do not naturally provide supportive opportunities for their children to participate in book reading. Kent-Walsh's goal is to offer these parents

evidence-based strategies to help them increase book reading opportunities with their children.

Since arriving at UCF in the fall of 2003, Kent-Walsh has received several grants to support her research on early language and emergent literacy acquisition in young children with complex communication needs. These grants have allowed her and her students to investigate the efficacy of two instructional programs for parents of children who use AAC, one involving Caucasian families and the other involving African-American families. Kent-Walsh is now working with her colleague Associate Professor Linda Rosa-Lugo to investigate the efficacy of a third instructional program, involving Hispanic families.

The programs are designed to teach parents how to implement culturally appropriate and evidence-based interaction strategies to provide children with meaningful opportunities to communicate during book reading activities. The studies measure the communicative turns of these young children using AAC before and after their parents receive instructional guidance. "After teaching the caregiver to support and encourage the use of an AAC system during book reading activities, young children with AAC needs are becoming more

active and effective communicators," Kent-Walsh said.

Kent-Walsh is also working with researchers at UCF's Institute for Simulation and Training to develop language interventions within virtual world contexts. In a pilot study currently under development, Kent-Walsh and her research team are designing cutting-edge interventions that will target early emerging receptive language concepts with children who have AAC needs. The children will participate in activities within contexts that might be inaccessible to them in the "real" world because of their disabilities (e.g., visiting and interacting with animals in a virtual pet shop).

Clinical Education

Kent-Walsh has developed new course work that provides graduate and undergraduate students with the opportunity to learn about AAC intervention and technologies. The undergraduate course in AAC includes a service-learning component where students work with individuals who have AAC needs and their families through local nonprofit agencies. The graduate course includes a large clinical component that allows students to complete assessments and intervention plans for clients in the UCF Communication Disorders Clinic and other local clinical facilities.

Clinical Service Delivery

The field of AAC has experienced rapid growth in technology and interventions in recent years. The UCF Communication Disorders Clinic is currently able to offer limited AAC assessments and clinical services to clients in the community. To better serve the needs of the greater Orlando area, the clinic requires funding to support a full-time clinician with expertise in AAC and to purchase additional AAC systems to compliment classroom instruction.

The Department of Communicative Disorders is proud of recent expansions in AAC research, clinical education and clinical service delivery and looks forward to many more exciting developments in the future.



Pam Lindemann (left) and her daughter Katherine work with Jennifer Kent-Walsh (right).

Sara Cooper

Graduate Update

The Department of Communicative Disorders offers two options leading to the Master of Arts degree in speech-language pathology for undergraduates with degrees in speech-language pathology and audiology — a traditional program and a program designed for students who have been providing speech and language services in the Florida public schools for at least one year prior to application. Both programs are intended for those interested in working with children and adults who have communication disorders.

The programs' goal is to provide the academic and clinical education experiences necessary for certification by the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) and licensure by the state of Florida. The Council on Academic Accreditation of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association has accredited the program since 1986.

For more information, contact the Department of Communicative Disorders at (407) 823-4798.

Foreign Accent Syndrome



Professor Jack Ryalls, Clinical Instructor Janet Whiteside and Tiffany Noell, a Florida woman diagnosed with Foreign Accent

Syndrome (FAS) in 2003, were interviewed on Oct. 29, 2004, by a film crew working for Discovery Health Channel. A broadcast date for the interviews has not yet been released.

Communication Disorders Clinic Expands Audiology Services

The Communication Disorders Clinic at the University of Central Florida recently added hearing aid evaluations, the dispensing of digital hearing aids and hearing evaluations for infants and young children to its growing list of services for community members.

Audiologist Melissa Riess has been working to expand the clinic's audiology services since she joined the facility in 2003. She and graduate student clinicians from the Department of Communicative Disorders now work closely with clients to assess their hearing concerns and to find a hearing aid that best meets their needs.

According to Riess, who holds a doctorate in audiology, hearing loss may occur from prolonged exposure to noise or sudden and loud bursts of noise, normal aging of the inner ear, medication side effects or disease.

Barbara Howell, an instructor and research coordinator for the College of Health and Public Affairs, attributes her own hearing loss to a life-long problem with chronic sinus infections — and aging. After years of struggling to hear students in classrooms, missing parts of conversations and hearing her own voice as a muffle, she sought help at the Communication Disorders Clinic.

A series of hearing tests revealed that Howell could not hear some high-pitched frequencies. Riess fitted her with new digital hearing aids that she programmed to amplify only the frequencies that Howell was missing.

"Things are really crisp and clear now," said Howell, who is thrilled with her improved hearing and the fact that her digital hearing aids are barely visible. She is also pleased that student clinicians were involved in every aspect of the process — from testing to fitting and



Barbara Howell (seated) is the first person to be fitted with new digital hearing aids by Audiologist Melissa Riess (standing) at the Communication Disorders Clinic.

programming of her hearing aids — and that she played a role in their learning experience.

The clinic has also recently expanded its audiology services to infants and young children by acquiring a state-of-the-art Visual Reinforcement Audiometry system, thanks to a generous grant from the UCF Learning Institute for Elders (LIFE).

"The first few years of a child's life are important in the development of speech, listening and language skills," explained Charlotte Harvey, director of the clinic. "The ability to hear adequately allows a child to develop his or her foundation for developing literacy skills later in life. No child is too young to have his or her hearing checked."

Harvey said any member of the UCF community or the general community may contact the clinic at 407-249-4770 to obtain information about scheduling an appointment for these services. The clinic is located off-campus in the Central Florida Research Park, 12424 Research Parkway, Suite 155, in Orlando.



alumni

Degrees in **bold** were awarded by UCF in communicative disorders.

1978

Robert E. Wright, B.A., M.A. ('81), M.H.A. (Chapman University, '88), Ph.D. in health care administration (LaSalle University, '97), is the CEO for Threshold, Inc. in Winter Park, Fla. He is a fellow of the American College of Healthcare Executives and the American Academy of Audiologists.

1981

Rosemary Notarantonio, B.S., M.S.N. (Barry University), is the vice president and chief nursing officer at Tucson Medical Center in Arizona.

1992

Jenny Story (Pearson), M.S., resides in Maitland, Fla.

1993

Raymond L. Irvin, B.A., M.A. ('97), worked as a speech-language pathologist for the Volusia County School District before entering the field of law enforcement. He is currently employed by the Sanford Police Department in Florida, where he was recently promoted to sergeant.

Tracy McCrea (Goodiel), B.S., M.A. ('96), is married with a 3-year-old daughter, Riley, and a second baby on the way. She resides in Stuart, Fla.

Mary Jo Matas, B.S., M.A. ('94), is a senior speech-language pathologist at HealthFirst and Holmes Regional Medical Center in Melbourne, Fla.

1994

Nancy Johnston (Ullrich), B.A., is a speech-language pathologist and the owner of Central Florida Therapy Solutions, Inc., located in Longwood and Orange City, Fla.

1995

Milaura Spelman (Baughn), B.S., M.S. in speech pathology ('99), is a speech-language pathologist for the Orange County School System in Orlando, Fla. She was married to Jason Spelman in October 2003 and resides in Oviedo, Fla.

Julius Fridriksson, B.A., M.A. ('97), Ph.D. in speech and hearing sciences (University of Arizona '01), is an assistant professor at the University of South Carolina in Columbia, and recently received a grant from the National Institutes of Health. His wife, **Astrid Fridriksson (Velazquez), B.A., M.A. ('97)**, also works at the University of South Carolina,

as a clinical supervisor.

Tricia Joy Johnson (Hightower), B.S., M.Ed. in special education ('00), is a second grade teacher for the Charleston County School System in North Charleston, S.C. She is married with a son, Greg Evan, born in 2002.

Melea Patrick, B.A., M.A. ('03), is a speech-language pathologist at CFRCR in Crystal River, Fla.

Denise Follenius (Seymour) M.A., resides in Gainesville, Fla.

1996

Virginia Taylor (Dair), B.S., M.A. ('98), is a speech-language pathologist at Sovereign in Melbourne, Fla.

1997

Elizabeth A. Gritzmacher (Bowersox), B.S., M.S. in communication disorders (Texas State University, '99), is a school-based speech-language pathologist at Round Rock Independent School District in Round Rock, Texas.

Rashelle A. Miller, B.A., M.A. ('02), works as a speech-language pathologist for Lake County Schools in Tavares, Fla. She had her first child in June 2004.

Alice Eastwood (Sprouse), M.A., resides in Melbourne, Fla.

Daisy Vanzandt (Woodward), B.S., M.A. ('00), is an assistant director at Active Therapies in Denver, Colo., and a diagnostician for Douglas County Child Find in Castle Rock, Colo. She plans to return to Florida in the next five years.

1998

Amy Hutto (Bartolomei), B.S., is a speech-language pathologist at Life Care Centers of America in Orange Park, Fla.

Tyra Turner (Harper), B.S., was inducted into the UCF Athletics Hall of Fame in October 2004. She has been playing volleyball professionally since she graduated from UCF.

Karen A. Jacobs (Montague), B.A., M.A. ('00), resides in Orlando, Fla.

Jennifer Smith Mallard, B.A., M.A. ('00), is a rehabilitative coordinator and speech-language pathologist at AGE Institute of Florida University Centers East and West in Deland, Fla.

Susan Moreno, B.S., is an assistant speech-language pathologist in the Dallas Independent School District and resides in Carrollton, Texas. She is enrolled in a graduate program for school-based speech-language pathologists through Texas Women's University.

Paul L. Sowder, B.S., is self-employed and resides in Fernandina Beach, Fla.

Erica Noel Ebersole (Szesny), B.S., is a secondary educator at Foundation Academy in Winter Garden, Fla.

1999

Theresa "Terri" Ayotte, B.A., M.A. ('01), is a speech-language pathologist at Orlando Regional Healthcare in St. Cloud, Fla. She is VitalStim Therapy and Hanen certified.

Tamara Seabrook, M.A., is a speech-language pathologist at Arnold Palmer Hospital for Children and Women in Orlando, Fla.

2000

Lindsay Allyn Kramer (Baskin), B.S., Au.D. (Nova Southeastern), is an audiologist for Broward County in Ft. Lauderdale, Fla.

Amelia "Amy" Allen (Miller), M.A., is married with a baby boy and recently started her own business as a speech-language pathologist. She resides in Kissimmee, Fla.

Kelli Morris, B.S., M.A. in audiology (University of Tennessee), is an audiologist for Ear, Nose, Throat and Plastic Surgery Associates in Altamonte Springs, Fla. She is working towards an Au.D. from the University of Florida.

Linda S. Weeks B.A, M.A. in education ('03), is a teacher with the Volusia County School System in Edgewater, Fla.

2001

Amy Wilcox, B.S., M.A. in communication science (Florida State University '04), is a speech-language pathologist at HCR Manor Care in Boca Raton, Fla.

2002

Emily Franklin, M.A., is a speech-language pathologist with Martin Memorial Health Systems in Stuart, Fla. She works primarily in the ICU and ER and enjoys the fast-paced medical setting.

Morgan Griffing, B.S., is a graduate student at the University of Kansas in Lawrence.

2003

Vanessa E. Fiscus, M.A., is a speech-language pathologist at Palms of Largo in Largo, Fla. She is currently taking classes towards a master's degree in health administration at the University of South Florida

Holly Hubbard, B.S., resides in St. Augustine, Fla.

2004

Jennine M.T. Harvey, B.S., resides in Orlando, Fla.

Cari Lauren Mutnick, B.S., is pursuing a master's degree in speech-language pathology at New York University in New York.

If you would like us to include your information in the next issue of Communiqué, visit www.cohpa.ucf.edu/alumni and click on "Stay Connected."

For comments, questions or more information:

Communiqué

Department of Communicative Disorders
College of Health and Public Affairs
University of Central Florida

P.O. Box 162215
Orlando, FL 32816-2215
(407) 823-4798
www.cohpa.ucf.edu/comdis/

Communication Disorders Clinic

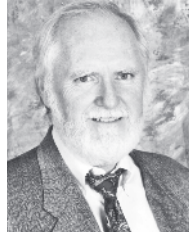
12424 Research Parkway, Suite 155
Orlando, FL 32826-2215
(407) 249-4770

Publication Production

Jack Ryalls, Ph.D., Faculty Consultant
Karen Guin, M.A., Director of Communications
Sara Cooper, B.A., Editor and Layout Artist

Associate Professor Thomas Mullin retires after 33 years

After more than three decades of service at UCF, Associate Professor Tom Mullin has become such an integral part of the Department of Communicative Disorders that it will be hard to gauge what UCF will be like once he retires. "Dr. T.," as he's known to several generations of students, is both an audiologist and a speech-language pathologist.



Countless students were guided into careers in communicative disorders because of Mullin's direct example and influence. Not only did he give special attention to students in the department, but he also helped many student athletes at UCF — several of whom he convinced to pursue careers as speech-language pathologists or audiologists.

Mullin received his Ph.D. from Syracuse University in New York in 1972 and began teaching at UCF the same year. His personal recruiting efforts over the years have added faculty and tremendous numbers of new students. He served as chair of the department

from 1994 – 1996.

Tom Mullin is a living testament to the ideal that one person can indeed make a difference, as witnessed by the hundreds of students' lives he has touched with his warm and understanding example. His contribution in the department will be greatly missed and we wish him well for the future.

– Jack Ryalls

Retirement Celebration

*The Department of Communicative Disorders cordially invites you to attend a retirement celebration for Dr. Tom Mullin on **Friday, April 8, 2005, from 5:00 to 8:00 p.m.** in the Health and Public Affairs Building I atrium. Parking will be available in the East Parking Garage. In lieu of a gift, contributions can be made in honor of Dr. Mullin to the Mission Feeding Project by calling Life Outreach International at 1-800-947-5433. To RSVP send an e-mail by March 21 to Michelle Lopez, ucfnsslha_vpia@yahoo.com.*



COLLEGE OF HEALTH AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS
Department of Communicative Disorders

University of Central Florida
P.O. Box 162215
Orlando, FL 32816-2215

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