Hello Alumni and Friends!

This is the inaugural issue of the UMass Amherst Department of Communication Disorders Alumni Newsletter. It is an exciting time for our department, with many new faces and ventures. This newsletter will provide you with an update about the goings-on in your UMass home.

Our faculty is involved in cutting-edge research that has garnered funding from government agencies like the NIH. I am proud of the accomplishments of our faculty, staff, students and alumni who represent our program in such positive ways. What we do makes a difference in the lives of those we serve.

I hope that each of you takes the time to connect with our department. Please stop by for a visit when you are in the area and email us to let us know what is happening in your life. And thanks to all of you who donate your time and/or money to help us educate the next generation of audiologists and speech-language pathologists.

Karen S. Helfer, Ph.D.
Professor and Chair

GREETINGS FROM THE CHAIR

Hello Alumni and Friends!

This is the inaugural issue of the UMass Amherst Department of Communication Disorders Alumni Newsletter. It is an exciting time for our department, with many new faces and ventures. This newsletter will provide you with an update about the goings-on in your UMass home.

Our faculty is involved in cutting-edge research that has garnered funding from government agencies like the NIH. I am proud of the accomplishments of our faculty, staff, students and alumni who represent our program in such positive ways. What we do makes a difference in the lives of those we serve.

I hope that each of you takes the time to connect with our department. Please stop by for a visit when you are in the area and email us to let us know what is happening in your life. And thanks to all of you who donate your time and/or money to help us educate the next generation of audiologists and speech-language pathologists.

Karen S. Helfer, Ph.D.
Professor and Chair

NEWSLETTER

POINTS OF PRIDE

• Since 1957, our department has educated more than 1000 individuals entering the fields of speech-language pathology and audiology.
  - Our two professional graduate degree programs (the clinical doctorate in audiology, or Au.D., and the M.A. in speech-language pathology) are accredited by the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association’s Council on Academic Accreditation in Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology.
  - We currently have approximately 250 undergraduate students and 75 graduate students enrolled in our degree programs.

• Since 2005, approximately 100 M.A. students and eight Ph.D. students have been funded under training grants from the U.S. Department of Education. We provide teaching assistant and research assistant opportunities to many other undergraduate and graduate students.

• Students in our department have the opportunity to participate in a range of activities that provide outreach to the community. These include:
  - The PAL Project, which pairs undergraduate Communication Disorders majors with older adults residing in long-term care facilities
  - The Shine a Light music/dance performance, an event organized by our graduate students to raise awareness of stroke and aphasia
  - Group programs for individuals with stroke, Parkinson’s disease and hearing loss
  - A chorus for individuals with neurological impairments
  - Hearing screenings at the annual Active Aging in the Valley event
  - A workshop for first responders to enhance their ability to communicate with individuals who have had a head injury
  - Summer camp programs for literacy and for social communication

• Our department hosts an annual Professional Development Conference (next date: April 5, 2019) that brings in leaders in the field to speak to an audience of over 100 students and professional speech-language pathologists and audiologists.

• Over the past six years, department faculty have received five highly-competitive research grants from the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

• Faculty research areas include language development; bilingualism; age-related hearing loss and cognitive disorders such as aphasia, dementia and Alzheimer’s disease; childhood language disorders, including autism; and communication technology such as hearing aids, cochlear implants and augmentative communication devices.
FACULTY AND STAFF UPDATES

Current Speech-Language Pathology Faculty and Staff:
Mary Andrianopoulos, Ph.D.
Yu-Kyong Choe, Ph.D.
Karen Guilmette, M.A.
Megan Gross, Ph.D.
Jill Hoover, Ph.D.
Jacquie Kurland, Ph.D.
Jennifer Mack, Ph.D.
Kelly Richardson, Ph.D.
Gwyneth Rost, Ph.D.
Jane Sackett, M.A.
Lisa Sommers, M.A.

Current Audiology Faculty and Staff:
Richard Freyman, Ph.D.
David Gooler, Ph.D.
Karen Helfer, Ph.D.
Tomma Henckel, Au.D.
Sara Mamo, Ph.D.
Sarah Poissant, Ph.D.
Nathaniel Whitmal, Ph.D.

Current Support Staff:
Joy Holhut, Office Manager
Hope O’Shaughnessy, Bookkeeper
Nicole Mare Usher, Undergraduate Advisor
Marcie Whitman, Clinic Office Manager

New Faculty and Staff
Our department is growing! In the past five years, we have welcomed the following new faculty and staff:

Karen Guilmette joined the University of Massachusetts Amherst in 2017. She obtained a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Virginia and a Master of Science from the University of Arizona. She previously worked as the director of a transition program for students with social communication disorders and has significant clinical experience working with individuals with pragmatic language deficits. Karen also has a strong interest in culturally and linguistically diverse populations, with a specific emphasis on bilingual Spanish-English language development.

Dr. David Gooler arrived at UMass Amherst in January 2018 as a senior lecturer in the Department of Communication Disorders. He received a B.S. in biology from Union College and a Ph.D. in neuroscience from the University of Rochester. He then pursued postdoctoral research in auditory neuroscience and an M.A. in audiology at the University of Illinois at Urbana–Champaign and was on the faculty in the Department of Speech and Hearing Science there for twenty years until accepting the position at UMass Amherst. Dr. Gooler’s research has focused on investigating neurophysiological and perceptual processes for encoding complex sounds including echolocation in bats, call recognition in frogs and perception of speech in noise by human listeners. Current collaborations focus on enhancing auditory evoked response measures to better study binaural processing.

Dr. Megan Gross joined the Department of Communication Disorders in fall 2018. She completed a master’s degree in speech-language pathology and a Ph.D. in communication sciences and disorders at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. Her research focuses on language development in bilingual children with typical development and with communication challenges. She is also certified as a speech-language pathologist, and her clinical interests include assessment and intervention in bilingual children and supporting individuals on the autism spectrum.

Dr. Jennifer Mack joined the faculty as an assistant professor in January 2018. Previously, she had a research faculty position at Northwestern University in Evanston, IL. Her research focuses on the neural basis of language in neurotypical adults and adults with aphasia caused by stroke and neurodegenerative disease. She is particularly interested in integrating the dynamics of language comprehension and production with their neural substrates, using eye-tracking and fMRI.
Dr. Sara K. Mamo completed her Au.D. and Ph.D. degrees at the University of North Carolina–Chapel Hill, and she completed a postdoctoral research fellowship at the Johns Hopkins Center on Aging and Health. She joined the UMass Department of Communication Disorders in January 2017 as an assistant professor. Her research focuses on improving the accessibility and affordability of hearing health care for older adults. She has a particular interest in addressing the hearing care needs of individuals with hearing loss and dementia.

Nicola Usher has an undergraduate degree in philosophy, politics and law from SUNY Binghamton and a master’s in International Education from New York University. After a successful career in the hospitality industry, she transitioned to academia, working in student, alumni and academic affairs at NYU Law School and then at Columbia Business School. In 2017, she joined the University of Massachusetts School of Public Health and Health Sciences as a student success advisor working with exploratory track and academically at-risk students. She joined the Communication Disorders Department as the undergraduate advisor in 2018.

Dr. Richard Freyman was awarded a five-year R01 grant from the NIH’s National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders (NIDCD) to continue his work on binaural hearing. He has had continuous funding from the NIH for more than 25 years.

Dr. Karen Helfer received a five-year R01 research grant from the NIH-NIDCD to investigate speech understanding, listening effort and the use of personal amplification products in middle-aged adults.

Dr. Jennifer Mack received a one-year pilot grant from the UMass Human Magnetic Resonance Center (hMRC) to investigate the brain basis of communication between the language and visual attention systems.

Dr. Sara K. Mamo was awarded a five-year career development and mentored research award (K23) from the NIH-NIDCD to study speech understanding in adults with age-related hearing loss and mild cognitive impairment (MCI) or dementia. One aim of the study is to investigate speech understanding abilities in noisy backgrounds in the laboratory with adults who have MCI or dementia. The other aim is to develop and test a hearing and communication intervention in the context of the group care setting, with a particular focus on engagement for older adults with age-related hearing loss and MCI or dementia.

Dr. Sarah Poissant is an inaugural recipient of an American Speech-Language-Hearing Foundation’s Researcher-Practitioner Collaboration Grant. Along with her co-investigators from Connecticut Children’s Medical Center, she will assess the use of stimuli other than tones for measuring behavioral audiometric thresholds in young children.

Dr. Kelly Richardson received a three-year, early career research award from the NIH-NIDCD to study two different approaches to treating speech and voice symptoms associated with Parkinson’s disease.

Dr. Nathaniel Whitmal was among the inaugural cohort receiving Campus Climate Improvement Grants this spring from the university’s Office of Equity and Inclusion. His award funded a luncheon for underrepresented faculty in the School of Public Health and Health Sciences to encourage meaningful dialogue between colleagues.
Jeanne Chaclas (M.A. 2014) graduated in May 2018 from Rocky Mountain University of Health Professions in Provo, UT, with a clinical doctorate degree in speech-language pathology.

Colleen Gargan (B.S. 2012, M.A. 2014), a doctoral student in speech-language pathology at UMass Amherst, received a grant from the Organization for Autism Research (OAR) to study motor speech impairment and atypical prosody in teenagers with autism spectrum disorder. She also was the recipient of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association’s (ASHA’s) Student Research Travel Award.

Ashley Higgins (M.A. 2018) received a Student Research Travel Award from the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association.

Lindsey Keator (M.A. 2016) completed a one-year post-master’s degree training program in research at Johns Hopkins University. She is currently completing a doctoral degree in SLP at the University of South Carolina’s Department of Communication Disorders and Sciences.

Shannon O’Neill, a third-year Au.D. student, received an Audiology/Hearing Science Research Travel Award from the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association.

Olivia Uchima (M.A. 2014) is currently completing a doctoral degree in Public Health at the University of Hawaii–Manoa.

SAVE THE DATE! The UMass Amherst Department of Communication Disorders will be hosting an Open House at this year’s ASHA Convention in Boston. This event will be held Friday, November 16 from 8:30 to 11:00 p.m. in the Marina II room at the Westin Boston Waterfront Hotel. Please stop by if you are attending the convention!

Take a minute to UPDATE US so that we may provide you with the latest and greatest department information. Please email Joy (jholhut@comdis.umass.edu) with your home address, work address, job title and email address. Please also send us any personal and professional news items (e.g., new jobs, new babies) that you would like to see in future Alumni Newsletters.
We would like to sincerely thank our donors, whose contributions allow us to continue to provide outstanding opportunities for our students. Please consider making a gift—no amount is too small. Donations can be made by clicking on the MAKE A GIFT link on our web page (https://www.umass.edu/sphhs/communication-disorders).