Each year is exciting on the UNO campus and in the department of Special Education and Communication Disorders; this year is no different. If I had to describe this year in one word, that would be collaboration. The students in our department will all be in careers that require collaboration so it is important that faculty continue to look for collaborative opportunities. The fall newsletter shared information on collaborative work with other departments in our college, and we have been working during the spring on several potential collaborations across the university system. As these collaborations develop, we will be sharing more information in our upcoming newsletter and on our web site.

The number of undergraduate and graduate students involved in research continues to grow with many examples of student research highlighted in this newsletter. There are so many ways for students to be involved in and leading research. Olajide Cooper is an outstanding example of student research leading to great things. She was recently awarded a Fulbright Scholarship to continue her work in Nicaragua. During Olajide’s undergraduate program at UNO, she worked on a research project with Dr. Julie Delkamiller.

We have new programs in the department such as the undergraduate program in Early Childhood Inclusive that is in collaboration with Teacher Education, and the Inclusion/Collaboration Specialist endorsement at the graduate level. Please contact our department to find out more about these opportunities.
National Student Speech-Language Hearing Association (NSSLHA)

By Andrea Snow, UNO NSSLHA President

The University of Nebraska at Omaha’s National Student Speech Language Hearing Association (UNO NSSLHA) is up to great things, gearing up to end the year with a bang! UNO NSSLHA held their second annual UNO’s Got Talent! with proceeds benefiting the Autism Society of Nebraska. Members have also spent the semester participating in a variety of activities. Events include the following: UNMCs Skate-A-Thon for Parkinson’s, ASN events such as Rec Club and Pump it Up, and UNO’s weekly 60 Minutes of Service. Members especially enjoyed taking their advocacy to the next level at the Nebraska Speech-Language-Hearing Association’s 2016 Legislative Day. Members traveled to the state capitol building to advocate for their profession and future clients by having lunch with state senators. During the luncheon, members, senators, and their staff members discussed important upcoming legislation that will impact those with communication disorders. UNO NSSLHA members have had a successful semester filled with personal, educational, and professional growth for everyone involved!

Student Council for Exceptional Children (SCEC)

By Trey Stuthman, UNO SCEC President

With the last month of school around the corner, the Student Council for Exceptional Children has been busier than ever! This semester we were able to start partnering with the Very Special Person Club and so far our members’ experiences have been nothing but positive. This volunteer event allows our members to interact with 20-30 people who have special needs who are ages range from high school to adulthood. With April being here, we have our busiest month in regards to events. In April we have the start of TOPSoccer for six weeks, the Autism Puzzle Walk, Special Olympics of Nebraska, and VSP.

SCEC officers traveled to St. Louis April 13-16 to attend the National Council for Exceptional Children Conference. Here the officers were given the opportunity to explore different sessions on a variety of topics in regards to special education and inclusive classrooms. SCEC will also be replacing two of the officers, President Trey Stuthman and Secretary Lauren Egger, who will be student teaching in the fall.
The UNO Student Research Fair took place Friday, March 6. There were four students from the Speech Pathology program that participated in the event #UNORCAF:

- **Bradi Anderson**, “An Expanded View of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and Awareness and Understanding on a College Campus” (Faculty Advisor: Dr. Mitzi Ritzman)

- **Jordan Gearheart**, “Temporal Reliability of Independent Analysis for Late Talkers Phonological productions” (Faculty Advisor: Dr. Shari DeVeney)

- **Ann Walker**, "Test-Retest Reliability Relational Phonological Analyses for 2-year-old Late Talkers” (Faculty Advisor: Dr. Shari DeVeney)

- **Taylor Hansen**, “iPad Pilot Program: Graduate Student Tablet Technology Use in Clinical and Classroom Settings” (Faculty Advisor: Dr. Shari DeVeney)
UNO Professors and Students Awarded FIRE Grant

Drs. Bjornsen, DeVeney, and Hagaman were recently awarded a Fund for Investigating in the Research Empire (FIRE) grant for their transdisciplinary investigation, “Receptively Delayed Late Talkers’ Characteristics, Processing Skills, and Outcomes: Pilot Study.” The research team (pictured) will be working with area childcare centers and participating families to identify key characteristics of late talking beyond language indicators. The long-range goal of the research line is to improve evidence-based early childhood assessments and interventions for young children with language delays. The project’s specific aim is to systematically differentiate subgroups of late talking toddlers, two-year-old children who gain new words more slowly and produce fewer word combinations than their typically developing peers in the absence of any other known deficits, from typically developing peers on a number of measures involving child and family characteristics. These characteristics include speech sound repertoires, symbolic play skills, emotional/behavioral issues, and parental stress indicators.

American Sign Language Student Organization

Students were volunteer interpreting or teaching ASL in many places during the year such as Deaf Awareness Day at the Henry Doorly Zoo, signing books for CONNECT at the Omaha Public Libraries and signing the national anthem at Creighton basketball games and Stormchaser baseball games. They volunteered for the UNMC mock doctor visits and ran a game booth at a carnival at the Iowa School for the Deaf. The advanced interpreting students interpreted four performances of “The Nutcracker Tree” with the Circle Theater in December 2015. The Circle Theatre and the UNO Sign Language Interpreting students will continue to collaborate on future theatre productions.

Dr. Julie Delkamiller, adjunct instructor Bethany Koubsky and UNO D/HH student Justin Cyboron were shadow interpreters at “A Christmas Carol” at the Omaha Community Playhouse in December.
Congratulations to Award Winners!

**Undergraduate Major Honorees**

**Kelsey Phipps**

My name is Kelsey Phipps, and I am currently a senior in the undergraduate speech-language pathology program in the College of Education. I have had a great experience at the University of Nebraska at Omaha while studying for my bachelor’s degree. I plan to continue my education in the fall to obtain a master’s degree. The field of speech-language pathology is diverse with professionals practicing with people from birth to geriatrics. Currently, it is my intent to work with children diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) on communication and social skills.

**Natalie McGovern**

Hi there! I’m Natalie McGovern. I’m originally from Omaha, Nebraska and will be graduating from University of Nebraska at Omaha in May with a degree in Special Education. I’m excited to begin my teaching career in August at Paddock Road Elementary School in District 66, where I will be teaching special education. I knew teaching was the career path for me because it gives me the chance to advocate for children and in turn, teach them how to advocate for themselves!

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**College of Education Distinguished Alumni Award**

**By Cathy Nelson**

My name is Cathy Nelson. In 2003, while studying Behavior Disorders at UNO under Sandra Squires, I was introduced to the concept of Service Learning. In my current capacity as Teacher Leader at Blackburn Alternative Program, I am responsible for coordinating service learning. We generally work with UNO professors and their students and community partners to accomplish a goal that benefits the community. For students who have had challenging school experiences, imagine the power of...training dogs at the Humane Society to be adoptable through positive reinforcement and shaping...preparing and serving a weekly meal to senior citizens...creating a mural for the Learning Community Center...installing your piece of sculpture in Joslyn Art Museum’s Discovery Garden...advocating to the mayor’s office for a speed limit change, and not only getting that change, but a state social studies award to boot for Blackburn and Dr. Mitzi Ritzman and her speech and language students!

Those are a few of the many projects that engage students in learning and immerse them in the community in positive ways. It simply matters more when what one learns can then be applied to making a difference in the community. Thank you, Dr. Squires, and thank you, UNO!!