Message from the Chair

We are nearing the close of another successful academic year in the department of Special Education and Communication Disorders. Our faculty continues to focus on quality programs in Special Education, Speech-Language Pathology and Sign Language Interpreting.

Our Speech-Language Pathology clinic continues to serve more clients, and we were also able to offer our LD Clinic this spring. Both of these clinics provide necessary and beneficial learning opportunities for our students as well as meaningful service to the community. We encourage you to spread the word about the clinics available on campus, and if you know of someone interested, please have them contact the department.

The graduate programs in Special Education continue to grow with enrollments rising each semester. Many students are appreciating the flexibility and the quality of the online courses in special education.

Congratulations to our Undergraduate Major Honorees Alexis Page and Elise Weaver who were honored at the Student Honors Convocation on April 11th. We would also like to congratulate Dr. Jacqueline Huscroft-D’Angelo who received the Promising Professional award. She will be honored at the UNO COE Alumni Luncheon on April 16th.

If you want to know more about what is happening in the department, please contact us at any time.

Dr. Kris Swain
Department Chair
National Student Speech-Language Hearing Association (NSSLHA)
By Brittany Goodman, NSSLHA President
UNO NSSLHA has participated in many events this spring semester. We started off the semester with the UNMC Skate-a-thon for Parkinson’s where members took turns skating for 24 hours straight. On January 20th members participated in the MLK Jr. Day of Service and assisted with activities throughout the community to benefit a variety of nonprofit organizations.

February started off with our annual SERTOMA Candy Sale fundraiser. The monthly Pump It Up event was held, in collaboration with the Autism Society of Nebraska (ASN). Members’ roles included playing with the kids in the bounce houses while their parents participated in a support group meeting, hosted by ASN. On February 11th, members took a trip down to the Nebraska State Capital for Legislative Day. After listening to Senator Mike Gloor speak, we had a luncheon with some Nebraska Senators. This was another great opportunity for members to advocate for our future profession. We held a new member celebration on March 4th to welcome members joining for the first time. On March 5th, our member meeting topic was "Reimagining Leadership: Creativity and Collaboration."

On April 4th we held our annual spring fundraising event, Together We Dance. This included a kiddie carnival as well as a decade theme dance. All of the proceeds we raised for this event will go directly to the Autism Society of Nebraska.

Pictured above: NSSLHA student members at the Together We Dance fundraiser.

Student Council for Exceptional Children (SCEC)
By Heidi White, SCEC President
This semester SCEC has been involved in a variety of activities. In January, we volunteered by keeping score at the Special Olympics Bowling event in Bellevue. In February, three of our officers, along with Dr. Leader-Janssen, attended the Midwest Symposium on Leadership in Behavioral Disorders in Kansas City. This was a wonderful learning opportunity for us! In March, we attended the Monroe Meyer Walk and Roll for Disabilities event, served refreshments and registered walkers. We also hosted a Teacher Panel that included several student teachers, a first year teacher and a Special Education teacher who spoke with us about their experiences in teaching special education.

The weekend of March 28-30, we headed to Lincoln for the Special Olympics spring games to help with basketball games. April begins with TOPSoccer, a program that matches children who have various intellectual and physical disabilities with “buddies” who assist them in learning basic soccer skills. This will take place on Sundays from 6-7pm starting April 6.

On April 26th, the Autism Puzzle Walk, Special Olympics athletics in Omaha and the Color Me Rad 5k Run all take place. Finally, new officers will be announced for the 2014-2015 school year at an end of the year social.

Pictured above (right): SCEC student members at the Monroe Meyer Walk and Roll for Disabilities.
2014 Pathways Conference attended by Dr. Shari DeVeney
By Dr. Shari DeVeney

The role of the Pathways program is to mentor early-career clinical scientists in developing strong foundations for independent research careers. It was an amazing experience as I was able to meet and ask questions of leading researchers in the field of speech-language pathology. It was also so refreshing to realize how genuine they were and how willing they were to help the next generation of researchers find their path and get started. Overall, it was a very productive conference and I made some great connections that I hope to cultivate and maintain for a long time to come.

Pictured above, left: Dr. Shari DeVeney (left) and her mentor, Dr. Leslie Rescorla from Bryn Mawr College. Dr. Rescorla is one of the foremost leaders in research on late talking toddlers.

Pictured above, right: Dr. Shari DeVeney (left) and Dr. Katy Cabbage from Massachusetts General Hospital Institute of Health Professionals at the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association National Headquarters in Rockville, MD.

Speech-Language Graduate Student Volunteers with the Transitions Program
By Dakila Marcelino

One thing many individuals with autism lack is good friends in their life to support them and let them know that they care about them. Participating in the Transitions program has been a really great way for me to get to know a few of the wonderful people in our community who have autism. In the program, two individuals with autism (ages 18-25) and two individuals without autism are put into a group. In these small groups, we meet together monthly to hang out and have fun. The Transitions program as a whole also meets together once a month for a large group activity (talent show, ice skating, etc.). These outings are really helpful for the participants to apply social skills they’ve learned in the real world. In our small group, even in the short time we’ve known each other, we’ve developed strong friendships. Even though one or two meetings monthly may seem like a small thing, I feel like it’s made a difference in all of our lives. As the name of the group suggests, this period of life for these individuals is full of changes. During these changes it’s nice for the participants to have a constant and supportive group of friends in their lives. The Transitions program has been a terrific experience for service and learning. I’m excited for everyone who will get to participate in years to come.

The purpose of the UNO Transitions Program is to provide young adults with ASD the opportunity to practice and improve their social skills in a safe environment. The Transitions program contains three components: social skills instruction, small group outings, and program-wide events. Our full program runs September to May with only program-wide events occurring during the summer months.

Our program is a joint effort between the University of Nebraska at Omaha and Autism Action Partnership. Mitzi J. Ritzman, Ph.D. and Troy Romero, Ph.D. are the directors of the program. Trained graduate assistants oversee the daily operations of the Transitions as program coordinators.
New AAC Devices in the Speech-Language Clinic
By Jill Kumke
The UNO Speech-Language Hearing Clinic (SLHC) has expanded their Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) devices with the help of a strategic community partner. The Southwest Omaha Sertoma Club purchased a DynaVox, Maestro for the UNO SLHC in January 2014. This device will be a resource for the UNO SLHC to use with clients, support AAC evaluations, and provide communication opportunities during Reach Out Group, a support group for adults with neurogenic communication disorders. In addition, AAC devices are used in class for hands-on learning experience for graduate speech-language pathology candidates.

We are delighted to train student on the DynaVox, Maestro. We are grateful for the partnership with Southwest Omaha Sertoma Club and appreciate their ongoing support and dedication to the UNO Communication Disorders program.

New NDE requirements for Content Exams
Beginning September 1, 2014 the Nebraska Department of Education will require a Content Exam as a certification requirement. All candidates who are completing initial certification or adding an endorsement in Nebraska will be required to take a Content Exam. Content exams are specific to the endorsement being completed so please check with your advisor if you have any questions. More information is available at http://www.ets.org/praxis/ne/faq/.

UNO’s Student Research and Creative Activity Fair Participants
Sister Rosemary Arrah and Dr. Elizabeth Leader-Janssen presented their poster entitled “The Impact of Reading Instruction Training for Secondary Teachers in the North West Province of Cameroon”.

NSSLHA Leaders
The Nebraska Speech-Language-Hearing Association Executive Board welcomes Jill Kumke as President-elect and Mitzi Ritzman on the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association Advisory Council for speech-language pathology as they begin serving in their new roles!