

University of Northern Colorado
Providing Academic Excellence in Speech-Language Pathology
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This article provides an overview of the University of Northern Colorado (UNC) and the work performed by the Scottish Rite Foundation of Colorado's UNC partner, the Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology Clinic. The following topics are discussed:

The Foundation's Partnership with UNC
Academic Excellence at UNC's School of Human Sciences
Clinical Care at UNC
UNC's Dedication to Research in Language Disorders



Gunter Hall - Home to UNC's Audiology and Speech-Language Sciences

Our Partnership with UNC

Founded in 1889, the University of Northern Colorado – located in Greeley, Colorado – has a undergraduate student population of about 10,000 and a graduate student population of about 2,000. UNC is a national leader in preparing students for careers in education. It is also one of two Colorado universities providing graduate programs in speech-language pathology and audiology. The graduate programs are accredited through the Council on Academic Programs in Communication Sciences and Disorders and endorsed by the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA).

In 2000 the Scottish Rite Foundation of Colorado entered into a RiteCare partnership with UNC's Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology Clinic located in Gunter Hall on the Greeley, Colorado campus. Funding support began in 2001. Established in 1958, the not-for-profit clinic is part of Audiology and Speech-Language Sciences in the School of Human Sciences, College of Natural and Health Sciences. It offers a variety of diagnostic and rehabilitative services to individuals with speech, language, hearing, and/or balance difficulties. Clinical services are provided by graduate students under the supervision of faculty and staff who are certified by ASHA.

Between 2001 and 2009, 92 children received speech-language services as a result of financial support from the Scottish Rite Foundation. During this period the Foundation supported the UNC clinic with more than \$55,000 in grant assistance for speech therapy.

In 2006 the Foundation conducted a fundraising program, generating revenues totaling \$105,215 to implement the Early Language Intervention Program, a clinical program which focuses on intervention services directed at early childhood communication disorders. In addition to a \$33,005 capital construction grant from the Foundation, fundraising partners contributed general operating support funds totaling \$72,210. These partners included the Daniels Fund, Williams Family Foundation, Mabel Y. Hughes Charitable Trust, Edward J. Madigan Foundation, and Wells Fargo Bank Foundation.



Foundation Trustees (LtoR) Tom Magnuson, Rick Frohlick, & Gerry Ford with RiteCare Kids at April 2009 dedication ceremony for Gunter Hall's *Scottish Rite Foundation Early Language Intervention Room*

Academic Excellence at UNC's School of Human Sciences

The principal academic programs offered by Audiology and Speech-Language Sciences include:

- Clinical Doctorate in Audiology (AuD)
- Master of Science in Speech-Language Pathology

- Master of Science in Speech-Language Pathology (online)
- Bachelor of Science in Communication Disorders

Students are admitted into the graduate programs each fall semester. The AuD program is a four year program with the fourth year involving a clinical fellowship. The on campus Master's degree program is completed in two years and the online Master's program is completed in three years.

These degree programs are consistent with the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association standards for entry into professional practice. An integral part of this education is clinical experience.

Audiology and Speech-Language Sciences has a faculty of 17 professionals as follows:

Doctoral faculty in Speech-Language Pathology	7
Doctoral faculty in Audiology	5
Master's level faculty in Speech-Language Pathology	4
Master's level faculty in Audiology	1

In 2003 the Scottish Rite Foundation of Colorado, in partnership with the Colorado Masons' Benevolent Fund Association, initiated a scholarship in speech-language pathology offered to second-year graduate students in the Master's degree program who intend to focus on early intervention work in their careers. Since then fifteen graduate students at UNC have been awarded this one-time \$5,000 scholarship with total expenditures through 2009 of \$75,000.



**Interior hallway of the former gym area
in Gunter Hall (note the center court symbol)
Speech and Audiology Professors' offices on first
floor adjacent to the former center court symbol**

Clinical Care at UNC

UNC's Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology Clinic provides professional assessment and intervention services for hearing, speech, and language disorders across the life span. The clinic is an integral part of the undergraduate and graduate audiology and speech-language pathology degree programs within the School of Human Sciences. It serves as a teaching environment for its students in the development of clinical competencies.

Approximately 5,000 clinic visits are made annually. The visits are made by clients who range in age from early childhood to later adulthood. These clients are seen individually or in small groups in therapy sessions typically involving a graduate student and a supervising speech-language pathologist or audiologist.

Speech-Language and Audiology services provided by the clinic include:

- Comprehensive speech and language evaluations
- Comprehensive hearing evaluations
- Individual and group therapy for children and adults with disorders of speech, fluency, voice, autism, and/or language
- Individual and group therapy for speech-language disorders following stroke, head trauma, or laryngectomy
- Aural rehabilitation
- Augmentative communication device training (for individuals with limited or no speech)
- Accent modification therapy
- Auditory processing disorders evaluations

In 2006 the Scottish Rite Foundation of Colorado provided funding to help create the Early Language Intervention Program, a program designed to enhance student learning through several types of clinical activities which focus on early childhood speech-language needs. The program consists of the following three components:

- Talking and Listening with Preschoolers – an intensive group experience for children with language problems and their typical peers.
- Speaking and Signing Stories – a summer semester program for children who are deaf or hard of hearing and their siblings where sign language, story books, and hands-on activities are used to improve communication skills.
- Language and Literacy – a summer semester program designed for older school children, their siblings and hearing peers with emphasis on skill development in literacy and language.



Dedication Plaque in the UNC Speech-Language Clinic

The program is housed inside the clinic in a suite of rooms acquired by the School of Human Sciences in 2005. The Scottish Rite Foundation of Colorado provided a capital grant to modify this space now known as the *Scottish Rite Foundation Early Language Intervention Room* and dedicated by UNC and the Foundation on April 6, 2009.

This state-of-the-art facility includes a large group therapy room for group intervention services and adjacent rooms affording observation and instruction capability for families and students. Work space is available for software and hardware assistive technology applications including listening technology for individuals who are deaf or hearing impaired and language technology for non-speaking individuals.

The Foundation's support for work with early childhood-age individuals is increasing the number of RiteCare children being helped by UNC. For example, thirty-four children were seen in 2008 and 2009, representing 37 percent of all RiteCare children seen by UNC graduate student/supervisory speech-language pathologists since inception of this program in 2001. This increase is largely a result of the Early Language Intervention Program implemented in 2007.

UNC Leadership in Language Disorders Research

Some of the Audiology and Speech-Language Sciences faculty are involved in a variety of research projects directed at both speech-language pathology and audiology. Several important examples are highlighted below.



**Graduate student Sarah Berg (MA – August 2009)
in the *Scottish Rite Foundation*
Early Language Intervention Room discussing
materials which help facilitate Speech Therapy**

1. UNC is leading a research project involving The Children’s Hospital, the University of Colorado, and the Children’s Speech and Reading Center in Fort Collins – all RiteCare partners. The title of this project is “Parent Perceptions of Early Speech-Language Intervention Services.” This project is addressing an important aspect of early language intervention – the role of families. The project recognizes that research outcomes for determining the most effective practices for family-centered services is minimal and only now beginning to emerge. It addresses the need for research regarding parent perceptions of their participation in speech-language therapy programs so that speech-language pathologists can be more enabled to effectively design and implement family-centered interventions that effectively meet the needs of parents and their children. The research is focused on parents of children who are enrolled in RiteCare programs in Colorado.
2. UNC is conducting a research project funded by the Daniels Fund which is directed at individuals with cochlear implants. The project is focused on exploring issues and methodologies for establishing a laboratory for troubleshooting and resolving issues being experienced by individuals with cochlear implants. The research project involves graduate students as well as faculty members. This is the first laboratory experiment of its kind in northern Colorado. The project is in its second year and to date has served 14 children and their families through aural rehabilitative therapy and diagnostic services. A number of issues have been addressed and either resolved or are being focused on in the second project year. Some of these issues are highly technical and involve mapping software/equipment to test the cochlear implant for electrode array problems.
3. A bi-lingual Speech-Language Pathology faculty member is conducting a research project focused on Spanish-speaking children. Titled the “Early Language Screening for Spanish Speakers Project,” the research is funded with a multicultural grant from the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. It is focused on studies of screening tools for use with two-year-old children from Spanish speaking families. It includes

follow-up research to describe how language impairment in young Spanish speaking children changes over time.

4. The Office of Naval Research and Dartmouth College are providing major funding for a 3-year research project titled “Field Deployable Hearing Assessment System for Tracking Noise-Induced Hearing Loss.” The overall objective of this project is to develop a sensitive hearing testing system for use with noise-exposed individuals to (a) detect susceptibility to noise-induced hearing loss, (2) detect noise-induced hearing loss early, and (3) determine the response to intervention.

These are just four examples of research presently underway by UNC’s Audiology and Speech-Language Services. They demonstrate UNC’s continued emphasis on academic training in speech-language pathology and audiology as well as research advancements in the field of communication disorders. We are honored to be associated with our UNC RiteCare Partner in it various endeavors to prepare graduate students in the field of communication disorders and to advance the research and science in this field of study.