150 Alums Help Celebrate 30 Years of the UTD/Callier Communication Disorders Program

Alums reunite

The Communications Disorders Program in UTD’s School of Behavioral and Brain Sciences celebrated its 30th anniversary with a fiesta reception that attracted more than 150 alumni who have been an integral part of the program’s history.

The reception, held March 23, 2006, in the Callier Center Dallas facility featured catered Mexican food and drinks from Blue Mesa. The event was scheduled in conjunction with the annual Texas Speech-Language-Hearing Association’s 50th Annual Convention and Exhibition, March 23-25, at the Gaylord Texan Resort and Convention Center in Grapevine. The university provided shuttle transportation between the Gaylord convention center and the Callier Center for reception attendees.

Dr. Robert Stillman, head of the Communication Disorders Program, welcomed the alumni attendees to the reception. Tours of the facility were offered to those interested in seeing how Callier has changed since their days in the program, including the addition of the Advanced Hearing Research Center. A continuously running slide show in Glorig Auditorium throughout the evening provided fond memories of past and present faculty, staff and students.
Message from the Dean

I am writing this in mid-May, and if it is a cliché that spring is a time of renewal, the cliché does seem true for the School this spring. There are many cycles in the academic year: Exams are taken and new semesters begin; students graduate and new students arrive; budgets are planned and set, and spent to the last penny. But one of the most essential aspects of the life of the School is the renewal involved in hiring new faculty.

There always is change at a University. It is part of what makes them such exciting places, but some changes are hard. This year we are losing two highly valued colleagues. Steve Lomber is leaving for a position at the University of Western Ontario and Anu Sharma is leaving for the University of Colorado. As painful as it is to see these people go, there also is the excitement of renewal. In this edition of the newsletter are profiles of three faculty who joined us last fall and we will have six more come in September.

We have had a very active year of faculty recruitment that will bring new dimensions of research and training to the School. Chris Dollaghan and Tom Campbell, both in Speech Pathology, will join us from the University of Pittsburgh. Christa McIntire is coming to our Neuroscience program from the University of California at Irvine. As part of our new initiative in brain-imaging with the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical School, Dan Krawczyk will join the faculty from U.C. Berkeley and Bart Rypma will come from Rutgers University. And in another joint appointment with Southwestern, Deb Wiebe, a health psychologist will come from the University of Utah. We are excited about welcoming our new colleagues to the University.

Shayla Holub Joins the School of BBS

Dr. Holub received her undergraduate degree from Millikin University in Decatur, IL and then went on to get her Ph.D. at Bowling Green State University in Ohio. While there, she did her dissertation on the positive bias seen in preschool-age children's perceptions of competence. She also conducted research on children's attitudes towards body shapes and sizes and continues to focus on that here at UTD.

Shayla’s attraction to the type and quality of research being done in the School of Behavioral and Brain Sciences (BBS), as well as appreciating the fact that there are several well-known faculty members in BBS, drew her to UTD. "I was also greatly impressed by how welcoming, warm, and friendly the faculty members are here," commented Dr. Holub.

This semester, Shayla is teaching a Masters level course in Toddler and Preschool Development and taught a course in Experimental Projects in the Fall of 2005. Dr. Holub is currently working on two major projects including a grant she received from Timberlawn where she looks at the restrictive feeding practices of parents of young children during both meal and snack times. The goal is to find out how those practices affect children’s attitudes and weight outcomes. The second project focuses on the stigma preschoolers hold towards obese peers, their eating in the absence of hunger, and personal body satisfaction.
Pam Rollins Provides Early Services for Autism Disorders

Pam Rollins attended Boston University where she obtained her undergraduate degree in Speech Pathology and then went to the University of Wisconsin where she got her master's degree in Communication Disorders. It was there that she became especially interested in autism. Pam earned her doctoral degree at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. Her research efforts, both at Harvard and UTD, have focused on the transition from non-verbal communication to language. Pam has translated her research findings into communication interventions for children with autism.

Pam joined the UTD faculty in 1994. After some time, Dr. Rollins came to realize she "really missed the children". "The children tell me what's important," she said. She was inspired to ask about starting a preschool. Her wish was finally granted, and the Early Communication, Language and Social Skills (CLASS) preschool program started in 2003, housed at the Callier Center for Communication Disorders in Dallas. Many of the Dallas area preschools for children with autism use ABA Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA). Dr. Rollins' preschool takes a different approach known as developmental social pragmatics. "We look at structuring the environment as opposed to changing the child," Pam comments. Rather than simply reinforcing the child for not screaming, she and her team try to understand why the child was screaming, and guide the child's language so the child can express his or her reason for the behavior.

Intervention in the Early CLASS focuses on the core features of autism in a natural preschool environment. Very close attention is paid to the social context. Pam's approach also uses many of pictures, which let the children have bimodal communication so that they are not just hearing the language, but seeing it as well. Attention is given to the childrens' emotional regulation so they are in a frame of mind to learn. "If they upset, we give them a break," Dr. Rollins says. Dr. Rollins and the Early CLASS staff work closely with the children's parents. She believes that what is practiced and learned at the preschool needs to transfer to the home in order to be effective and allow the children to be able to communicate in the world.

Among those who work daily in the preschool are Michelle McFarland, who is a speech pathologist and a UTD alumna works, and Carol Trautman, a special educator and UTD doctoral student. The Early CLASS is also a training site for students in UTD's Communication Disorders Program and they are supervised by Michelle and Carol. Dr. Rollins also teaches a course in research methods and continues to do research at UTD.

Student clinician focuses on functional communication

Social interaction is a challenge for children with Autism Spectrum Disorders
Dr. Mills earned a bachelor’s degree, summa cum laude, in cognitive neuroscience from the University of Florida, and a Ph.D. in developmental psychology from Yale University where her dissertation focused on the development of cynicism. She joined the School of Behavioral and Brain Sciences (BBS) in August, 2005. In the spring semester, Candice taught a graduate level seminar on the development of social cognition with a focus on how children understand others’ minds, thoughts, beliefs, and desires. Her interest is to find out how these social cognitive processes change over the course of development. One of Dr. Mills’s current projects with children examines how they determine the qualities for being a good judge and how they’re able to recognize there are times when judges may be partial or biased.

Dr. Mills was very excited about and attracted to BBS in part because of the way the School is structured. “This is a growing university, and our School has a strong group of faculty with varied research interests,” Candice says. “That fact plus the connections that we have to the Callier Center and the Center for BrainHealth help make the BBS an exciting place to be.”

Mandy Maguire Arrives at the School of Behavioral and Brain Sciences

Dr. Maguire completed her undergraduate work at Penn State in psychology and went on to obtain her Ph.D. in developmental psychology at Temple University. While there, she worked with Dr. Kathy Hirsh-Pasek, studying language acquisition in normally developing populations. Mandy’s post-doctoral training was in the Developmental Neuropsychology Laboratory at the University of Louisville where she focused on the neurological processing of language in children with various developmental delays, such as dyslexia, hearing loss, and autism.

Dr. Maguire’s research interest involves using neurological evidence (measured through electrophysiological responses in the brain) to study language and conceptual development in children. "There aren’t many people who look at normal developing language and how the brain processes it. Most study children with different types of disorders and how their brains are processing differently," says Dr. Maguire. "Once we know more about normal development, it will help us to answer a lot more questions about abnormal development."
### Faculty Profile: Dr. Alice O’Toole

Dr. O’Toole did her undergraduate work in Washington, D.C., where she got started in research by working in an auditory perception lab. Getting into research work early helped her to be more prepared for graduate school at Brown University.

Alice became more interested in computer-based work, initially in artificial intelligence, but subsequently in neural networks which was a focus of hers at Brown. One of Dr. O’Toole’s professors there, Dick Milner, got her interested in research on faces, a subject that she continues to study at UTD. "Students enjoy the different aspects you can study when it comes to studying faces, including social perceptions of faces or even computational models of faces," says Dr. O’Toole. In 1989, when Alice joined UTD, she was comparing computer-based models of face recognition with human recognition characteristics, or what makes certain faces easy to recognize while others are more challenging.

Over the years, Dr. O’Toole has taught research methods courses, basic perception, and cognitive science - a class of hers that used to have only five or six students but has now grown to about 70 students. "I’m excited the course has become more popular," states Alice. She has also taught a graduate level cognitive science course that has grown over the years.

Currently, Dr. O’Toole is working on the computational modeling of fMRI data (functional magnetic resonance imaging), or looking at brain maps to try and predict what external conditions might have caused those brain map patterns. She has also been funded to compare several computer algorithms that are being tested by the U.S. government to make comparisons between the performance of humans and that of the algorithms. Finally, she is working with graduate students on the perception of shape and reflectance in faces.

### School of BBS 2005-2006 Student Awards

**Congratulations!**

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<tr>
<th>Student Name</th>
<th>Award</th>
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<tr>
<td>Erika Armstrong</td>
<td>2006 Student Research Award</td>
<td>Society for Research in Human Development</td>
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<td>Tiffany Joe</td>
<td>Myrna Schlegel A.W.A.R.E. Scholarship</td>
<td>Alzheimer’s Women’s Association for Resources and Education</td>
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<td>Elizabeth Littlewood</td>
<td>Student Travel Award</td>
<td>Society for Research in Child Language Disorders</td>
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<td>Marissa Mendrygal</td>
<td>Outstanding Third Year AuD Student Scholarship</td>
<td>Audiology Foundation of America</td>
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<td>Justin Nichols</td>
<td>AAA Student Investigator Research Award</td>
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<td>Julie Verhoff</td>
<td>Lear Ashmore Research Award</td>
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<td>Donna Fox Scholarship</td>
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<td>Charles Holland Student Scholarship</td>
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<td>LULAC National Scholarship</td>
<td>League of United Latin American Citizens</td>
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**Dr. Alice O’Toole**

Summer 2006
We Want to Know About You and You Want to Know About Your Classmates for the Alumni Network!

Please fill out the following questionnaire and mail it to:
Nancy Waller
The University of Texas at Dallas
P.O. Box 830688, GR 41
Richardson, TX 75083-0688

Or register at:
www.utdalums.com

Name at graduation (if changed): Last ________________
First ________________ MI ________

Home Address ____________________________________________
City ________________ State ________________ Zip __________

Home Telephone ______________________________________________________________________

Email address ______________________________________________

Web address ________________________________________________

Major / Degree (s) __________________________________________

Employer __________________________________________________

Title or Position ____________________________________________

Business Address ____________________________________________
City ________________ State ________________ Zip __________

Business Phone ______________________________________________________________________

Other (Special projects or interests) __________________________

Awards, recognitions, professional involvement, marriages, babies? ____________________________

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THIS EDITION’S “SCRAMBALER”

Unscramble each group of letters and write the words on the dashes. Then transfer each letter on a numbered dash to its correspondingly numbered dash at the bottom and you’ll complete the sentence.

MEGAS __  __  __  __  __

WYAN __  __  __  __  __

LOFI __  __  __  __

OHTCU __  __  __  __  __

Answer to last edition’s “Scrambler”:
New President