LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

I’m sure you can think of many words to describe the past year. I know I can! The thing is, most of the words I think of aren’t reflective of the things we’ve lost over the past year. Instead, most of the words I think of reflect the resilience, compassion and kindness of humanity. I think of these words because of what I witnessed the students, faculty, staff and alumni of USD CSD achieve over the past year.

Our students, faculty, staff and alumni were challenged to continue to meet the needs of and advocate for the persons we serve. We were challenged to support those with communication differences and disorders in a world of masks, video calls and minimal face-to-face interactions. This was a moment in history where we were called to the front lines, and we answered. We showed up and we did what needed to be done. Your acts inspire us, as a department, to work harder for current and future generations.

We would love to hear from you and learn about what you have been doing to make the world (or someone’s world) a better place. I hope your time at USD helped propel you to the successes you have today!

Go Yotes!
Jessica J. Messersmith
Department Chair

Keep up with USD CSD by giving us a like and a follow.

USD Communication Sciences and Disorders @usd_csd

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UPCOMING EVENTS
Annual DCOM Banquet
Friday, April 30 – Aalfs Auditorium
Audiology Research and Externship Presentations
Friday, May 7 – Farber Hall
Commencement Ceremonies
Saturday, May 8
Event details TBA
White Coat Ceremony
Friday, September 11
3:30 p.m. – MUC Ballroom
SAA UPDATE
by Maddey Sicora, SAA President

While this year has been unprecedented for many reasons, it has also marked our largest Student Academy of Audiology (SAA) membership to date! This year we were forced to get creative, with outdoor meetings on the Noteboom lawn for as long as the weather permitted, and video calls once the South Dakota winter came knocking. We strove to make our video meetings entertaining and educational with trivia games, panels about graduate school applications, learning about the importance of advocacy and visits from our 4th-year classmates currently away on externship. USD SAA was able to participate in several in-person events on campus, including tabling in the MUC and the Student Org 2020 Trick or Treat event, where local children could safely celebrate Halloween. For the remainder of this year, SAA will continue to meet monthly. We plan to learn about and discuss diversity and inclusion in audiology, as well as women’s leadership in the broader health care community. We will also buy supplies and get prepared for outreach trips to county fairs and tractor pulls we are planning for next summer and fall. Our elections will take place in April, giving a new group of students the ability to educate and advocate for the benefit of our department, the university and the Vermillion community overall.

NSSLHA UPDATE
by Elizabeth Woods, NSSLHA President

During this past fall 2020 semester, our NSSLHA chapter got the chance to grow closer as a community through creative events and planning. Although the year presented challenges, I believe that everyone did a great job of being creative and stepping out of the box. Things that we accomplished included affiliating our chapter on the national level, hosting online and virtual meetings and participating in multiple socially distant events. Our favorite highlight took place during the Vermillion Halloween Drive-by Trick or Treat event. Pictured below you are able to see all of the NSSLHA and SAA members who were able to attend. It was a great chance to meet members of the community and mingle with the volunteers helping with the event. We are all looking forward to participating in the event again when the time comes around. As we move into the spring semester, we are excited to work together as a club to boost involvement, maximum volunteer events and grow closer together as a community here in the department.
Impact of Department Donations on Student Life

By Brooke Wiest

As a former Communication Sciences and Disorders student, I want to say thank you! Thank you for your donations and support. Your donations have impacted me in more ways than you know. Your generous donations have allowed me to hear better, receive an excellent education and lighten my financial burden. Your support has helped me reach my goal of becoming a speech-language pathologist.

One way your donations impacted me is by allowing the department to obtain new technology in the audiology department. This technology allowed the audiologists to screen and diagnose me with a hearing loss. As a result of the testing, I realized how much my hearing loss was adversely impacting my life and I acquired hearing aids which benefited my hearing and quality of life in many ways.

Another way your donations impacted me is by allowing me to obtain a first-rate education. The department was able to buy materials that could be used for both clinic and teaching purposes. These materials allowed me to receive hands-on and real-life experience in the classroom. I was also fortunate enough to use these materials during my undergraduate clinical experience.

The final way your donations have impacted me is through scholarships. I was incredibly grateful to have received the Clifford, Gregg and Stanage Award scholarship through the department. This scholarship eased my financial burden by covering some of my tuition cost. It was a special honor to be recognized within the department.

Once again, I want to say thank you for donating to USD’s Communication Sciences and Disorders department. Your donations have impacted me, along with other students, in many ways. My undergraduate experience would not have been the same without your generous donations. I am thankful for everything the Communication Sciences and Disorders department has done for me and my future. Thanks to you, I hope to one day give back to the department. Hopefully, I can positively impact students’ lives like you have impacted mine.
ALUMNI SPOTLIGHTS

Tyler Fletcher, MA, CCC-SLP

Who knew geriatric patients had such a sense of humor? Tyler Fletcher, a 2012 SLP graduate, finds this to be true each day as he is often the subject of their jokes. This sort of relationship has always defined his passion and continues to do so today—serving the geriatric population. At present, Fletcher works primarily in Fremont, Nebraska, at a nursing home/hospital, but travels nearby to two additional facilities. Days are long with countless hours spent on the road, but Fletcher knows the importance of his role as resources in rural areas are limited. Fletcher is most passionate about working with individuals post-stroke. Seeing these patients regain once lost functions is one of the most rewarding aspects of his job. He believes this feat is best achieved through a multidisciplinary approach. In fact, Fletcher attributes many of his successes to having extremely knowledgeable coworkers.

Nick Arra, Au.D., CCC-A

Nick Arra graduated with his Doctorate of Audiology degree in 2018. He is currently employed as a pediatric audiologist at the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP). Arra works at the CHOP Specialty Care & Surgery Center, Bucks County, in Chalfont, Pennsylvania. The department of audiology has more than 35 audiologists across 8 locations. When asked about his favorite clinical activities, he shared that conducting auditory brainstem response (ABR) evaluations in newborns is his favorite clinical assessment. For those children diagnosed with hearing loss, he values establishing rapport with families, hearing aid management and observing caregiver empowerment and the child’s developmental growth over time. Arra also keeps busy as the co-captain of Team CHOP for the annual Pennsylvania and New Jersey Walk 4 Hearing event. He collaborates with a fellow audiologist to promote fundraising and participation in the walks and even designs the team’s shirt for the event. When asked for an interesting fact, he shared that during his time in graduate school at USD, he opted for cochlear implantation in his right ear with guidance and support from Drs. Messersmith and Jorgensen. Being a student at the time allowed Arra to adjust to the implant more seamlessly by having direct access to cochlear implant mappings.
I loved wearing scrubs to clinic! I appreciate that the Zooms are recorded because I can go back and re-watch a lecture if I did not fully grasp the concept. Zoom has also made interacting with my classmates more of a challenge.

— Cassidy Geersen, SLP Student

Clinic is where I really found myself having to be more creative and finding things that work through telehealth! I was nervous to begin my first semester of clinic and knew that it would be challenging, but COVID just added an extra twist to it! I think overall though it’s been beneficial in the sense that I’ve really had to use my online resources, and if I do telehealth in the future I won’t panic!

— Melissa Cruz, SLP Student

My favorite part about grad school is getting to share the experience with my cohort, so these past couple of semesters apart have been rough. However, I’m SO grateful that we got to go back in-person this semester so I could be with my classmates one last time!

— Marlee Mack, SLP Student

During COVID, I used the extra alone time to reflect and redefine my goals. I worked on research projects for school as well as creative projects for my personal life. For example, I helped create an infographic for ASHA and made a virtual video for my dad’s birthday! And the extra time at home has meant more time to cuddle my kittens, who can complain about that?

— Kristine Hunt, Au.D. Student

It was nice to be able to see my family a lot last spring when we went all online, but then I missed my Au.D. squad. I’m glad we can be back on campus, and in Vermillion while staying safe. I’m currently looking forward to the weather being warm enough to sit on patios again!

— Maddey Sicora, Au.D. Student
At this time last year, Elizabeth Hanson was returning to the department after a semester spent on sabbatical. Sabbatical is awarded to faculty to allow for time (either a semester or an academic year) to really focus on a project. It may be research, writing or any number of different activities. Extending her alphabet supplementation research program was Hanson’s primary sabbatical project. We know that when speakers with a motor speech disorder learn to point to the first letter of the word they’re saying, their intelligibility improves. Hanson thought it would be useful to incorporate first-letter cues in a speech intelligibility test for children. A search of the existing evidence showed that a procedure and word list was published for that purpose several decades ago but didn’t make it into popular use. So, the sabbatical project focused on creating an app for SLPs to measure speech intelligibility in children, with and without first letter cues. The “Supplemented Speech Intelligibility Test for Children” (SSIT4C) now exists as a prototype! Next steps are to validate the word lists used for stimuli and investigate usability. Hanson hopes for help from one or more interested undergraduate and graduate students to advance the project! It would make a great undergraduate honors thesis (hint! hint!).

A new textbook chapter should be coming out (hopefully) soon as well. With coauthors Kristy Weissling, SLP-D, CCC-SLP (UNL) and Miechelle McKelvey, Ph.D., CCC-SLP (UNK), Hanson completed a book chapter, “AAC Assessment,” for the upcoming textbook: Principles and Practices in Augmentative and Alternative Communication. The review and publication process was delayed by the current pandemic (what else is new?), but page proofs are expected this spring with an optimistic summer/fall 2021 publication date.

As always, Hanson loves hearing from former students and is always willing to help brainstorm AAC solutions! Contact her at elizabeth.hanson@usd.edu.

New to USD CSD is Jennifer Phelan, Au.D. Phelan joined the department in June of 2020 as an assistant professor and audiology clinic coordinator. Phelan followed a somewhat non-traditional path into the world of audiology that would eventually lead her here to USD. After graduating from the University of Scranton as a history major, she realized she wanted to be more “people-focused” in her career, so she pursued teaching. Phelan spent two years as a second-grade teacher through Teach for America. It was through this experience she discovered the world of communication sciences and disorders and quickly fell in love with audiology. She graduated with her Au.D. from The Ohio State University in 2011. With a strong interest in pediatric audiology, she landed her first job at Nationwide Children’s Hospital and worked there for four years. She has held the Pediatric Audiology Specialty Certification (PASC) since 2016 as an extension of her commitment to working with pediatrics. Realizing a second passion of teaching audiology students, she was able to combine teaching and clinical audiology at her next position as a clinical faculty member at Northwestern University. When the position of assistant professor and clinic coordinator opened up in the USD CSD Department, she knew it was her next calling. This brings us to present day Vermillion where Phelan, her husband and her two children reside. She said the warm welcome extended by Vermillion and USD has made moving amidst a global pandemic easier. Phelan and her family love exploring new places, so they look forward to doing more of that in the near and far future. She also made it known she is a proud Buckeye and Coyote!

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CSD ANNOUNCEMENTS

Moving Announcement

We are moving! The USD Speech, Language, and Hearing Clinic will finally have a new place to call home starting January 2022. Faculty, staff and students will be heading over to McKusick Technology Center, which adjoins the Arts & Sciences building in the southeast corner of campus. After the building is fully remodeled, it will serve as a modern, comfortable space for clinical experiences, student collaboration and other enriching activities. Noteboom Hall has served us well, but we truly cannot wait to make McKusick our new home. We hope our alumni will come visit and witness these exciting improvements!

NEW! CSD Advisory Board

The USD Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders is forming an advisory board. The advisory board will serve as an external group to provide guidance and non-biased input to the department to allow us to continue our success and high impact work. It is expected that the advisory board will meet twice per year. If you have interest in serving on the advisory board, please contact Jessica Messersmith (jessica.messersmith@usd.edu).
SUPPORT OUR DEPARTMENT

USD Communication Sciences & Disorders is dedicated to the success of our students and the individuals we serve. Any gift, large or small, can help our program continue this work with our students, clients and community. To make a gift to the USD Department of Communication Sciences & Disorders, please visit usdfoundation.org/donate/csd or send a check to the USD Foundation using the form below. If you would like to make a gift via phone, please contact the USD Foundation at 800-521-3575. Thank you for supporting our department.

Stay up to date on current topics within communication sciences and disorders by following USD Communication Sciences & Disorders on Facebook! It is a fun and informative page that shares current news, student and faculty updates, and much more!

Check out @usd_csd on Instagram to follow Charlie Coyote around Noteboom and meet current students, faculty, and staff of CSD.