Transitioning to New Leadership for the Division of Speech and Hearing Sciences

On July 1, 2017, Sharon Wallace Williams, PhD, will succeed Jackson Roush, PhD, as director of the Division of Speech and Hearing Sciences. Concluding a 25-year tenure as division director, Roush said: “It has been a great honor and privilege to serve as director, but I felt the time was right for new leadership. I appreciate all the support I received from former chairs, Drs. David Yoder and Lee McLean, and current chair, Dr. Stephen R. Hooper, along with a wonderful group of faculty colleagues and departmental staff. And I couldn’t be more pleased with the appointment of Dr. Williams to succeed me. She will do an outstanding job.”

Roush’s tenure as director included the addition of two new doctoral programs, the PhD and AuD, and the division’s move to Bondurant Hall in 2006. A pediatric audiologist by profession, he has published and presented extensively on a variety of topics related to hearing in children and he has directed more than $7 million in federally funded leadership and training grants. He will continue as director of the North Carolina LEND Program, which was recently funded by the U.S. Maternal and Child Health Bureau through 2021, including a competitive supplement to prepare pediatric audiologists to work with children who have autism and other developmental disabilities in addition to hearing loss.

Williams has served as faculty in the division since 2003. As an audiologist with expertise in gerontology, she applies her training and expertise to the scholarship of older adults living with life-limiting illnesses, and to death and dying processes and outcomes. Her work has been funded by the National Institute on Aging, The Duke Endowment, and UNC’s Center for Aging and Health, and her publications have appeared in The Journal of Gerontology, The Gerontologist, Aging & Mental Health, and the Journal of Palliative Medicine. “I am excited to transition into this leadership role within our division,” Williams said. “It is an honor to move forward as we work together to continue our tradition of excellence. We are fortunate to build on the foundation of an outstanding past and a very stable present as we face changes in health care delivery and in the demographics of those we serve.” Williams’ PhD is from the University of North Carolina-Greensboro in Human Development and Family Studies followed by a postdoctoral fellowship at the Wake Forest University School of Medicine.

New Grant Prepares Pediatric Audiologists to Work with Children with Developmental Disabilities

We are pleased to report that UNC has been awarded a supplemental grant of $400,000 over the next five years to support the educational preparation of pediatric audiology students funded by the North Carolina LEND program which is based at the Carolina Institute for Developmental Disabilities. NC-LEND Director, Dr. Jack Roush, notes, “We were proud to receive one of the first three LEND audiology grants when they were initially awarded in 2009 and are very pleased the funding will continue through 2021 to prepare pediatric audiologists from UNC’s Doctor of Audiology (AuD) program with specialized training to work with children who have developmental disabilities and other complex needs in addition to hearing loss.”
Tar Heel Reader Celebrates 10 Million Books Read on Innovative Platform

Tar Heel Reader (THR), an eight-year-old collaborative venture between the Department of Allied Health Sciences’ Center for Literacy and Disability Studies and the Department of Computer Science, celebrated 10 million books read on its innovative platform on January 31, 2017.

Dr. Stephen Hooper, DAHS chair and associate dean, said the THR platform is a remarkable asset for the University that happens with focused effort. “All of us want to make a difference in the lives of individuals,” he said. “Tar Heel Reader reinforces why we do what we do at this University.” The THR platform invites people from around the world to write and publish free, easy-to-read, books available on topics of their choice. People of all reading abilities create drafts of books and use the open-source image website, Flickr, to illustrate them.

As of late 2016, THR’s authors have published nearly 50,000 books on the platform. Users from more than 200 countries have read books on the site, totaling 10 million books read as of January 7, 2017. While most of the books are geared toward beginner level readers with disabilities learning to read English, books on the THR site are also read by adults learning English as a second language, high school students learning languages other than English, and people across the world accessing books on the site in 26 languages other than English.

Dr. Karen Erickson, the center’s director and the David E. & Dolores (Dee) Yoder Distinguished Professor of Literacy and Disability Studies, remarked that support for THR has thrived thanks, in part, to the collaboration with the Department of Computer Science. Erickson is also a professor in the department’s Division of Speech and Hearing Sciences.

Gary Bishop, a professor in the Department of Computer Science, said the easily accessible content allows children to learn to read, even those who face disabilities. “It has been a tremendous blessing to work on this project with a great group of people,” he said.

Kevin Guskiewicz, PhD, and dean of the UNC College of Arts and Sciences, said the initiative represented synergy unleashed, a common theme of several initiatives at the University.

“It takes leadership to carry on,” he said. “You’re exemplary examples of the kind of work that our faculty can do.” In late 2016, the Center for Literacy and Disability Studies received a five-year, $2.5 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Special Education. The grant will build a shared reading interface to support the THR platform and to build a model to support its implementation into classrooms serving children with significant cognitive disabilities across the country.

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Cara McComish, PhD, Inducted into UNC School of Medicine Academy of Educators

The UNC School of Medicine Academy of Educators has inducted Cara McComish, PhD, as a faculty fellow to recognize her dedication and service to the division.

McComish, an assistant professor in the division, is the inaugural inductee from the Department of Allied Health Sciences, where the division is housed. The Academy recognized McComish at its Evening of Scholarship on May 11, 2017, held in the George Watts Hill Alumni Center.

Founded in 2006, the Academy of Educators emphasizes teaching and supports faculty development in Chapel Hill and across the state. More than 250 active faculty members and 60 resident members represent a diverse population of educators across various specialties.

The Academy’s mission includes the following:

• To promote and support excellence in teaching and the work and career paths of excellent teachers;
• To promote and fund curricular innovation, evidence-based curricular change and a scholarly approach to the education mission; and
• To provide a forum for education leadership and advice for the dean, vice dean for medical education, and leadership of the curriculum.

Dr. Stephen R. Hooper, associate dean and chair of the Department of Allied Health Sciences, noted “Dr. McComish is a wonderful addition to this prestigious Academy, and she most certainly embodies our departmental teaching mission in a spirit of excellence. We are extremely proud of Dr. McComish and her induction into the UNC Academy of Educators.”
Southeast University Clinical Educators (SEUCE) Conference

Lisa Domby has provided academic English pronunciation services to the UNC community since 2001. With a focus on English as an international language of communication, she has developed an assessment of intelligibility and qualitative dimensions of communication that emphasizes functional communication outcomes. Professor Domby presented "A Task-Based Assessment of English Pronunciation" at the Southeast University Clinical Educators (SEUCE) conference in Folly Beach, SC on September 27 and invited feedback for the assessment and scoring procedures. Professor Domby will collaborate with Dr. Becky Butler in the UNC ESL Writing Center to test the procedures with international students and scholars.

Former LEND Audiology Trainees Now Clinical Preceptors at UNC Hospitals

Former LEND Audiology Trainee, Dr. Mallory Baker (left), now a pediatric audiologist at UNC Hospitals, looks on as current LEND trainees Skye Dorsett (right) and Melissa Simpson (middle) from UNC's doctoral program in audiology conduct a hearing screening on a newborn infant. Former LEND audiology trainees Dr. Shana Jacobs and Dr. Laurel Okulski are also pediatric audiology preceptors at UNC Hospitals.

Division Holds 47th Annual Commencement Ceremony

The Division of Speech and Hearing Sciences held its 47th annual commencement ceremony at the William and Ida Friday Center for Continuing Education on Saturday, May 13, 2017. The program celebrated two Doctor of Philosophy degrees, ten Doctor of Audiology degrees, and 28 Master of Science degrees in speech-language pathology.

Dr. Jackson Roush, program director, addressed graduates and encouraged them to serve at the local, state, and national levels, in addition to listening and thinking critically.

"Service, advocacy, and teaching will enrich your careers. I strongly encourage you all to be teachers in some capacity; you will take a great deal of satisfaction in those roles," Roush said. The program also recognized clinical preceptors who have made a difference in the lives of students. William Hoole, AuD, received the audiology preceptor award, and Maegan K. Evans, PhD, CCC-SLP, LSLS Cert. AVED., received the speech-language pathology preceptor award.
Linda Watson, EdD, Named 2017 Recipient of Robert W. Peters Award for Research Mentoring

The Robert W. Peters Award for Research Mentoring is named in honor of the late Professor Robert W. Peters, who joined UNC-Chapel Hill’s faculty in 1969 and founded the Institute of Speech and Hearing Sciences, which later became a division in the Department of Allied Health Sciences. Peters chaired the academic program in speech and hearing until 1981 and taught courses in psychoacoustics, fluency disorders, and research design. Watson, the award’s second recipient, received accolades from colleagues and students. They lauded Watson’s ability to help students focus their research projects, and for her dedication to their success as scholars and researchers.

Division of Speech and Hearing Sciences Hosts Ninth Annual Student Research Day

Seven PhD candidates and dozens of master’s and AuD students presented the culmination of their research and findings at the ninth annual student research day on Friday, April 28.

The 2017 Student Research Day featured a host of different projects, including those investigating hearing loss, autism spectrum disorder, and social aspects of communication, among others. The afternoon included oral presentations by PhD students and two poster sessions from master’s and AuD students.

Dr. Adam Jacks Featured on YOUR HEALTH Radio

Dr. Adam Jacks, an associate professor in the division, spoke on “YOUR HEALTH” Friday, April 28. He joined host Dr. Adam Goldstein and guest co-host Laurel Sisler in a conversation about aphasia and how communication can break down in some patients.

Jacks and Goldstein discussed resources for patients with aphasia, including the UNC Center for Aphasia and Related Disorders.

If you missed the show on the radio, make sure to download the podcast on iTunes.

“YOUR HEALTH” airs every Saturday, Sunday and Monday on 97.9 FM and Sunday mornings on 88.3 FM.

Dr. Watson with current and former students.

PhD candidates and projects:
- **Ashwaq Alzamel**: “Sex & IQ as Predictors of Sensory Patterns in Children with ASD.”
- **Michaela Dubay**: “In Search of Culturally Appropriate Autism Interventions for Latino Families.”
- **Lisa Erwin-Davidson**: “Classroom Transformation upon the Infusion of a Symbolic Communication Intervention: Year 1 Results.”
- **Thelma Uzonyi**: “Measuring Transactional Engagement Among Infants at risk for Autism.”
- **Jonet Artis**: “Is There a Relationship between Early Parent Concerns and a Later Developmental Disorder Diagnosis?”
- **Kathryn Dorney**: “Impact of Project Core on the Communication Skills of Pre-Linguistic Preschool Students with ASD.”
- **Jenni Shafer**: “Access Barriers to Outpatient Rehabilitative Therapy after Stroke: Implications for the Speech Language Pathologist.”

Dr. Watson with current and former students.

Dr. Jacks with host and guest.

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