

SLHS newsletter

JUNE-AUGUST 2025



Welcome to Fall Semester!

Summer 2025 was filled with inspiring events, exciting research, student successes, and meaningful collaborations. We're excited to share highlights from our department as we continue our work in teaching, research, and service in **Speech, Language, and Hearing Sciences**, and to celebrate our community's milestones, welcome new faces, and recognize the many accomplishments of the season.

New Faces

We recently added two new staff members:

- **Gabrielle Reimer** – Manager of Finance and Business Operations
- **Brenda Baker** – Academic Program Coordinator

Faculty Highlights

- Congratulations to **Audra McCorkle**, who has been named ASL Director in recognition of her leadership and expertise.
- **Don Bell-Souder** successfully defended his dissertation, *Electrically-evoked cortical auditory potentials: Validity, efficacy, and perception in cochlear implanted adults*, on July 1, 2025. His mentor was **Dr. Anu Sharma**. We congratulate **Dr. Bell-Souder** on this outstanding achievement!
- Personal news: Warm congratulations to **Dr. Allison Hilger** and her family on welcoming their baby in April 2025!



Don Bell-Souder



Samantha Hilger Solorzano



SLHS C230

Building Updates

- Our new classroom, SLHS C230, is now open—renovated with updated, easy-to-operate audio/visual systems and designed to be a comfortable, clean learning space.
- On the second floor, we replaced the drinking fountain with a water bottle filler. To comply with ADA regulations, we installed a new wall and relocated a locker. Work will be completed in the next couple of weeks.

We're thrilled to share an overview of the exciting work happening across SLHS this summer—from new funding and publications to student achievements and community engagement. These highlights show the depth of our department's impact in teaching, research, and service.



Scholarships

- Marilyn K. Johnson Scholarship: **Anna Edmundson** and **Natalie Sesselmann**
- Frank Morris Speech and Language Pathology Scholarship: **Makayla Sileo** and **Kaprianna Morris-Lopez**
- Colorado Diversity Initiative Fellowship: **Alyssa Baca**
- Dwight A. Hamilton Scottish Rite Foundation Graduate Scholarships: **Sara Kurutz**, **Sophia Wonneberger**, and **Sarah Booth**

SLHS Graduate Students

This fall, SLHS will welcome 33 new graduate students:

20 MA-SLP students

4 MA-SLP leveling students

6 AuD students

2 PhD students - **Richy Hayes** and **Sarah Conrad**

Research Presentations & Publications

- Our recent MA-SLP graduate **Caitlin Cain** and **Dr. Allison Hilger**, along with **Drew Mancini**, published “Differential diagnostic patterns of acquired motor speech disorders in children: A preliminary investigation of four case studies” in the *American Journal of Speech-Language Pathology*. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/40523843/> Drew Mancini is an SLP at Children’s Hospital and a PhD student at CU Anschutz. He is teaching SLHS 5292 Motor Speech Disorder in the fall.
- MA-SLP graduates **Melanie Esver** and **Caitlin Cloud**, with **Dr. Allison Hilger** and **Dr. Christine Brennan**, published “Revisiting the cerebellum’s linguistic role: Evidence for cerebellar involvement in expressive syntax” in *Springer Nature* in July 2025. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12311-025-01879-y>.
- Former MA student **Avery K. Allen**, mentored by **Dr. Christine Brennan**, with co-authors **Christina Riseman** and **Dr. Allison Hilger**, published “Harnessing AI for aphasia: A case report on ChatGPT’s role in supporting written expression” in *Frontiers in Rehabilitation Sciences* on May 30, 2025. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3389/fresc.2025.1600145>.
- Recent MA-SLP graduate **Collin Eagen’s** thesis, *The impacts of testosterone therapy beyond fundamental frequency in transmasculine voice: Vocal quality and fricative articulation*, was accepted for publication in the *Journal of Voice* in July 2025. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvoice.2025.06.005> Collin defended his thesis in spring 2024 under the mentorship of **Dr. Christine Brennan**, **Dr. Allison Hilger**, and **Jen Walentas Lewon**. He also presented the results of his study at the 2024 ASHA convention.
- A paper based on the senior honors thesis of **Emily Heneman Lee**, mentored by **Dr. Christine Brennan**, was published in the *Asian-Pacific Journal of Second and Foreign Language Education* in September 2025. The article is titled “Differential benefits of syllable versus grapheme instruction for English-speaking adults learning to read words in Hangul.” DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40862-025-00348-7>.
- PhD student **Richy Hayes** and **Dr. Pui Fong Kan** published “The semantic depth of Japanese-English bilingual children” in *Frontiers in Language Science*. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3389/flang.2025.1601352>.



- MA-SLP student **Natalie Sesselmann** and PhD student **Richy Hayes**, mentored by **Dr. Pui Fong Kan**, presented their research “Examining Microstructure and Macrostructure Elements in Narratives of Japanese-English Bilingual Children,” at the International Symposium on Bilingualism in San Sebastián, Spain.

Research Presentations & Publications (Continued)



- PhD student **Richy Hayes**, mentored by **Dr. Pui Fong Kan**, also presented their poster “The Semantic Depth of Japanese-English Bilingual Children” at the International Symposium on Bilingualism Conference.
- **Richy Hayes**, mentored by **Dr. Pui Fong Kan**, presented his work, *The Contribution of Semantic Depth and Language Input to Narrative Macrostructure in Japanese-English Bilingual Children* at the Harmonious Bilingualism Network (HaBilNet) in San Sebastián, Spain, in June 2025.
- **Don Bell-Souder**, with co-authors **Chen Chen**, **Anthony Spahr**, and **Dr. Anu Sharma**, presented “Stimulating and recording cortical potentials via cochlear implant” at the International Evoked Response Audiometry Study Group (IERASG) Biennial 29th Symposium in Boulder, CO, in June 2025. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-024-79528-3>
- **Kayla Cormier**, with co-authors **Carly Schimmel**, **Vinaya Manchaiah**, and **Dr. Anu Sharma**, presented “Examining EEG correlates of tinnitus in mild to moderate hearing loss” at the International Evoked Response Audiometry Study Group (IERASG) Conference in Boulder, CO, in February 2025.
- **Carly Schimmel**, with co-authors **Kayla Cormier**, **Dr. Stephen Cass** (Anschutz), and **Dr. Anu Sharma**, presented “Cortical evoked potentials in conductive and mixed hearing losses” at the International Evoked Response Audiometry Study Group (IERASG) Conference in Boulder, CO, in June 2025.
- **Dr. Anu Sharma** gave two invited presentations on cochlear implants and participated in a roundtable at the European Symposium on Pediatric Cochlear Implantation in Hannover, Germany, in July 2025.
- **Dr. Anu Sharma** gave a keynote presentation, “The rewiring brain: Cross-modal plasticity in hearing loss,” virtually at the Developmental Psychology Section of the German Society of Psychology Conference in Giessen, Germany, in September 2025.

Grants & Funding

- **Dr. Christine Brennan** was awarded a \$15,000 catalyst grant by the Division of Social Sciences for her project, *Exploring language in Smith-Magenis syndrome: The SMS Radio Project*.
- **Dr. Christine Brennan** and collaborator Nancy R. Lee, PhD (Drexel University), were awarded a \$4,000 grant by Parents and Researchers Interested in Smith-Magenis Syndrome (PRISMS) for their project, *Vocational activities and their cognitive-behavioral correlates in adults with Smith-Magenis syndrome*.
- **Sherri Tennant** and **Dr. Christine Brennan** received \$24,000 for their AAC outreach project, Empowering economically disadvantaged adolescents with complex communication needs. This is the sixth year of funding from the Office for Public and Community-Engaged Scholarship (PACES).
- **Sherri Tennant** was featured in an article titled “Opening conversations: Empowering youth with complex communication needs” in May 2025, highlighting her AAC outreach grant.
- **Dr. Allison Sedey** presented a webinar sponsored by the Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists, “Language outcomes of children who are deaf or hard of hearing – birth to 6 years of age: A review of the literature.” She also received contracts from CSDB and EHDI Colorado to document language outcomes of children birth–3 years.
- PhD student **Richy Hayes** received funding from the Harmonious Bilingualism Network (HaBilNet) to attend a research symposium in San Sebastián, Spain, in June 2025.

Events & Workshops

At the National Stuttering Association Conference on July 1, 2025, **Ryan Pollard** delivered an invited presentation, “IEP goal writing strategies,” in Denver.



This fall, the Child Learning Center (CLC) celebrated its 50th anniversary with alumni, families, faculty, staff, and friends. The celebration featured a special visit from founding director **Elizabeth “Tikki” Heublein**, heartfelt speeches reflecting on the center’s impact, and a slideshow highlighting five decades of memories. See the article, [“Tucked in the heart of campus, CU Boulder’s hidden gem turns 50.”](#) Many thanks to **LJ Werner, Liz Berube, Katie Miller, Carli Varga**, and the department volunteers for bringing this event to life.

ASL & Deaf Culture Workshops

Session 1: **Audra McCorkle** led training on clinically relevant signs, ASL GLOSS structure, and Deaf culture.

Session 2: **River Frank** guided participants through storytelling, supporting Deaf children, and clinical considerations.



In June and July, graduate AuD students completed the Spanish Audiology Learning Community with Audiology en Español, strengthening bilingual service delivery. Facilitated by Alejandra Ullauri, this work expands access to high-quality audiology services for the Latino community.

Events & Workshops (Continued)



In June, SLHS hosted the International Evoked Response Audiometry Study Group (IERASG) Symposium. Graduate audiology students **Evan Watt**, **Ana Sanchez**, and **Ann Ross** volunteered. Evan assisted in a hands-on demo by renowned researcher Lisa Hunter and impressively achieved a perfect tympanometry seal on his first attempt.

Undergraduates **William Randall**, **Kaleb Vardon**, and **Gemma Gallucci** volunteered at the Denver Ataxia Walk n' Roll, raising \$10,000 for research.



AuD student **Chloe Tierney** visited Washington, D.C. as part of the SAA National Board, advocating for the Medicare Audiology Access Improvement Act.