

Students Mentoring Students in Theatre & Therapy

Our department is currently in its fifth year of offering the *Theatre & Therapy* program, which provides activity-based intervention for adolescents and young adults, ages 15 to 30, with developmental disabilities in the areas of expressive/receptive language, articulation/motor speech, and social-communication skills. The program was developed by Drs. Angela Losardo, Derek Davidson, and Kim McCullough as a collaborative effort between the departments of Communication Sciences and Disorders (CSD), and Theatre and Dance. Dr. Jennifer Buff and Clinical Educator Emily Hornback took over the program beginning in Spring 2021, offering activities in an online format due to the Covid pandemic.

Theatre & Therapy uses a mentorship model in which first year graduate students in Speech-Language Pathology mentor undergraduate CSD students. Each graduate student is assigned a client and paired with two or three undergraduate students who work on the client's therapy team. The graduate clinician is responsible for leading therapy activities and facilitating the session each week while the undergraduates gain experience with those tasks and complete other therapy activities as assigned by the clinician. The graduate clinicians meet with their undergraduate mentees after each therapy session to compare data, discuss interventions, and plan for the next session.

Comments from individual graduate students who took the course in Spring 2021 reflect the benefits of this type of mentoring opportunity:

Being a mentor for undergraduate CSD students really made me analyze my clinical decisions on a level that I don't think I could have gotten from a lecture class. I would introduce something I wanted to do and they would ask "Why?" and I would have to go way more in depth with my explanations/reasoning because they really wouldn't know. I think it was a great way to learn as someone who was just getting started clinically because I didn't have a lot of experience to back up my decisions at that point.

I really enjoyed the opportunity that I had as a graduate student to mentor the undergraduate students in my group. I have seen them make incredible progress in identifying specific techniques and their use of evidence-based intervention strategies, and I believe that this first-hand clinical experience will be priceless as they consider their futures. As a graduate clinician, working with my undergraduate group members has allowed me to develop accountability as our team leader. I have also honed my understanding of interventions as I provide my undergraduates with advice and observe them lead their activities.



A team of graduate and undergraduate students works with their Theatre & Therapy client.

We offer our sincere appreciation for the continued support of the Scottish Rite, without which we could not fulfill our mission.