

CSD Connects: Fall 2025

In 2023, the department's strategic planning set a clear direction around three priorities: **One CSD**, connecting science to practice and building a shared identity across programs; **Breaking Silos**, accelerating cross-disciplinary partnerships within Northwestern and beyond; and **Amplifying Voices**, ensuring our work resonates across campus, our professions, and the communities we serve. This Fall 2025 newsletter reflects that trajectory. It is also a special issue, shaped by a quarter in which the external funding climate felt especially stark and uncertainty was high. Even so, faculty, staff, students, and trainees stayed ambitious and collaborative, emerging more resilient and more aligned.

That momentum shows up throughout this newsletter. Scholarship and training continued to thrive, from major publications and grant activity to student and trainee achievements in academia and industry, national presentations, and high visibility invited talks. "Breaking Silos" translated into concrete outcomes, including the annual [Knowles Hearing Center symposium](#) that convened national and international leaders to advance hearing care and wellness, alongside growing engagement around responsible, high-impact AI in communication sciences and disorders. Our service mission remained front and center through community partnerships and practical outreach, including communication access training for organizations serving people with aphasia and new technology-enabled screening initiatives. We also strengthened our cross-program alignment and collaboration via **CSD Connects**, an expanding forum for invited talks that spans the entire research-to-clinic translational spectrum. Internally, we continued operationalizing **One CSD** through implementation of new bylaws and committee structures, creating clearer governance, shared ownership, and sustained progress. Our research-to-community model is also being recognized beyond the department; the [Northwestern University Leadership Circle](#) recently highlighted how annual giving helps extend its impact. We carry this energy into **2026**, with an exciting lineup ahead across research, education, clinical translation, and community impact.

Bharath Chandrasekaran, PhD

Ralph and Jean Sundin Endowed Professor and Chair

ASHA Fellow, Knowles Fellow

Roxelyn and Richard Pepper Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders

Megan Roberts, PhD, CCC-SLP

Research Excellence and Innovation

Building Interdisciplinary Connections Across the Mind–Brain Sciences

Professor and Chair Bharath Chandrasekaran delivered two invited presentations emphasizing practical pathways for creating and sustaining interdisciplinary collaboration across neuroscience, linguistics, psychology, health, engineering, and related fields. In a keynote at the University of Lisbon's Mind Brain College, he shared strategies for launching collaborative programs, aligning methods and incentives, and navigating common obstacles. In the Grand Rounds at Northwestern's Physical Therapy and Human Movement Sciences, he highlighted how interdisciplinary approaches accelerate translation from neural mechanisms to clinical impact in age-related speech processing.



Advancing AI for Communication Sciences and Disorders

Professor Sumit Dhar co-chaired the ASHFoundation's *Foundations and Innovations in Artificial Intelligence Summit: The Future is Now* (November 17–18, 2025) at the ASHA National Office in Rockville, MD, hosted by the ASHFoundation with support from Reality Labs Research at Meta. The Summit convened thought leaders to identify priority Communication Sciences and Disorders questions where AI/Machine Learning can enable more accurate, affordable, and accessible assessment and treatment—especially in hearing and language—and to translate those discussions into a published gap analysis and a focused new call for proposals with clear metrics for success.



Martin-Harris Represents SCSC at ESSD Congress, Secures Second Place for Best Oral Presentation

Professor Bonnie Martin-Harris represented the Swallowing Cross-Systems Collaborative (SCSC) at the European Society for Swallowing Disorders (ESSD) 15th Annual Congress in Athens, Greece. She delivered two invited presentations, “Imagining New Options for Behavioral Rehabilitation of Dysphagia” and “Clinical Impact of Respiratory Swallow Training on Refractory Dysphagia in Oropharyngeal Head and Neck Cancer,” and was awarded second place for best oral presentation.



Marian Delivers Keynote at ARMADILLO Conference; Lab Showcases Research at Psychonomic Society Meeting

Professor Viorica Marian delivered a keynote address at the 2025 Association for Research on Memory, Attention, Decision-Making, Intelligence, Language, Learning, and Organization Conference hosted at the University of Texas at El Paso. Her invited keynote highlighted Northwestern's leadership in bilingualism and cognitive science research and underscored the lab's national visibility in language and cognition scholarship.



Dr. Marian's Bilingualism & Psycholinguistics Research Group presented research at the Psychonomic Society's 66th Annual Meeting. They presented on their work integrating eye-tracking and EEG methods in bilingualism research, the role of bilingualism in creativity, and how bilingual mothers and children engage with books.

Morton-Jones Receives NIH R21, Presents Internationally, and Co-Authors Textbook

Mancosh Postdoctoral Fellow Mariah Morton-Jones received funding from the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders to support her project titled *Blood Lactate as a Biomarker of Vocal Function: Validating a Novel Vocal Muscle Strength Task in Older Adults with Presbyphonia* (R21DC023275). The purpose of this project is to develop a new outcome measure of vocal fitness and explore metabolic and physiological biomarkers of the aging voice.



Dr. Morton Jones also presented a poster presentation at the British Society for Aging Research in Manchester, UK and hosted a panel at the 2025 ASHA Convention. She also co-authored the newest edition of the *Voice Therapy: Clinical Case Studies textbook*.

New Investigators Research Grant to Support Breakthrough Work in Parkinson's Disease

Postdoctoral fellow Ankita Bhutada received a New Investigators Research Grant from the ASH Foundation for her project *Accelerating Parkinson's Disease Clinical Research in Swallowing and Motor Speech Disorders: A Novel Large-Language Model-Based Solution for Optimizing Clinical Trials Efficiency*. Her funded project focuses on accelerating Parkinson's disease clinical research in swallowing and motor speech disorders using a novel large-language-model-based approach to improve clinical trial efficiency. The New Investigators Research Grant is designed to help further new investigators' research activities by funding one-year, preliminary studies that could launch larger-scale research studies.



Education, Growth, and Professional Development of Students and Postdoctoral Scholars



Abhijit Roy and Shengyue Xiong

PhD students Abhijit Roy and Shengyue Xiong have accepted a summer internship at Dolby. Dolby's Research Internship Program offers PhD students the opportunity to define and lead an independent, high-impact research project at Dolby's San Francisco research offices, advancing purposeful innovation aimed at enhancing the human experience in audio, video, and entertainment technology.





Benjamin Amartei

PhD student Benjamin Amartei traveled to New Orleans for the 2025 Acoustical Society of America (ASA) conference, where he presented two posters based on two studies he's been completing during his program.



Rachael Pennock

PhD student Rachael Pennock had a new paper accepted by the Journal of the American Academy of Audiology, *Audiologist Decision-Making: Hearing Aid Technology Levels and Auditory Ecology*. This is an important and understudied area affecting clinical practice and hearing aid outcomes.



Isabella Isaac

The Undergraduate Research Assistant Program Committee funded the proposal *Emotional speech communication by children with cochlear implants*, written by Dr. Monita Chatterjee and undergraduate student Isabella Isaac. This funding will support Isabella's work on the project.



Nik Sung

Nik Yoonhyun Sung, an undergraduate student working with Dr. Viorica Marian, was named a Finalist for the Fletcher URG Prize, which is given for outstanding summer research projects. Nik also received a Conference Travel Grant to present his work at the Psychonomic Society conference in Denver. His research explores the neural underpinnings of bilingual language co-activation and memory using combined EEG and eye-tracking methods.



NSSLHA Welcomes New Members

The undergraduate student group associated with the National Student Speech Language Hearing Association (NSSLHA) welcomed more than 25 new members this fall. NSSLHA is a barrier-free organization at NU, meaning it is open to all students interested in communication sciences and disorders with no membership fee. Students who are interested in neuroscience, pre-med, dentistry, audiology, speech-language pathology, and health sciences participate in weekly meetings, professional talks, and community service. With guidance from Dr. Karen Kinderman, who has been the faculty sponsor of NSSLHA since 2022, the undergraduate students also have the opportunity to observe therapy and tour the clinic on the Evanston campus.



SAA's Fall Activities

The Student Academy of Audiology organized a food drive for the ReVive program and had the opportunity to hear from Carrie Balian, Guide By Your Side Coordinator at Hands & Voices. The session highlighted Hands & Voices' mission to support families of children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing through connection, advocacy, and peer-based guidance. The talk emphasized the importance of family-centered care and community partnership in audiology practice.

Faculty and Staff Development

Dhar Earns ASHA Lifetime Publications Award and Headlines 2025 Researcher-Academic Town Meeting

Professor Sumit Dhar received the Alfred K. Kawana Award for Lifetime Achievement in Publications from the American Speech Language Hearing Association. This award honors scholars with a long history of excellent publications.

Dr. Dhar was also a panelist at the 2025 Researcher-Academic Town Meeting at the ASHA Convention titled *Reflections and Revelations: A Century of Discovery in*



Communication Sciences and Disorders Research. The meeting covered the evolution of foundational theories, advances in clinical practice, technological shifts, and future focused issues.

Chatterjee Joins Our Faculty

Professor Chatterjee joined our department in July as a full professor and director of the Auditory Prostheses & Perception Laboratory. Dr. Chatterjee is interested in mechanisms underlying auditory and speech perception by individuals who have hearing loss and use cochlear implants to hear. A specific area of interest is voice pitch perception by cochlear implant patients and consequences for emotional prosody (both perception and production). Working with patients across the lifespan, her research asks interesting and impactful questions about experience-driven changes in school-age children, aging effects in adults, and the influence of cognitive function on outcomes.



Speights Co-Authors Textbook

Assistant Professor Marisha Speights co-authored *Clinical Phonetics*, Sixth Edition by Plural Publishing. This updated edition provides enhanced transcription tools, diverse audio examples, and an integrative framework for clinical application, making it an essential resource for students and professionals in speech-language pathology.



Weisleder Invited to Present at the Cognitive Development Society Meeting

Assistant Professor Adriana Weisleder was invited to give a talk at the Cognitive Development Society meeting in Montreal in 2026. She will present as part of the symposium titled *Growing up multilingual: Contexts and mechanisms of language learning*. You can read more about the meeting here:
<https://cogdevsoc.org/invited-speakers/>



Welcome Dr. Sameer Ashaie

Assistant Professor Ashaie joined our department in September. He also holds a joint appointment as a research scientist at the Shirley Ryan AbilityLab and a research assistant professor position in the Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation at

Feinberg School of Medicine. Dr. Ashaie directs the Affect and Emotion Rehabilitation (AER) Lab and his research primarily focuses on aphasia rehabilitation, particularly post-stroke depression and related psychosocial disorders with an emphasis on developing ecologically valid depression measures and non-linguistic biomarkers of depression. He also works on emotion recognition in right hemisphere stroke patients, linguistic changes in healthy aging, mild cognitive impairment, and Alzheimer's disease.



New Academic Leadership

CSD is pleased to announce several new academic leadership appointments that align with our updated committee and governance structure. Dr. Elizabeth Norton has been elected as the first Chair of the Curriculum Committee, a key role in strengthening curricular coherence and continuous improvement across our programs. Dr. Adriana Weisleder has been elected Director of Undergraduate Studies, providing academic leadership for the undergraduate curriculum, advising, and student experience. Dr. Adrian Rodriguez Contreras will serve as Interim Director of Graduate Studies, supporting graduate education and mentoring across our graduate programs.

We also extend sincere thanks to Dr. Elizabeth Norton and Dr. Jason Sanchez for their impactful service as Director of Undergraduate Studies and Director of Graduate Studies, respectively. Their leadership advanced critical priorities during a period of growth and change, and we are grateful for the strong foundation they built. We look forward to the energy and direction this new leadership team will bring as we continue to strengthen coordination, transparency, and shared ownership across CSD.

Lidov Begins Visiting Faculty Position

Elizabeth Lidov started as a Visiting Clinical Assistant Professor this fall. She is a pediatric speech-language pathologist with extensive experience in private practice and research settings. Inspired by her experience as the sibling of an older brother with disabilities, she is passionate about translating research into everyday clinical practice while guiding the next generation of clinicians to deliver culturally responsive, compassionate care that empowers families and strengthens communities.



ASHFoundation Awards Adjunct Professor Jeanane Ferre

Adjunct Professor Jeanane Ferre received the prestigious Frank R. Kleffner Lifetime Clinical Career Award from the ASHFoundation. Dr. Ferre has been a tremendous asset to our Audiology program contributing her expertise in central auditory processing disorders.

Breaking Silos: Interdisciplinary Collaboration, Strategic Partnerships and Global Outreach

Auditory Ecology Conference Brings Together Interdisciplinary Researchers

Professor Pamela Souza's fall conference on Auditory Ecology and Hearing Loss, funded by a Global Collaboration Grant from the Northwestern Buffett Institute for Global Affairs, was a success with attendance by an interdisciplinary group of researchers, postdoctoral fellows, and PhD students from multiple institutions. Attendees gathered and presented on their current research and participated in a discussion to identify shared research priorities to develop ideas for future collaborations.



RISE: Leading in Research and Innovation in Speech and Language Evaluation

Marisha Speights, Assistant Professor and Director of the Pediatric Speech Technologies and Acoustics Research Lab (PedzSTAR) led a 1.5-day collaborative workshop that brought together three Northwestern labs, PedzSTAR, Neurodevelopmental Diversity Lab, and SoundBrain Lab, to design a scalable, HIPAA-compliant cloud infrastructure for speech and language evaluation. Facilitated by AWS and Slalom, the workshop united researchers, NU IT partners, and clinical experts to create a blueprint for:

- Secure data ingestion and integration of AI-driven analytics.
- A web-based application enabling national data collection.

Supported by AWS Social Responsibility award, this initiative positions Northwestern at the forefront of responsible AI in clinical and research settings, driving innovation and collaboration across disciplines. Dr. Speights said, *"RISE represents my commitment to building infrastructure that accelerates research while ensuring privacy and scalability. This collaboration is a critical step toward transforming how we evaluate speech and language using Clinical AI."*



CSD Connects Expands with Grand Rounds and Standing Room Only Success

CSD Connects delivered a high impact Fall quarter, with several sessions drawing standing room only crowds and energetic cross program participation. The series meets on the third Monday of each month from 12:00 to 1:30 pm. It is a department wide forum where scholarship, clinical practice, and professional learning intersect. This fall's highlights included sessions led by Professor Megan Roberts on strengthening autism evaluation access and translating evidence into practical pathways for timely support. Professor Pam Souza led a session on the rapidly evolving over the counter hearing aid landscape and offered clear guidance for clinicians supporting patients and families.

Fall also marked the expansion into a new format, CSD Connects Grand Rounds. This case based, interdisciplinary series focuses on clinical decision making and the evidence behind it. A flagship example was the November 17 Grand Rounds session, Diagnostic Uncertainty: How Biases and Information Shape Decisions, led by Research Assistant Professor Maranda Jones and Professor Megan Roberts. The session used a toddler autism case to highlight how collaboration and critical thinking improve decisions. Looking ahead, CSD Connects will continue to grow across complementary formats. CSD Connects Research features invited talks that elevate cutting edge scholarship and catalyze collaboration. CSD Connects Grand Rounds creates a structured space for translation through cases and discussion. CSD Connects Research Spotlight is a standing format for bite sized doctoral student work in progress presentations that will be featured in upcoming programming. We look forward to an exciting 2026 lineup.

Interdisciplinary Theatre and Speech-Language Collaboration Supports Early Literacy

Undergraduate Theatre majors and MS students in Speech-Language Learning collaborated through an interdisciplinary initiative at Total Child Preschool in Evanston led by Clinical Assistant Professor Debbie Lee and adjunct professor Ellie Levine. Through weekly, play-based sessions, students integrated theatre principles with communication sciences to support early literacy development, including semantics, narrative structure, phonemic awareness, and expressive language. This partnership highlights the value of creative, cross-disciplinary approaches to learning while providing meaningful, hands-on experience for students and enriching educational opportunities for children.



Inclusive Theatre Festival Explores Art, Neurodivergence, and Belonging

At the Annual Inclusive Theatre Festival attendees explored how theatre and other art forms can foster meaningful communication and belonging. The festival serves as a space to celebrate and advance inclusive and accessible theatre practices. Assistant Clinical Professor Stephanie Boron presented *Your Body, Your Brain, Your Choice*:

Sensory, Autonomy and Consent in Theatre. Her session invited participants to rethink how theatre can honor individual agency and sensory experiences.



High Quality Clinical Services

NUCASLL Monthly Newsletter

Each month, we share updates about upcoming programs and events, helpful articles about communication health, tips from our clinical team, and highlights from our work in the community.

Check out the December issue and previous issues here:

[NUCASLL News](#)



Loud for Life for Pediatrics Expands Evidence-Based Voice Therapy for Children

Assistant Clinical Professor Leigh Cohen has brought LSVT LOUD for Kids to NUCASLL. This program brings evidence-based voice therapy to children with neurological speech disorders, empowering clearer communication and confidence. At NUCASLL and in collaboration with GiGi's Playhouse Deerfield we are proud to be leaders of change, as this intervention offers hands-on training for graduate students, fosters interdisciplinary collaboration, and supports meaningful research, all while advocating for patient-centered care.



Advocating for Healthy Hearing on Campus

At a Faculty Senate meeting, Associate Clinical Professor Professor Catherine Fabian raised concerns about athlete safety related to helmet use and potentially harmful noise levels at athletic events. The discussion sparked dialogue with Northwestern's Athletic Director about scooter use, concussion prevention, and opportunities for collaboration around hearing health and safe noise exposure at campus venues. Dr. Fabian also conducted hearing assessments for School of Communication and School of Medicine employees.

Community Engagement

Reading Fluency: What It Is and Why It's So Hard to Change

Associate Professor Elizabeth Norton presented a webinar for Landmark Outreach titled *Behavior and Brain Perspectives on Building Fluency: From the Neuroscience Lab to the Classroom*. Dr. Norton discussed fluency and the neuroscience that informs our understanding of how the reading brain functions—and how we can support it effectively. Dr. Norton provided a blog post which explores this topic and offers a thoughtful, evidence-based look at how we can better support developing and struggling readers.

<https://www.landmarkoutreach.org/blog-post/norton-fluency-blog/>



Expanding Communication Access Through Community Partnership

Drs. Belma Hadziselimovic, Sarah Penzell, and Karen Kinderman partnered with Chicago community organizations to strengthen communication access for individuals with aphasia, responding to requests from groups such as Nourishing Hope and the Uptown People's Law Center. They delivered a two-hour training at Uptown People's Law Center for ~20 frontline professionals (including social workers, nurses, case managers, and legal staff), with graduate students supporting demonstrations and observing real-world translation of clinical expertise. Building on strong interest in an ongoing partnership, the team is preparing an ANCHOR grant proposal to expand training, develop sustainable communication-access initiatives, and deepen community impact.



NUCASLL Hosts Virtual All Brains Parents' Club

Assistant Clinical Professor Stephanie Boron and Master's of Speech-Language and Learning graduate students hosted the pilot All Brains Parents' Club, a free virtual drop-in workshop and Q&A for parents of neurodivergent children. The session welcomed more than 20 families from across the country and focused on neurodiversity, advocacy, helping children understand their brains, and practical strategies for increasing safety and support in everyday environments. The successful event highlights NUCASLL's commitment to accessible, family-centered education and community outreach.



NUCASLL in the Community

NUCASLL hosted several community screening events this fall, including the Healthy Hearing Event and Swallowing Screenings. These events provided students with hands-on experience while expanding access to essential communication and swallowing health services.

The audiology clinical faculty and AuD students provided free hearing screenings at the Northwestern vs. Purdue football game. Fifteen attendees received screenings, and approximately 400 earplugs were distributed to fans.

Several audiology students assisted the Lurie Children's Sound Experience program by providing community-based hearing screenings. Their involvement demonstrated meaningful student leadership in outreach and supported accessible hearing healthcare in the Chicago community.

Alumni News

Undergraduate program alumna Yomna Elsiddig, a bilingual speech-language pathologist based in Los Angeles, spoke with our NSSLHA students about her high-impact work supporting marginalized families and children.



PhD program alumna Dr. Kahla Graham led our NSSLHA students through a guided observation from the Swallowing Cross-Systems Collaborative lab. She discussed evaluation and treatment techniques performed by speech-language pathologists to support safe swallowing practice.

MS-SLL Program alumna Simone Bellot had an article from her undergraduate research published in the Journal of Speech Language and Hearing Research.

McMillen, S., & Bellot, S. (2025). [Improving Equitable and Culturally Sensitive Practices for Bahamian Creole English Speakers: Identifying Children's Typical Morphosyntactic Productions Through Language Sampling](#). *Journal of Speech, Language, and Hearing Research*, 68(10), 4829-4844.

Events



CSD Faculty Retreat Focuses on Academic Program Review

This year's CSD Faculty Retreat was intentionally organized around the department's upcoming Academic Program Review. Faculty used the retreat to align on the State of the Department and strategic direction, pressure-test key issues through structured discussion, and identify concrete next

steps, including mechanisms to capture input and support the review process moving forward.



Hearing Health for All: Knowles Hearing Center Symposium a Major Success

Organized by Dr. Sumit Dhar and supported by the Knowles Hearing Center, the Hearing Care & Wellness: Toward Hearing Health for All symposium brought together national and international leaders to reimagine hearing care as a cornerstone of overall wellness. The day-long event featured

experts from across academia, industry, and clinical practice who explored innovative strategies to make hearing care more accessible, affordable, and equitable. With exceptional attendance and robust cross-sector dialogue, the symposium was hailed as a resounding success and a model for translational collaboration in hearing health.



NU CSD Represented on National Stage

Our department was well represented at the 2025 American Speech, Language, and Hearing Association Convention in Washington, DC. We were proud of our faculty, students, and alumni who presented their research and clinical work and showcased our programs at the graduate fair.



Department Holiday Party

Thank you to our administrative team for organizing a lunch with festive contests to celebrate the end of the quarter.

New Publications Involving CSD Faculty and Students

Boxrud, B., Siegle, E., Shankman, S. A., Cherney, L. R., & Ashaie, S. (2025). [Speech-language pathologists' perspectives on barriers to recognizing depression in people with aphasia: a reflexive thematic analysis.](#) *Aphasiology*, 1-19.

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Depreux, F., Whitlon, D., & Richter, C. P. (2025). [ALZET pump implantation in mice for chronic drug delivery to the cochlea](#). *Scientific Reports*, 15(1), 36379.

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Graham, K., Lee, J. J., Tomic, R., Arunachalam, A., & Martin-Harris, B. (2025). [Acute impact of lung transplantation on respiratory-swallow coordination, swallowing impairment, and airway invasion: A prospective cohort study](#). *JHLT Open*.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhlto.2025.100402>

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Hazelwood, R. J., Robinson, G. F., Wolford, G. W., & Smith, R. F. (2025). [Assessment of Dysphagia Management Competence among Healthcare Providers: A Scoping Review](#). *Dysphagia*, 1-18.

Heise, M. J., Mon, S. K., & Bowman, L. C. (2025). [Analysis of event-related potential difference waves can benefit from linear mixed effects modeling: Recommendations for analyses and general model fitting](#). *Developmental Cognitive Neuroscience*, 101614.

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Koo, C., Zhou, Y., Thomas, D., Fuentes, R., Li, J., Kim, M., ... & Tan, X. (2025). [Sex-specific Hearing Loss in Sirt3 Knockout Mice and Attenuation by Honokiol](#). *Hearing Research*, 109502.

Lai, M. C., Abrams, E., Dargham, S. B., Fallon, J., Goldman, E., Hauptman, M., ... & Pylkkänen, L. (2025). [Changes in auditory evoked responses at different levels of linguistic processing in adults and school-age children: An MEG Study](#). *Neuropsychologia*, 109219.

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[relatives](#). *Frontiers in Psychiatry*, 16, 1588429.

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