DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION SCIENCES & DISORDERS
COLLEGE OF ALLIED HEALTH SCIENCES

SUMMER RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES FOR UNDERGRADUATE students

FOR APPLICATION YEAR: 2026

PROJECT TITLE: Stuttering and social cognition: a series of experimental studies

Katie Winters, PhD, CCC-SLP
College of Allied Health Sciences
3225 Eden Ave
Cincinnati, OH 45267
winterki@ucmail.uc.edu
Phone: 513-558-6428

Project Description

Stuttering is a neurophysiological communication disability characterized by a speaker's sensation of loss of control during speech and a listener's observation of sound-syllable repetitions, sound prolongations, and silent blocks marked by dysrhythmic and tense quality. Stuttering impacts communication for up to 5-10% of young children (age 2-6 years old) in the United States and 1% of children and adults worldwide. In addition to overt speech-related characteristics that we can see and hear, children and adults face adverse cognitive and affective consequences of stuttering including stigmatization, bullying, repetitive negative thinking, and avoidance. The proposed work employs experimental research designs to test hypotheses related to the intersections of stuttering and social cognition, or the way in which children who stutter think about, remember, and apply what they learn from other people.

In this series of experimental studies, the UPRISE student will play participant-facing, data analysis, and dissemination roles. The student will support participant recruitment and scheduling (i.e., reaching out to potential families via email and phone), data collection for clinical measures of stuttering and social cognition (i.e., reaching a level of reliability for any behavioral protocols and implementing these with children ages 3-6 years), and implementation of a manualized intervention for one study (i.e., working with a team of researchers to support a group intervention for childhood stuttering). The student will also learn reliable coding methods for data collection and gain experience using RStudio for descriptive and inferential statistics. These skills will be acquired through some in-progress research studies and some pilot studies, through which the student will participate in tailoring and refining pilot procedures for the intended patient population.

Across studies, the student will gain mentorship in human subjects research, experimental research designs, statistical analysis, and professional communication skills with children and their families in addition to training in both stuttering and social cognition topics. At the conclusion of this experience, the student will earn co-authorship on at least two conference proposals and up to two manuscripts to be submitted for peer review in a scientific journal.

The ideal student candidate is one with some experience working with children and their families, strong organizational skills, strong verbal and written communication skills, and an interest in gaining research analysis and dissemination skills. As this student will be working with people who stutter, exceptional listening skills and patience are required to support best communication practices with this patient population.