

**Department of Communication Sciences & Disorders
COLLEGE OF ALLIED HEALTH SCIENCES**

**SUMMER RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES
FOR UNDERGRADUATE WOMEN**

APPLICATION DEADLINE: March 1, 2012

The Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders is pleased to offer the following research project for the summer of 2012. Interested students are urged to contact the faculty member(s) directing the project that most interests them. By contacting the faculty member, you can discover more about the project, learn what your responsibilities will be and, if possible, develop a timetable for the twelve-week research period.

PROJECT TITLE: Personalizing AAC for People with Aphasia: The Role of Text and Pictures

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Project Description

Aphasia is an acquired language disorder that often follows a stroke in the left side of the brain. Aphasia impairs a person's ability to produce spoken language. People with aphasia have the same thoughts and ideas as they did before the stroke. However, they cannot express those ideas as fluidly. Having aphasia is analogous to visiting a foreign country and not knowing the language; you know what you want to say but do not have the words to say it aloud. Roughly, 50% of people who acquire aphasia must live with the condition as a chronic impairment. Recently, researchers have reported the effectiveness of augmentative and alternative communication (i.e., AAC) strategies to support the communication of people with aphasia. AAC might include low-technology options, such as communication books that include pictures, words, and/or drawings). Additionally, AAC techniques might also include high-technology options, such as computers that incorporate pictures, written text, and speak buttons. When pressed or selected, these speak buttons 'say' messages, which represent ideas in the written text or the photos that the person with aphasia is unable to say. The use of Visual Scene Displays (VSDs) for people with aphasia (PWA) has recently emerged in AAC research/clinical applications. The purpose of this study is to investigate the role of text, personally-relevant contextualized photographs, and non personally-relevant contextualized photographs in VSDs used by people with aphasia. Results may guide design of high-technology AAC interfaces for PWA.