



# Speech Pathology and Audiology ranks in top graduate programs nationwide

By Ken Kempcke. Photos by Theresa Danna-Douglas.

The Department of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology in the School of Medicine at the University of Nevada, Reno was recently recognized by *U.S. News & World Report* as one of the top graduate programs in the country. Started in 1956, the department has grown to be internationally recognized for excellence in communication disorders and sciences.

"I am pleased to learn, but not at all surprised, that our program is considered one of the top speech pathology and audiology programs in the nation," Thomas Watterson, chair of the department, says. "This distinction is a credit to the quality of our faculty and the accomplishments of our students. We have an excellent, dedicated faculty and a bright, hard-working student body, so it is no surprise that we have achieved this recognition from our peers."

Typically, there are approximately 90 undergraduate majors and 40 graduate students enrolled in the department. "The outstanding learning environment attracts graduate students from all over the country," Watterson says. "Many end up staying in Nevada. Graduates of the program have a 100 percent passing rate on national certification and license exams and a 100 percent employment rate after graduation."

Kerry Lewis, professor and director of graduate studies in the department, says: "We've heard from employers who say that they hire students from all over the U.S., but Nevada graduates are their first choice."

The Department of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology is housed on an entire floor of the Nell J. Redfield Building on the north campus. The facility and the clinic's outreach services are supported, in part, by

local service organizations, such as Sertoma, and private donors including the William N. Pennington Foundation, the Emblem Club, the Minnie B. Leonette Family Foundation, AT&T and the Nell J. Redfield Foundation. Also housed in the department are the Northern Nevada Cleft Palate Clinic and the Scottish Rite Language Disorders Clinic.

The department enjoys a high visibility within the medical school due largely to its active on-campus clinic and its outreach services. As the School of Medicine's first clinical department, faculty members see about 4,000 patient visits per year.

The Claude I. Howard Speech and Hearing Clinic offers treatment for voice disorders, language disorders, autism articulation/phonological disorders, hearing disorders, cleft palate and fluency disorders. Six diagnostic rooms are fully equipped for all types of speech, voice

## NUMBERS:

The University of Nevada School of Medicine runs the only ACS-verified Level One Trauma Center in Nevada. The Trauma Center treats more than **14,000** patients annually and earned national acclaim in **2003** for saving the life of Las Vegas entertainer Roy Horn after he was attacked by a tiger on-stage.

*LEFT: Katie Thompson '99 (speech pathology), '01M.S. (speech pathology and audiology) tests 5-year-old Jordan Moore's hearing at the Speech Pathology Clinic for the Washoe County School District's Child Find Project. BOTTOM: Nancy Kuhles '82M.S. (speech pathology) and Carissa Welch '98 (speech pathology), '00M.S. (speech pathology and audiology) provide support to Washoe County School District parents, such as Melissa Moore and 3-year-old daughter Charlee Moore, to ensure that their children receive the education, and intellectual and social/emotional support they need.*

and language evaluation and have observation capabilities. There are 19 completely equipped therapy rooms.

In addition, the department houses two specialty teams. The Northern Nevada Cleft Palate Team is a multi-disciplinary health care team dedicated to the care and treatment of children with cleft lip and palate, and other craniofacial disorders. It evaluates about 150 children per year at no cost to the patient.

The University of Nevada, Reno Multidisciplinary Autism Assessment Team provides comprehensive diagnostic evaluations for

children who exhibit characteristics of autism and/or other neurodevelopmental disorders. Families receive diagnoses and recommendations individualized to their child's strengths and challenges. The team includes child psychiatrists, child psychologists, developmental specialists, occupational therapists and speech-language pathologists.

The Department of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology also plays a supporting role in the Washoe County School District's Child Find Project which identifies, evaluates and provides appropriate assistance to Washoe County school children in need of special education services.

"The staff at the Child Find Project has enjoyed a reciprocal relationship with the University of Nevada Speech Pathology and Audiology Department for several years," Nancy Kuhles '82M.S. (speech pathology), lead speech and language pathologist for the project, says. "Whether we're making referrals to the craniofacial clinic, assisting in research studies or helping a child with a disability, we both have a deep interest in the welfare of children. We are on the same team, helping children in our community with a disability or developmental delay to find and receive appropriate services and education."

Community members are grateful for the care they receive through the department. "We really appreciate the patience and commitment of the clinicians," says one recent patient. "The faculty have always provided us with a wealth of knowledge and are extremely supportive. I would recommend this program to anyone with difficulty with speech or language." 

