The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) has awarded Dr. Valarie Fleming the Advancing Academic-Research Careers (AARC) Award. The AARC award program is aimed at reducing the shortage of PhD-level faculty in the Communication Sciences and Disorders discipline by encouraging new faculty who are at the beginning of their academic-research careers to remain in higher education. Recipients will use the award monies for activities such as mentoring student research, conducting personal research, and improving teaching knowledge and skills. Only five awards are given each year. The $5000 monetary award will be presented at the national convention in Chicago, IL this November.

Dr. Fleming has brought national recognition to the Department of Communication Disorders at Texas State.

What is Mild Cognitive Impairment?

Rachel L. Marks

Mild Cognitive Impairment (MCI) is a complex disorder that affects between 3% and 19% of the population of individuals over 65. It is a psychogeriatric disorder that affects a person’s cognition more than would be expected for that person’s age or educational background, but it does not typically have an effect on a person’s activities of daily living. MCI is important for researchers because approximately 50% of people who are diagnosed with MCI later go on to develop dementia within five years. Therefore, MCI is considered a primary risk factor for dementia.

Currently there are no standardized tests specifically designed to assess MCI. However, the Cognitive-Communication Lab’s director, provide the first assessment of this kind, based on discourse production. Discourse is natural conversation, and it is one of the earliest components of language affected by persons with MCI and Alzheimer’s dementia.

Dr. Fleming is currently recruiting participants for a preliminary study to help diagnose and treat MCI. Details can be found on page two.

Cognitive-Communication Laboratory’s Recent Publications

New Second-Year Students Begin Research in the C^2L

The Cognitive-Communication Lab is housed within the Department of Communication Disorders at Texas State University. All second-year graduate students are required to pursue research during their study at Texas State, either as part of an Independent Study with a faculty member or by completing a thesis.

Clayton R. Wimberly earned his BS in Communication Sciences and Disorders at Texas A&M University – Kingsville. He became interested in speech language pathology at a young age because his older brother, who is diagnosed with Down Syndrome, received speech therapy in the clinic and at home. Clayton has grown fond of the adult and geriatric populations while working in an Austin nursing and rehabilitation center during graduate school. He is currently working at St. David’s Medical in downtown Austin. Lauren Maxwell attended Texas State University for her undergraduate degree. Lauren received hands-on experience with the assessment of children with autism as a clinician in the Center for Autism Research Education and Support (CARES), a new program at the Speech-Language-Hearing clinic at Texas State. She also served as the graduate representative to the faculty in the Department of Communication Disorders at Texas State for the fall and spring semesters. She is currently an intern at Central Texas Rehab.

Rachel Marks will continue to support the C^2L lab as Research Assistant through October. She is currently working as an intern at an elementary school in south Austin.

Research Participants Needed — Be a Part of MCI/Dementia Assessment & Treatment!

Younger and Older research participants needed for research study, “Understanding age-related deficits in information processing.” The purpose of the study is to find out how well typically-aging adults understand written and spoken information. Gift Certificate to Wal-Mart provided upon completion of study! Call 512-245-1929. This project is funded by the Research Enhancement Program (REP) Texas State University.

National Presentations: Recognition for Entire C^2L

Dr. Valarie Fleming, Principle Investigator of the Cognitive-Communication Lab, will be presenting a paper for a technical session at the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) national convention in Chicago, IL this November. The topic of the paper is “Discourse comprehension and executive function: understanding age-related deficits,” based on work conducted out of the Texas State Cognitive-Communication Lab. This year will be Dr. Fleming’s fifth presentation at ASHA.

Rachel Marks, the Cognitive-Communication Lab’s Research Assistant, will be presenting for the first time at ASHA with Dr. Frances Burns, also from Texas State University-San Marcos. Their poster is based on research Rachel has conducted for her Master’s thesis. It focuses on the linguistic contexts of third-person-singular /s/ in children who speak African American English.

Clayton Wimberly will also be presenting a poster with Cardin Coleman and Dr. Celeste Dom-sch, both of Texas State University. Their presentation is titled “Conversational Syntax of School-Aged Children with Late Language Emergence.”

Lauren Maxwell recently presented at the Symposium of Child Language Research in Madison, WI, also with Dr. Domsch. The study examined standardized narrative scores of school-age children who had been previously been diagnosed as having late language emergence.