

## **2003 3<sup>rd</sup>-Year Undergraduate Summer Research Assistantship Employer Testimonials**

**Dr. Nancy Cohen, Hincks-Dellcrest Centre/ University of Toronto**

**Student: Brynne Redford**

It was a treat to have a summer student through The Network. Brynne seemed an unusual choice for the HQP committee to make as she is not planning a career in a field directly related to language and literacy. Instead, this coming academic year she is entering law school. Brynne had made the case in her application that her goal was to practice law in an area related to child welfare and thus an opportunity to be a summer student/research assistant in a setting focussing on research with infants and preschoolers would ultimately be valuable. Given her goals, and my needs, it seemed best to involve Brynne in a range of activities. She worked on three projects. One is a longitudinal study of infants adopted from China where she helped with procedures, data entry, and updating literature. She was an excellent observer and asked a lot of good questions. A second is an evaluation of a Boundless Adventures Program for high risk families and their preschool children where she helped to make appointments, administer questionnaires to mothers, and occasionally baby-sit. The third is a literature review around the topic of using centre-based child care as an opportunity for mental health promotion in the period from birth to 5 years where she helped compile national statistics around child care and summarize responses to a national scan we did of child care teachers and directors. In all of these endeavours Brynne was a quick learner, took initiative, asked a lot of good questions, and was highly organized. She also was a good communicator with parents and other staff alike, and had a great sense of humour. I would be delighted to make this an annual event.

**Dr. John Connolly, Neuroscience and Psychology, Dalhousie University**

**Student: Nathan Saruk**

Once again, the Undergraduate Summer Research Assistant (UGRA) has proven to be a very valuable experience - both for the student and for my lab. Nathan learned how to use the range of equipment (ERP) we use very quickly and was testing subjects early in the summer. He helped us run several pilot studies which proved to be very valuable in the development of some new work we are attempting. He also helped others in the lab run some of their experiments, analyze data, and book subjects. Nathan will be continuing this work during the academic year within the Hons program and will apply to grad school to work in the area. This is an excellent program and the committee responsible for developing it deserves full marks.

**Dr. Alain Desrochers, Psychology, University of Ottawa**

**Student : Patrick Nadeau**

The Network Undergraduate Summer Research Assistantship Program is a remarkable initiative. Students can gain a diversified research experience and receive an enviable stipend. In turn, Network researchers have the privilege of working with extremely bright students. Patrick Nadeau was my first Network-funded assistant and I would unhesitantly repeat the experience of supervising a student of this calibre. In the Spring and Summer 2003 Patrick learned how to collect reading performance data from

children, how to score, enter and verify these data, how to manage a database with Excel, Access, and SPSS. He demonstrated his ability to learn new skills fast, adjust promptly to the demands of different schools, work hard and meticulously, and be a very pleasant teammate. Patrick's career goal is to become a professional researcher. The Network will have contributed to taking him one step closer to his goal and helped him join the next generation of Canadian scientists.

**Dr. Megan Hodge, Speech Pathology and Audiology, University of Alberta**  
**Student: Kimberley Cote**

Our first experience with the 3rd Year UGRA program was an unqualified success! Kimberley arrived from the University of Saskatchewan with excellent skills in data analysis and management, which we put to use immediately. We were able to provide funding to support her attendance at the Network Annual Scientific Conference in Victoria in early June so that she could learn more about the Network's mandate and meet other researchers and students. She was our youngest student researcher on the project and her lovely personality, strong organizational skills, attention to detail and flexibility endeared her to everyone in the lab. Kimberley worked on various projects related to developing software to measure and model children's speech intelligibility. She learned basic programming techniques for *Authorware ver. 6*, a multimedia software package, and created and edited digital photographic stimuli for the *TOCS+* software. She also created assessment and treatment materials for use by some of our clinical partners. These materials are based on a theory-to-practice model developed in the lab to increase the speech intelligibility of young children with severe speech delay. Kimberley also learned about speech acoustics and became proficient in using waveform capturing and editing software (*CSpeechSP*), to measure vowel formants and calculate vowel quadrilateral area, an important acoustic correlate of speech intelligibility. She was coauthor on a presentation and proceedings publication for the Canadian Acoustics Association based on this work. She also used this knowledge to conduct an initial evaluation of an automatic formant tracking system developed by one of the project co-investigators, Dr. Terrance Nearey. During the summer Kimberley was able to spend two weeks in Dr. Connie Varnhagen's Spelling Lab and observed children participating in an fMRI experiment on spelling. We were sad to say good-bye to Kimberley at the end of the summer but hope to see her back at the University of Alberta in September 2004, to start a graduate program in speech-language pathology.

**Dr. Susan Rvachew, Communications Sciences Disorders, McGill University**  
**Student: Meaghen Buckley**

Meaghen was a delightful and productive addition to my laboratory this summer. She came to our lab with considerable skills in place due to her excellent training at the undergraduate level and previous experience with research in her home department. The fact that she is fully bilingual (English/French) was also a significant asset. Meaghen worked with one of my thesis students, Sara Turner, to digitize, transcribe, and analyze a backlog of infant speech samples that had been building in my lab for over a year. She was very cheerful about traveling great distances on public transit to recruit subjects and record more speech samples. I was so impressed by her skills and initiative that I encouraged her to begin her own research project - developing a

normative database for the measurement of the Phonological Mean Length of Utterance. She is continuing with this research on a part-time basis now that the summer is over and I expect that she and I will generate several publications on this topic over the long-term.

**Supervisor: Dr. Sunita Shankar, School of Optometry, University of Waterloo**  
**Student: Julien Saad**

In the summer of 2003 I had the pleasure of supervising Julien Saad, a recipient of the Network's 3<sup>rd</sup> Year Undergraduate Summer Research Assistant funding. Julien proved to be an enthusiastic student who quickly immersed himself in gaining a background in vision science and Optometry before our summer projects began. Along with three Optometry students, Julien made valuable contributions in data collection and data handling for two projects. His responsibilities included literature reviews, making up schedules, packing of equipment, taking autorefractometer readings, administering the literacy tests, entertaining the young participants while they waited (his block building skills and cheerful personality made him very popular), data entry and some analyses. Julien worked well within the group dynamics and walked away with a good exposure to the world of Optometry, vision screening and literacy testing, and honing of his research skills. His work for us is much appreciated.