EARLY LIFE EXPERIENCES INSPIRE CAREER CHOICES

Personal experience introduced Jess Reuter to Speech Pathology at a young age. While Jess was in second grade, a friend suffered several medical events, which resulted in a coma. “Once out of the coma, she could not walk, talk, or even eat; she had to learn how to do all those basic tasks again. The strange medical events happened again when we were in 7th grade, but this time I had a better understanding of what was going on.”

Experiencing this level of illness and recovery with her friend made Jess aware of communication disorders and that there are careers dedicated to assisting people to overcoming medical issues. “Talking and eating are things that we take for granted. I was truly inspired by my friend’s progress in relearning to do those tasks. A few years later, I shadowed an speech-language pathologist at the hospital in my hometown and knew that that was the career for me.” Jess Reuter is a second year Speech Pathology Graduate Student at UNI. Speech Pathologists are medical professionals who diagnose and treat communication and swallowing disorders caused by stroke, brain injury, hearing loss, developmental delay, a cleft palate, and other issues.

Most Speech Pathologists earn a Masters degree and choose to focus on working within the K-12 school systems or in hospitals and medical clinics. It is a field with a better than average job outlook. More than 120,000 Speech Pathologists and Therapists are working in the Unites States today. That number is expected to grow by about 19% by 2022. At UNI, the Speech-Language Pathology Masters degree is a part of the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders within the College of Humanities, Arts, and Sciences.

Even though Jess had selected Speech Pathology as her career choice, something else first attracted her to UNI. “When I was 8 years old I competed in the Bill Riley Talent Competition at the Iowa state fair. While at the fair, a UNI cheerleader gave me a panther tattoo, and I told myself I wanted to go there and be a cheerleader, too. I had my heart set on UNI ever since. When I discovered that they had a prestigious speech-pathology program, I was ecstatic. I also knew that I wanted to continue dancing in college. So, when I made the UNI dance team, it sealed the deal.”
Jess describes Speech Pathology at UNI

“The Communication Sciences and Disorders program offers a wide range of courses and opportunities. In this major, you gain experiences with both children and adults, explore augmentative communication, and learn useful American Sign Language. In the program, we have opportunities to provide services in our very own speech therapy clinic on campus (the Roy Ebben Speech and Hearing Clinic), as well as schools and nursing homes throughout the community. We work with a wide range of clients ranging from those who just need a little extra help with a certain speech sound, children who have autism, and people who have experiences a stroke, to name a few. We assess, diagnose, treat and help to prevent disorders related to speech, language, cognitive-communication, voice, swallowing and fluency. The students and faculty are very close in this program. Together, we participate in various community service events, as well as occasional potlucks and social events.”