Melanie Spence, Ph.D.
Associate Dean

We are very proud to announce that Dr. Melanie Spence has accepted a position as the Associate Dean of Undergraduate Studies in the School of Behavioral and Brain Sciences. In August 2010, the University suffered a tragic loss when it was announced that Dr. Duane Buhrmester, the preceding Associate Dean, had been killed in a rock climbing accident. However, in the words of the Dean, Dr. Bert Moore, “[Dr. Spence’s] able leadership of our graduate program in Psychological Sciences and her deep knowledge of the School and University, coupled with her commitment to development of programs within the School, make her the ideal candidate to assume this leadership position under extraordinary and difficult circumstances.” We are confident that Dr. Spence will excel in her new role, and we are committed to supporting her through continued research activity in the lab.

Congratulations, Dr. Spence!

Current Projects:

- Face Discrimination Study: 3-4 and 8 months
- Other-Race Training Study: 6 and 9 months
- ID Faces Study: 6 months
- Facial Expression Study: 6 and 10 months

The Truth About Television and Your Infant
Brittney McCormick

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, “Children of all ages are constantly learning new things. The first 2 years of life are especially important in the growth and development of your child’s brain. During this time, children need good, positive interaction with other children and adults. Too much television can negatively affect early brain development. This is especially true at younger ages, when learning to talk and play with others is so important. Television is not recommended for children under the age of 2.” [continued on p. 3]
Infant-Directed Speech Helps Babies Learn Language

Lisa Keylon

Almost universally, adults speak to infants differently than they speak to other adults. This unique type of speech, with its higher frequency and slower rate of speaking, is called infant-directed speech (ID speech). Other traits of ID speech include clearer articulation, longer vowel sounds, and a wider pitch range used by the speaker.

ID speech is thought to help infants distinguish between different spoken sounds long before they can speak. Recent research has revealed ways in which ID speech could be helpful to infants when they’re learning language. In a study with 19-month-olds, who are learning words very rapidly, the slower speaking rate used during ID speech helped infants recognize and identify a familiar word more quickly (Song, Demuth, & Morgan, 2010). This suggests that ID speech could play an important role in word learning around this age in addition to the help it provides infants with speech processing earlier on.

What does this mean for parents? Using ID speech when you speak to your baby should not be considered “baby talk” but should be encouraged because research suggests it is useful in helping your child learn to understand and produce language.
We are excited to welcome two new students to our lab, Brittney and Megan. We are also happy to welcome back our returning students:

- Rachel Beaulieu
- Lindsey Collins, B.S.
- Lisa Keylon
- Brittney McCormick, B.S.
- Sarah Salomon, B.S.
- Kate Shepard, M.S., CCC-SLP
- Kaia Wakamiya, B.S.
- Megan Wallace, B.S.