UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH EXPERIENCES

Engaging in research as an undergraduate can have many benefits including:

- Participating in novel research
- Gaining experience for graduate school and/or research assistant positions
- Getting a feel for the different aspects of research
- Learning invaluable skills in practice
- and many more...

BUT DON'T TAKE OUR WORD FOR IT:

TEXT SIMPLIFICATION

“The research that I am currently involved in is text simplification and its automation—we're working on how to get computers to simplify language. Our main methods of investigating this is by focusing on topic and discourse. Discourse is any structural aspect beyond syntax, like relations between sentences or relation between paragraphs, and with topic we're looking at how it moves within the reading and how it affects discourse. The most interesting thing about it is that I see it as like a translation within a language, because we're trying to achieve understanding while interpreting, but it's all English. Also computers generally have a hard time dealing with language, so I hope that this might become something significant in solving that problem. Besides what I'm actually learning about through my research, I think I'm also learning how to think differently in a way that your average class doesn't allow. I remember in my first few weeks of researching that I was amazed as to how much I was capable of exploring. There are no answers to your questions; research is to ask those questions without textbook answers and to provide an avenue to finding those solutions. Practically, research gave me insight into what graduate school might be like, and if pursuing further in my education was something that I wanted to do. I’m glad for the opportunity I’ve had to be involved in undergraduate research and it has taught me a lot.”

Lois Kim
Supervising Professor: Mari Ostendorf
Signal, Speech and Language Interpretation Laboratory, Electrical Engineering

FIRST LANGUAGE ACQUISITION AND PHONETICS
“My name is Melanie Fish. I graduated with a BA in Linguistics in 2011, and am now a full-time research assistant in Dr. Patricia K. Kuhl’s lab at I-LABS. I first became involved with research at I-LABS as an undergraduate, where I spent several quarters as a LING499 student. During this time, I worked under the direction of postdoctoral fellow Adrian Garcia-Sierra to write my departmental honors thesis. My role in the project was to analyze recordings of caregiver speech in adult-directed and infant-directed contexts, using PRAAT to measure voice onset times (VOT) of initial stop consonants. I later used these measurements to compare VOT across the speech styles, and determined that VOT is lengthened in speech directed to infants as compared to speech directed to adults. As a post-baccalaureate research assistant, I have been expanding this paper to include data for recordings of Spanish-English bilingual caregivers. My goal is to publish it the Journal of Child Language and present the findings of this study at a linguistic conference later this year. My other current projects at the lab include assisting in investigations of speech perception by monolingual and bilingual adults and infants, using event-related potential (ERP) technology.

My time at I-LABS has allowed me to gain valuable hands-on experience with linguistic research, as well as pique my interest in the subfields of language acquisition and neurolinguistics. As a result of my involvement with projects in these areas, feel prepared to pursue related research in graduate school and beyond.”

Melanie Fish

Lab: Patricia Kuhl Lab at the Institute for Learning and Brain Sciences (I-labs), working with Adrian Garcia