2018 HIGHLIGHTS

Key recruitments:
- Matt Stelzer, M.B.A., was recruited for the position of director of MMI Business Services.
- Regina Carroll, Ph.D., was recruited as director of research and clinical services at the Autism Care for Toddlers Clinic.
- Zach LaBrot, Ph.D., was recruited as assistant professor, MMI Department of Psychology.
- Bethany Hansen, Ph.D., was recruited as assistant professor, MMI Department of Pediatric Feeding.
- Scott Smith, Ph.D., was recruited as associate director of the Human Genetics Laboratory.
- Dawna Daily, M.Ed., was recruited as transition specialist for the MMI University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD).
- Five genetic counselors were recruited to expand pediatric, prenatal and cancer genetic counseling services - Alyssa Cady, M.S. (prenatal and pediatric), Kristen Fishler, M.S. (prenatal and research), Michael Gurtler, M.S. (cancer), Andrew Schmanski, M.S. (pediatric) and Brianna Zieba, M.S. (pediatric).
- The Nebraska Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and related Disabilities (LEND) program recruited its first two disability advocacy leadership trainees, Olivia Versaw and Nathaniel Allen.
- Tracy Kirianov, R.N., was recruited as a specialty care nurse by the MMI Department of Developmental Medicine.

Key promotions:
- Kevin Luczynski, Ph.D., was promoted to associate professor, Center for Autism Spectrum Disorders.
- Nicole Rodriguez, Ph.D., was promoted to associate professor, Center for Autism Spectrum Disorders.
- Lois Starr, M.D., was promoted to associate professor, MMI Department of Genetic Medicine.
- Janice Flegle, M.A., was promoted to clinical associate professor, MMI Department of Occupational Therapy.
- Howard Needelman, M.D., was promoted to professor of pediatrics, MMI Department of Developmental Medicine.

Key appointments:
- Keith Allen, Ph.D., was named director of academic affairs.
- Eric Evans, Ph.D., CEO for Disability Rights Nebraska, was appointed as adjunct assistant professor at MMI.
- Sara Fisher, M.S., was named assistant program director for the MMI/College of Allied Health Professions Genetic Counseling Program.

Awards and certifications:
- Joe Evans, Ph.D., received both the University of Nebraska’s Innovation, Development, and Engagement Award, and the Behavioral Health Education Center of Nebraska Distinguished Service Award.
- Wayne Stuberg, Ph.D., received the UNMC Distinguished Scientist Award and was elected as vice chair of the Nebraska Board of Health.
- Wayne Fisher, Ph.D., received the 2018 Don Hake Translational Research Award from the American Psychological Association.
- Marne Iwand, M.P.T. (below), received the Golisano Health Leadership Award from the Special Olympics.
Mark Shriver, Ph.D., received the UNMC Outstanding Teacher Award.

Max Kurz, Ph.D., received the UNMC Outstanding Faculty Mentor of Graduate Students Award.

Karoly Mirnics, M.D., Ph.D., received the 2018 Help is Hope Award, presented annually by Autism Action Partnership, and was appointed chair of the Pathophysiological Basis of Mental Disorders and Addictions Study Section by the National Institutes of Health.

Cynthia Ellis, M.D., was appointed president of the Nebraska Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics.

Amy Nordness, Ph.D., was awarded the endowed Scottish Rite of Nebraska Professorship in Speech-Language Therapy.

Rashelle Hoffman, D.P.T., received the Patricia Leahy Award from the Foundation for Physical Therapy Board of Trustees.

Cathleen Piazza, Ph.D., was honored with the Student Committee Mentorship Award of the Association for Behavior Analysis International.

John Keenan, public relations, received the Gold U Award from UNMC.

Warren Sanger, Ph.D., posthumously received the Pediatric Legend Award from Children’s Hospital & Medical Center.

Bruce Buehler, M.D., received the Lifetime Medical Education Award from Children’s Hospital & Medical Center.

Michael Crawford, Ph.D., received the 30-Year Fellow Award from the National Council for Therapeutic Recreation Certification.

Lois Starr, M.D., achieved board certification in clinical cytogenetics from the American Board of Medical Genetics and Genomics.

Jennifer Sanmann, Ph.D., achieved board certification in molecular genetics from the American Board of Medical Genetics and Genomics and was appointed president of the Great Plains Chapter of the Clinical Laboratory Management Association.

Katy Menousek, Ph.D., achieved certification as a research reliable Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule (ADOS) administrator.

Community Engagement & Media:

- The MMI Patient Experience Pledge was created.
- MMI established a Community Advisory Committee.
- The Student Alliance for People of All Abilities (SAPAA) was formed on the UNMC campus.
- Multiple new partnerships were established with the University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO) College of Business Administration, College of Arts and Sciences, and College of Engineering, and the UNMC College of Dentistry, College of Allied Health Professions, College of Nursing and College of Medicine.
- The MMI University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD) established a presence at UNO’s Barbara Weitz Community Engagement Center.
- MMI staff participated in the Scottish Rite’s Walk Rite for RiteCare, RiteCare Classic Golf Tournament and Friends of Scottish Rite Dinner; the Meyer Foundation for Disabilities’ Walk & Roll for Disabilities, Owl Ride and Denim for Disabilities; and the Munroe-Meyer Guild’s Garden Walk.
- MMI participated in approximately 40 events at schools, agencies and in the community.
- Halloween Trunk-or-Treat at MMI (below) welcomed more than 500 participants and numerous community partners.
• The Harlem Globetrotters (above) made an on-site visit to MMI.

• The Camp Munroe Theater Co. held summer and winter productions.

• The MMI Department of Recreational Therapy held an art sale featuring art created by MMI clients.

• MMI participated in the Rock Your Socks Project for World Down Syndrome Day.

• The inaugural Light it Up Blue event on the Bob Kerrey Pedestrian Bridge drew a crowd of more than 100. The state capitol, UNMC’s Hope Tower, MMI buildings and UNMC’s 42nd street walkway also were “lit up blue” for World Autism Month.

• Alison DeLizza, M.A., Amy Nordness, Ph.D., and Karoly Mirnics, M.D., Ph.D., all drew large crowds when each gave a UNMC Science Cafe presentation.

• MMI won the campuswide NE150 Challenge, logging 207,237 miles of exercise, more than any other college or UNMC team.

• MMI hosted the Chancellor’s Board of Counselors on a tour of the institute.

Philanthropy and newly obtained funding for MMI programs:

• Joe Evans, Ph.D., and Brandy Clarke, Ph.D., were awarded a collaborative $1.9 million Behavioral Health Workforce Education and Training grant.

• Jolene Johnson, Ed.D., received a $1.68 million Buffett Early Childhood Fund grant to focus on development and implementation of social emotional and executive functioning programming in high quality early childhood sites across the U.S.

• Mark Shriver, Ph.D., obtained a $1.2 million Department of Education grant to train graduate students to work collaboratively in interdisciplinary teams to address significant behavior issues in schools.

• MMI partnered with University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDDs) in Iowa and South Dakota via a $425,000 grant from the Kessler Foundation for a two-year project on direct service to providers and job coaches using telecommunication.

• A gift was given by Donald C. Scott for a collaborative project between the MMI Department of Psychology’s Autism Detection Training Program and the Center for Autism Spectrum Disorders’ Autism Quick Start Program.
**Education and Research:**

- Channabasavaiah Gurumurthy, Ph.D.'s novel Easi-CRISPR technology was licensed by Taconic Biosciences, a global leader in genetic engineering.
- The MMI Virtual Reality Lab was established under the leadership of Max Kurz, Ph.D.
- Max Kurz, Ph.D., partnered with Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center to examine the benefits of power training for children with cerebral palsy (below).

- Curriculum was developed and received provisional accreditation for a genetic counselor training program in a joint MMI/College of Allied Health Professions endeavor.
- A master’s degree program in applied behavior analysis (ABA) was established in collaboration with the University of Nebraska at Omaha Department of Psychology.
- Under the direction of Bhavana Dave, Ph.D., current cytogenetics and molecular genetics laboratory fellowships were transitioned to a single Laboratory Genetics and Genomics Fellowship accredited through the American Board of Medical Genetics and Genomics.
- A Developmental/Behavioral Pediatrics Fellowship program was established.
- A Think College pilot program, enabling a student with developmental disabilities to attend college classes, was implemented at UNO.
- The Nebraska Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and related Disabilities (LEND) program graduated 34 long-term trainees who participated in the LEND interdisciplinary leadership training program, Autism Leadership Academy, board certified behavior analyst (BCBA), early intervention and the LEND Pipeline Training Program.
- The Project Search pre-employment training program for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities posted a 93 percent competitive employment record across the past three years of the program's graduates.
- The Nebraska LEND Program developed a leadership training track for self-advocates.

**Clinical:**

- MMI contracted with the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services Title V Medically Handicapped Children's Program (MHCP) to expand the Nebraska Department of Education’s Family Care Enhancement Project to allow parent navigators to support children ages birth-21 and their families.
- The MMI Health Care Transition Clinic opened as a partnership with the UNMC Department of Internal Medicine and the Nebraska MHCP program.
- The Respite Employer Engagement Program developed partnerships with more than 40 businesses across the state that are now sharing respite resources with their staff.
- The Respite Service Learning Certificate Project is recruiting and training certified nursing assistants and nursing students from Clarkson College and students from UNO to become trained respite providers.
- The Autism Care for Toddlers Clinic expanded as a result of a community partnership with the Autism Center of Nebraska.
- An integrated screening and diagnostic protocol for autism was implemented in collaboration between the MMI Patient Information Office, the MMI Departments of Psychology and Speech-Language Pathology and the Center for Autism Spectrum Disorders.
- A new partnership between the MMI Department of Psychology and Great Plains Health was initiated to place and integrate an MMI-trained behavioral health provider into a primary care clinic in North Platte.
The MMI Department of Psychology, through its fellowship, developed a program to provide outpatient and community behavioral health services for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

The Interdisciplinary Adult Behavior Medicine Clinic was established as a collaboration between the MMI Departments of Developmental Medicine and Psychology. The interdisciplinary clinic includes psychology, developmental medicine, nursing and social work.

The MMI Department of Physical Therapy expanded services to the Omaha Public Schools by adding provision of home-based Early Development Network services to patients with developmental delays ages birth-3.

The MMI Department of Physical Therapy contracted with Children's Respite Care Center to serve children in their day respite and outpatient program.

MMI services and programs expanded to the former JP Lord School facility.

The Human Genetics Laboratory developed clinical exome testing for mutations across the coding regions of the genome and expanded four postnatal indication-specific gene panels to include additional genes of interest.

The Human Genetics Laboratory enhanced its hereditary cancer test offerings through the expansion of three indication-specific panels and through the addition of a molecular assay for the detection of the Boland inversion (MSH2 gene).

The Human Genetics Laboratory developed three new custom fluorescence in situ hybridization (FISH) probes for indications associated with solid tissue tumors.

MMI facilitated the NICUSeq study as part of a national collaboration, offering rapid whole genome sequencing of infants in the intensive care setting (NICU and PICU).

The MMI Department of Recreational Therapy expanded leisure education services to the Westside Public Schools special education transition program, serving students ages 18-21.

MMI partnered with Legal Aid of Nebraska to provide services for MMI families through the United Way of the Midlands Karnett Trust.

MMI’s National Core Indicators Survey contract to measure quality of life and satisfaction for individuals receiving long-term services and support was extended.

MMI initiated a new cardiac genetic service at Nebraska Medicine.

MMI established a new inpatient genetic counseling service at Children's Hospital & Medical Center.

The MMI Departments of Genetic Medicine and Developmental Medicine expanded outstate telehealth services, funded by MHCP through the state of Nebraska and using specially designed telehealth carts funded by the Friedland Professorship. A new clinic was opened at Gordon (Neb.) Memorial Hospital, and clinical visit capacity in Scottsbluff was doubled.

Speech-language pathologist Jessie McMordie, M.S., partnered with Nebraska Medicine Music Therapy in the newborn intensive care unit to offer the pacifier-activated lullaby to support development of non-nutritive sucking skills.

A new speech-language screening was established to initiate first contact with families in a timely manner and ensure the most appropriate evaluation is scheduled.

MMI speech and swallowing services in the Nebraska Medicine Head & Neck Cancer Clinic were expanded.

The Lincoln RiteCare Clinic now offers a Hanen Parent Training Program for parents of young children (birth-5 years of age) with a language delay. The program provides parents with practical strategies for helping their children learn language naturally throughout their day together, practice and discuss strategies with their child and the speech-language pathologist and identify ways to adjust daily routines to support language development.

An enhanced fitness room was opened to serve patients and staff.

Other:

The University of Nebraska Board of Regents approved the move and rebuilding of the Munroe-Meyer Institute for Genetics and Rehabilitation on June 28.

Bruce A. Buehler, M.D., third director of MMI, died Sept. 19.

The MMI Security Alert System was implemented.

MMI purchased two high-speed/high-capacity servers for secure file storage.