The Life Span Institute at a Glance
Research-based solutions for the challenges of human and community development, disabilities and aging

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<th>Who</th>
<th>Investigators, Research and Administrative Staff, Graduate and Postdoctoral Students</th>
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<td>The LSI brings together 159 scientists who are affiliated with 20 academic departments to study human development from its genetic origins through the final stages of life. These investigators are supported by 165 research and administrative staff members, including 85 graduate research assistants. The Institute has two affiliated multidisciplinary graduate/doctoral programs, the Child Language Doctoral Program and the Gerontology Graduate and Doctoral programs, as well as several post-doctoral training programs.</td>
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<th>What</th>
<th>Research, Training, Technical Assistance, Direct Services and Leadership</th>
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<td>Most of the easy problems in the behavioral and the biological sciences have been solved. Today the important problems are increasingly found and solved at the intersection of many disciplines. The Life Span Institute stands at such a convergence. At the Life Span Institute we know that our mission—to develop knowledge about human and community development, disabilities and aging—can only be achieved by problem-driven collaborations across many disciplines. The Life Span Institute's 13 centers and Peruvian affiliate currently have 144 active programs and projects that constitute basic and applied research, training, direct services, consultation and technical assistance. Last year, 40,000 Kansans benefited from the Institute's direct services, training and technical assistance.</td>
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<td>The Schiefelbusch Institute for Life Span Studies was established in 1990, when the distinguished 67-year-old Kansas Bureau of Child Research joined with the Gerontology Center and other new research groups to form one of the premier research institutes in the world on human and community development, disabilities and aging. The Bureau was directed for 35 years by Richard L. Schiefelbusch for whom the Institute is named. Dr. Schiefelbusch's appointment to lead the Bureau in 1956 was the beginning of its modern era. The Institute has had three directors, Stephen R. Schroeder, from 1990 until his retirement in 2001, Steven F. Warren, from 2000 to March 2008, when he was appointed vice provost for research and graduate studies at KU and John Colombo, who became the Institute's third director in September 2008.</td>
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<th>Where</th>
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<td>The Institute's central office is in the Robert Dole Human Development Center at the University of Kansas in Lawrence with components at the John T. Stewart Children's Center and Malott Hall. The Institute also operates in Kansas City at the Juniper Gardens Children's Project, at the University of Kansas Medical Center's Kansas Life Sciences Innovation Center, the Center for Child Health and Development and at the University of Kansas Edwards Campus. A major center is also located at the Life Span Institute in Parsons, Kansas. Much of the work of the Institute is accomplished in and directly benefits underserved Kansas City neighborhoods and rural Kansas counties. Several projects are collaborations with researchers in other parts of the state, region, country and world, and are regional, national or international in scope.</td>
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<th>How</th>
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<td>The Life Span Institute attracts more combined federal, state and private dollars than any other designated research center at the University of Kansas, drawing $26.5 million in sponsored project support in FY 2008-09. Each state dollar brought in $7.23 external dollars this fiscal year.</td>
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change...and success

Over the past year, the Life Span Institute and its affiliated scientists have seen a great deal of change. On the national level, we have a new president who has articulated a welcome progressive agenda for science, particularly in areas that are directly relevant to LSI’s missions. There are new directors at the two major sources of LSI’s federal funding, the National Institutes of Health and the Institute of Education Sciences. Our local environment has been no less volatile, as the University of Kansas will be engaged in searches for a new provost and a new dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences in the next year. We are encouraged and gratified with the recent selection of a new chancellor for KU, Bernadette Gray-Little, who lists the expansion and support of university research among her highest priorities.

Through all of these changes, and through the economic tribulation that the last year has brought, there was at least one thread of consistency—the LSI has continued to thrive, surpassing its own record-breaking 2008 total support in 2009. Our analysis of this increase was largely across-the-board; the vast majority of our centers experienced at least some degree of growth. In 2009, LSI returned over $7 for every state of Kansas dollar invested.

Charles Darwin once wrote that the species most adaptable to change is the one most likely to survive. LSI investigators have provided evidence to the truth of this statement time and again; perhaps 2009 has given us the best evidence of all.
Preemie scientists deliver new scientific society at KU

The Kansas Neonate Oromotor Feed Society was born at KU on April 15. The scientific society was delivered by Steven Barlow, KU professor and developer of the NTrainer system®, and fellow experts in premature infant feeding and oromotor development from across the country and Canada. Oromotor development refers to the neural control of oral movements that are critical to feeding and speech.

Originating a new scientific society at KU recognizes Barlow’s leadership in this area of neuroscience, said John Colombo, LSI director. Barlow anticipates a KU-based biennial meeting and scientific journal that can attract graduate students and funding to speed discovery in this maturing field.

The NTrainer system rapidly trains preterm infants and other babies with oromotor problems to feed orally and is the only device that can objectively assess oromotor development. It is the first medical device developed at the Lawrence campus and produced in Kansas. KCBiomedix, located in Shawnee, Kan., shipped out the first unit in September.

Ground-breaking idea takes shape in KCK

A new 72,000-square-foot home for agencies and programs serving children and families in the urban core broke ground on October 7 and is quickly taking shape on a prominent corner in Kansas City, Kan., at State and Minnesota Avenues.

The Children’s Campus of Kansas City will house the KU Medical Center’s Project Eagle, LSI’s Juniper Gardens Children’s Project and the Family Conservancy. The $15.5 million, three-story facility will also include a model infant/toddler and preschool program.

The Children’s Campus is the fruition of a multi-year effort to coordinate programs for children, youth and families within a one-stop center and to revitalize downtown Kansas City. The project was made possible by contributions from private foundations, public entities, corporations, individuals and even families from the community.

Located on 3.5 acres, the campus will open June 8, 2010, and will serve approximately 1,200 children and families annually.
Larger pupil size found in autism

LSI researchers have added a characteristic to the description of autism—larger “tonic” or resting pupil size. In the March 2009 Developmental Psychobiology, John Colombo, director of LSI, and Christa Anderson, doctoral student in psychology, reported that tonic pupil size of children with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) was larger than those of peers of the same mental and chronological age.

Using only pupil size, researchers were able to correctly identify which children from a group of 22 had ASD with 71 percent accuracy.

The researchers believe that pupil size might be used to identify children with ASD earlier than the typical 3 years of age.

People with ASD have differences in heart rate, respiration, blood pressure and sleep that like pupil size are involuntary bodily functions controlled by the same part of the brain. “This is further evidence that the disorder might have its origins in these lower-order brain systems,” Colombo said.

Autism Resource Center opens at KU Edwards campus

On March 24 the Kansas Center for Autism Research and Training (K-CART) threw open the doors to a long-awaited family and practitioner resource center at the KU Edwards Campus in Overland Park.

Edwards Campus Vice Chancellor Bob Clark contributed the suite of offices and a library/reception area. Materials and furnishings were purchased with gifts from the Autism Society of the Heartland, the 2008 senior class at Blue Valley North High School in Leawood, Kan., and from two fundraising events — Caeden’s Cause and the Kansas City Young Matrons Ball. Interior design students and faculty at Johnson County Community College volunteered interior design services.

The Autism Resource Center is both a resource and a referral center. Staff help identify autism services and recommend materials to check out from the center, which operates as a lending library. In addition, K-CART sponsors guest lectures and training workshops for parents and practitioners.
Self-employment works for Peruvians with disabilities

Entrepreneurship has meant independence for many people with disabilities in the U.S. and now in Peru, thanks to LSI researchers Glen White and Wendy Parent. Partnering with Lili-ana Mayo, director of LSI affiliate Centro Ann Sullivan del Perú, in Lima, they developed a “supportive entrepreneurial package” that can be replicated in other developing countries and even in rural areas of the U.S. where employment opportunities are scarce.

This enabled six Peruvians to translate their talents into self-employment. A few examples: Carlos Alberto Blanch, who has muscular dystrophy, created a graphics and web design company; Christina Ascue, who has a developmental disability, runs an internet café catering business with her mother, Pilar; Justin Coello, who has autism, and his mother, Betty, launched a jewelry and accessory business and Maria Luisa Huerta, who has post-polio syndrome, is making wheelchair cushions to help other wheelchair users avoid pressure sores.

KC Latino neighborhood gets help getting healthy

Convincing one person to exercise more or eat healthily is tough, but changing the lifestyle of a whole ZIP code is downright daunting.

But that’s exactly what a grass-roots coalition that includes LSI’s Work Group for Community Health and Development is doing with a predominantly Latino population in Kansas City, Kan. Funded by the National Center on Minority Health and Health Disparities, the Latino Health for All Coalition has developed a five-year program to promote nutrition, physical activity and access to health services in the 66101 community.

This includes translation services in medical clinics, health screenings, nutrition education in Spanish-language media and free healthy meals. The Bethel Neighborhood Center created a community garden to provide low-cost fresh produce and inspire families to plant their own sustainable plots.

Once again the efforts of the Work Group to partner with communities in problem solving is bearing fruit and in this case—vegetables.
Seminal research on child language development at KU continues to spawn studies with far-reaching benefits, this time for young children with disabilities. Research conducted by Betty Hart and Todd Risley demonstrated that the amount of language heard by infants in homes profoundly influences language development by age three. Follow-up of those children by LSI Juniper Gardens Children’s Project researchers showed that those early language experiences also predicted children’s later school success.

This knowledge has now been translated into effective early language intervention strategies. In a model demonstration center funded by the U.S. Office of Special Education, LSI researchers Dale Walker, Jane Atwater, Kathryn Bigelow, intervention coaches and graduate students are evaluating the intervention for young children with disabilities through a partnership with early childhood service providers in Kansas City, Olathe and Topeka.

In fact, service providers are teaching the intervention to parents by sharing graphs and reports with them and showing how the intervention improves their child’s communication.

“This project will tell us how the intervention works under real-world conditions and how to support parents’ and practitioners’ use of evidence-based strategies to promote language and literacy,” said Walker.

Dale Walker, associate research professor at the Juniper Gardens Children’s Project, and Steven Warren, vice provost of research and graduate studies, established the Center for Promoting Language and Literacy Readiness in Early Childhood in 2008.
Are older Americans prisoners of their stuff? They are, says KU Gerontologist David J. Ekerdt, if it keeps them from living as independently, safely and healthily as possible.

Ekerdt is studying what he calls household disbandment for the National Institute on Aging with colleagues Mark Luborsky and Cathy Lysack at Wayne State University in Detroit.

The Household Moves Project is following 150 individuals and couples 65 years and older in Greater Kansas City, Lawrence, Kan. and Detroit from the decision to move to a smaller living space, during and after the move.

We lose the ability to manage our thousands of household possessions—as well as our households themselves—and this can stop us from moving to a safer neighborhood, nearer to family members, or into assisted living, Ekerdt explained.

“Geriatricians, social workers, retirement community directors and family members firmly believe this,” Ekerdt said. The project has even garnered interest from national retirement community owners Erickson Living and Brookdale Senior Living.

One of the most intriguing findings so far is that even though releasing things that define and express us can be emotional wrenching, the process can be ultimately very gratifying, Ekerdt reports. “You are choosing who you are next going to be.”

The study, the first of its kind, will help inform public policy, practice and businesses that serve older Americans.

Want to participate? www.lsi.ku.edu/household_moves.shtml

Photo by Steve Puppe

The stuff of life

The first study of its kind into how older Americans downsize their possessions is revealing how complex a process it is. David Ekerdt leads the study at KU with assistance from sociology graduate students Gabriella Smith and Aislinn Addington.
It’s a sobering statistic: about 10,000 HIV-infected U.S. children and adolescents have the virus because they were exposed prior to or at birth. Little is known about the impact HIV has on their physical and cognitive development.

Now a national team of medical researchers and neuroscientists is coming to grips with the consequences of HIV on cognitive development, a high priority for the National Institutes of Health. Among those at the forefront is Mabel Rice, director of the Center for Biobehavioral Neurosciences in Communication Disorders. She is focusing on possible neurocognitive and language acquisition disorders in these HIV-positive children as part of the Pediatric HIV/AIDS Cohort Study.

Rice is finding that language delays are much more prevalent in this population than previously thought. Estimates were that about 10 percent would score low on language assessments, but Rice said the number is actually 35 percent. About two-thirds of these children also have cognitive impairment, said Rice. But there is still a higher risk of delayed language acquisition in this group of children than researchers expected, even for those who are not cognitively impaired.

The discovery that HIV is one of the factors that can contribute to language impairment, independent of other developmental disorders, is an important advance, said Rice. “This will help science identify diseases that can influence higher cognitive abilities even when other developmental disorders are not apparent.”

HIV-infected children at greater risk for language delays

*HIV-infected children face yet another health complication: delayed language acquisition.*
In 1991 scientists identified a gene on a “fragile” site of the X chromosome as responsible for the most common inheritable form of intellectual disability, Fragile X syndrome (FXS), which often co-exists with autism.

In 2004 13 scientists from three top National Institutes of Health developmental disabilities research institutes launched a major scientific campaign to learn how children with FXS and their families adapt to the challenges of the condition.

KU scientists Steven Warren, vice provost for research and graduate studies, and Assistant Professor Nancy Brady led KU’s part in the five-year Family Adaptation to Fragile X Syndrome.

Their previous work broke ground in showing how crucial parenting style is to children’s language development.

Now their study of mothers and their children with FXS has found that a “responsive” parenting style has a strong and positive impact on a child’s communication development according to several measures of 55 children the team followed from two to five years of age.

Responsive parents initiate communication with their children frequently and respond positively to reinforce their children’s non-verbal and verbal communication attempts. For example, if a child points at the moon, a mother might say, “Yes, that’s the moon!”

Child development researchers and families are excited by these findings, said Brady, because the study confirms that parent-child interactions can change the course of development even in children with a genetically based, complex disability.

The power of Mom

Positive parenting style has potent effect on development of children with most common form of intellectual disability.
Being a mom is hard under the best circumstances and if you are young, unmarried, and/or lack resources, the demands of parenting can be overwhelming. These moms are often the ones most in need of parent training and support, and the ones most likely to drop out of such services, according to Judy Carta, special education professor and LSI senior scientist.

Now, the cell phone is looking like an answer to this longstanding challenge.

 Mothers in a study combining an in-home parenting intervention with access to cell phone support—including text reminders and suggestions—stayed in a parenting program twice as long as a group of mothers without this component.

The study, directed by Carta and Kathryn Bigelow at the Juniper Gardens Children’s Project, is part of a larger effort to prevent child neglect with the University of Notre Dame that has major funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Doris Duke Foundation.

More encouraging results—the parenting training reinforced by cell phone contact is sticking six months later—resulting in both improved parenting and child behavior.

The cell phone may be key to getting much needed services to younger, more transient individuals in a cost-effective way, says Carta. “But the real bottom line is preventing child maltreatment—and that is both a long term benefit and cost-saving measure for society.”

Calling all moms

Parenting program for young mothers turns to an everyday tool for reinforcement: the cell phone.
Despite increasing community integration of people with intellectual disabilities in the last 20 years, rates of serious behavior disorders in this population remain high and psychoactive medication remains the treatment of choice.

But a multi-university research team headed by Dean Williams, Parsons senior scientist, is unscrambling the triggers of Chronic Aberrant Behavior (CAB), marked by aggression, head banging, biting and other forms of self-injury. With Parsons colleague Kathryn Saunders and researchers at Johns Hopkins University and West Virginia University, Williams is pinpointing the interplay of environmental and individual differences that cause CAB.

While clinicians know that transitioning between activities generates agitation and the characteristic behaviors in people with CAB, understanding which transitions, and why, remains a challenge.

Williams’ team has observed that some activities cause problems only when they follow more favored activities. “A person might have problems in math class when it follows recess, but not when it follows spelling class.”

The take-home point? “It may not be transitions, per se, or the particular activities that generate problem behavior,” Williams asserts. “A solution may be looking closely at the context of activities and ways of making activities equivalent to individuals.”

CAB strains families, communities and the health care system and causes immeasurable suffering for those with the disorder. Williams hopes to translate this research to therapeutic approaches across settings, people and circumstances, a priority of the funding agency, the National Institutes of Health.
Funding

The Life Span Institute had its most successful year in overall funding ever in 2009. Although the total number of awards was reduced by 5 percent from 2008, overall funding increased by $3.7 million (16 percent) from $22.8 million in 2008 to $26.5 million in 2009. This strong showing was due to continued funding of 82 previous awards and 26 new awards. This achievement is particularly noteworthy, given the decline in federal research funding for health and education that has been ongoing for several years. In addition, this does not reflect the contribution of challenge grants or supplements attributable to the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) as these awards would be accrued after the close of the 2009 fiscal year.

Awards from the National Institutes of Health increased from $9.5 million to $11.2 million based on 37 awards, ten of which were new to KU. Awards from the U.S. Department of Education increased from $8.4 million to $9 million, based on 33 total awards, nine of which were new. Another $1.3 million in funding came from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Federal awards account for 82 percent of the Institute’s overall external funding. State of Kansas contracts totaled $3.2 million this past year with 15 awards, 4 of which were new.

The LSI remains the largest designated research center at KU in terms of combined federal, state and private dollars. The LSI continues to leverage external funding at an impressive rate. In 1990, the LSI returned $3.30 on every dollar the state of Kansas invested in the Institute. In 2009, every state of Kansas dollar invested in LSI yielded $7.23 in external awards.
the centers of the life span institute at the university of kansas

The Life Span Institute at Parsons 1956
For more than 50 years, the University of Kansas Life Span Institute at Parsons in southeast Kansas has partnered with national, state, regional and community partners to conduct research, develop model service programs and provide training for professionals involved in services to young children, youth and adults with disabilities and their families. Housed on the campus of the Parsons State Hospital, the Parsons LSI includes the Kansas University Center on Developmental Disabilities and the Parsons Research Center. Current research addresses early literacy and reading; language and communication; health and obesity and maladaptive and challenging behavior. Additionally, the Parsons LSI provides significant service and training across the nation and state of Kansas on the assistive technology needs of Kansas, early intervention and early childhood and training for community organizations and agencies serving persons with developmental disabilities. 

David P. Lindeman, Ph.D., Director
Contact: 620 421-6550, ext. 1713, parsonslsi.ku.edu

Juniper Garden’s Children’s Project 1964
The Juniper Gardens Children’s Project began in 1964 when residents of the northeast Kansas City, Kansas neighborhood joined with faculty from the University of Kansas to devise solutions to specific problems in educational achievement and parenting in that low-income community. The Project has grown over the years from a small, community-based research initiative housed in the basement of a liquor store to a unique internationally recognized research center that includes local and national community sites in projects and investigations. The Project is particularly recognized for its contributions to the development of effective approaches for accelerating learning and reducing classroom conduct problems in both special and general education. In 1996 JGCP was given the Research Award of the International Council for Exceptional Children in recognition of its outstanding research contributions. In 2010, the JGCP will be relocating to the Children’s Campus of Kansas City, a joint community initiative now under construction in Kansas City, Kansas. 

Charles R. Greenwood, Ph.D., Director
Debra Kamps, Ph.D., Associate Director
Contact: 913 321-3143, jgcp.ku.edu

Kansas Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Research Center 1967
The Kansas Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Research Center (KIDDRC) has been continuously funded by a core grant from the National Institute of Health and Human Development for the past 42 years. Throughout its history the KIDDRC has played a major international role in generating highly effective behavioral interventions aimed at the causes, prevention and treatment of intellectual disabilities and related secondary conditions and in delineating basic knowledge of the underlying biology of typical and atypical development. The center spans the KU-Lawrence and Kansas University Medical Center campuses as well as the Juniper Gardens Children’s Project. Over the past four decades it has served as a model of interdisciplinary collaboration across campuses and disciplines.

John Colombo, Ph.D., Director
Peter Smith, Ph.D., Co-Director
Contact: 785 864-4295, kiddrc.kumc.edu

Kansas University Center on Developmental Disabilities 1973
More than 35 years ago, as the Life Span Institute’s research on developmental disabilities took root, efforts began to translate this research into practice through what is now known as the Kansas University Center on Developmental Disabilities (KUCDD). Virtually all of the Life Span Institute’s direct service, technical assistance, and post-doctoral, pre- and in-service training are associated with KUCDD. These include clinics to diagnose and treat children with disabilities, a statewide project that provides assistive technology to people with disabilities and their families and training childcare providers and social workers to support individuals with disabilities. In addition, investigators affiliated with the KUCDD conduct research that has state, national and international impact in areas like self-determination, positive behavior supports, inclusive educational practices, early childhood education, community and workplace supports, family systems and supports and other areas critical to the lives of people with developmental disabilities and their families.

Michael L. Wehmeyer, Ph.D., Executive Director
Glen White, Ph.D., Associate Director
Chet Johnson, M.D., Director, KUCDD-Kansas City Site
David Lindeman, Ph.D., Director, KUCDD-Parsons Site
Michael L. Wehmeyer, Ph.D., Director, KUCDD-Lawrence Site
Wendy Parent, Ph.D., Assistant Director, KUCDD-Lawrence Site
R. Matthew Reese, Ph.D., Assistant Director, KUCDD-Kansas City Site
Contact: 785 864-4295, kucdd.ku.edu

The Research and Training Center on Independent Living 1980
The Research and Training Center on Independent Living (RTC/IL) has a 30-year history of conducting disability research, providing training and transferring knowledge to practice. The Center furthers Independent Living for people with disabilities through the use of scientifically sound, theoretically driven sustainable interventions and measures that lead to effective community living solutions and policy change. Center researchers work closely with consumers and service providers to develop research and products that meet their critical needs. The Center also partners with other universities and agencies to design and implement projects that improve the health and participation of people with disabilities in the community.

Glen W. White, Ph.D., Director
Contact: 785 864-4095, rtcil.org

Child Language Doctoral Program 1983
The Child Language Doctoral Program was established in 1983 as the first specialized degree program in the emerging field of child language acquisition. The program focuses on the interdisciplinary academic preparation and research training of child language specialists. The internationally recognized faculty bring diverse approaches to the study of how children communicate and speak. The program offers students a wide choice of research tools, facilities and field sites including the Child Language Acquisition Studies Lab that has the largest known archive of transcribed spontaneous samples from preschool children diagnosed as receptive/expressive specific language impaired. The Life Span Institute, the Language Acquisition Preschool and the clinical and research facilities of the Speech-Language-Hearing Clinic provide research sites and practica.

Mabel L. Rice, Ph.D., Director
Contact: 785 864-4570, clp.ku.edu
Beach Center on Disability 1988
Through excellence in research, training, technical assistance and public service in Kansas, the nation and the world, the Beach Center on Disability seeks to make a significant and sustainable difference in the quality of life of families and individuals affected by disability. Research focuses on access to the general curriculum, assistive technology, deaf-blindness, disability policy, employment, family supports and services in early childhood, family quality of life, individual control of funding, positive behavior support and self-determination. Founded in 1988 by KU Special Education Professors Ann and Rud Turnbull, the Beach Center honors Ross and Marianna Beach for their long-standing efforts on behalf of families affected by disability.
H. Rutherford Turnbull, III, LL.B./J.D., LL.M., Co-Director
Ann P. Turnbull, Ed.D., Co-Director
Michael L. Wehmeyer, Ph.D., Associate Director
Wayne Sailor, Ph.D., Co-Associate Director
Contact: 785 864-4570, bncd.ku.edu

Gerontology Center 1990
The Gerontology Center’s affiliation with the Bureau of Child Research in 1990 paved the way for an extended research agenda of the newly formed Life Span Institute. Center researchers are interested in all areas of aging, but are distinguished by seminal research in cognition, communication and aging, long-term health care and housing alternatives and decision making in later life. The Center coordinates an interdisciplinary graduate certificate program in gerontology for students enrolled in any master’s or doctoral program at the University as well as a multidisciplinary graduate program that offers both masters and doctoral degrees in gerontology.
David J. Ekerdt, Ph.D., Interim Director
Contact: 785 864-4130, www2.ku.edu/~kugeron/

The Merrill Advanced Studies Center 1990
The Merrill Advanced Studies Center, established in 1990 with an endowment from Virginia Urban Merrill and Fred Merrill, is a catalyst for scholarship on disabilities and policies that shape university research. Merrill conferences and publications establish new directions and build collaborative projects in both science and policy. World-class experts often meet as a group for the first time at Merrill conferences and go on to develop national projects that answer key questions in science. The Center publishes books on topics relevant to developmental disabilities and makes policy papers available online and in print. The Merrill web site at KU has fact sheets and discussions on science and policy for the general public.
Mabel L. Rice, Ph.D., Director
Contact: 785 864-4570, merrill.ku.edu

Work Group for Community Health and Development 1990
Established in 1975, the KU Work Group joined the Life Span Institute as a distinct center in 1990. The Work Group has developed widely used capabilities for community evaluation and community-based participatory research (including its Online Documentation and Support System) and building capacity for community health and development (including the Community Tool Box). Recognition of these capabilities led to official designation in 2004 as a World Health Organization Collaborating Centre.
Stephen B. Fawcett, Ph.D., Director
Contact: 785 864-0533, ctb.ku.edu

Center for Physical Activity and Weight Management 2001
The Center for Physical Activity and Weight Management joined the Institute in 2001 and supports research, education, training and clinics for promotion of physical activity and nutrition to diminish obesity and related co-morbid diseases. The Center provides evidence-based programs for community-wide dissemination. The Center has a major effort aimed at preventing overweight and obesity in children by increasing physical activity and improved nutrition in elementary and middle schools. The Center’s Energy Balance Laboratory features a whole-room indirect calorimeter that measures energy expenditure precisely under a variety of experimental conditions.
Joseph E. Donnelly, Ed.D., Director
Contact: 785 864-0797, ebl.ku.edu

Biobehavioral Neurosciences in Communication Disorders Center 2002
The Center for Biobehavioral Neurosciences in Communication Disorders (BNCD) was founded in 2002 when the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders awarded a core grant to establish the center. The BNCD is a natural outgrowth of the Life Span Institute’s long-standing focus on communication and language development and intervention. The BNCD’s research spans a wide range of issues relevant to the causes and treatment of communication disorders from infancy to old age including studies on infant attention, the genetics of language impairments, language intervention, the decline of working memory in old age as reflected in speech and more precise measures of hearing loss to aid cochlear implant design.
Mabel L. Rice, Ph.D., Director
Contact: 785 864-4570, bncd.ku.edu

The Kansas Center for Autism Research and Training 2008
The Kansas Center for Autism Research and Training (K-CART), established in 2008 with private and public funds, is a multidisciplinary center that promotes research and training on the causes, nature and management of autism spectrum disorders (ASD). Committed to the highest standards of scientific rigor, K-CART generates new scientific discoveries about ASD, disseminates research-based practices by training professionals, practitioners and families who serve children and adults with autism and provides clinical services through the Center for Child Health and Development at the University of Kansas Medical Center.
Debra Kamps, Ph.D., Director
R. Matthew Reese, Ph.D., Co-Director
Contact: 913 897-8471, kcart.ku.edu

Centro Ann Sullivan del Perú
Centro Ann Sullivan del Perú (CASP) is a nonprofit educational institution that serves children and adults with severe intellectual disabilities, autism and behavioral problems, their families and professionals from Peru and other parts of the world. Under the direction of its founder Liliana Mayo, Ph.D., CASP is recognized and honored worldwide for its contributions as a model research, demonstration and training center. Mayo has been supported by a steady stream of her KU colleagues who have volunteered as consultants, trainers, administrators and fundraisers, notably, Judith Le Blanc, who serves as CASP research director, and retired Life Span Director Stephen Schroeder and Carolyn Schroeder. CASP has a formal agreement with the Life Span Institute and receives much of its staff education through university faculty from the KU departments of Special Education and Applied Behavioral Science.
Liliana Mayo, Ph.D., Director
Contact: annsullivan.fundaciontelefonica.org.pe
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Mehmet Bilgen, Ph.D.
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Susan E. Carlson, Ph.D.
Judith J. Carta, Ph.D.
Hugh W. Catts, Ph.D.
Paul D. Cheney, Ph.D.
Mark Chertoff, Ph.D.
Lane K. Christenson, Ph.D.
John Colombo, Ph.D.
Pamela J. Cress, Ed.S.
Rick T. Dobrowsky, Ph.D.
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