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OU-Tulsa ECEI Partners with Georgetown & Harvard to Study Three-Year-Olds' Development

TULSA, OKLA (Dec. 12, 2016) — 85% of brain development occurs by age three, making early child education vital to a child's future success in school. The OU-Tulsa Early Childhood Education Institute (ECEI), a research-based institute to advance the quality of early child education (ages 0-3), has been selected to work with researchers from Georgetown University and Harvard University on a new long-term study.

The study, titled SEED (School Experiences and Early Development), will follow approximately 900 three-year-olds from Educare, CAP-Tulsa, and community child-care programs from now through third grade. The study will look at literacy, math skills, self-regulation executive function, and social-emotional development, especially as it applies to children from economically-disadvantaged households, dual-language learners, and those with special needs. A combination of direct child assessments, teacher reports, classroom observations, and school district and program administrative data such as demographics will be used.

"Tulsa's reputation as a leader in early childhood education and ECEI's previous work created the opportunity for this high-profile partnership," said Diane Horm, ECEI director and co-principal investigator on this project. "Early childhood education is vital because it lays the foundation for all later learning and development. We are thrilled Tulsa is on the cutting-edge of national research."

A variety of child assessments and classroom observations will be used for this study. The child assessments focus on the children's pre-literacy, pre-math, language, and self-regulation skills. Classroom observations will examine in-class activities and teacher-child relationships. In addition, teachers will provide feedback on each child and parents will complete questionnaires regarding their child's early experiences including childcare history and information about the child's home and family experiences.

The ECEI has a decade of expertise collaborating with early childhood programs in NE Oklahoma. As the Local Evaluation Partner for all three Tulsa Educare sites, the ECEI has assessed children, observed and provided feedback about classroom practice, and interviewed participating families. The ECEI has also evaluated the CAP-Tulsa Head Start and Early Head Start programs for over eight years, and has also provided program evaluation for the OECF (Oklahoma Early Childhood Program). For the past eight years, the ECEI has also participated in a national RCT (Randomized Control Trial) Study of children in Educare programs, and is currently following a sample of children as they move through the public school system. These projects have positioned the ECEI to partner with national leaders interested in investigating the short- and long-term impacts of early childhood experiences.

Georgetown University has conducted previous research in Tulsa when it studied Tulsa's Pre-K program for 4-year-olds and recently released a report showing the enduring impacts of a high-quality Pre-K program on children's development through middle school.

The ECEI is part of the OU Jeannine Rainbolt College of Education. It is one component of the Early Childhood Education research and academic programs available at OU-Tulsa.

OU-Tulsa is a nationally-recognized center for higher education offering a wide range of 30+ undergraduate, Master's, and Doctorate level degrees, as well as graduate certificates. Programs include architecture, engineering, education, nursing, public health, occupational and physical therapy, human relations, library and information studies, organizational dynamics, public administration, social work, as well as medicine through the OU-TU School of Community Medicine. Since 1957, OU-Tulsa has provided higher education to NE Oklahoma and moved to the 60-acre Schusterman Campus in 1999. For more information, visit ou.edu/tulsa.

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