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OU-Tulsa PhD Student Receives First Head Start Research Grant in Oklahoma

TULSA, OKLA (Dec. 12, 2016) — Emisha Pickens-Young, an OU-Tulsa PhD student, has been selected as one of only six doctoral students in the entire country — and the first ever in Oklahoma — to receive a prestigious and highly-competitive federal Head Start Graduate Student Research Grant.

Pickens-Young is earning a Doctorate in Instructional Leadership & Academic Curriculum in the Jeannine Rainbolt College of Education at OU-Tulsa and works as a Project Director for the Early Childhood Education Institute (ECEI) also at OU-Tulsa.

“We knew Emisha’s unique experience of attending Head Start as a child and having worked as a Head Start teacher for more than six years made her an extremely strong candidate,” said Dr. Diane Horm, Director of the ECEI. “She is a Head Start success story, and living Head Start’s mission of delivering high-quality early childhood education to children growing up in poverty gave her a unique vantage point.” Pickens-Young was a lead preschool teacher, master teacher, and coach for new teachers at CAP-Tulsa’s Head Start for six and a half years.

Pickens-Young’s dissertation research will study teaching teams at local Head Start and Early Head Start programs, specifically how the teams impact classroom quality and child outcomes. Her research will not only be important for Head Start programs across the country, but her results will also impact the larger field of Early Childhood Education and fill a current void in the research literature.

The “Early Care and Education Research Scholars” grant application is an extensive process. Pickens-Young’s application was approximately 100 pages and all applicants were critiqued on the significance of the research questions, design and methodology, dissemination and management plans, collaborate partner relationships, budget, and qualifications of doctoral student and mentor, Dr. Horm. This federal grant is funded by the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation within the Department of Health & Human Services.

OU-Tulsa’s Instructional Leadership & Academic Curriculum PhD program prepares researchers and leaders serving young children (Ages 0-8). The program focuses on research, leadership, advocacy, and infant/toddler studies.

The ECEI, which recently celebrated its 10th anniversary, has a national reputation for being on the forefront of early childhood education research, supporting Tulsa as a leader in the field.

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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