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## **OU-Tulsa's ECEI Receives NIH Grant with Georgetown to Extend Pre-K Study**

TULSA, OKLA (Sept. 20, 2018) — OU-Tulsa's Early Childhood Education Institute (ECEI), an applied research group focused on advancing the quality of early childhood education, has received a \$2.7 million award from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) National Institute of Child Health and Human Development to extend work with researchers from Georgetown University.

With the study's long-term focus (following children from age 3 through 4<sup>th</sup> grade), its depth (data collected from children, classrooms, teachers, parents, administrators, and health providers) as well its sources (multiple methods used across various early childhood settings) — **this study is the among the most comprehensive contemporary longitudinal study of public pre-K and its associations with children's outcomes through elementary school.**

This new award will allow researchers to follow the participants who are now in kindergarten for 5 years (until 2023). The longitudinal study will examine the processes in preschool through 4<sup>th</sup> grade classrooms that support children's self-regulatory skills — skills that underlie children's academic success and relate to their overall health. The study, titled SEED (School Experiences and Early Development), began following approximately 650 three-year-olds from Educare, CAP-Tulsa, and community childcare programs in fall 2016. Funds from NIH will allow expansion of the sample size, duration, and depth of the study.

"We are thankful for the funding from the Heising-Simons Foundation, Spencer Foundation, and GKFF that enabled us to start the study in 2016 when the children were 3 so we could examine the transition from various preschool settings and pre-K into kindergarten," said Diane Horm, Ph.D., director of the ECEI at OU-Tulsa. "This NIH funding will allow us to study the children for a longer time period to better understand the variables that support children's success through the critical grade 3 transition."

The NIH-funded 5-year longitudinal study will document and test understudied mechanisms in preschool/pre-K that produce a strong developmental boost into elementary school classroom environments. The study will focus on children's self-regulatory skills such as attention and impulse control, management of emotions, memory, planning, and organization. Additionally, it will look at classroom features that support those skills — skills which are notably compromised among children who have experienced significant economic adversity. This new evidence will inform the design of next-generation pre-K programs that will work to reduce the universal public health threat posed by poverty and economic insecurity related to young children's optimal development.

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.

Horm stated, "We are excited to continue our collaboration with our Georgetown University partners Drs. Anne Johnson and Deborah Phillips who are well-known for their contributions to our current understanding of pre-K and its ability to boost children's early school performance. Dr. Phillips and her colleagues have investigated Tulsa's pre-K programs for nearly two decades. We are excited to continue our partnership with Tulsa Public Schools to conduct this work and have been welcomed into TPS schools by administrators and teachers who are eager to understand how best to support the youngest children in pre-K, kindergarten and early primary grades. This funding will also allow us to begin collaboration with Dr. David Kendrick and his group at OU Physicians Medical Informatics to incorporate health and medical information to gain a more comprehensive view of how education and health factors interact in young children's development over time."

The ECEI has more than 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 partnered with CAP-Tulsa Head Start and Early Head Start programs for more than 12 years, and has also provided program evaluation for the OECF (Oklahoma Early Childhood Program) that serves infants and toddlers statewide. For the past 8 years, the ECEI has also participated in a national RCT (Randomized Control Trial) Study of children in Educare programs across the country, 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 in Tulsa, a city known for innovative early childhood programming.

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.

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