

Newsletter, May 2019

Faculty Affiliate Profile: Dr. Jackie Nelson



Jackie Nelson has always loved interacting with children.

Her undergraduate work in a small psychology laboratory at Elon University in North Carolina gave her the opportunity to run all aspects of parent-child research studies. "In a liberal arts college lab with one or two other members studying parent-child interactions, I wasn't just one part of the puzzle; I was involved in everything," Nelson said. "We spent a lot of time in families' homes observing parents and children play and read together."

Nelson was excited about research and knew she wanted to apply to a research-based PhD program focusing on certain elements of child development in context: how kids are affected by family dynamics, diversity and stress.

Nelson earned both her Master of Science and PhD degrees in human development and family studies from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. In 2011, Nelson joined UT Dallas and the School of Behavioral and Brain Sciences because it "felt like a good fit."

"There were people interested in similar questions who understood the importance of studying families," Nelson said.

Nelson's current research focuses on negative emotions - how stress can influence parents' interactions, both with each other and with their children. Part of her research includes a daily diary where parents complete measures each day, such as documenting dinnertime activities, helping researchers get a realistic idea of what is happening in families' lives. [Read more...](#)

Donor Profile: Pagett Gosslee, MAT '79, CFRE

Pagett Gosslee is committed to children. The first director of development and alumni relations for the School of Behavioral and Brain Sciences at UT Dallas in January 2009, Pagett was instrumental in raising funds for the Center for Children and Families early on, and fostering its growth.

"The Meadows Foundation granted three-year funding to establish the Center in August 2008, and we had a deadline to raise specified funds in the first year. We accomplished that goal and grew the donor base for the new Center," Gosslee said.

A graduate of the UT Dallas Human Development masters program in 1979, Gosslee said UT Dallas was transformative in her academic experience and in her life. "With two preschoolers at home, each class I took seemed to have valuable information I needed for parenting at the time, as well as for making critical decisions about their academic experiences," Gosslee said.

During the first capital campaign at UT Dallas, Gosslee pledged to establish an endowed [opportunity fund](#) with monthly payroll deductions to support CCF. "It was a joy to support the infancy of the Center, to nurture the growth of its community outreach programs, and provide valuable learning experiences for our students," Gosslee said. Now retired, Gosslee has recently joined the Advisory Council for the Center for Children and Families and remains committed to its growth and future success.



Spring Semester Service Learning Course Wraps Up

CCF recently wrapped up another semester of service learning, offered through the "Engagement through Collaboration, Mentorship, and Service Learning" initiative at UT Dallas. With guidance from Play With Me program manager, Adriana Baird, students in the service-learning class were responsible for helping to facilitate [Play with Me program](#) classes for parents and their children ages 0-3 at two program sites. Here is what some of the students shared about their experiences:



- "I enjoyed the interaction with the children the most about this program; it was great to see the progress that each child showed throughout the course of the program."
- "I enjoyed using the things I've learned in the classroom in real life."

- "I really liked how a lot of responsibility was given to the students - we were asked about what we thought on multiple things, and I really enjoyed that."



From the Director

With graduations in the air, we are lifted up by the celebratory spirit on campus. We're particularly proud of and thankful for our student interns, volunteers, and those who participated in CCF's second service learning class. CCF provides unique, hands-on experiences for UT Dallas students to work with children and parents in the field. As an inherent part of a higher education institution, [service learning](#) and training opportunities for UTD students not only help us better serve our outreach program beneficiaries, but also better prepare the next generation of child development specialists in our region. Congratulations to all our graduates!

[- Margaret T. Owen, PhD, Robinson Family Professor, Director, Center for Children and Families, School of Behavioral and Brain Sciences](#)

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