Get to Know Angela Pharris

What is your role in the School?
I am an Assistant Professor on the Norman campus.

Have you always lived in Oklahoma? Or, are you a transplant? Tell us more!
I was raised in north central Indiana...literally, I am a girl from the farm. But, I have spent the last 20 years living around Nashville, Tennessee. My family and I are proud to call Oklahoma our home starting July 2017

Where did you go to school?
BSW from Middle Tennessee State University, a MSW from Spalding University in Louisville, KY and a PhD from Tennessee State University

What are some of your favorite places you’ve worked, work you’ve done?
This is a difficult question, because I have really enjoyed almost every job in social work I have had the privilege to hold. My favorite would be my first job in community mental health...what a learning experience for a new social worker! I also worked in Tennessee in public child welfare during a time of large scale system reform as a Director of Training. That work presented so many new opportunities and challenges and really grew my professional skills in administration, policy and systems.

Why do you like working at OU?
What's not to love!! The faculty, staff and students make OU Social Work a special place. I love that I have the opportunity to generate quality research that can help the Oklahoma child welfare system and have great experiences in the classroom with our students. The simulation lab is really exciting, too!

What motivated you to pursue your area of research?
I study child welfare administration, policy and workforce, but with the very important view that in this case, in the role of public child welfare, these are not simply systems of government but the actual corporate parent of children and youth in foster care. This would seem to require a different approach to government then say, running a public park or collecting tax revenue. My motivation is to help build the capacity for state agencies to provide not only great social work services but also administrative structure that gives kids the opportunity to thrive!

What is your favorite thing about social work – or what surprised you about social work?
How much fun it can be! I know, it is very serious and complex work, but when you get to ideas, solutions, collaborations, and partnerships that work, that actually create better outcomes - it is exciting! In my early training there was so much emphasis (rightly so) on self-care and protection from burn-out, etc. that I don't think I ever really considered how much I could, and would, really like the profession of social work.
Do you have any hobbies? Please tell us about one?
   I love musicals and musical theater.

Tell us an interesting fact about yourself that few people know or that would surprise people?
   As I mentioned before, I am a farm girl. I can drive large tractors and trucks, handle small scale veterinary tasks and other skills for farming. I paid for my undergraduate degree with cash earned from livestock shows (yep, I had "show" pigs).

Learn more!