Becoming a Hornet

My calendar is full; it is linked, synced, and updated several times a day with my husband’s in order to make sure that there is a parent available for our children when we are needed. The weekdays begin with a series of questions: “did you brush your teeth, comb your hair, is your agenda signed?” Once I hear “yes, yes, yes,” we head out the door. It takes two stops and two goodbyes; one child heads for the elementary school doors and the other gets hugs and kisses outside the preschool classroom. Next, I travel to one of several schools that I serve and begin my workday. After the busyness of the workday, I change gears and switch back into “mom mode.” The evenings are filled with Tae Kwon Do, Girl Scouts, PTO, Youth Group, and church activities. As the day comes to a close, the kids are tucked into bed, I put on my PJs and slippers, make a cup of hot tea, and sign in to one of my Emporia State University online classes.

I never thought I would be a student again; I didn’t think it was possible. It is hard enough to juggle the roles of being a parent and an employee. When I first started thinking about pursuing a teaching degree, I began researching graduate program options. I quickly learned that graduate school was not going to be an option at this point in my life. In order to go back to school, I would need to extend the day by about six hours. Furthermore, I would need to reduce my work hours significantly which would mean less pay and higher student loans. The hardest part though would have been missing out on time with my family.

My mind changed and doors started opening when I visited the Emporia State University website and began learning about the Early Childhood Unified Master of Science distance education program. Those preconceived worries about trying to find class schedules to fit my constantly changing schedule and thinking about commuting to school were challenged. I learned that at Emporia State University, you can be a full time student and a full time employee. The distance education program provides students with many benefits including flexible degree planning. I learned that I had several options; I was able to choose whether I wanted to start the program in the fall, spring or summer. This was unlike many other graduate programs that only accept students once a year. Now, I am halfway through the program and completing the first of two practicum experiences.

In addition to making graduate training accessible, the distance education program has allowed me to connect with students throughout Kansas and internationally. The technology used
in the distance education program allows students to utilize a variety of formats to collaborate with peers on group projects and cooperative learning experiences. I have also learned a lot about how to use technology in classrooms and when working in teams.

In addition to the online class experiences, the program also helps students put the academic knowledge gained into practice by utilizing hands-on learning experiences. Students visit classrooms throughout the program, collaborate with professionals, and partner with families. Furthermore, during the practicum experiences, students work with a mentor in order to enhance the learning experience. For me, the Early Childhood Unified distance education program at Emporia State University has provided advanced training that is accessible and affordable.

Thanks to the distance education program at Emporia State University, I can say that I am a full time student, full time employee, full time mom and wife. The online Early Childhood Unified Masters program has allowed me to prepare for a career change and create a new path for myself. When I complete the program, I will be prepared to teach at-risk preschoolers and also provide Early Intervention services to families with infants and toddlers. I will also be able to use the training and experience that I have as a School Social Worker to help me connect with families in order to create home and school partnerships.

In addition to the professional knowledge I have gained, the program curriculum also pushes students to reflect on their personal beliefs in order to grow as an individual. This approach has helped me develop as a student and member of society. I know that the personal growth I have experienced through this process will lead to more meaningful relationships with my family, with students and their families, with colleagues, and as a community member. Becoming a Hornet has definitely been a life changing experience for me!