



Tomie Motlow, Councilman Chris Osceola's executive assistant, has spent the last few years dedicated to higher education. Already having earned a bachelor's degree in criminal justice from Penn



Tomie Motlow graduated from her online law enforcement operations program at FSU. She plans to continue her education in January and pursue an MBA. (Photo courtesy of Grad Images)

State in December 2015, she recently earned a crime scene investigations (CSI) minor and her second bachelor's degree from Florida State University, this time in law enforcement operations.

Her most recent accomplishment took two years to complete through FSU's online program, through which she earned a 3.5 GPA and graduated cum laude. Along with completing a full-time course load, which included classes such as ethics in policing and intelligence, evidential reasoning, and homeland security, she also spent a year as a background investigator at the Seminole Police Department. In addition, she spent two weeks completing lab and field work with other students in the program at FSU. During these labs, she worked with peers to investigate crime scene simulations, reconstructed bullets, learned forensic photography and even witnessed an up-close autopsy in a local morgue.

Ultimately, Motlow's goal is to work in forensics or a CSI unit. While the Tribe does not have a traditional CSI team, SPD does have a Criminal Investigation Unit (CIU), which is led by detectives to investigate crimes involving financial, technological and organized crimes against Tribal people and properties.

"It's so interesting to me," she said, explaining that her fascination for the field sparked from crime television shows. "When 'America's Most Wanted' came on in the '80s, I was glued to the TV. I had to find the crime and find out who the killer was. Ever since then, I've always wanted to know how to solve this and that."

Pursuing this field and getting her degree online was not easy. The mom of two children - aged 20 and 10 - said that balancing work, school and parenthood was not easy. After she got her GED when she was 16 or 17, Motlow tried pursuing an associate's degree, but dropped out of college two credits shy of completion. It wasn't until 2013 that she decided to focus on pursuing her career at

Penn State.

“It’s not easy. I’ve done all my bachelor’s degrees online and you have to be really self-motivated,” she said. “If you don’t get it done, they [the professors] don’t care; you’ll get an F.”

As the first person in her family to graduate college, she wants to continue on her educational journey. Motlow is enrolled at FSU for yet another degree, this time for an MBA, which she started at the beginning of January. Once she gets her MBA, which she predicts will take two years, Motlow plans to pursue another bachelor’s degree in biology, as most forensic positions require a general science degree, such as biology or chemistry.

To those who think they cannot return to school, Motlow says they just have to push themselves, especially mothers and single parents, because there is no lesson as valuable as an education.

“Mothers and single parents, it’s not hard [to pursue higher education]. You just have to push yourself. Sometimes you have to put yourself first,” she said, explaining how she completes her homework at night once her son goes to bed. “Everybody thinks, ‘I can’t do it because I have kids.’ You can find time. Even if you’re doing it late at night, you can still do it. . . It’s a sense of accomplishment and pride you can give yourself.”

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