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Jennifer Griffin

CAREERS AND RESEARCH

Captain Jennifer Griffin, PhD, Patrol Troop Commander, Delaware State Police

Captain Jennifer Griffin has been a trooper with the Delaware State Police for 16 years. She has had assignments as a patrol trooper, a school resource officer, and a grant manager and planner in the Planning Section; she has been the director of the Internal Affairs Unit, and she is currently a patrol troop commander. But what most people don't know is that she is also a PhD from the University of Delaware. As a young woman, Captain Griffin says she always knew that her career calling was to be a police officer, and so she pursued her bachelor's degree in criminal justice. However, within one year of becoming a state trooper, she realized that she wanted to earn her master's degree. During that time, she says, "I realized how much I enjoyed school and research, and how much more the research and the lessons meant to me because I was studying the field in which I was working." After she completed her master's, she continued on and earned her doctorate in sociology with concentrations in gender and deviance.

Captain Griffin's doctoral studies included her writing her dissertation, which was titled "Stress in the 21st Century: Are We Protecting Those Who Protect Others?" She says she chose a research topic based on her experience as a police officer and wanted to use her research abilities and training to gain information to help police officers deal with the stress and strains of policing. Through her research, she was able to open a dialogue between police officers and the Delaware State Police administration to discuss stress, burnout, work-family conflict, and the relationships among officers from different demographic groups.

Captain Griffin's research skills have provided her with opportunities that she says she never even imagined. As a result of her interest and education, she has been teaching as an adjunct instructor at the University of Delaware and other universities, and she teaches classes that range from graduate-level research methods to several undergraduate criminal justice courses. She says, "Without my PhD, teaching both undergraduate and graduate students wouldn't have been an option, and it gives me the opportunity to share not only my expertise as a researcher and scholar, but also my life experiences as a state trooper. Being able to blend my academic background and life stories really helps me engage with students in ways that are both meaningful for the students and relevant to what is going on within society."

Her advice to other criminology and criminal justice students is this: "Find an area within the field that you are most interested in, and focus on how you can make it meaningful to not only you but to the field, because you really never know the doors that will open for you in the process. I could have never imagined all of the opportunities and interests that I have developed just from continuing my studies within criminal justice."