

Expressions!

Ardmore business alliance, SOTC team to grow future workers

Faced with a tight job market and low levels of unemployment, five southern Oklahoma businesses are resorting to a time-tested way to gain well-trained workers...growing their own.

Through the leadership of Southern Oklahoma Technology Center, the area businesses have partnered with the Ardmore Chamber of Commerce, the Ardmore Development Authority and the Oklahoma Alliance for Manufacturing Excellence, Inc. to establish the Training Alliance of Southern Oklahoma (TASO).

Alliance business members are Ardmore Foundry, Inc.; Atlas Roofing Corporation; Michelin, North America; Murray Biscuit; and Southwest Silicon Technology.

The Alliance, launched in September 2000, is a local effort to alleviate the critical shortage of multi-skilled industrial technicians, said David Powell, director of business and industry services at Southern Oklahoma Technology Center, Ardmore.

TASO's training program is an intensive 11-month effort. Training is a mixture of classroom instruction and "hands-on" practical experience in electronics and mechanics, hydraulics, pneumatics and Programmable Logic Controller (PLC). Students then go to the participating

industry for supervised on-the-job training.

Twelve students are currently enrolled in the program, said Ron Cockran, TASO coordinator. (16 students started the

program but some withdrew).

Each student receives wages and benefits from their company sponsor, college credit and first crack at new job openings.

Powell said the first group of TASO students, who are expected to graduate in July, will be much sought after by local companies. "We're predicting a demand for about 175 industrial technician positions here in the Ardmore area over the next four to five years," Powell said. "And these are good jobs

that pay about \$30-40,000 per year."

William Capshaw, 49, is in the first class of TASO students. The former business owner said he was attracted to the training program because of the high-tech job opportunities.

Another student, Tiffany Faught, 22, said the chance to gain career skills that are in high demand attracted her. Michelin, North America, sponsors her.

"There is such a big demand for industry technicians that there's a lot of job security," she said.



Faught and Capshaw

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Business magazine gives Oklahoma workforce training top ranking

Oklahoma's nationally renowned career and technology education system received another accolade recently when it was ranked among the top two states with the best workforce training programs.

Oklahoma ranked second only to South Carolina in a poll of site location consultants on states with outstanding industry training programs.

Site location consultants specialize in searching for desirable locations in which companies might locate a new facility or expand existing facilities.

The poll was conducted by *Expansion Management* magazine which is a monthly international business magazine mailed to 45,000 senior executives of companies actively seeking places to expand or relocate.

Vikki Dearing, economic development liaison at the Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education, was interviewed by *Expansion*

Management magazine. She said that Oklahoma has risen in the standings since the magazine started conducting the study three years ago.

"Oklahoma has ranked fourth for two years," she said.

"The purpose of the survey is to give companies and site

locations consultants information to help them make decisions about where best to locate or expand businesses."

According to Dearing, Oklahoma scored high marks for its Training for Industry Program (TIP) which is coordinated by the Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education and delivered through local technology centers.

"Most states offer some version of an industry training program; but what makes Oklahoma stand out is our ability to be flexible, the quality of the service we provide and the fact we have caring professionals at the state and local level who take a personal interest in each project," Dearing said.

Site locations consultants were also impressed by the services Oklahoma provides to help new and existing companies keep growing.

"Oklahoma technology centers provide the infrastructure to support companies beyond the start-up phase through programs like industry specific training, existing industry training and full-time programs at technology centers," Dearing said.

She also said the *Expansion Management* ranking carries a lot of weight in the site location consultant field.

"Oklahoma's ranking gets their attention, gives us higher visibility, and improves our chances of attracting new companies," Dearing said.

What makes Oklahoma stand out is our ability to be flexible, the quality of the service we provide and the fact we have caring professionals

**— Vikki Dearing,
ODCTE**

Expressions! is the official publication of the Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education. It is published five times a year (from September through May) by the Communications and Marketing division. Story ideas are welcomed. Please send your ideas to the address below, or call (405) 743-5109.

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This publication is printed and issued by the Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education as authorized by 70 O.S. 1981, Sec. 14-104, as amended. 5,000 copies have been prepared and distributed at a cost of \$000.00. Copies have been deposited with the Publications Clearinghouse of the Oklahoma Department of Libraries.

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State CareerTech agency partners with online testing company

More and more Americans are going online to conduct everyday business. Add one more item to the list of tasks you can do from your computer – skills certification.

A partnership between the Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education and Brainbench, one of the nation's leading online certification firms, means that thousands of Oklahoma CareerTech students and instructors will be able to take industry certification exams free of charge and have the results back instantly.

The web-based testing will be available July 1 through the ODCTE website.

“The partnership will benefit Oklahomans involved in all levels of the CareerTech system including instructors, adult training, students and business and industry,” said Kelly Johnson, program administrator for CareerTech business and information technology education division.

“Brainbench has been offering online certification testing for about two years. The firm currently offers more than 300 online certification exams (designed by industry experts) most are in the information technology (IT) area,” she said.

“Brainbench commends ODCTE for taking a bold step to use web certifications to raise the competitive edge of their students,” said Mike Russiello, chief executive officer and founder of Brainbench.

Some of the certification tests offered include Computer Industry Knowledge, E-Commerce Concepts, Oracle 7.0 and 8.0 Administrator, Internet Security and Linux Administration. Brainbench also offers certifications exams in other non-IT areas such as nursing assistance, consumer finance, and childcare fundamentals.

Johnson said the partnership will help more students meet professional industry standards and secure industry certification.

“One of the biggest obstacles preventing students from taking other industry certification exams is the cost. Now they can take these exams for free,”

she said. “Brainbench’s certification is another qualification our students have to show when going into the job market.”

Apart from saving money, the CareerTech’s agency’s agreement with Brainbench also has other benefits.

People taking the test will be able to receive the results instantly. Test results will indicate not only areas where improvement is needed but also identify other sources of training. Johnson said Brainbench’s online tests are a great way for students to prepare for IT certification exams conducted by Microsoft, Cisco, CompTIA and Oracle. She also said online certification is growing in popularity.

“Brainbench’s website received two million hits in 2000 and online testing is becoming more widely recognized everyday,” Johnson said.

For more information about the partnership contact Kelly Johnson at kjohn@okcareertech.org or Erich Hottenstein at erich.hottenstein@brainbench.com.



Pictured from left are Michelle Keylon, Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education; Eric Hottentstein, Brainbench; Kelly Johnson, ODCTE; and Mike Russiello, chief executive officer and founder of Brainbench, a leading online certification company.

IT classes qualify students for college hours in E-Commerce program

Thousands of Oklahoma students enrolled in business and information technology programs at technology centers will soon be able to earn up to one-fourth of the hours needed for an E-Commerce degree at Northwestern Oklahoma State University, thanks to an historic agreement signed on Feb. 1.

The agreement came in the form of a new policy statement signed by NWOSU President Dr. Tom McDaniel and *CareerTech* State Director Dr. Ann Benson in a special ceremony at Northwest Technology Center in Alva.

McDaniel said the agreement provides a huge pool of potential students for the new School of E-Commerce at NWOSU. The school, established just 18 months ago, has skyrocketed from its initial total enrollments of 80 to more than 500 this semester.

“This is a winning situation for both NWOSU and the *CareerTech* system,” McDaniel said, “but the biggest winners are the students and their parents, who don’t have to pay twice, in both effort and dollars, for skills already learned.”

Other big winners in the agreement will be information technology companies, not only in Oklahoma, but also across the nation and the world, who are in desperate need of new employees to fuel their E-Commerce growth.

“This agreement is consistent with the goals of Chancellor Hans Brisch and the Oklahoma State

Regents for Higher Education, whose initiatives have encouraged meeting these business needs and whose policy has guided this effort,” McDaniel said.

“This is absolutely a red-letter day for career and technology education in Oklahoma,” Benson said. “

“While many of our students have been able to

receive credit for their *CareerTech* classes through cooperative agreements with Oklahoma’s junior and community colleges, this is one of our first advanced standing agreements with a four-year university that grants bachelor degrees.”

McDaniel credited the efforts of Dr. Timothy Zwink, vice president for academic affairs at NWOSU, Alex Pujari, dean of the university’s School of E-Commerce, and Kelly Johnson,

CareerTech’s state program administrator for business and information technology education, for developing the agreement. He also praised Dr. Don Dale, superintendent at High Plains Technology Center in Woodward, and Freelin Roberts, superintendent at Northwest Technology Center, for their help. Those two schools should be among the first sending students to the university’s E-Commerce program.

Pujari said he and Johnson will now begin the work of pre-approving *CareerTech*’s business and information technology courses qualifying for the agreement.



Pictured from left are (seated): NWOSU President Dr. Tom McDaniel and Dr. Ann Benson, state CareerTech director. Standing, from left are Freelin Roberts, Northwest Technology Center superintendent, and Dr. Don Dale, High Plains Technology Center, Woodward, superintendent.

Bush honors Project Hope instructor

President George W. Bush has honored Project Hope science teacher Jeff Marshall with the Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching for 2000, the nation's highest honor for mathematics and science teachers in grades K through 12. Marshall was one of four Oklahoma teachers named to receive the award.

He will receive a \$7,500 educational grant for Project HOPE, a presidential citation, and a trip to Washington, D.C. for a series of recognition events.

Marshall, a Putnam City Schools science teacher, is an instructor at Project HOPE, Francis Tuttle's dropout prevention program operated jointly with Putnam City Schools, Crescent Public Schools, Deer Creek Public Schools, Edmond Public Schools, Millwood Public Schools, and Western Heights Public Schools.

"The award is a nice honor for me, but it also honors others. It says good things about Putnam City and the other school districts involved because they support us in being imaginative in order to engage these students. The best part of the award, though, is

that it gives recognition to the students who are in this program," Marshall said.



Jeff Marshall

Marshall is known for his innovative teaching methods.

His students have built a solar-powered car each of the past two years and are in the process of building one this year. The car will be entered in a competition against other schools and universities from across the nation.

In creating the car, students learn physics, design, chemistry, and engineering principles at a level of complexity and sophistication that "rivals instruction in any high school in the country," says Bob Melton, science curriculum coordinator for

Putnam City Schools.

This year, Marshall's students' solar-powered car, named Mirage, will be entered in competition in May in Topeka, Kan., where they will participate in a sprint race, a 62-mile track race, and a cross-country race from Topeka to Jefferson City, Mo. Last year's car, Nemesis, finished second in the nation.

Essay winners highlight importance of career skills

Three students were honored by Mid-America Technology Center for their writing skills as part of an essay contest organized during National CareerTech week in February.

First place winner was Grace Morgan, a home-schooled student from Bridge Creek. Josiah Morgan (Grace's brother), a Bridge Creek High School student, came in second; and Treavor Freeman, Bridge Creek High School, placed third. The first place winner received \$50, second place \$30, and third place \$20.

Debbie Scroggins, School-to-Work/Tech Prep

coordinator, said the essay contest, which had 35 entrants, was one of several school activities organized during National CareerTech Week. The theme of the essay was "Want Career Success? Get Career Skills."

In her winning essay, Morgan, a horticulture student, said, "Success in the workplace requires self motivation, confidence in one's training, and, above all, enjoyment in one's chosen field. Consequently, acquiring career skills at a technology center results not only in personal success but also in the success of those around you."

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OAABAVE banquet recognizes educators, student

Two long-time supporters of diversity in education were honored at the, annual banquet of the Oklahoma Association for the Advancement of Black Americans in Vocational Education (OAABAVE), held at Tulsa Technology Center's Peoria Campus recently.

Former OAABAVE president Alberta Jones, assistant director of Tulsa Tech's Peoria Campus, received the Golden Torch award. The award honors OAABAVE members for dedicated service. Also honored was Charlotte Edwards, executive director of the Oklahoma Vocational Association (OVA), who received the Meritorious Service Award.

"Both Alberta and Charlotte have been strong supporters of OAABAVE," said Ned Gray, OAABAVE president. "They both understand that

diversity plays an important role in education and industry."

The banquet also recognized John Pettis, Millwood High School student, for leadership. Pettis is central region vice-president of Family Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA, formerly known as FHA/HERO), the career and technology student organization for family and consumer sciences students. He is the first African-American male to hold that position.

The guest speaker at this year's banquet was Dr. Kermit McMurry, vice chancellor of the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education. He spoke about the importance of diversity in education and the characteristics of good leadership in the new millennium.

MARCH 2001

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Career and Technology Education
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