

Expressions!

OF OKLAHOMA VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION

Benson shares her vision for vo-tech in first summer conference address

In her first address to vocational educators from across the state, Dr. Ann Benson, new state vo-tech director, talked about her vision for the Oklahoma vocational system.

Benson gave the address at the 1999 Vocational and Technical Summer Conference held Aug. 2-4 in Tulsa. "My vision is that we keep growing as the world's best vocational system," she said.

She urged vocational educators to be committed to the Oklahoma vocational system's mission: to help Oklahomans succeed in the workforce.

"It's not some or a few—it's all Oklahomans," Benson said.

In order for Oklahoma vo-tech to remain the best in the nation, the four different arms of the system need to work together, Benson said. The four arms are comprehensive schools, technology centers, business and industry services, and the skills centers in state prisons.

Benson pointed out that the skills centers comprise one of the fastest-growing arms of Oklahoma's vocational system.

"The number of skills centers has grown tremendously," Benson said. "By the end of the year we expect to have 25 skills centers at correctional centers and juvenile facilities."

She stressed that providing inmates vocational training is an important part of helping them make a successful return to society.

"When they (inmates) are released, they will be living next to you and me," she said. "I want them to have job skills."

Benson said that one of the challenges the system faces is convincing the public that vocational programs are rigorous and academically demanding. She also said that

vo-tech needs

to focus on the good things in the system and showcase its successful students.

"A whole lot of Oklahomans are successful because of vocational and technical education programs," she said. "Let us and others know about them."

Benson also recognized Donna Lindly, a family and consumer sciences teacher at Wright City High School, and Mac DeVilbiss, an agricultural education teacher from Yukon High School. They are among the 12 finalists for the Oklahoma Teacher of the Year award.

Summer Conference also featured nationally known speakers Emory Austin, a motivational speaker, and Dr. Bill Daggett, director of the International Center for Leadership in Education.



Dr. Ann Benson

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Drafting, business education, auto collision programs recommended for college credit

Students in three programs in Oklahoma's technology centers/area vo-tech schools may now qualify for college credit, thanks to recent recognition of the quality of those courses by the American Council on Education (ACE), one of the nation's principal higher education associations.

The three programs include drafting, business education and auto collision technology.

State vo-tech officials hope to eventually bring more than 70 occupational programs to ACE's College Credit Recommendation Service, also known as ACE/CREDIT, for its review and recommendation. Oklahoma's vo-tech system becomes the first statewide system in the nation to embark on such an ambitious undertaking, said Phyllis Embry, Norman, state director of ACE/CREDIT.

"This cooperative effort between the vo-tech system and ACE/CREDIT will open the doors to college credit opportunities for a large number of Oklahoma students," Embry said.

The College Credit Recommendation Service has recommended that auto collision technology students be eligible for up to 64 hours of college credit, drafting students be eligible for up to 32 hours, and business education students be eligible for up to 35 college credit hours.

The American Council on Education is a national organization that represents more than 1,800 accredited higher education institutions and several regional and national higher education associations. In addition to recommending college credit for workplace education and training, ACE also helps service members and veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces earn college credit for the education and training they received while in the military. It also administers the tests of General Educational Development (GED), which allow more than 500,000 adults to earn a high school diploma every year.

Oklahoma's recommendation came only after extensive state-level reviews of course content in the three training programs, said Matt Boyles, program specialist for the Oklahoma Department of Vocational and Technical Education.

Boyles said students who satisfactorily complete these three programs will be given an official ACE transcript to use when applying to colleges, not only in Oklahoma but also across the nation. This transcript will note students have completed college-level coursework and that ACE recommends they be granted college credit for the courses.

For example, he said, students who have taken Principles of Drafting and Introduction to Computer-Aided Drafting can apply them towards credit hours in Fire Protection and Safety Technology and Mechanical Engineering Technology degree programs at Oklahoma State University.

In addition, Cameron University in Lawton will award drafting students credit hours towards an associate of applied science degree in computer-aided design drafting. Boyles said the ACE recognition determines a statewide benchmark for college credit in a vocational program.

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Agricultural education was first step on OSU grad's path to Cambridge University

Chris Stephens, a Chickasha High School graduate who gave up baseball in junior high for the vocational student organization FFA, finished his collegiate career at Oklahoma State University scoring a rare academic double play.

Stephens, who graduated in December 1998 with a bachelor's degree in agricultural economics, earned a prestigious British Marshall Scholarship, which allows him to do two years of postgraduate study at Cambridge University in England. To win this scholarship, he competed against more than 800 American students for one of 40 scholarships.

Stephens had earlier won the Harry S. Truman Scholarship for Public Service, which will help fund his law school education when he returns from England. The Truman Scholarship is a three-year award for 70-80 college juniors. Recipients receive \$10,000 per year, including the last year of undergraduate and two years of postgraduate studies.

Candidates are evaluated on academic achievement, leadership potential, social commitment, and communication skills.

Development of the skills necessary to compete for such notable scholarships began years ago for Stephens. He learned how to make tough decisions at a young age.

"I used to play baseball," Stephens said. "But in junior high school, I decided to become involved in FFA instead. I knew I couldn't do both well and figured that I had more potential to succeed with FFA."

Besides, he'd grown up with agricultural education — both of his parents, Shirley and Mike, teach it at Chickasha High School.

Active in other organizations such as student council and National Honor Society, Stephens found FFA to be an organization that gave him a solid foundation for the future.

Through FFA, he learned about goal-setting, public speaking, competition, persistence and good sportsmanship.

"I remember my first goal was to qualify for the state speech contest in my freshman year. That didn't happen. But, I did work hard, and I qualified the next three years," he said.

Stephens took that same ambitious attitude to OSU and graduated with honors.

He enters Cambridge University this fall with the Marshall Scholarship, which provides funding at any British institution. There, he will study land economy, an academic program that combines agricultural economics, law, environmental policy and natural resources.

When he returns to the U.S., Stephens says that he plans to apply to law school, using the Truman Scholarship, and eventually become involved in Oklahoma's agricultural industry on either a state or national level.



Chris Stephens

Great Plains Area Vo-Tech develops maintenance training program for Goodyear plants in three states

“Alone each of us has the capacity to do good work. But together as a team, we have the capacity to do amazing work.”

Oklahoma’s Training for Industries Program (TIP) takes that philosophy to heart. The primary purpose of TIP is workforce development. One of Oklahoma’s biggest TIP success stories is the partnership between Great Plains Area Vocational-Technical School and the Goodyear Tire and Rubber Plant in Lawton.

“This partnership has existed since the plant first opened in the 1970s,” said Will Johnson, Great Plains’ director of Corporate Training.

Goodyear was so pleased with the success of Great Plains’ maintenance training program at the Lawton plant that the firm approached the school to start the program at plants in three other states—Virginia, Tennessee and Kansas.

The Goodyear training for maintenance technicians is multifaceted and features electric, electronic, mechanical, fluid power, welding and metal fabrication training. The American Council on Education accreditation of the program has allowed an additional partnership with Lawton’s Cameron University. Graduates of the technical component of the program can earn up to 39 college credit hours. Great Plains provides the technical training while Cameron supplies the academic coursework necessary to complete an associate degree.

The shop area set aside for the Goodyear training features scaled-down replicas of actual state-of-the-art workstations that are used in the plant.

“Our associates can learn on these stations and then walk right into the plant and do the same type of work,” said Brian Holmes, Goodyear team leader for Organizational and Development Training. Approximately 35 to 40 Goodyear associates train at Great Plains daily, Holmes said.

Will Johnson and Kevin Henson, Corporate Training coordinators at Great Plains, will help develop training specifications and lesson plans for the new training program. Johnson also plays an

integral role in the implementation of the program and will travel to each site to identify equipment and space needs, instructional staff and courseware specifications. The target date for the first launch of the program is set for January 2000 in Virginia.

The strong work ethic and Great Plains Area Vocational-Technical School’s commitment to industry were two key elements in Goodyear’s decision to locate in southwest Oklahoma in the late 1970s, says Holmes who has been with the company for 23 years.

“Our partnership with Great Plains has been the envy of my sister plants for some time,” said Holmes. “The Goodyear Corporation believes this is the very best training facility in North America.”

Over the years, Great Plains has offered a variety of training venues for Goodyear employees, including safety training, computer training, and the maintenance training. Each year more than 2,000 Goodyear associates take part in the safety training offered by Great Plains.

— By Teresa Jensen, Great Plains Area Vocational-Technical School



From left, Darin Le Jeune, Del Sanders and Chuck Kriss, from Lawton’s Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company plant, go through a maintenance training session at Great Plains Area Vo-Tech.

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Vo-tech construction programs help Oklahoma recover from May tornadoes

They all came for different reasons. Some came to upgrade their job skills while others came to get into a completely different career field.

All had one thing in common. They were each making the most of the free construction skills and safety training — offered by Oklahoma's vo-tech system — to help the state recover from the May 3 tornadoes.

According to Pam Stacey, Skills to Rebuild coordinator at the Oklahoma Department of Vo-Tech Education, 16 area vo-tech schools/technology centers have already held or scheduled 160 Skills to Rebuild classes.

Vo-tech safety instructors have trained more than 850 volunteers to help in the cleanup process, she said. Based on current data and scheduled classes, about 830 more Oklahomans will be trained in basic construction skills.

Stacey said the most widely available class is frame carpentry helper. It has 31 classes scheduled or already held.

Participants in one Skills to Rebuild class, taught by Metro Tech instructor Billy Guthery, went



Danene Vincent, director of Instructional and Curriculum Services at Metro Tech, is pictured laying a brick wall during a Skills to Rebuild Class at Metro Tech's Skills Tech facility in Oklahoma City.



Oklahoma Vo-Tech's
Skill to Rebuild

through a rigorous six-day program.

Guthery's course was divided into two sections. The first part was a five-hour safety training class, and the second part was a

40-hour frame carpentry helper course. Students attended the frame carpentry class for five consecutive eight-hour days. The first two days were classwork, and the other three days consisted of practical work in the shop, Guthery said.

Worker safety is critical, especially when working on a construction site, Guthery said.

According to statistics from the Oklahoma Department of Labor, one-fourth of all injuries to construction workers occur within their first three months of work. Also, a new construction worker is 10 times more likely to be injured than a construction worker with one to five years of experience.

David Colyer, a Skill to Rebuild student and retired Oklahoma Department of Transportation employee, said one of the best aspects of the safety training class was learning how to do things the correct way. Some of the techniques were as simple as learning how to correctly hammer a nail.

Colyer said the Skills to Rebuild training will enable him to work more effectively as a volunteer.

"With the experience I am gaining, I can help in the rebuilding process," he said.

After going through the training program, Colyer planned to join Habitat for Humanity or one of the other volunteer teams involved in the rebuilding effort.

Guthery is confident that his students will be able to put the skills they learned in his class to good use in the construction industry.

"We were already facing a critical shortage of construction workers in Oklahoma," he said. "There's a tremendous amount of opportunity for trained people."

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Program prepares future vo-tech leaders

Nineteen vocational educators participated in Leadership Vo-Tech III held at Roman Nose State Park in Watonga during the summer.

The program is one of three leadership development programs conducted by the Oklahoma Department of Vocational and Technical Education.

All three prepare educators for leadership and administrative roles within the Oklahoma vo-tech system.

Level I is for individuals who wish to expand their understanding of vocational education and leadership. Level II is for individuals in mid to upper-level administrative positions who desire to assume key administrative positions at technology centers/area schools or the state agency. Level III prepares individuals to step into key administrative

positions in the vo-tech system.

“The programs are preparing individuals to have a better understanding of the system and,

ultimately, have an interest in leadership and administrative positions within the statewide vocational education system. These individuals can then lead the system into the future,” said Juanita Bice, state coordinator of Professional Development.

“This year’s Leadership Vo-Tech III program will be somewhat different from previous programs. The participants will spend more time discussing issues facing vo-tech and its role in education and economic development. Visits to other institutions or industries and an internship requirement will be included as part of the learning experience,” Bice said.

— By Shannon Wooster

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