

# Announcing... *career*tech Focus

The first edition of *CareerTech Focus* highlights current system initiatives and partnership activities. It provides key facts about new and unique initiatives that we have developed on our own or in partnership with other organizations and agencies. *Focus* is on CareerTech's Web site, [www.okcareertech.org](http://www.okcareertech.org), in the "About Us" section.

While all initiatives and partnership opportunities that support our mission and vision are important, several deserve special emphasis. Staff members throughout the system have worked extremely hard to implement a new instructional system through the **Career Clusters** initiative. Career Clusters will greatly improve opportunities for CareerTech students as they live and learn in our global economy. This year most technology centers will use the Career Clusters model as they advise students and enroll them in career majors. The **CareerTech Information System** will provide a Web-based data system to provide accountability and track students and activities more efficiently.

This past year marked a milestone as CareerTech and Higher Education completed the last of 29 **Cooperative Alliance Agreements** to offer high school and adult students the opportunity to earn college credit at technology centers. This is a tremendous benefit for our students because it enables them to get a head start on their postsecondary education in an extremely affordable way.

A study of CareerTech full-time programs in technology centers by noted economist Mark Snead showed that the 11,000 students who complete programs each year contribute \$2 billion annually to the state's economy. This provided the impetus for launching the "**Elevating Our Economy**" advertising campaign that has successfully impacted opinions about the value of CareerTech. New information will be rolled out in future phases of the campaign, to highlight CareerTech's positive benefits on careers, lives and communities.

Information about legislative initiatives and funding reflects action taken by the legislature during the session ending May 2008. As new budget requests are approved, this information will be updated. While the legislature continues to support CareerTech efforts by increasing our funding, many of the funds have been earmarked for specific purposes. We continue to champion the benefits of career and technology education to legislative members and business and industry leaders and urge everyone to do the same.

I believe the information in *Focus* will help you communicate the goals of our system and the important work that you do. If you have questions or suggestions, please contact Paula Bowles at 405-743-5108, or [pbowl@okcareertech.org](mailto:pbowl@okcareertech.org).

Dr. Phil Berkenbile  
State Director  
August, 2008

**INITIATIVE TITLE:** Oklahoma Career Clusters

**INITIATIVE SUMMARY:** The Oklahoma Career Clusters will increase our students' ability to transition within our system to careers and to postsecondary education. This initiative also increases our system's ability to meet employer expectations for a highly skilled workforce that contributes to the economic vitality of our state. Ultimately, our system's goal is to become industry-focused, student-centered and performance-driven.

**ROLE OF CAREER TECH:** The Oklahoma Career and Technology Education System is transitioning its educational delivery design to the Oklahoma Career Clusters framework. This framework is based on the National Career Clusters model and incorporates additional components to meet the specific needs of Oklahoma's unique delivery system. The Oklahoma Career Clusters framework allows us to meet the needs of both short-term and full-time students in all areas of our delivery system and prepares all students for challenging technical training, rigorous academics and life-long career preparation.

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**INITIATIVE TITLE:** 2008 Legislative Session Summary

**INITIATIVE SUMMARY:** In a standstill budget year, the CareerTech system saw a slight increase in the FY09 base appropriation. This resulted from adding previous year, one-time funding to the new year base and funding mandated increases in teacher retirement employer share contributions. At the end of the session, the system base appropriation had moved from \$154,864,391 in FY08 to \$156,899,736 for FY09.

Several pieces of legislation approved during the 2008 session will impact the CareerTech System:

- Senate Bill 2100 allows the state agency to provide continuing education credit for technology center and state board member training.
- HB2276 identifies base appropriations for the CareerTech system.
- SB1196 provides \$1,370,000 in one-time funding for CareerTech initiatives not included in the base appropriation.
- HB2074 removes the earning cap for Teacher Retirement System retirees re-entering the educational system after three years of retirement (with stipulations).

**ROLE OF CAREER TECH:** ODCTE wants to ensure adequate funding and support statutory language to advance the CareerTech mission. ODCTE also seeks to identify statutory changes that may limit resources for or access to CareerTech opportunities across the state.

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**INITIATIVE TITLE:** CareerTech Information System (CTIS)

**INITIATIVE SUMMARY:** The CTIS is the new data collection system for CareerTech and replaces the Model 204 system. Student information will be collected at the Career Cluster, Career Pathway, Career Major and Course levels. The CTIS will gather all student and client data for the following delivery systems of CareerTech: Comprehensive Schools, Technology Centers, Skills Centers and Business & Industry.

**ROLE OF CAREER TECH:** The ODCTE will maintain this system to gather enrollment, completion and follow-up data as well as perform various reporting functions.

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**INITIATIVE TITLE:** CareerTech’s Return on Investment Campaign — “Elevating our Economy”

**INITIATIVE SUMMARY:** ODCTE, technology centers and the Oklahoma Association of Career and Technology Education launched a multi-media, multi-year advertising campaign in January 2007. This campaign seeks to position the CareerTech system as the educational leader in economic, community and career development for Oklahoma. Strategies were developed using research from economist Mark Snead’s study on the impact of full-time programs as well as findings from the department. The first phase of the campaign, which will continue through August 2008, focuses on CareerTech’s economic impact with the theme, “Elevating Our Economy.”

The key messages are: 1. Oklahoma CareerTech graduates add \$2 billion annually to the state’s economy. 2. CareerTech increased profitability for more than 6,900 companies in 2007. These key messages are supported with information about the Training for Industry Program and the Oklahoma Bid Assistance Network. The second phase, which will focus on career impact, carries the theme, “Elevating Careers.” Its key messages are: 1. The college credit earned by CareerTech students is a pathway to further education. 2. Half of Oklahoma high school students learn leadership skills in CareerTech student organizations.

**ROLE OF CAREER TECH:** ODCTE staff members serve on the steering committee. The department continues to fund research and provide support in various ways, including Creative Services, printing and special events.

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**INITIATIVE TITLE:** Cooperative Alliance Agreements

**INITIATIVE SUMMARY:** Higher Education and CareerTech have partnered to offer high school and adult students the opportunity to earn college credit at technology centers. No tuition is charged to high school students. An academic service fee of \$8 per credit hour is charged to cover costs incurred by the colleges. Because high school students are not eligible for financial aid, a fee-waiver process was developed. Tuition is charged to adult students by technology centers. Last year 4,456 high school and 4,746 adult student enrollments earned 78,592 hours of college credit through the Alliances.

**ROLE OF CAREER TECH:** Technology center faculty teaching college-level courses qualify as adjunct faculty at the higher education institutions. Their credentials are reviewed and recorded by the higher education partners for purposes of regional accreditation. Faculty at the partnering colleges and technology centers collaborate on course content and work with advisory boards. All technology centers participate in alliances.

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**INITIATIVE TITLE:** Carl Perkins Career and Technical Education Improvement Act 2006

**INITIATIVE SUMMARY:** The new Perkins legislation was signed into law August 12, 2006. The purposes of the act were to develop challenging academic and technical standards and related challenging integrated instruction; focus on high-skill, high-wage, and high-demand occupations in current or emerging careers; and improve the quality of CareerTech. Key changes in the new legislation include:

- Focus on continued improvement, not sustaining what is current
- Increased focus on academic skills and graduation rates for CareerTech students
- Increased accountability
- Funding for innovation and challenging, integrated content
- Increased use and improved quality of technical skill assessments leading to credentials, certificates, licenses and degrees

**ROLE OF CAREER TECH:** ODCTE administers Carl Perkins funding. Funding is available for comprehensive schools, technology centers and community colleges. These funds are distributed via formula funding, and schools and/or consortia must make application to be eligible.

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**INITIATIVE TITLE:** High Schools That Work (HSTW)

HSTW

**INITIATIVE SUMMARY:** High Schools That Work (HSTW) is an effort-based school improvement initiative founded on the conviction that most students can master rigorous career/technical and academic studies if school leaders and teachers create an environment that:

- Expands students' opportunities to learn a rigorous academic core and a career/technical concentration
- Creates supportive relationships between students and adults
- Creates teacher advisers to work with parents, students and home high schools
- Establishes common planning time and professional development

**ROLE OF CAREER TECH:** The ODCTE provides technical assistance and support through site visits and in-service training. ODCTE also coordinates the reimbursement of grant funds to participating schools.

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**INITIATIVE TITLE:** Technology Centers That Work (TCTW)

**INITIATIVE SUMMARY:** Technology Centers That Work (TCTW) is a model to assist shared-time technology centers in reviewing actions needed to produce high-demand, high-skills graduates who will be leaders in their selected careers. Based on High Schools That Work's 10 Key Practices, the three major goals are:

- Aligning classroom expectations with those of employers and postsecondary institutions
- Broadening the definition of rigor to include the ability to apply academic knowledge and skills to address authentic activities, projects and problems
- Improving the transition from the home high school to the technology center and postsecondary education

**ROLE OF CAREER TECH:** The ODCTE provides technical assistance and support through site visits and in-service training. ODCTE also coordinates the reimbursement of grant funds to participating schools.

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**INITIATIVE TITLE:** Achieving Classroom Excellence (ACE Initiative)

**INITIATIVE SUMMARY:** This legislated initiative requires all Oklahoma students in Grades 9-12 to demonstrate mastery of state academic content standards in order to graduate from a public high school with a standard diploma. Subject area assessments essential to pass are Algebra I and English II. Additionally, two of the following five assessments must be passed: Algebra II, Biology I, English III, Geometry, and U.S. History.

**ROLE OF CAREER TECH:** ODCTE is working with the ACE Commission to provide students the opportunity to substitute a CareerTech industry certification for one of the required tests after a specified number of unsuccessful attempts.

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**INITIATIVE TITLE:** Financial Literacy

# FINANCIAL LITERACY

**INITIATIVE SUMMARY:** Beginning in August 2008, all students in Oklahoma will be required to receive instruction and demonstrate competency in 14 legislated areas of financial literacy. This instruction can use a variety of methods and curricula, and occur at numerous points during Grades 7-12. Accountability will be tied to the specific delivery method and curriculum used by the instructor.

**ROLE OF CAREER TECH:** CareerTech can offer a variety of solutions for delivering and assessing this instruction. Several CareerTech courses can provide this information. The Curriculum & Instructional Materials Center (CIMC) offers several curricula that support this initiative, including *Life Skills: Financial Literacy, Consumer Education, and Agricultural Business Management*. CIMC also offers, through a partnership with *Shryk*, an online delivery system that is free to schools. The Testing Division offers a Financial Literacy Assessment for accountability purposes.

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**INITIATIVE TITLE:** Dropout Recovery

# DROPOUT RECOVERY

**INITIATIVE SUMMARY:** Dropout Recovery is a statewide project led by the Oklahoma Department of CareerTech and operates in seven of our larger technology centers. It helps students complete requirements for a high school credential, stabilize their lives and return to their home high school to continue their education. This initiative serves out-of-school youth from 15 to 19 years old. Students participating in Dropout Recovery receive opportunities to earn academic credit and participate in career-specific training.

**ROLE OF CAREER TECH:** ODCTE is working to establish additional sites in major population areas of the state to serve this out-of-school population.

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**INITIATIVE TITLE:** Governor’s Council for Workforce and Economic Development

GCWED

**INITIATIVE SUMMARY:** The Governor’s Council for Workforce and Economic Development (GCWED) brings together leaders from a variety of private and public sector organizations to develop a strategy to accelerate economic growth and to provide direction to state administration. The Council’s vision is for Oklahoma to have a competitive advantage through integrated workforce and economic development objectives. The Council will achieve this vision through its mission to advance a demand-driven workforce and economic development system. The Governor’s Council for Workforce and Economic Development, in conjunction with the Oklahoma Department of Commerce, is focusing on regional solutions to workforce challenges facing Oklahoma’s primary industry sectors and the employers within them.

**ROLE OF CAREER TECH:** Together, we must deliver the highest caliber workforce to serve the demands of industries most promising to Oklahoma. We must first understand demand—the education, skills, and quantities of workers needed in key growth industries. We must also enhance our education and training systems to ensure the pipeline is filled with the right quality and quantity of workers to meet employer demand. This competitive advantage will enable Oklahoma to attract new business from the most promising industries, create quality jobs and ensure we are positioned to increase wealth opportunities for all our citizens.

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**INITIATIVE TITLE:** Young Offender/Probationer Project

YOUNG OFFENDER

**INITIATIVE SUMMARY:** This program prepares young offenders/probationers to enter the world of work and ensures that they have knowledge and work ethics to succeed in life. Diverting these young people away from a life of crime, and ultimately prison, helps the state by saving incarceration costs and by further developing our future workforce in critical areas.

**ROLE OF CAREER TECH:** ODCTE established two prison-based training academies that provide occupational training, life skills development, and academic preparation that result in students obtaining a high school credential. ODCTE also partnered with three technology centers to establish projects for young probationers and offenders housed at community correctional centers. Each of these projects prepare offenders for entry into jobs based on local industry demand. This project will be expanded to include students 18-29 years old.

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**INITIATIVE TITLE:** Oklahoma's Promise (OHLAP)

**INITIATIVE SUMMARY:** The Oklahoma Legislature has a unique program, Oklahoma's Promise (Oklahoma Higher Learning Access Program or OHLAP), for students in Grades 8-10 that will help pay for their college education if their family's income is \$50,000 or less at the time the student applies for the program.\* The program requires students to take certain high school courses. They will have to pass those courses and maintain a 2.5 GPA. Students must also stay away from activities involving gangs, drugs and alcohol. In short, the student promises to prepare academically for college and stay out of trouble, and in return, the state of Oklahoma promises to help pay the student's college tuition.

\*In addition, the income of the student's parents (or the student if the student is financially independent of their parents) may not exceed \$100,000 at the time the student begins college and prior to receiving the scholarship. This provision becomes effective for students receiving the award in college for the first time in 2009-10 and thereafter.

**ROLE OF CAREER TECH:** CareerTech offers a variety of courses that can count for the required high school courses.

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**INITIATIVE TITLE:** Grow Oklahoma

**INITIATIVE SUMMARY:** This campaign is a broad umbrella initiative that involves students, parents, community and business leaders, and educators throughout the state. It is a fresh approach to career planning, skills development and the earning of credentials and degrees. One part of the campaign is the development of the career management Web site [www.GrowOklahoma.com](http://www.GrowOklahoma.com). This site is the single site for Oklahomans to take control of their education and career planning.

**ROLE OF CAREER TECH:** ODCTE is one of the contributors for content on the Grow Oklahoma Web site. The Oklahoma Career Information System (OKCIS) may be accessed from the Web site.

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**INITIATIVE TITLE:** WorkKeys and Career Readiness Certificates

**INITIATIVE SUMMARY:** Designed by ACT, the company that developed the ACT Assessment college entrance exam, WorkKeys measures communication, problem-solving and interpersonal skills valuable to any occupation and at any level of education.

Assessment sites can be found across the state on college campuses, One-Stop sites, tech centers, etc. Individuals' assessments and scores are recorded and housed in a secure database. Depending on their scores, potential or incumbent employees are awarded a gold, silver or bronze Oklahoma Career Readiness Certificate.

These portable skills credentials, which are easily and nationally recognized, can be used to facilitate job placement, retention and advancement in our mobile society.

**ROLE OF CAREER TECH:** Many of the Oklahoma Technology Centers administer the WorkKeys assessments. For more information or to find out how you can participate in the WorkKeys/Oklahoma Career Readiness project, contact:

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**INITIATIVE TITLE:** Academies

**INITIATIVE SUMMARY:** An academy is a smaller learning community within a high school or technology center that blends rigorous academic preparation with a focused field of technical preparation and gives students an opportunity to experience an industry through varied learning opportunities. Academies focus on a particular industry sector and must identify pathways that lead to postsecondary certifications, licenses and/or degree opportunities through continued education.

**ROLE OF CAREER TECH:** ODCTE works with high schools and technology centers to implement career academies. It has identified the following expectations for those academies:

1. Clearly identified pathways into college or university degree programs, coordinated with higher education partners
2. Integration of upper level math and science courses
3. Evidence of ongoing advisement process, including individual plans of study
4. Ongoing data collection and evaluation to benchmark student success and develop strategies for program improvement

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**INITIATIVE TITLE:** No Child Left Behind /End of Instruction Assessments

**INITIATIVE SUMMARY:** Oklahoma state tests are used for assessing student achievement; targeting student, classroom, and program improvement; and informing parents of student progress. The administration of the Oklahoma Core Curriculum Tests (OCCTs) fulfills No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and state mandates for testing, and the test results are used for federal and state accountability requirements. Oklahoma public schools administer OCCTs in Grades 3-8 and after completion of specific high school courses. All state tests are aligned to the Oklahoma Priority Academic Student Skills (PASS). Reading and Math tests are administered in Grades 3-8 and in high school Science, Social Studies, and Writing tests are given in Grades 5 and 8, and Geography is administered in Grade 7. English II, Algebra I, Biology I, and U.S. History are given as End-of-Instruction (EOI) tests in high school. Beginning in 2008-2009, English III, Geometry, and Algebra II will be administered in high school as well, in accordance with recent Oklahoma legislation titled Achieving Classroom Excellence (ACE).

**ROLE OF CAREER TECH:** Oklahoma technology centers may assist with remediation of students who have not successfully completed their EOI assessments. Technology centers also currently assist with enhancement of academics and may offer math and/or science courses for credit.

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**INITIATIVE TITLE:** Economic Development Resources and Incentives

**INITIATIVE SUMMARY:** Oklahoma CareerTech provides customized training programs and services for new companies locating in Oklahoma, existing Oklahoma companies, small businesses working to expand or entrepreneurs.

**ROLE OF CAREER TECH:** The CareerTech system promotes the economic development of the state. ODCTE has a variety of programs and services available to assist business and industry: Training for Industry Program (TIP), Existing Industry (EI), Safety, Oklahoma Bid Assistance Network (OBAN), Adult and Career Development, and Business & Entrepreneur Services.

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**INITIATIVE TITLE:** Firefighter Training

**INITIATIVE SUMMARY:** This initiative accommodates the increased demand placed on technology centers for training and testing of volunteer fire departments in the state of Oklahoma. This training includes firefighters' training and associated testing as well as first responder training and associated testing.

**ROLE OF CAREER TECH:** The safety and welfare of many Oklahoma residents depend on the effectiveness of volunteer fire departments. Technology centers now assist these volunteer fire departments by providing upgrade training or training on new systems or equipment.

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**INITIATIVE TITLE:** Focused Safety Initiative

**INITIATIVE SUMMARY:** Accidents and lost days not only affect the personal lives of our citizens, but they also threaten productivity and increase operational costs to employers across the state. The Focused Safety initiative is to provide a means to target high-risk areas in the workplace.

**ROLE OF CAREER TECH:** Oklahoma's economic future is enhanced by the ability of technology centers to provide training for existing business and industry to remain competitive and grow in the marketplace. Frequently, this requires providing the existing workforce with focused safety training. Technology centers respond to these needs by designing customized industry training programs.

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**INITIATIVE TITLE:** Tech Prep

**INITIATIVE SUMMARY:** Through the new Carl Perkins legislation, Tech Prep supports curriculum alignment to industry standards in associate and baccalaureate degree programs that lead to high-wage, high-skill and high-demand careers. Tech Prep challenges adult and high school students through rigorous coursework that prepares them for college transition while they are earning transcribed college credit at technology centers. Tech Prep provides a “fast-track” transition from high school to associate and baccalaureate degree programs and accelerated placement in the workforce.

**ROLE OF CAREER TECH:** ODCTE provides high-quality professional development opportunities for 25 Tech Prep consortia and their members, as well as funding for implementation and local administration activities. ODCTE also provides leadership and assistance in meeting new and more stringent accountability measures of Carl Perkins, including the number and percentage of Tech Prep students who enroll in postsecondary education, the number of those that remediate, and the number that complete associate and baccalaureate degrees.

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**INITIATIVE TITLE:** STEM Initiatives

**INITIATIVE SUMMARY:** ODCTE has been working with several Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) initiatives, including pre-engineering, biomedical sciences and biotechnology. The pre-engineering initiative is the most mature and includes middle school and high school curriculum developed by Project Lead the Way. The Gateway to Technology curriculum is for middle school students, and a series of high school courses include foundational, specialty and capstone options. The biomedical sciences curriculum is also developed by Project Lead The Way and is a series of four courses for high school students who are interested in pursuing bioscience and health professional degrees. The biotechnology initiative is currently being developed at Southern Technology Center in partnership with the Noble Foundation and provides a model for other sites. The series of courses being developed for this initiative include biotech courses as well as two AP science courses.

**ROLE OF CAREER TECH:** ODCTE is providing leadership, resources and support for the development and implementation of the STEM initiatives.

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**INITIATIVE TITLE:** FIRST Robotics

(For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology)

FIRST ROBOTICS

**INITIATIVE SUMMARY:** FIRST Robotics Competition (FRC) is a unique varsity sport of the mind designed to help high school students discover how interesting and rewarding the life of engineers and researchers can be. The FIRST Robotics Competition challenges teams of young people and their mentors to solve a common problem in a six-week timeframe using a standard “kit of parts” and a common set of rules. Teams build robots from the parts and enter them in competitions designed by Dean Kamen, Dr. Woodie Flowers and a committee of engineers and other professionals. Oklahoma hosted a Regional FIRST Competition in the Spring of 2008, and next year’s Regional is already scheduled for February 2009.

**ROLE OF CAREER TECH:** Many of the FIRST Robotics teams from the state of Oklahoma are led by CareerTech instructors. ODCTE staff members provide resources and support for Oklahoma teams and are involved in the Regional Competition planning. They also volunteer to help with the event. For more information, visit the Oklahoma FIRST Web site at [www.oklahomafirst.org](http://www.oklahomafirst.org) or the official FIRST Web site at [www.usfirst.org](http://www.usfirst.org).

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**INITIATIVE TITLE:** Oklahoma Nanotechnology Education Initiative

NANOTECHNOLOGY

**INITIATIVE SUMMARY:** Before 2010, the market for nanotechnology products and services is estimated to reach \$1 trillion in the U.S. economy and will require from 800,000 to two million new workers. To address these workforce needs, the Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education and Oklahoma State University-Institute of Technology have launched the Oklahoma Nanotechnology Education Initiative (ONEI). To advance this initiative, ONEI has been awarded a \$598,000 three-year Advanced Technological Education National Science Foundation grant.

**ROLE OF CAREER TECH:** Nanotechnology is an enabling technology that impacts many CareerTech courses and career disciplines. This three-year grant will help the CareerTech system infuse microtechnology and nanotechnology into CareerTech pre-engineering academies and manufacturing, aviation, health care and automotive courses. OSU-Institute of Technology is developing a two-year associate degree that will advance industries’ use of microtechnology and nanotechnology.

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