

## **Oklahoma Consortium Receives \$3 Million NSF Grant for Cyber Security Education and Workforce Development**

The Oklahoma Center for Information Assurance and Forensics Education (OCIAFE), a consortium of Oklahoma CareerTech centers, four of the state's largest community colleges and the University of Tulsa, has been awarded a prestigious Advanced Technology Education (ATE) Center designation by the National Science Foundation (NSF). The accompanying \$3 million grant over four years will help establish cyber security education and workforce development programs at two-year institutions in Oklahoma and neighboring states.

“The ATE Center will energize our EDGE initiative,” said Oklahoma Governor Brad Henry. “High quality technological education programs are vital to keeping and creating jobs in our state. At the same time, the emphasis on cyber security workforce development will advance infrastructure protection efforts undertaken by industry, government and law enforcement agencies.”

OCIAFE currently incorporates four CareerTech centers (Central Technology Center-Drumright, Moore-Norman Technology Center- Norman, Francis Tuttle Technology Center-Oklahoma City), Oklahoma City Community College, OSU-Okmulgee, Rose State College and Tulsa Community College. The University of Tulsa, a national leader in cyber security education and research, serves as the principal training entity and mentor to the two-year institutions.

With assistance from the University of Tulsa, OCIAFE's two-year institutions have instituted A.S. and A.A.S. degree and certificate programs in cyber security, which are mapped to various certifications (e.g., Cisco, Microsoft, CompTIA and SCP). The academic programs cover the core areas of information assurance, secure electronic commerce, network security, enterprise security management and forensics, embracing their technical, operational and managerial dimensions as well as legal and ethical issues. Articulation agreements between institutions provide students with seamless educational pathways from CareerTech centers and community colleges to four-year colleges and universities. As an ATE Center, OCIAFE will establish similar programs at six additional CareerTech centers and fourteen community colleges in Oklahoma and neighboring states.

“We are delighted to host an ATE Center – it's an incredible opportunity to build Oklahoma's information technology workforce and to provide national leadership in workforce development and training,” said Kathy Taylor, Oklahoma Secretary of Commerce and Tourism. “We will leverage the NSF funding with additional monies from federal, state and private sources to create new high-tech workforce initiatives, including providing students with internships and professional development opportunities.”

OCIAFE institutions currently cover almost 60% of Oklahoma's population and more than 70% of its information technology workforce. Partnerships with universities and two-year institutions will enable the ATE Center to offer education and training opportunities throughout Oklahoma and in major population centers in neighboring states. More than

31,000 individuals will attend technician training, adult reskilling and incumbent workforce training programs over the project period. In addition, at least 2,700 secondary students and adults will attend occupational programs. Since 90% of all these individuals are expected to come from the workforce or enter the workforce upon completion of their studies, the ATE Center will significantly impact workforce development and training in Oklahoma and neighboring states.

“This is a dream come true,” said Dr. Sujeet Sheno, Professor of Computer Science at the University of Tulsa, who spearheads OCIAFE. “The ATE Center is the culmination of three years of hard work involving Dr. Sheryl Hale, from the CareerTech System, and our community college partners. We have trained faculty members, built outstanding academic programs, and won a nationally competitive grant. Now we must develop our workforce. We want to create an ‘Outsource Oklahoma’ phenomenon, where the combination of costs and quality will encourage American companies to send IT security jobs to Oklahoma instead of to India.”

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