

## **Office of Governor Brad Henry**

### **State of Oklahoma**



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## **Oklahoma Schools Win \$3 Million Grant for Cyber Security Education**

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Oklahoma City -- Thanks to a \$3 million grant from the National Science Foundation, Oklahoma will become a national model for cyber security and forensics education. An added benefit, state officials say, will be new jobs and enhanced cyber security for Oklahoma businesses, government and law enforcement agencies.

A consortium of Oklahoma community colleges, CareerTech centers and the University of Tulsa has been awarded the NSF's Advanced Technology Education Center designation, which will provide funds for education and workforce development programs in Oklahoma and neighboring states over a four-year period.

This is the first ATE Center of Excellence in Oklahoma and the nation's second for cyber security education and workforce development. The new center is first in the country to emphasize the emerging field of digital forensics.

The consortium includes CareerTech centers in Drumright, Moore-Norman and Oklahoma City; Oklahoma City Community College; Tulsa Community College; OSU-Okmulgee; and Rose State College. TU, recognized as a national leader in cyber security education and research, serves as the principal training institution and mentor to the two-year schools.

Gov. Brad Henry said the ATE Center of Excellence institutions will be vital to keeping and creating jobs in our state.

"The focus on security and forensics education is critical in a post-9/11 America," he said.

"All businesses and government entities must ensure that their computer networks are secure and reliable. Furthermore, practically every crime now involves electronic evidence, and law enforcement personnel need the expertise to deal with these cases."

Gov. Henry added that Oklahoma's rural areas will also benefit, because of the programs offered by the statewide network of CareerTech centers.

"We worked to ensure that all Oklahomans would have the opportunity to participate in

this high tech growth area," he said.

With the assistance of TU, the CareerTech centers and community colleges have created associate degrees and certificate programs in cyber security that are mapped to Cisco, Microsoft, CISSP and Security+ certifications. The academic programs cover information assurance, secure e-commerce, network security, enterprise security and forensics. In addition, the curriculum addresses technical, operational and managerial aspects, as well as legal and ethical issues raised by cyber security.

"Cyber security represents an important workforce need nationally," explained Corby Hovis, lead program director, Directorate of Education and Human Resources, at the NSF. "The National Science Foundation believes that two-year colleges can play an important role in educating the multitude of IT professionals needed to secure computer networks and investigate security breaches. The Oklahoma center will provide national leadership in meeting this workforce need."

Dr. Sujeet Shenoi, TU professor of computer science, who heads the educational consortium, said the prestigious NSF grant was three years in the making.

"This is a dream come true," said Shenoi, who gave credit to Dr. Sheryl Hale, state coordinator of Adult and Career Development for CareerTech, and the community college partners.

"We have trained faculty members, built outstanding academic programs and won the national competition to be designated an ATE Center. Now we must develop our workforce to attract the multitude of jobs that will follow."

Shenoi said he hopes the center will create an "Outsource Oklahoma" phenomenon, where the combination of costs and quality would encourage American companies to send IT security jobs to Oklahoma instead of countries like India.

"This designation and grant award is an incredible opportunity to grow Oklahoma's high-tech industry and to provide national leadership in workforce development and training," said Kathy Taylor, Oklahoma Secretary of Commerce and Tourism.

"We will leverage the federal grant to create new high-tech workforce initiatives," she stated. These will include providing students with internships and professional development opportunities.

Taylor said Oklahomans can be proud that the state is emerging as a leader in cyber security education and research.

"Very few of these centers of excellence designations are made annually," she emphasized. "This is a reflection of the visionary leadership and academic opportunities offered at the University of Tulsa, Oklahoma CareerTech centers and community colleges."

The consortium of schools – called the Oklahoma Center for Information Assurance and Forensics Education – serves nearly 60 percent of Oklahoma's population and more than 70 percent of the state's information technology workforce. Agreements established between institutions will provide students seamless education pathways from CareerTech centers and community colleges to four-year colleges and universities.

Currently, more than 100 community college students are enrolled in cyber security programs in the state. Plans call for the consortium to establish similar programs at six additional CareerTech centers and 14 community colleges in Oklahoma and neighboring states.

Projections by the consortium call for 31,000 individuals to attend technician training,

adult re-skilling and programs for existing workers over the four-year project period. In addition, 2,700 secondary students will attend occupational programs. Since 90 percent of these students are expected to come from the workforce or enter it upon completion of their studies, the programs will significantly impact workforce development and training in Oklahoma and neighboring states, officials said.

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