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Grant to help state become national cyber-security model

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OKLAHOMA CITY (AP) - A \$3 million grant from the National Science Foundation will enable Oklahoma to become a national model for cyber-security and digital forensics, officials said Wednesday.

A consortium of Oklahoma community colleges, CareerTech centers and the University of Tulsa has been awarded the NSF's Advanced Technology Education Center designation.

An added benefit from the grant and designation, officials said, will be new jobs and improved cyber-security for Oklahoma businesses, government and law enforcement agencies.

"The focus on security and forensics education is critical in post-9-11 America," said Gov. Brad Henry. "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 and the expertise to deal with those cases."

The Oklahoma consortium will be the first in the country to emphasize the emerging field of digital forensics, which involves the extracting, examination and preservation of evidence from cellular phones and other electronic equipment.

The consortium includes CareerTech centers in Drumright, Moore-Norman and Oklahoma City; Oklahoma City Community College; Tulsa Community College; Oklahoma State University -Oklmulgee and Rose State College.

The University of Tulsa, recognized as a national leader in cyber-security education and research, is the principal training institution and mentor to the two-year schools.

"Cyber-security represents an important work force need nationally,"

said Corby Hovis, NSF official. He said the Oklahoma center "will provide national leadership in meeting this work force need."

Sujeet Shenoi, TU professor of computer science, who heads the Oklahoma consortium, said he hopes the center will lead to American companies sending its information technology 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 work force development and training," said Kathy Taylor, Oklahoma secretary of commerce and tourism.

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