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Oklahoma CareerTech develops world-class workforce

The Oklahoma Career and Technology Education System focuses every day on developing a world-class workforce.

“Oklahoma CareerTech partners with business and educational institutions to enhance career awareness, increase educational attainment and meet the needs of our state,” said Marcie Mack, Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education state director. “CareerTech is an integral part of Oklahoma’s economy.”

The Oklahoma CareerTech System is celebrating CareerTech Education Month in February. Gov. Kevin Stitt recently issued a proclamation declaring this month as Career and Technical Education Appreciation Month in Oklahoma.

Stitt has called Oklahoma CareerTech “a system that has been nimble and robust in helping us train the workforce.”

The CareerTech System delivers educational experiences through a network of 394 PK-12 school districts, 29 technology center districts, 16 skills center sites in correctional facilities and 32 adult basic education providers. In fiscal year 2019, CareerTech’s enrollments totaled more than 550,000, and CareerTech System graduates added more than \$3.5 billion to Oklahoma’s economy.

The 29 technology center districts have 58 campuses that offer career training to high school and adult students, along with training and assistance for Oklahoma’s businesses and industries.

High school students can attend the technology centers in their districts for free, learning skills that will help them land good jobs after school and also position them to continue their education after graduation. Certifications earned through CareerTech courses give students entrance into higher-paying careers, which can also help them pursue higher education without incurring excessive debt.

Adult students at technology centers can learn new skills and earn certificates and credentials to get jobs, change careers or advance in their current careers. In FY18, CareerTech students earned 19,566 industry-endorsed certificates, showing that they have the skills Oklahoma’s industries need.

In Oklahoma’s comprehensive school districts, 35 percent of sixth through 12th grade students -- and almost half of ninth through 12th grade students -- enrolled in CareerTech courses: agricultural education; business and information technology education; family and consumer sciences education; health careers education; marketing education; science, technology, engineering and mathematics; and trade and industrial education.

More than 82,000 students also learned leadership skills as members of co-curricular CareerTech student organizations: FFA; Family, Careers and Community Leaders of America; SkillsUSA; Technology Student Association; Business Professionals of America; HOSA; and DECA.

In addition, 3,356 CareerTech students in comprehensive schools and technology centers were honored for their work by achieving membership in the National Technical Honor Society.

In 2019, CareerTech also expanded OK Career Guide, its statewide career development education system, to include Galaxy, which introduces career awareness to pre-K through fifth grade students.

Oklahoma CareerTech helps provide qualified employees for the state's businesses and industries by preparing state residents for successful careers, but it also provides direct services to business and industry.

CareerTech's Business and Industry Services Division helped more than 8,000 companies increase their profitability in FY19 with increased sales, higher productivity, reduced costs and expanded operations and helped companies move to and start in Oklahoma and provided training for 2,527 new jobs. Also, the Oklahoma Bid Assistance Network helped state companies secure more than \$550 million in contracts.

CareerTech also has a presence in state correctional facilities through a partnership with the Oklahoma Department of Corrections. Instructors in the Skills Centers School System teach inmates and juvenile offenders work and life skills that help keep them in the workforce and out of the corrections system after their release. In FY19, more than 2,000 people were enrolled in skills centers, and positive placement -- employment, continuing education or military -- was 89.21 percent.

The CareerTech System also helps those who dropped out of high school earn diplomas and gain skills to enter the workforce through the dropout recovery program. In FY19, 367 people earned a high school diploma through the program.

ODCTE also oversees Oklahoma's adult basic education program, which includes 32 providers offering high school equivalency programs and tests along with English literacy and civics courses at 111 sites. In FY19, 12,647 students enrolled in CareerTech's adult basic education programs.

The Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education provides leadership and resources and assures standards of excellence for a comprehensive statewide system of career and technology education. The system offers programs and services in 29 technology center districts operating on 58 campuses, 394 comprehensive school districts, 16 skills centers campuses that include three juvenile facilities and 32 adult basic education service providers.

The agency is governed by the State Board of Career and Technology Education and works closely with the State Department of Education and the State Regents for Higher Education to provide a seamless educational system for all Oklahomans.