

## CareerTech moving Oklahoma forward

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[U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan](#) commented recently about a [Harvard Graduate School of Education](#) report, "Pathways to Prosperity," which envisions a new system of career and technical education (CTE, called CareerTech in [Oklahoma](#)) that is a radical departure from the vocational education system of the past.

Duncan said the mission of CTE has to be more than earning a diploma and landing a job after high school. It has to be about students earning a postsecondary degree or an industry-recognized certification and landing a job that leads to a successful career.

Our CareerTech system has long been recognized as one of the best in the nation, if not the world. We receive frequent requests from other states and countries to learn more about how Oklahoma delivers CareerTech education. So it is no surprise that Oklahoma is ahead of the curve and doing just what Duncan suggests - preparing students for successful careers and helping Oklahoma companies and industries thrive.

Last year, half of Oklahoma high schools students, or 89,036 students, were enrolled in CareerTech classes. And nearly 71,000 students learned important leadership skills as members of CareerTech student organizations.

During the 2009-10 academic year, students were enrolled in more than 73,000 college credit hours through a partnership with Oklahoma higher education called Cooperative Alliances.

High school students in these alliances pay only \$8 per credit hour for administrative costs. For many of these students the cost is waived and they are earning free college credit toward an associate of applied degree. Adults pay the administrative costs and regular technology center tuition.

While offerings for high school students comprise a large part of CareerTech education in Oklahoma (154,492 enrollments), our system's largest enrollments are for business and industry training.

Last year CareerTech helped more than 7,000 companies increase sales, improve productivity, reduce costs and expand operations. Through Training for Industry Program funding, CareerTech was an incentive for companies to locate in Oklahoma and provided training for 5,198 new jobs in 2010.

CareerTech also helped 969 Oklahoma companies secure more than \$218 million in contracts through the Oklahoma Bid Assistance Network, whose coordinators throughout the state help companies compete for federal contracts.

Our state's CareerTech system is committed to leading Oklahoma in work force development and job creation. One of the strengths of Oklahoma's CareerTech system is the accessibility to citizens of our state.

That sentiment was confirmed in a recent survey conducted by [Cole Hargrave Snodgrass](#) and Associates. Eighty-four percent of those surveyed believe taxpayer money used to operate the system and its member institutions is a wise investment, and respondents revealed a high level of satisfaction for the services provided.

With stimulus funds expended and the Rainy Day Fund depleted, the only way to grow Oklahoma's economy is through new jobs, work force development and business expansion. Now, more than ever, the individuals and businesses in our state need the services CareerTech provides to keep Oklahoma moving forward.

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