Gov. Fallin Visits UCO to Announce Plan to Increase College Graduates

Gov. Mary Fallin and a group of key state leaders were at UCO in late September to unveil a plan to increase the number of Oklahomans with college degrees.

“Oklahoma is not producing enough college graduates and that’s a disadvantage to Oklahoma,” Gov. Fallin said.

A business environment that fosters economic growth and job creation must have an educated workforce. Studies show that by the end of the decade, 60 percent of jobs will require a college degree. Today, only a third of Oklahomans are college graduates. That’s lower than Texas and far below many Northeastern states where half the population is college educated.

That’s not good enough, Gov. Fallin said, calling for the state to increase the number of Oklahomans getting a college degree by 67 percent over the next 12 years.

Joining Gov. Fallin were Chancellor Glen Johnson, Oklahoma Secretary of Commerce Dave Lopez and Oklahoma Secretary of Education Phyllis Hudecki.

To increase the number of Oklahoma college graduates, the plan unveiled includes revamping college remedial courses, making transferring college credits easier, aligning degrees with business needs, encouraging students to finish degrees on time and encouraging more adults to go back to school. More support needs to be given to existing programs like Reach Higher and Oklahoma Brain Gain.

“I thank the governor and the chancellor for making explicit what we know: Education matters to the future of our families, communities and states,” Central President Don Betz, Ph.D., said. “As for the University of Central Oklahoma, our location, program array and reputation combine to emphasize the collaborative role we will play.”

Oklahoma is one of 29 states to become part of the national initiative called Complete College America, supported by five national foundations — the Bill and Melinda Gates, the Carnegie, the Ford, the Lumina and the W.K. Kellogg.

Complete College America has asked Oklahoma to serve as a model for other states.
UCO Earns National Recognitions

National recognitions just seem to keep coming to Central!

U.S. News & World Report recently ranked Central as the top public regional university in Oklahoma in the magazine’s list of 2012 Best Colleges — No. 81 in the Tier One “Regional Universities: West” category.

Better yet, it’s a first for Central to be listed among the Tier One universities. That recognition followed Forbes magazine naming Central to its list of the nation’s 650 best undergraduate institutions. Only three Oklahoma public universities made the list — Central, the University of Oklahoma and Oklahoma State University.

Central also recently was named one of the nation’s “Great Colleges to Work For” by The Chronicle of Higher Education. This was the third time in the last four years UCO achieved this honor.

Central President Don Betz, Ph.D., said the honors recognize the university’s deliberate, creative and collaborative efforts to prepare students to live meaningful lives, achieve their goals and serve their communities.

“This is how we believe this institution best serves the community,” he said.

Add to all that, CNBC recently ranked Edmond as No. 1 on its Top Ten List of Perfect Suburbs. The community was noted for being safer from crime than 71 percent of U.S. communities and for its low 4.9 percent unemployment rate; better public schools than 59 percent of all U.S. communities; and better than 96 percent of Oklahoma schools. Best of all, almost half of Edmond’s populace — 47.8 percent — hold four-year college degrees, another sign of a great community, according to the CNBC poll.

UCO Professors Receive Fulbrights

Two UCO professors — Wei Chen, Ph.D., and David Hartmann, Ph.D. — received grants from the J. William Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board, allowing them to work abroad for the 2011-12 academic years.

Chen and Hartmann are among 1,100 U.S. faculty and professionals awarded a Fulbright Scholar grant. Chen is using his to teach a biomedical engineering course at the National Yang Ming University in Taiwan and conduct research in the area of laser nanotechnology for cancer treatment. Hartmann is teaching a course in business decision science at the undergraduate and graduate levels at the College of Business Administration in Jeddah, Saudia Arabia. Both plan to return to Central where they will share their experiences in and out of the classroom.

Recipients of Fulbright awards are selected on the basis of academic and professional achievement, as well as demonstrated leadership in their fields.

In 2008, Chen was named a U.S. Professor of the Year by the Council for Advancement and Support of Education. The Oklahoma Foundation for Excellence earlier this year awarded Chen the Oklahoma Medal for Excellence in Teaching at a Regional University/Community. When he returns from Taiwan, Chen will resume his duties as assistant dean of Central’s College of Mathematics and Science.
Big Name Visitors Enhance the Central Experience

Central has hosted a number of national figures this fall semester, ranging from a Pulitzer-Prize winning journalist to a legendary entertainer.


Los Angeles Times reporter and Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Dave Willman came to campus to discuss his book, “The Mirage Man: Bruce Ivins, the Anthrax Attacks and America’s Rush to War.”

Nationally acclaimed psychologist and two-time Pulitzer nominee Daniel Goleman made two campus presentations. Topics included ideas for promoting emotional and social intelligence in classrooms, workshops, families and business. Recently honored by The Wall Street Journal as a “Top 10 Influential Business Thinker,” he is the author of “Emotional Intelligence,” translated into 40 languages.

ACM@UCO gets Home Of Its Own

The Academy of Contemporary Music at the University of Central Oklahoma now has a home to call its own.

Purchase of the Oklahoma Hardware Building closed in August, just in time for a record enrollment of more than 500 students.

The ACM@UCO began leasing space in the building when it opened just two years ago in Oklahoma City’s Bricktown district — where students and area merchants have formed a thriving symbiotic relationship with student performances attracting customers.

Purchasing the 65,000-square-foot structure at a cost of $6.5 million made sense because of the program’s growing enrollment and space needs, Steve Kreidler, UCO executive vice president, said.

Important to note, however, is that the ACM@UCO’s operating costs do not use any state resources. The program, including the purchase of the building, is 100 percent paid by tuition and fees, with support from donors and sponsors — and now lease payments from the building’s first floor tenants.

When launched in 2009, the program immediately attracted attention as the nation’s “School of Rock” with its affiliation with ACM in Guildford, England. Scott Booker, manager of the multi-Grammy winning Flaming Lips, became the school’s chief executive officer. He has repeatedly kept his promise to provide students master classes with top performers, including The Who’s Roger Daltrey, Rock and Roll Hall of Fame inductee Jackson Browne, blues guitarist Joe Bonamassa and the Flaming Lips’ Steven Drozd.

ACM@UCO initially offered two-year associate degree programs in bass, drums, guitar, keyboard, music production and vocals. Students now also may earn an associate degree in Applied Science in Music Business as well as a bachelor’s in Applied Technology in Contemporary Music — all while experiencing a “real world” sense of the music industry.

UCO’s Broadway Tonight brought Academy Award-winner Olympia Dukakis to campus in September for a weekend of performances of her one-woman play, “Rose.” As part of her visit, she conducted a master class for Central Theatre and Music Theatre students.

To keep up-to-date on future campus presentations, visit www.uco.edu.
Retired President Webb Honored In Special Ways Close to His Heart

Retired Central President W. Roger Webb, J.D., and his 14 years of service to UCO have been honored in a number of ways, but perhaps none more fitting than a Criminal Justice scholarship in his name and the renaming of a building close to his heart.

The UCO Forensic Science Institute is being renamed the W. Roger Webb Forensic Science Institute. Plans are to have the new name displayed in three places, including on the rotunda area of the building that faces Second Street, across from the Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation’s forensic laboratory.

Webb is given credit for envisioning Central and the Edmond community becoming a hub for forensic science education and investigations. He worked to bring the OSBI laboratory to Edmond. Forensic Science Institute Director Dwight Adams, Ph.D., credits Webb’s persistence with getting him to retire as head of the FBI Laboratory at Quantico, Va., and come to Central to start the institute, which also brings in law enforcement and forensic specialists from around the world for training and seminars. In May, Central’s first student graduated with a master’s degree in Forensic Science.

To solidify the idea of Webb forever leaving his fingerprints on the UCO Forensic Science Institute, designers put his actual enlarged fingerprint — complete with a DNA code — across the north corner of the two-story rotunda windows.

Also honoring Webb, the UCO Foundation has created the W. Roger Webb Endowed Scholarship for Criminal Justice or Counterterrorism. Instrumental in developing the scholarship were Regents Richard Ogden, J.D., and Belva Howard with the Regional University System of Oklahoma (RUSO).

The scholarship honors not only Webb’s time at Central, but also his 12 years of work with the Oklahoma Department of Public Safety, including serving as the Commissioner of Public Safety for the State of Oklahoma.

Webb continues to serve on the board of directors for the Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism.

Fall Enrollment Hits Another Record

Central’s fall semester enrollment hit another milestone — a record 17,239 students choosing Central.

The increase marks the third consecutive year of record-setting fall enrollment, topping last year’s 17,101 students. Enrollment also posted a 1.1 percent rise in first-time transfer students, a 1.7 percent increase in graduate students, and a record number of credit hours, up 2 percent to 195,016.

The largest percentage increase came in international student enrollment, up 19.4 percent from 1,031 students in fall 2010 to 1,231 for fall 2011.

“Students recognize that Central is an innovative, metropolitan learning community in the right location for accessibility,” Myron Pope, Ed.D., vice president of enrollment management, said. “They also see it as a smart investment for success.”

Forensic Science Institute, designers put his actual enlarged fingerprint — complete with a DNA code — across the north corner of the two-story rotunda windows.