To advance understanding of how socio-ecological systems can adapt sustainably to climate change, Oklahoma has been awarded $20 million over five years from the National Science Foundation (NSF) Experimental Program to Stimulate Competitive Research (EPSCoR).

The NSF EPSCoR award will facilitate research and learning opportunities for college faculty, college students and K-12 students. The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education will provide an annual $800,000 match.

"This award will strengthen Oklahoma's capacity to perform cutting-edge research that will benefit the state," said Chancellor Glen D. Johnson. "Through EPSCoR, we will be able to broaden participation in the science, technology, engineering and mathematics fields, resulting in a more educated and diverse scientific workforce for our state's economy."

The knowledge gained during the project will be used to empower managers to effectively adapt socio-ecological systems to climate variability and to educate Oklahomans about the expected consequences of regional environmental change.

"The new program will continue our efforts to develop the capacity and capability to conduct nationally and internationally competitive research in the state of Oklahoma," said Dr. Jerry Malayer, Oklahoma EPSCoR state program director.

"In addition, the program integrates research and education, offering research opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students and educational outreach initiatives for K-12 public schools."

The NSF award is a multi-institutional collaborative project that includes researchers from the state’s research-intensive institutions (OU, OSU, TU, SRNF), as well as regional colleges, tribal colleges and the state’s lone historically black college, Langston University.

The award will be managed by Dr. James Wicksted, principal investigator, OSU professor and director of multidisciplinary research, and Oklahoma EPSCoR associate director. Dr. Alicia Knoedler, associate vice president for research and director of the Center for Research Program Development and Enrichment at OU, will serve as the co-principal investigator.

EPSCoR, originally developed by NSF, is designed to expand research opportunities in states that have traditionally received less funding in federal support for university research. Oklahoma EPSCoR is a partnership among colleges and universities, industry and research institutions. Its mission is to make Oklahoma researchers more successful in competing for research funding.

Pictured: OU Vice President for Research Dr. Kelvin Droegemeier at the National Weather Center in Norman, Oklahoma.
The National Science Foundation (NSF) and the Oklahoma Experimental Program to Stimulate Competitive Research (EPSCoR) held Oklahoma NSF Day on Jan. 8, 2013, on The University of Tulsa campus to provide Oklahoma researchers with insight into the Foundation, its mission, priorities and funding opportunities. More than 150 people from institutions across the state participated.

NSF presenter George Wilson shared information about the NSF proposal and merit review process with attendees, while representatives from the seven NSF directorates, the Office of International Science and Engineering, and the Office of Integrative Activities made presentations on their individual programs. Topics included: biological sciences, education and human resources, engineering, geosciences, mathematical and physical sciences, social and economic sciences, computer and information science and engineering, as well as cross-disciplinary and special interest programs.

Program directors hosted afternoon breakout sessions related to their NSF focus areas, and workshop attendees had the opportunity to informally discuss potential research proposals with NSF staff during those sessions.

“This was my first EPSCoR NSF Day,” shared attendee Marilyn Korhonen. “The topics were perfect. It was wonderful to have so many program officers there at one time; they were very inviting and approachable,” she said.

Fellow attendee Dr. Joshua Li, Oklahoma State University professor of civil and environmental engineering, said he viewed his NSF Day experience as a valuable educational opportunity.

“As a new faculty member, I learned a lot from the workshop. Now it is much clearer to me how I can fit in the NSF programs,” Li said.

Oklahoma EPSCoR was established by the National Science Foundation in 1985 to strengthen Oklahoma’s exploration and growth in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. The program is also funded through an award from the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education.
Comanche Nation College (CNC), the first and oldest tribal college in Oklahoma, has reached a milestone in its quest for accreditation. On Nov. 1 the Board of Trustees for the North Central Association-Higher Learning Commission voted to grant Comanche Nation College “the status of candidate for accreditation,” according to a letter from NCA-HLC President Sylvia Manning.

“This journey has taken Comanche Nation College four years to accomplish and is indeed an accomplishment to celebrate, as we are now the first Oklahoma tribal college with initial candidacy,” said Consuelo Lopez, college president, in a letter to supporters. “The accreditation will give us the ability to provide students with financial aid, thereby giving us independence to meet the needs of our community and better serve our students.”

“With candidate for accreditation status, CNC is now approved to offer certificates and associate-level degrees to our students,” said Gene Pekah, college dean of student services.

Partnerships with programs such as the Oklahoma Experimental Program to Stimulate Competitive Research (OK EPSCoR) have played a significant role in the tribal college’s growth and quest for accreditation, according to Pekah.

“Through the EPSCoR partnership, we have been able to build a science department and cyber infrastructure platform that includes equipment most colleges take for granted,” explained Pekah. “Without EPSCoR we would not have funds to provide our students with these invaluable resources.”

The granting of candidate for accreditation status is based on a self-study written by Comanche Nation College, a report by an evaluation team appointed by NCA-HLC, a report to the NCA-HLC Institutional Actions Council Hearing Committee, and successful responses by Comanche Nation College to these reports.

Although the period of candidacy is four years, Lopez noted in a letter to college supporters that an application for early initial accreditation may be filed in as few as two years.

“Oklahoma EPSCoR offers CNC our congratulations on this prestigious accomplishment,” said James P. Wicksted, Oklahoma EPSCoR associate director. “We look forward to continuing our partnership with the college and assisting in their journey to full accreditation.”

OK EPSCoR’s central goal is to increase science, technology, engineering and mathematics research in Oklahoma through strategic support of research instruments and facilities, research collaborations, and integrated education and research programs such as those at Comanche Nation College.
HOW TO GET INVOLVED:
405.744.9964
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Because
STEM is a part of Oklahoma’s Future.

The Oklahoma Experimental Program to Stimulate Competitive Research (OK EPSCoR) was established by the National Science Foundation in 1985 to strengthen Oklahoma’s exploration and growth in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. OK EPSCoR’s central goal is to increase the state’s research competitiveness through strategic support of research instruments and facilities, research collaborations, and integrated education and research programs.

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