

SWOSU & WestOak Industries Honored by State Regents

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Southwestern Oklahoma State University in Weatherford and Sayre and WestOak Industries Inc. were recently recognized by the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education for their partnership. At the ceremony were (from left): SWOSU President John Hays and Oklahoma Alliance for Manufacturing Excellence Agent Paul Walenciak; SWOSU Small Business Development Council Coordinator Doug Misak; WestOak Industries General Manager Larry Rosson; and State Regents Vice Chancellor Sid Hudson. Both Misak and Walenciak work in SWOSU's Center for Economic & Business Development.

Southwestern Oklahoma State University was among 22 institutions throughout the state recently recognized for their outstanding partnerships with community businesses.

The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education's Economic Development Grant for the Partnership Recognition Program is designed to highlight successful partnerships between higher education institutions and businesses and to further cultivate the higher learning environment through State Regents' Economic Development Grants.

WestOak Industries Inc. and SWOSU have partnered together to offer business student interns the opportunity to gain practical experience in serving in an advisory capacity for small business owners.

WestOak Industries has been a leading Oklahoma manufacturer of circuit board assembly since 1973. After communicating at length with the company's general manager, Larry Rosson, it was determined that SWOSU student interns should conduct a market analysis to determine where the company stood, relative to its competitors and how the industry has changed in recent years. The market analysis performed by SWOSU interns showed WestOak Industries ways in which they could improve their market potential. As a second project with WestOak Industries, SWOSU student interns conducted a capital asset acquisition study.

SWOSU student interns learned valuable research skills that will carry over to future projects. They also learned how to use the North American Industry Classification System to identify potential competitors, suppliers and customers. Finally, students learned how to create a quality questionnaire, which helped them interview competitors for the market analysis.

The partnership established between WestOak Industries and SWOSU provided both entities with valuable information and experiences. WestOak Industries gained valuable information to help them enhance their business and the student interns gained valuable experiences that can only be learned through hands-on processes.

"If we're to improve Oklahoma's future, we need creative collaborations like this program," said Chancellor Glen D. Johnson. "The partnership between business and higher education benefits us threefold: businesses retain employees, employees improve their education, and immediate needs are solved in Oklahoma's economy."

Institutions involved in these partnerships provide \$500 for tuition waivers to employees of the partnering businesses, internships for current students of the institutions to work at the partnering businesses, or faculty externships with the partnering businesses. The State Regents provide a \$500 match to the waivers.

The Partnership Recognition Program is an annual event. For more information, visit www.okhighered.org/eco-devo.