

SWOSU Awarded \$485,498 USDA Distance Learning Grant

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Southwestern Oklahoma State University has been awarded a \$485,498 grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture to assist with equipment and other needs to deliver college classes in rural schools and also help in the project of reducing the shortage of certified teachers in the districts.

The distance learning and telemedicine grant was received by Marci Grant, director of the SWOSU Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning on the Weatherford campus.

Grant said the funds will purchase equipment to replace aging videoconferencing equipment on both the Weatherford and Sayre campuses. Ten high schools and one technical center will also receive interactive video equipment that will enable students to concurrently enroll in college courses. Receiving equipment are:

- *Arapaho-Butler School District
- *Canute Public Schools
- *Carnegie Public Schools
- *Clinton Public Schools
- *Central Technology Center in Drumright
- *Geary Public Schools
- *Hooker Public Schools
- *Hydro-Eakly Public Schools
- *Hammon Public Schools
- * Leedey Public Schools
- *Reydon Public Schools

“We are excited to provide state-of-the-art technology so that high school students and adult learners have access to undergraduate and graduate college courses,” Grant said.

SWOSU-Weatherford will upgrade three new interactive video conferencing classrooms that will be dedicated to delivering college courses to all of the hub/end-user sites in the project.

SWOSU-Sayre will receive upgrades to three interactive video conferencing classrooms that will be dedicated to delivering college courses to 10 high schools included in the project. The Sayre campus will also receive three interactive video conferencing classroom upgrades that will be dedicated to receiving college courses from SWOSU-Weatherford.

SWOSU Vice President for Academic Affairs Dr. James South said the university is proud of Grant and Dr. Yolanda Carr (SWOSU Office for Sponsored Programs) for working to secure this federal grant of nearly \$500,000 to enhance the university’s outreach operations.

USDA Rural Development has provided \$239.5 million for 729 distance learning projects in rural areas nationwide since 2009. USDA’s Rural Utilities Service, which

administers the distance learning program, also offers infrastructure programs that bring broadband, safe drinking water and improved wastewater treatment facilities to rural communities.