Meeting Oklahoma’s Need for Educators

The College of Education is helping meet national and state needs for teachers through a pair of grant programs, the Teacher Education Assistance for College and Higher Education and the Teacher Shortage Employment Incentive Program.

“We encourage our teacher education students to consider taking advantage of the TEACH and TSEIP grants,” says Bob Davis, associate dean and director of student services for the College of Education.

“Both programs offer significant financial incentive to students and graduates while providing highly qualified and well prepared teachers in key subjects and areas for Oklahoma and beyond. It’s a win-win situation.”

Teacher Education Assistance for College and Higher Education

A federal program administers the Teacher Education Assistance for College and Higher Education, TEACH, grants. The grants provide educational funding for undergraduate and graduate students who commit to teaching in a high-need field in a low-income district for four years within the first eight years after graduation.

The TEACH grant is available to students pursuing undergraduate or graduate degrees in shortage areas, including secondary education mathematics and science or foreign language education for pre-kindergarten through grade 12. The grant is also available for students pursuing a graduate degree in special education at OSU.

To qualify for the TEACH grant, students must score above the 75th percentile on any subset of the ACT or SAT or have a high school and college grade-point average of 3.25 or higher. The grant also requires that students maintain the same GPA to continue receiving funding.

During the 2009-10 academic year, 82 OSU students used TEACH grants.

Teacher Shortage Employment Incentive Program

In an effort to recruit mathematics and science teachers, Oklahoma offers financial incentive through the Teacher Shortage Employment Incentive Program. Students who have graduated from an accredited teacher education program in Oklahoma can receive reimbursement for eligible student loan expenses or an equivalent cash benefit by committing to teach in an Oklahoma public secondary school for at least five years.

To date, 116 OSU graduates are part of TSEIP.

The annual award is based on a formula not to exceed three times the average annual cost of undergraduate tuition and fees at institutions in the state that offer teacher education. For example, the amount for the 2009 award was $13,602. Teachers receive the funds at the conclusion of their fifth year of service.

In 2009, 12 of the 21 teachers completing five years of service graduated from OSU. One of those, Jill Ireland Bloyd, 2004 secondary mathematics education graduate, recommends TSEIP.

“I am very thankful that I had the opportunity to get my education from OSU. The College of Education prepared me well for many situations I have faced in my first five years of teaching,” she says.

“I am also very thankful for the TSEIP program, and I would strongly encourage any student who plans to teach science or math in Oklahoma to sign up.”

PHOTOGRAPHY GARY LAWSON
A TEACH grant is helping Destiny Murray continue her studies in OSU’s special education program, which allows students to complete both a bachelor’s degree and master’s degree in five years.
For Destiny Murray,
TEACH, the Teacher Education Assistance for College and Higher Education grant, made perfect sense.

When she arrived at OSU from Southeast High School in Oklahoma City, Murray knew she wanted to be a teacher. After considering secondary mathematics, she changed her major to elementary education.

She further defined her career path when she took the special education introductory course, “Educating the Exceptional Learner,” taught by assistant professor Jamie Van Dycke.

“My cousin has a learning disability, and I tutored her. It wasn’t that effective. I kept thinking, ‘What can I do to help her,’ and I didn’t know. I didn’t have any tools or knowledge,” Murray says.

“I went to Dr. Van Dycke’s class, and I thought, ‘Wow.’ Everything she said was applicable to all students. You have students with disabilities and those without. The teacher has to reach all of them.”
Murray says the class changed her. Van Dycke introduced the college’s relatively new special education program, which allows students to complete both a bachelor’s degree and master’s degree in five years, and outlined ways to help pay for it.

Murray’s scholarships and financial aid expired after four years at OSU, and the TEACH grant gave Murray the final push to delay graduation and continue in the special education program. She had a strong desire to teach in a low-income school and using the TEACH grant offered the opportunity to help pay for an extra year of school.

She has already seen the additional education pay off.

“I tutored my cousin again this summer, and it worked better. I have learned how to assess a student with disabilities and develop individualized lesson plans. I think majoring in special education is going to make me a better teacher. I’m more confident going into the classroom,” she says.

Murray encourages other teacher education majors to consider pursuing the special education degree with the help of a TEACH grant.

Every class has students with disabilities, and being prepared is the way to become an effective teacher for all the students, she says.

Murray finished her course work during the fall semester and is performing her student teaching this spring. After graduating, she hopes to move to Georgia and teach in a low-income school.

“I am interested in teaching fourth grade,” she says. “I would love to split my time or co-teach in both general and special education.”

Additional details at http://www.okhighered.org/tseip
To learn more about these programs, contact:

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Each fall, the College of Education teams with the School of International Studies to host an International Fair at OSU. More than 400 area fourth-grade children experience the culture of countries from around the world as international student presenters teach about their cultures through hands-on activities.

College faculty and pre-service teachers are involved in the planning and execution of the event, which the College of Education and the School of International Studies established in 2005. A grant from the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education’s Minority Teacher Recruitment funds the annual fair.