

2020 Hall of Fame



Dr. Stephen Smith

Dr. Stephen E. Smith has spent the majority of his career in education, in public schools, the Career Tech system and higher education. He began his career as a high school assistant, principal and coach at Stigler Public Schools. Upon leaving Stigler, he was hired as an assistant principal at Stillwater High School, where he became one of the state's leaders in the development of the Teachers as Advisors program. He presented the concepts of this program to more than 100 public schools across Oklahoma and was also named as a two-time finalist for Assistant Principal of the Year in the state of Oklahoma. After his tenure with Stillwater Public Schools, Dr. Smith remained in Stillwater and was named the director of Full-Time Instructional Programs at Meridian Technology Center. During his time in this position, he assisted with the development of the first precision metal fabrication program in Oklahoma, as well as one of the first bio-technology programs. At the time of their development, both programs were considered cutting-edge training programs throughout the state.

Dr. Smith joined Eastern Oklahoma State College as the dean of the McAlester Campus in July 2005. He became Eastern's 20th president on March 28, 2007. Upon his appointment as president, Dr. Smith was 38 years of age, making him the youngest college president in the state at that time. He remained in the position until his retirement in June 2020. Dr. Smith had a role in many significant achievements during his tenure as president, including earning a number one ranking in the state for Eastern's nursing program, the development of five fully online degree programs, awards of more than \$40 million in grant funding and Eastern's positive role in regional economic development. Eastern received its largest endowed scholarship gift in the college's 111-year history in 2016 with a \$1 million donation from Pete Tourtellotte and his family in honor of their father, former president E.E. Tourtellotte. Additional fundraising efforts have resulted in about \$3 million in donations and gifts to the EOOSC Foundation and college. Dr. Smith also established Eastern's Sapphire Ball, an annual event to recognize alumni, employees and community supporters. In 10 years, the event has raised more than \$136,000 for student scholarships. Efforts to advance Eastern's academic programs include the completion of the Higher Learning Commission's five-year Assessment Academy to improve student learning outcomes, the development of the college's first study abroad program, the launch of five fully online degree programs, and the introduction of new degree programs in respiratory therapy and ranch management–stocker operations. In 2017, Eastern received a 10-year reaffirmation of its accreditation from the Higher Learning Commission.

In 2015, Eastern launched Mountaineer Radio, a 25,000 watt commercial radio station that reaches into five counties in the college's service area. Students in the mass communication degree program serve as interns and on-air personalities, producing news and weather reports, public service announcements and providing play-by-play and color commentary during local sports broadcasts. Eastern added men's and women's soccer to its athletics program in 2014, bringing in an additional 40 students annually and adding international diversity to the student population. During Dr. Smith's tenure, there were numerous improvements and renovations to facilities in both Wilburton and McAlester. Construction of a new student center was completed in 2009, the first new building on campus in 40 years. New apartment-style student housing opened in 2012, and two state-of-the-art greenhouses were built to support Eastern's agriculture students and aquaponics programs.

Dr. Smith has also led several efforts to improve community outreach in southeast Oklahoma. He established the Four County Small Business Consortium, in partnership with the Oklahoma Small Business Development Center, to offer no cost entrepreneurial and small business management advising to help Oklahomans start and grow small businesses. The Consortium serves citizens in Latimer, Pittsburg, Haskell and LeFlore counties. He also helped develop the Career and College Expo, a hands-on experience designed to encourage eighth grade students to think about their future education and career goals and take the necessary steps to work toward them. A native of southeast Oklahoma and member of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, Dr. Smith graduated from Quinton High School and earned a bachelor's and master's degree in education from Northeastern State University. He also earned an education specialist and doctorate in educational leadership from Oklahoma State University. Dr. Smith received national recognition for his research on the transition of dependent school district students to independent school districts in Oklahoma.