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NSU launches center to coordinate regional economic development, outreach support

(Tahlequah, Okla.)—Northeastern State University is consolidating its outreach efforts to better serve northeastern Oklahoma by creating a [Center for Regional and International Partnerships](#).

The Center will be directed by Dr. Dilene Crockett, an associate professor of business at NSU, and staffed by Barry Clark, a former regional director for the Oklahoma Department of Commerce; and Dessie Apostolova, the former director of International Trade for ODOC.

According to Provost Martin Tadlock, the center is the result of a year's worth of institutional discussion on how NSU can best serve the needs of its 21-county service area. The conversation evolved from two Regional Summits that are resulting in the development of a regional strategic plan.

The 14-county plan addresses such issues as workforce development, natural resources and tourism, entrepreneurship, infrastructure, family and social issues, and a regional public policy agenda.

Through its strategic plan, NSU has been considering the most effective ways to support the plan by helping to build sustainable communities that balance economic development, environmental stewardship and healthy families and schools.

The Center will serve as a "front porch" to community members, especially for those involved in regional development within their communities and businesses, Tadlock said.

"Creation of the Center for Regional and International Partnerships is a significant addition to the regional development efforts already underway at Northeastern State University. Barry Clark, Dessie Apostolova, and Dilene Crockett will work with our staff who are already engaged in reaching into the region through NSU's Business Service Center, our Office of Continuing Education, and the College of Extended Learning to coordinate our outreach effort.

"The work we are doing in partnership with others already enhances the quality of life for those living in northeastern Oklahoma," Tadlock said. "The addition of this Center will strengthen that work by bringing additional economic development opportunities to the region."

Crockett will coordinate the activities of the Center, which will serve as an umbrella organization for NSU outreach activities, bringing together regional and international partners to invest in northeastern Oklahoma. The Center will be the only one in the state of Oklahoma that is designated to work with the U.S. State Department's EB-5 program that encourages international investment in the U.S. to create jobs, provide for new business start-ups, and assist existing businesses to expand.

Crockett will work with others to coordinate NSU outreach efforts such as those provided by NSU's Business Services Center, the College of Extended Learning, and Continuing Education. In the future, she will coordinate with others to maximize the impact of two strategic planning initiatives: a Civic Engagement Center and an Office of Sustainability.

Funding for the Center for Regional and International Partnerships will come from external contracts and will be self-sustaining. The Center will be housed at the NSU-Broken Arrow campus the first year with plans to establish offices at NSU-Muskogee and NSU-Tahlequah in succeeding years, Tadlock said.

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