

The Career Discovery Day idea was sparked when two high school students shadowing Senator Paddock at the Oklahoma State Capitol didn't know what their future career plans were. Their answers illustrated a disconnect between awareness of available jobs, training requirements for these jobs, and how students could utilize existing programs to receive training before graduation.

Southern Workforce Board, Inc., being a partner in both the Pontotoc and Garvin County Career Days and working with Senator Paddock felt it was important to have a Career Discovery Day in each county of Oklahoma. Bryan County held its inaugural "It Starts Now" Career Discovery Day on January 7, 2015, at Southeastern Oklahoma State University in Durant. Over 600 students from nine schools, and 95 volunteers were at the event.

Each eighth-grade student attended an opening session, a general session which covered soft skills, three breakout sessions based on their career interests, and a closing session which reviewed what they had learned for the day with a motivational speaker.

The sessions are intended to inform students of occupations available throughout the region, qualifications for these positions, as well as the importance of staying in school and finishing some kind of post-secondary education.

Southeastern Oklahoma State University continues to host this annual event each spring, along with sponsors from the Southern Workforce Board and the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma. Many SE alumni look forward to returning to campus as guest speakers each year to educate students about their career options and the companies for which they work.

Additional partners of the event are: area school districts, Kiamichi Tech, Choctaw Nation Career Development, Choctaw Nation Workforce, AllianceHealth Hospital, Durant Chamber of Commerce, and various local business owners.