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Science, math school requires more support

The recent Governor's Conference on STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) has prompted a statewide dialogue on the critical importance of developing a workforce with diverse technical aptitudes and abilities.

Part of that dialogue needs to be about increasing state funding and support for the Oklahoma School of Science and Mathematics (OSSM), an amazing two-year STEM high school that launches 65 to 80 graduates every year who become scientists, engineers and critical thinkers in dozens of professional fields.

Some may feel that the school is elitist because it seeks to give a STEM education to our best and brightest students. I think the opposite is true. In this day and age, there is nothing elitist about a high school curriculum that delivers an outstanding college level education in STEM. The demand for these skills over the next 10 years is forecast to grow at double the rate of other



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jobs.

The Oklahoma School of Science and Mathematics accepts students from all 77 of Oklahoma's counties, providing one of the finest academic high school educations in the country, completely free for Oklahoma residents. There are no fees. Zero. Not for tuition or books. Not for room and board. Not for tutoring or mentoring.

The school also accepts students from some rural counties at a much higher rate than from urban/suburban areas. In addition, OSSM has a system of Regional Centers that provide calculus and calculus-based physics in less populated areas such as Afton, Poteau and Drumright.

Another misconception

DID YOU KNOW?

The Oklahoma School of Science and Mathematics is the only high school in Oklahoma to teach geosciences and advanced computer science courses.

is that only students who have taken a bunch of advanced placement courses and have stratospheric ACT scores can be accepted to OSSM.

OSSM recognizes that some students come from schools where resources are limited.

Though they have good grades and good instincts, these students may lack the opportunities of students from better-equipped suburban schools. OSSM accepts these students if they have curiosity, a willingness to work hard, and the determination to accomplish their goals. Over the years, students from a wide range of backgrounds and schools have excelled at OSSM.

The school is rigorous. The pace is accelerated. Students are completely

immersed in the learning experience and challenged across the entire curriculum. Twice a month, they have tests on Saturday. Between classes, they don't go back to the dorm and play video games. They have at least two full hours of study time every night.

The bottom line is that if you have a child, teach a student or even know of a young person who is hard-working, determined and wants to make a difference in the world through the use of science, technology, engineering, or mathematics, OSSM is the ideal place to prepare them for their future.

Scott Meacham is president and CEO of i2E Inc, a nonprofit corporation that mentors many of the state's technology-based startup companies. i2E receives state appropriations from the Oklahoma Center for the Advancement of Science and Technology. Contact Meacham at i2E_Comments@i2E.org.