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**WORKFORCE, COMMERCE TRANSITION TO CREATE COLLABORATION TO ADDRESS  
WORKFORCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEMANDS**

Sean Kouplen, Oklahoma Secretary of Commerce & Workforce Development, announced that the administrative entity of the Oklahoma Office of Workforce Development (OOWD) will transition from OSU-OKC to the Oklahoma Department of Commerce (Commerce), effective January 1, 2020. Kouplen also announced the hire of OOWD's executive director, Don Morris.

Morris is a 27-year Human Resources executive, leading large healthcare systems in Lawton, Wichita and, most recently, Tulsa. He recently retired as Division Head of Human Resources for the Hillcrest Healthcare System in Tulsa with over 6,500 employees. His responsibilities included recruitment, metrics, compensation, performance and training. As a client of Oklahoma's workforce system, he brings a unique perspective to workforce development in our state.

"By beginning this transition now, we can help ensure an orderly transfer of employees and federal funding," said Kouplen. "We believe that aligning OOWD with Commerce will lead to a great partnership and collaboration as both agencies work to solve Oklahoma's workforce and economic development demands. I am so excited about Don's leadership as we establish Oklahoma as the premier workforce development state in the country."

Early in his administration, Governor Kevin Stitt and Secretary Kouplen asked David Stewart, Trustee and Chief Executive Officer of MidAmerica Industrial Park, to lead a task force that would develop an innovative roadmap to make Oklahoma a national leader in workforce development. Stewart will work with Kouplen, Morris, the Governor's Council for Workforce and Economic Development, and economic development organizations across the state to implement this new plan.

"Oklahoma's culture is founded upon diversity and a strong work ethic," said Stewart. "It's time we ensure Oklahoman's have career pathways and employment skills that companies need to be successful in our state."



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“Workforce development is a critical component of our economy and the future success of Oklahomans. When I took office, I vowed to break down silos that would limit our progress,” said Gov. Stitt. “By joining the Department of Commerce and the Office of Workforce Development, we are moving in that direction and I’m confident we will see positive results as these teams work together to strengthen workforce development in our state.”

OOWD staff will remain in their current office space at OSU-OKC.

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