UCO officially becomes 125 years young this year, and the celebration has begun with a focus on both the past and the future.

First came the Oklahoma Territory, created in May 1890. Then, in December of that year, the new Territorial Legislature founded in its closing days what would become Central, along with the University of Oklahoma and Oklahoma State University.

Central started as the Territorial Normal School. Its mission was to train teachers for the many schoolhouses that were being built for the children of settlers. Those needing an education would grow even more in 1891 with three different state land runs bringing an estimated 20,000 settlers.

“I believe that our culture of learning, leading and serving was enkindled in the minds, hearts and intentional efforts of those who came before us and founded this institution,” Central President Don Betz recently wrote.

Those in 1890 were focused on building a foundation for education. Today’s university leaders are focused on continuing to build a foundation to benefit the education of Central’s students, as well as the metropolitan area, the state, the nation and the world.

“In 2015, we will honor the past, embrace the present and craft the future, fully aware of the challenge of hyper-change that surrounds,” President Betz wrote.

We will be “guided by the spirit and values that moved those men and women to erect Old North as an unmistakable educational beacon, a cathedral of learning on the plains,” he said. Old North is Central’s first campus building, still standing today.

As part of the 2015 celebration, Central will dedicate its new CHK|Central Boat-house on the Oklahoma River, as well as celebrate the opening of its new 440-bed campus housing, The Quad.

Wanting to share with the community as well as the campus, Central is hosting a number of national speakers and entertainers, which began in late January with Bruce Katz, author of *The Metropolitan Revolution*, and including entertainer John Legend in early April.

Visit uco.edu/125/ for a growing list of events, including UCO’s Distinguished Speakers Series. Make plans to help Central celebrate its 125th birthday.
UCO Receives $12 Million-Plus In Federal Funds for Programs

Central’s 125th year has started with affirmations from a number of grants recently awarded the institution, including more than $12 million in funding from the U.S. Department of Education.

Those funds include a five-year, $7.7 million grant that will support Central’s Student Transformative Learning Record (STLR) initiative. That program is designed to be a national model for developing a student transcript that will reflect the experiential skills a student learns both in and out of the classroom. The model will focus on skill-sets that have been identified as important for workplace, citizenship and personal success. The transcript will give employers a better idea of how a Central graduate will meet the needs of the workplace.

“This grant is a strong indication that higher education experts in an extremely competitive national environment recognize UCO’s STLR as a viable innovation deserving support,” said Jeff King, Ed.D., principal investigator for the grant and director of Central’s Center for Excellence in Transformative Teaching and Learning.

UCO also has received a $5 million U.S. Department of Education grant under Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP). That program emphasizes programs to increase the number of low-income students prepared to enter and succeed in postsecondary education.

The federal funding is being matched by the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, the Oklahoma Council for Economic Education, MidFirst Bank and UCO for a total budget of $11.4 million over seven years. The funds will focus on 899-low income students from high-poverty, low-performing Oklahoma City schools, working with them first in middle school, then through high school to ensure their college readiness and success.

MORE THAN 3,000 students graduated from Central in 2014. That’s 3,000 who achieved a personal milestone, forever changing their futures, as well as that of their families and communities. That’s also 3,000 helping Oklahoma meet its Complete College America goals, as outlined by Gov. Mary Fallin.

Earlier this year, officials at UCO and the Oklahoma State University Institute of Technology in Okmulgee signed an agreement ensuring courses at the two-year institution will transfer to Central for students to complete a four-year degree. It’s another way to help Oklahoma meet its future educational needs while helping students succeed.

UCO Honored for Community Engagement Initiatives

UCO is one of only 82 colleges and universities nationwide to recently receive the 2015 Community Engagement Classification from the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

First offered in 2006, the award recognizes institutions for their collaboration with their larger communities, exchanging knowledge and resources.

“As a metropolitan university, we have opportunities to develop unique partnerships that allow both our students and the surrounding community to thrive,” UCO President Don Betz said. “This recognition from the Carnegie Foundation further validates the importance of cultivating relationships with our community.”

The classification will be retained for 10 years, after which Central must again complete the two-year application process for recognition.

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UCO Endeavors to Strengthen Hispanic Community Connections

UCO has partnered with the Greater Oklahoma Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, sponsoring the conference center in the chamber’s new facility at 3321 S. Western, Oklahoma City.

“As Oklahoma’s metropolitan university, it’s a part of our mission to support the diversity of the Oklahoma City area,” UCO Provost John Barthell said. “We are excited about the opportunities this partnership brings in helping us reach out to this growing community.”

Plans are underway for the university to begin offering workshops, short courses and consulting for business development. Traditional education programs also will be scheduled.

Additionally, programs and advising will be offered to help area families prepare their students for college enrollment. Presentations will be bilingual, as appropriate.

Last fall, UCO introduced Spanish-language campus tours for bilingual prospective students to make it easier for their families to get the information they need and to make the campus-tour experience less stressful for all.

Meanwhile, the university was again recognized as a top institution of higher learning for international students, ranking 13th for enrollment among all master’s level institutions in the U.S. by the Open Doors Report on International Education Exchange. International students represent 84 countries and 9 percent of UCO’s student body.

National Event at UCO To Attract 5,000 Researchers

UCO has been selected to host the National Conference on Undergraduate Research 2018, expected to bring as many as 5,000 students and faculty to the campus, as well as other metro locations.

Considered a premier national scholarly event, the conference will be in Oklahoma for the first time in the organization’s 27-year history. Participating students in all fields of study from throughout the country present their research in a professional setting. They also interact with their peers and meet with recruiters from businesses and graduate schools from across the country.

“University of Central Oklahoma’s detailed and thoughtful proposal to host this keystone event, as well as its deep commitment to the culture and practice of undergraduate research and its collaborative network with regional partners, were outstanding evidence of its readiness to host an excellent conference,” Elizabeth Ambos, executive officer for the Conference on Undergraduate Research, said.

The Oklahoma conference will be April 4-7, 2018. An event logo is being developed with UCO students from the university’s Department of Design. UCO’s Greg Wilson, Ph.D., will chair an organizational committee with the help of Michael Springer, Ph.D., as vice chair.

Meanwhile, 22 UCO undergraduates will be participating April 16-18 in the National Conference on Undergraduate Research 2015 event at Eastern Washington University in Cheney, Washington.
UCO’s Downtown OKC Classes Now Underway, Growth Expected

Classes began in January in the university’s new UCO Downtown campus in Oklahoma City’s Carnegie Centre at 131 Dean A. McGee Ave. With a deliberate plan to do only limited advertising, UCO attracted 160 undergraduate and graduate students with a wide range of classes.

The low-key opening, considered a big success, has allowed UCO to fine-tune its new downtown presence. Plans now are to expand enrollment to 300, while also looking to the downtown community for feedback on what they want to see offered.

Central’s Center for eLearning and Customized Education can partner with downtown businesses and offer customized education, non-credit courses, certificates, company retreats, leadership training and conferences, all while respecting its for-credit courses.

“If we’re a public metropolitan university, it’s only logical that we would have a physical linkage to the downtown of that metropolitan city. And Oklahoma City is that city that defines the metropolitan area,” UCO Provost John Barthell said.

UCO’s Edmond campus is and always will be the center of what the university does. However, UCO Downtown is offering exciting new possibilities for downtown and the university.

Visit uco.edu/ucodowntown for classes and more information.

Always Central Campaign Completed Ahead of Schedule; Old North Funds Still Needed

UCO’s Always Central campaign surpassed its $40 million fundraising goal, six months before its targeted completion date.

Nearly 7,000 alumni and friends contributed to the campaign. First-time donors comprised 64 percent of the supporters, who donated $40,133,019 in support of students, teaching, facilities, programs and future needs of UCO.

However, the campaign continues because $500,000 still is needed for the renovation of Old North, the oldest and most iconic building on the UCO campus. While that campaign has had its equal share of donors, they largely have been smaller donations from alumni — many older and with limited incomes. In fact, 25 percent of the Old North contributions have been less than $1,000, made by individuals vs. corporations.

More recently, the fund for Old North received two significant donations — $500,000 from the E.L. and Thelma Gaylord Foundation and $100,000 from the Sarkeys Foundation.