

Degrees of Progress

News from the State Regents for Higher Education



OKLAHOMA STATE REGENTS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

Improving our future by degrees

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CONCURRENT ENROLLMENT STRENGTHENS DEGREE COMPLETION, STATE ECONOMY

By Chancellor Glen D. Johnson

Oklahoma's future economic growth requires an educated workforce. Currently, 26% of Oklahomans older than age 25 hold a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to the national average of 33%. Concurrent enrollment, a key component of our nationally recognized Complete College America strategic plan, is critical to increasing degree completion in Oklahoma. The concurrent enrollment program allows outstanding high school juniors and seniors who meet admission and course placement requirements to earn college credit at Oklahoma colleges and universities while still in high school.

Concurrent enrollment strengthens student preparation, reduces family college costs and decreases the time required to complete a college degree. Under the program, eligible high school seniors receive a tuition waiver

for up to 18 credit hours of concurrent coursework in the academic year. Delivered via traditional instruction or online on a college or high school campus, concurrent enrollment courses are taught by qualified faculty providing the student a collegiate experience. Participation in the program has nearly doubled in the last decade, and in the last academic year, more than 14,000 students from Oklahoma high schools enrolled in concurrent courses generating nearly 133,000 student credit hours.

As state system institutions pivoted to online and remote instruction in spring 2020 in response to the coronavirus pandemic, campus faculty and administrators were particularly mindful of the needs of concurrently-enrolled high school students. A working group of K-12 and higher education staff collaborated to develop a guidance document to ensure ongoing positive experiences for concurrent students and participating schools. Additionally, many institutions reached out to concurrent students directly or through the school district to ensure they could continue their college coursework without disruption, providing for connectivity options in campus parking lots, laboratories and libraries.

Public higher education's FY 2020 appropriation provided the opportunity to fully fund the concurrent enrollment program for high school seniors. Expansion of concurrent enrollment to provide full funding for tuition waivers for both high school juniors and seniors would enhance college accessibility, promote college affordability and produce more graduates to fill the growing number of jobs in our state that require a college degree.



Chancellor Glen D. Johnson

A proven driver of degree completion and ultimately, economic and workforce development, concurrent enrollment is an investment that benefits Oklahoma students, families and employers. Expanding the concurrent enrollment program is one of the most important strategic decisions our Governor and legislative leaders can make to continue building a globally competitive workforce in our state.

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USAO MODERNIZES CAMPUS WHILE RETAINING VINTAGE FLAIR

By Dr. John Feaver, President, USAO

While the University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma has recently embarked on a number of large renovation projects to several of the historic buildings on our campus, we have also benefited from a less visible upgrade: a nearly complete overhaul of our IT infrastructure.



In 2018, we initiated our partnership with CBTS, a company specializing in customized IT systems. Since then, USAO's newly-enhanced technological infrastructure focuses on the "internet of things," the seamless use of various wireless devices on a single network. Together, we completely rewired campus, including athletics facilities and event spaces, and created outdoor WiFi access points to allow for greatly-improved mobility, bandwidth and wireless calling. New hardware and CBTS-managed services have also augmented the network's security capabilities considerably.

Another critical aspect of these IT renovations was the implementation of standardized servers and storage to provide redundant systems for disaster recovery. A new, virtualized environment now backs up critical university data to CBTS's cloud-based network, public higher education's OneNet system, and USAO's own servers on campus.

By taking the time to understand USAO's current financial and technical situation, CBTS created a comprehensive strategy and phased approach that avoided large capital expenses. They now handle most large-scale problems with the network, freeing USAO's IT staff to focus on more specific issues and support our faculty and our student body as we all adapt to the changes that 2020 has required from us. The new system automatically calls CBTS's cloud-based support services when problems do arise.

CBTS is a leading technology provider to more than 3,000 organizations in all industries. They provide consulting resources and cloud or on-premises technologies that deliver consistent IT performance, reduce costs and increase operational efficiency.



President John Feaver

Thanks to the brilliant people at CBTS and our own outstanding IT staff, our institution now boasts a mobile network that is built for the future, one that has already helped us overcome the unprecedented challenges of this year. These campuswide improvements have equipped USAO to continue serving the curious, innovative and all-around exceptional students who choose to make this college their home.

DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARDS

The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education recently honored two legislators with Distinguished Service Awards for Higher Education, which recognize individuals who demonstrate distinguished leadership and support of higher education in Oklahoma during the legislative session.

House Majority Floor Leader Jon Echols was recognized with the 2020 Distinguished Service Award for Higher Education for his support of higher education's budget request, the concurrent enrollment program, and maintaining current law regarding weapons on campus in his role as House Majority Floor Leader. He also serves as a member of the Appropriations and Budget, Higher Education

and Career Tech, Joint Appropriations and Budget, Rules, and Legislative Office of Fiscal Transparency committees.

Oklahoma State Sen. Gary Stanislawski was recognized with a 2019 Distinguished Service Award for Higher Education for his support of higher education's budget request and the concurrent enrollment program in his role as Chair of the Education committee. He also serves as Chair of the General Government and Transportation committee; as Vice Chair of the Business, Commerce and Tourism Committee; and as a member of the Appropriations, Retirement and Insurance, and Rules committees.



House Majority Floor
Leader Jon Echols



Sen. Gary Stanislawski

The Distinguished Service Award for Higher Education is the highest award presented by the State Regents and the Council of College and University Presidents.

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON HONORED WITH LEADERSHIP OKLAHOMA'S LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Chancellor Glen D. Johnson was recently honored by Leadership Oklahoma with their 2020 Lifetime Achievement Award. He is one of four state leaders recognized by the organization during a virtual Excellence in Leadership Gala celebration.

The Lifetime Achievement Award recognizes individuals who have used their leadership abilities to improve the quality of life for Oklahoma's citizens and its future generations.

"Each year, Leadership Oklahoma recognizes the outstanding contributions of Oklahoma corporate and individual leaders for their commitment and service to elevating the quality of life and empowering our state for greater prosperity," said Marion Paden, President and CEO of Leadership Oklahoma. "This year's Excellence in Leadership award recipients are truly deserving based upon the remarkable and meaningful differences they have made in Oklahoma. It is our privilege to honor them."

The 2020 Excellence in Leadership Gala video may be viewed at youtu.be/fZdBKq5s1YU.

Seminole State College President Lana Reynolds provided introductory remarks. Also offering congratulatory comments to Chancellor Johnson during the virtual celebration were U.S. Congressman Tom Cole; Oklahoma City Thunder Chairman Clay Bennett; BancFirst Chairman Emeritus H.E. "Gene" Rainbolt; and Northern Oklahoma College President Cheryl Evans.

"I feel privileged to receive this recognition from Leadership Oklahoma, an organization I deeply respect, and honored by the kind remarks offered by friends and colleagues," said Johnson. "Public service has been my life's goal, and I remain focused on representing and advocating for Oklahoma higher education at the state and national level."

Johnson was named chancellor of the Oklahoma State System of Higher Education in January 2007 following a national search. Before assuming the role of chancellor, he served as the 16th president of Southeastern Oklahoma State University in Durant for 10 years. He was also director of public policy

and adjunct professor of law at the University of Oklahoma College of Law. Prior to his work at OU, he served in the Oklahoma House of Representatives from 1982 to 1996 and was speaker of the House from 1990 to 1996. At the time of his election as speaker, he was the youngest sitting speaker in the United States.

Johnson is an honors graduate of OU with an undergraduate degree in political science and a juris doctorate from the OU College of Law, and is a member of Phi Beta Kappa. He was inducted into the Oklahoma Hall of Fame in 2006 and the Oklahoma Higher Education Hall of Fame in 2016.

Leadership Oklahoma is a statewide organization with 1,630 graduates from 183 Oklahoma communities whose mission is to create, inspire and support a dynamic network of leaders whose increased awareness and commitment to service will energize Oklahomans to shape Oklahoma's future.

STATE REGENTS LAUNCH NEW WEBSITE

The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education recently launched a new website, OCOLearnOK.org, targeting Oklahoma institutions, administrators, faculty and staff who aim to improve online education at their institution and across the state.

The new site consolidates the activities and initiatives of the Online Consortium of Oklahoma (OCO), the Council for Online Learning Excellence and the Oklahoma Quality Matters consortium.

The site provides 24/7 access to current resources available through online education initiatives in Oklahoma, including

collaboration opportunities in several key areas, such as Open Educational Resources and digital accessibility. New communication tools are available through the site, including email subscription lists and a calendar of upcoming online professional development opportunities. Visitors may also access an on-demand

library of recorded webinars targeting the critical areas necessary to support and engage online learners.

The new website is supported by the member institutions of the OCO, in collaboration with the State Regents. For more information, visit OCOLearnOK.org.



Online Consortium of Oklahoma

STATE REGENTS ANNOUNCE NEW SYSTEM INNOVATIONS COMMITTEE

The State Regents for Higher Education have established a new permanent committee, the System Innovations Committee. State Regents' Chair Ann Holloway announced the appointment of the following regents to serve on the committee: committee chair Regent Jody Parker, Regent Jeff Hickman, Regent Ann Holloway, and Regent Steven Taylor.

The State Regents' other permanent committees include Academic Affairs and Social Justice and Student Services, Budget and Audit, Investment and Strategic Planning and Personnel and Technology.

"The System Innovations Committee will analyze data and key performance indicators recently developed through the comprehensive institutional fiscal and long-term viability reviews conducted by Huron Consulting, as well as similar informational materials that will be considered and produced by the System Innovations Committee on an ongoing basis," said

committee chair Regent Jody Parker. "The committee will research and review each institution's key performance indicators and evaluate the ways in which Oklahoma's colleges and universities are adapting to higher education's changing local and national environment."

The committee will provide guidance for the State Regents and Chancellor regarding the development of innovative strategies to improve institutional and system viability and performance, including establishing key performance indicators (e.g. fiscal viability, retention rates, graduation rates, employment outcomes, etc.); utilizing predictive analytics to assess state system performance; identifying important trends and engaging in data-driven decision making; identifying special programs or pilot projects to enhance institutional and state system student outcomes; and collaborating with outside stakeholders on leading-edge proposals.

"We continue our work to implement the recommendations of the Task Force on the Future of Higher Education, and establishing a permanent System Innovations Committee will strengthen those efforts," said Chancellor Glen D. Johnson. "The committee will shape our focus and define our path to adapt Oklahoma higher education to fit changing business models, meet demand for workforce-aligned programs and enhance accountability and transparency."

Formed in March 2017, the Task Force on the Future of Higher Education examined all aspects of system operations, including academic models, online education, structure, fiscal services and operational efficiencies, workforce development, and information technology. After 10 months of study and deliberations, the Task Force unanimously issued a set of comprehensive cost saving, innovative strategies in 2018 to increase degree completion in our state.

STATE REGENTS PROVIDE FOR FLEXIBILITY IN COLLEGE ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS IN RESPONSE TO CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

Acknowledging the impacts of COVID-19 on student access to standardized testing, such as the ACT and SAT, the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education are providing for flexibility in public college and university admission requirements for the fall 2020 semester.

"The coronavirus pandemic is significantly impacting all levels of education in Oklahoma," said Chancellor Glen D. Johnson. "A lack of standardized test scores or the inability to schedule standardized testing should not deter students from pursuing higher education. We encourage prospective students to visit with campus officials for specific information about fall 2020 admission options."

While all students are encouraged to take the ACT or SAT if the tests are available, public colleges and universities will be authorized to use multiple measures of student performance, such as high school grade point average, high school and concurrent enrollment courses taken, and other criteria, to make admission and placement decisions for the fall 2020 semester. For more information, students should contact the admissions office at the college or university they would like to attend.





2020 READING CONFERENCE

Oklahoma Teacher Connection recently hosted the 13th Annual (virtual) Reading Conference, titled *Recreating Affinity Spaces: Equity-Oriented Practices and Dispositions in Reading Education*. The conference was attended by higher education faculty, teachers, administrators and other stakeholders throughout Oklahoma.

Each year the State Regents, in conjunction with other higher education institutions, offer an annual reading conference with the purpose of providing substantive reading professional development and curriculum alignment with a variety of crucial and timely topics that affect both conventional and emergent readers.

Keynote speakers Dr. Marsha Herron, Chief of Equity and Student Supports for Oklahoma City Public Schools, and Lee

Roland, Director of Principal Development for Epic Charter Schools, led the conference with *Brown Girl Dreaming: The Power of Literacy and Liberation* and *Shhh, The Children are Crying: What, Why, When and How to Help the Children Who Need Us Most*, respectively.

During the afternoon, participants chose between two literacy breakout sessions. Dr. Kathren Stehno, Professor at Southwest Christian University, facilitated a panel during the first session titled, *The Road to Literacy: Implication of Race, Ethnicity, Poverty, and Social-Emotional Well-Being*. Panel members included Leslie Baxter, Epic Charter Schools; Dr. Belinda Biscoe, University of Oklahoma; Dr. Lea Ann Garcia, University of Central Oklahoma; and Jessica Ponder, Epic Charter Schools. This

session highlighted the potential strategies and resources for creating accessible spaces and places for equitable literacy development with the end goal of breaking the cycles of poverty and illiteracy.

The second session, *Equity: Every Child Deserves a Comprehensively Prepared Reading Teacher*, was presented by Dr. Tobi Thompson, Northeastern State University and Dr. Sheri Vasinda, Oklahoma State University. This session highlighted the importance of having a comprehensively prepared reading teacher in every classroom, emphasized what good reading and literacy instruction looks like, and underscored the importance of cultivating instructional practice to reach all learners and address all challenges that students may have in reading and literacy.

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON ELECTED TO SHEEO EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Chancellor Glen D. Johnson was recently elected to serve on the Executive Committee of the State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO). The Executive Committee is responsible for shaping SHEEO's federal priorities and strategies and for leading its communications with Congress, the U.S. Department of Education and other federal agencies.



"Chancellor Johnson's depth and breadth of experience at the campus, state and national levels make him an excellent selection by his peers to once again serve on SHEEO's Executive Committee," said

Dr. Robert Anderson, SHEEO president. "I look forward to working alongside him over the coming year."

Johnson served SHEEO as Executive Committee chair during 2018-19. Prior to serving as chair and chair-elect, Johnson served as treasurer during 2016-17. He was previously elected to serve consecutive terms on the Executive Committee in 2008, 2010, 2014 and 2015.

"I am honored to serve once again on SHEEO's Executive Committee," said Johnson. "I look forward to working collaboratively with the other members to ensure each of our state's higher education systems are able to prepare graduates for a globally competitive workforce. Additionally, working closely with the SHEEO Executive Committee will provide me the opportunity to share the Oklahoma state system

of higher education's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as learn best practices from other states that may be beneficial to our colleges and universities."

Johnson received SHEEO's Exceptional Leader Award in 2019. The award, which is SHEEO's highest individual honor, is presented to a current state higher education executive officer who has shown exceptional leadership, a commitment to higher education, a contribution to the greater good, and service to the SHEEO association.

SHEEO, the national association of the chief executives of statewide governing boards and coordinating boards for postsecondary education, works to assist its members and states in developing and sustaining excellent systems of higher education.

SI-MORE-OFFN AWARD CONNECTS ADDITIONAL INSTITUTIONS TO OKLAHOMA'S SCIENCE DMZ

A new grant awarded by the National Science Foundation (NSF) will expand research computing at five more Oklahoma colleges and universities. The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education (OSRHE) and OneNet received \$232,275 in funding for the Small Institution Multiple Organization Regional OneOklahoma Friction Free Network (SI-MORE-OFFN) through NSF's Campus Cyberinfrastructure (CC*) grant program.



Administered by NSF's Office of Advanced Cyberinfrastructure, the CC* grant program invests in campus-level cyberinfrastructure improvements for science applications and research projects.

The two-year grant award will connect Oklahoma State University Institute of Technology (OSUIT), Oklahoma State University-Oklahoma City (OSU-OKC), Redlands Community College (RCC), Oklahoma Christian University (OC) and the University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma (USAO) to Oklahoma's Science DMZ known as the OneOklahoma Friction Free Network.

A Science DMZ engineers a portion of a campus network for science applications. According to ESnet, who developed the model, the configuration and security policies of a Science DMZ create an environment tailored to meet high-performance scientific computing needs, including high-volume data transfer, remote experiment control and data visualization.

As Oklahoma's Science DMZ, OFFN is a 10 Gbps network ring that provides higher education institutions with a dedicated internet route that allows researchers to bypass slower traditional networks and transmit data at higher speeds. Three previous NSF grant awards to Oklahoma connected 12 research and regional universities to OFFN. This new award specifically targeted smaller institutions to expand their research and education initiatives.

"The State Regents are pleased to see more Oklahoma institutions added to the OFFN network," said Chancellor Glen D. Johnson. "These connections will enable new and diverse research collaborations for faculty at these institutions. The grant also has a significant educational impact for college students by expanding STEM and cyberinfrastructure educational opportunities."

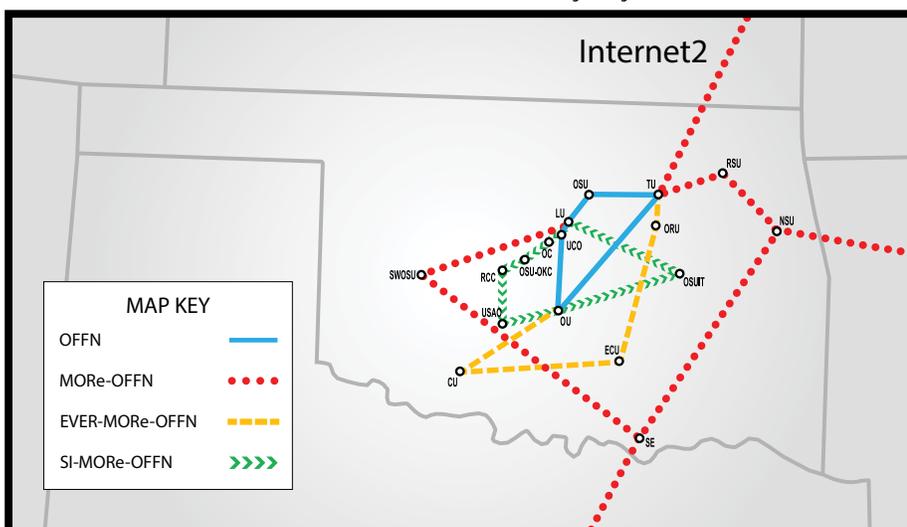
The grant award will be managed by OneNet, and Vonley Royal, OneNet executive director

and State Regents' chief information officer, will serve as principal investigator. Dr. Dany Doughan of USAO will lead research and education application adoption, and Jon Fields of RCC will lead campus technology. Brian Burkhart and Sky Pettett of OneNet will manage network technology implementation and training.

The project will make advanced cyberinfrastructure tools and services available to the five participating campuses and support a wide range of scientific disciplines. Research and education initiatives that will benefit from the grant include:

- Oklahoma State University Institute of Technology
 - Cybersecurity for Institutional Resources and Education
 - Data Science and Virtualization
 - Programming with Software Defined Networking
- Oklahoma State University – Oklahoma City
 - Resilience Academy — Transition in Practice — Nursing
- Redlands Community College
 - STEM Tutoring
 - Aquaponics Greenhouse Research
 - Hemp Research
 - Science and Nursing Lab Network
- Oklahoma Christian University
 - Adaptive Cyber Defense
- University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma
 - Stereochemistry
 - Thermodynamic Favorability
 - Environmental Characteristics of Urban Areas

OneNet makes SI-MORE-OFFN possible by providing the network that connects the colleges and universities. OneNet also provides access to Internet2, a nationwide network for education and research. Internet2 is a 100Gbps network that supports big data movement and collaboration among educators across the nation.



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OKLAHOMA ENERGY WORKFORCE CONSORTIUM

The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education and the Oklahoma College Assistance Program have joined forces with Oklahoma CareerTech, Oklahoma Works, the Oklahoma State Department of Education and several Oklahoma energy partners to create the Oklahoma Energy Workforce Consortium.

The purpose of the consortium is to develop a talent pipeline for one of the state's top industries, energy. As a leading industry that offers high-paying jobs, the energy industry is vital to sustaining the continued growth of the state. Oklahoma is one of only a handful of states that have created a new energy career cluster, which showcases careers in the energy cluster.

"Increasing awareness of educational pathways for Oklahoma's critical occupations is a key element of the state system of higher education's ongoing efforts to advance educational attainment in our state," said Chancellor Glen D. Johnson. "Our state system

colleges and universities offer numerous degree options to prepare graduates for employment in the energy sector."

The energy industry is one of the largest in the state, with salaries averaging \$100,000 a year. The energy career cluster is expected to have a shortage of skilled workers by 2025.



"OKcollegestart.org is pleased to highlight the importance of our state's energy industry as we implement the new career cluster statewide," said Theresa Shaklee, student portal coordinator for the Oklahoma College Assistance Program. "Oklahomans of all ages can use the website to learn more about these critical occupations as they explore career and postsecondary education options."

Continued from page 6



As a division of the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, OneNet is the only organization in Oklahoma that provides access to Internet2.

"OneNet is higher education's partner in research and education and ensures campuses have access to the networking and technology required to support scientific discovery and innovation," said Royal. "Expanding access to networks like OFFN is vital to providing resources that enhance these initiatives for Oklahoma colleges and universities."

The State Regents and OneNet will continue to partner with higher education institutions to grow the OFFN network. Plans for another NSF grant application to connect additional regional universities to the network is underway.

2020 COLLEGE APPLICATION WEEK

Oklahoma College Application Week (CAW) is an annual opportunity for high school seniors to receive hands-on assistance from knowledgeable volunteers in completing their college applications. Even in the midst of the COVID-19 restrictions, 46 schools in Oklahoma have registered for CAW 2020 so far, representing over 6,200 high school seniors in our state.



One hundred forty-four Oklahoma high schools participated in CAW 2019, with 4,475 students completing applications to 244 different colleges in 42 states, the District of Columbia and

Canada. In the exit surveys received last year, 93% of the CAW event coordinators indicated that they will hold a College Application Week again in 2020.

Oklahoma GEAR UP piloted CAW in its 24 school districts in 2012 and 2013. In 2014, all high schools across the state were invited to participate. In 2015, OCAP and OK-CAN joined GEAR UP in promoting CAW, which officially took place in November each year. This year, school events can be held any week, September through November. GEAR UP and OCAP offer free promotional materials and have used webinars and conference calls to introduce CAW to event coordinators and walk them through the program materials and resources.

College Application Week is part of a national initiative sponsored by The Kresge

Foundation, the Lumina Foundation and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation for the American Council on Education. At the state level, the project is endorsed by higher education Chancellor Glen D. Johnson, the Oklahoma State Department of Education and the Oklahoma State Chamber.

QuickFact

In the last five years, Oklahoma's College App Week has reached more than **27,000** high school seniors who submitted more than **31,500** college applications.

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Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education

655 Research Parkway, Suite 200

Oklahoma City, OK 73104

Phone: 800-858-1840 or 405-225-9100

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