

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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Higher Education: Invest Today for a Brighter Tomorrow

Chancellor Glen D. Johnson, Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education

We know that a highly educated workforce is crucial for our state's economic growth. Over the last 10 years, more than 90 percent of national earnings growth has been driven by citizens with a college degree. The deadline to meet Oklahoma's workforce needs through increased degree and certificate attainment is fast approaching.

Data from The Georgetown Center for Education and the Workforce indicate that by 2020, 67 percent of all Oklahoma job vacancies will require a college

degree or additional postsecondary education and training, and 37 percent will require an associate degree, bachelor's degree or higher. Working collaboratively, public and private institutions and career technology centers surpassed Oklahoma's Complete College America degree completion goals in the first four years, but progress has been compromised by reduced investment in public higher education.

Increased funding for the concurrent enrollment program is a priority. Concurrent enrollment, which allows outstanding juniors and seniors to earn college credit while still in high school, is a critical component of Oklahoma's degree completion efforts. The program improves student preparation, drives student success in college, decreases family costs for college, and decreases the time required to complete a degree.

Our state system of higher education continues to keep tuition affordable despite the exceptionally challenging fiscal environment. While tuition costs have increased dramatically in many other states, Oklahoma's public colleges and universities have increased tuition and mandatory fees an average of only 5 percent since the start of the recession in FY09. U.S. News & World Report ranks Oklahoma tuition and fees as seventh-lowest in the nation and student debt at graduation as 10th-lowest in the nation. This distinction follows



Chancellor Glen D. Johnson

recognition by both the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation and the National Center for Education Statistics, which rank our state system of higher education as one of the most affordable in the nation.

We continue to make significant progress as a system, and we remain committed to increasing degree completion and to strong partnerships with common education, CareerTech and the business community to meet Oklahoma's workforce needs. We also remain optimistic that the state economic climate will continue to improve, and we will continue to make a persuasive case that there is no better investment to ensure a stronger state economy than the investment our policy leaders can make in higher education.

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Legislators Must Prioritize Higher Education

Calvin Anthony, Board of Regents for the Oklahoma A&M Colleges



Calvin Anthony

Lawmakers must find a solution to Oklahoma's ongoing budget challenges. As a former state legislator, I know weighing the needs of state services amidst years of declining revenues is a daunting task. Even so, we must find adequate funding for our state's colleges and universities.

Our challenge is exacerbated by the fact that declining state support comes at a time when enrollment is rising. For example, from 2008 to 2016, Oklahoma State University enrollment increased by more than 2,600 students while the number of full-time university employees decreased by 77. Students are short-changed when universities are unable to provide the educational tools required to pursue their degrees.

Our state is short-changed if we fail to produce an educated workforce necessary for a healthy, job-generating economy. There is no other way to say it — when we gut funding for our

colleges and universities, the quality of the education they can provide declines, which negatively impacts the future of our state.

Some argue that not everyone needs to attend college. While this may be true, in Oklahoma we are experiencing a shifting economy that requires more college graduates in order to be successful. Unfortunately, we lag the nation in almost every economic indicator, including the number of college graduates — only 24.2 percent of Oklahomans age 25 and older have at least a bachelor's degree, while the national average is 30.1 percent. So, if Oklahoma wants to be competitive, we must increase that number or watch as companies flock to other states with their capital and jobs. Our college graduates are the future inventors, entrepreneurs and leaders who will take our state forward. We must maintain high-quality, nationally competitive institutions where students and faculty can excel, which means prioritizing investing in our colleges and universities.

In a state striving to increase prosperity, our universities are powerful economic drivers. Companies want to know the talent they need to succeed is available, and the cuts to our colleges and universities make it more difficult to provide that assurance. When major bond rating agencies including Moody's and S&P downgrade our state's credit due to lack of investment in higher education and a lack of financial support penalizes our national rankings, our lawmakers should take notice.

Most states see higher education as an important investment and are

increasing appropriations. By contrast, in Oklahoma total state-funded support for higher education has been set back nearly two decades. In fact, the last time OSU received less in state appropriations than it did in FY18 was in 1996, during my time in the Oklahoma House of Representatives.

Dramatic cuts to higher education may solve short-term budget problems, but the long-term ramifications will be bleak if we fail to reverse the tide soon. For the sake of my grandkids, I pray our leaders will stop bickering, work together for Oklahomans and invest in our colleges and universities.

QUICK FACT

Since its January launch, 67 Oklahoma schools have enrolled in the Oklahoma FAFSA Data Portal (OK-FDP), a free online tool provided by OSRHE and OCAP to help counselors better assist high school seniors to successfully complete the FAFSA.

State Regents Accept Report of the Task Force on the Future of Oklahoma Higher Education

The State Regents unanimously accepted the Task Force on the Future of Higher Education's *Report on the Future of Higher Education*, which outlines the task force's assessment process and recommendations to strengthen Oklahoma public higher education. The report was unanimously approved by the task force at the Jan. 31 meeting.

Formed by the State Regents in March 2017, the task force examined system operations. Task force members approved recommendations from the four subcommittees at the Dec. 6, 2017 meeting.

The **System Structure Subcommittee** reviewed institutional governance models, missions, and geographic service regions. Recommendations focus on streamlining academics, student services and administration through consolidation of institutional governing boards.

The **College Degree Completion and Workforce Development Initiatives Subcommittee** developed recommendations to increase

college degree completion rates and align academic programs to meet current and future workforce needs. Recommendations focus on implementing predictive analytics to streamline administrative processes and strengthen student support services; expediting the approval process for workforce-oriented programs; accelerating and scaling proven degree completion strategies; fully funding the concurrent enrollment program; and developing a course equivalency matrix specifically designed for student veterans and active duty military.

The **Academic Program Innovations and Online Education Subcommittee** developed recommendations to promote innovative, collaborative academic programming and scale online education in Oklahoma. Recommendations focus on the design and implementation of microdegrees/microcredentials and competency-based education; expanding public-private partnerships to address academic and non-academic student needs; and development of a systemwide

delivery model for online education and best practices in online instruction.

The **Fiscal Solutions, Efficiencies, Affordability, and Technology Subcommittee** reviewed system resource allocation, revenue trends and projections, alternative sources of revenue, and capacity for improving operational efficiencies through institutional collaboration and technology. Recommendations focus on administrative consolidation; establishing fiscal viability reviews for each institution, branch campus, and campus site; and coordinated purchasing of technology products and services across the state system.

Copies of the task force report have been provided to Governor Mary Fallin, Senate President Pro Tempore Mike Schulz, and Speaker of the House of Representatives Charles McCall, each of whom designated a representative to serve on the task force. The report has also been shared with the full Legislature, and can be accessed online at www.okhighered.org/future/.

Oklahoma's Promise Champions

The State Regents recently named 10 Oklahoma high schools "Oklahoma's Promise 2017 State Champions." These schools lead the state in the number of graduates who met the requirements to receive a scholarship through Oklahoma's Promise, a state program that allows students from families whose annual income is \$55,000 or less to earn a scholarship for college tuition.

For more than two decades, over 80,000 Oklahoma students have been afforded the opportunity to pursue their college

education through the Oklahoma's Promise scholarship program. Oklahoma high schools have done an exceptional job encouraging and supporting their students' participation in Oklahoma's Promise. High schools named Oklahoma's Promise 2017 State Champions are:

- Class B, Covington-Douglas, Grandfield, Lomega and Moyers, with seven Oklahoma's Promise graduates each.
- Class A, Stringtown with 11 Oklahoma's Promise graduates.

- Class 2A, Dove Science Academy (Oklahoma City) with 31 Oklahoma's Promise graduates.
- Class 3A, Douglass (Oklahoma City) with 34 Oklahoma's Promise graduates.
- Class 4A, Broken Bow, with 35 Oklahoma's Promise graduates.
- Class 5A, Santa Fe South (Oklahoma City), with 67 Oklahoma's Promise graduates.
- Class 6A, Union (Tulsa) with 152 Oklahoma's Promise graduates.

2017 Distinguished Service Awards

The State Regents recently recognized Sen. Roger Thompson, Rep. Katie Henke and former Rep. Scott Martin with 2017 Distinguished Service Awards, which are conferred to recognize individuals who demonstrate distinguished leadership and support of higher education in Oklahoma during the legislative session.

Sen. Thompson was honored for his continued support of higher education in his role as a member of the Oklahoma State Senate and for his leadership as a member of the Appropriations and Education Committees; for his efforts to restore funding and minimize budget cuts to higher education during the 2017

regular session; for his ongoing support of the Oklahoma's Promise scholarship program; and for his commitment to public safety through his efforts to maintain the current law with regard to weapons on campus.

Rep. Henke was honored for her support of higher education in her role as a member of the Oklahoma House and for her efforts to restore funding and minimize budget cuts to higher education during the 2017 regular session; for her ongoing support of the Oklahoma's Promise scholarship program, including sponsoring and supporting SB 529, historic reform legislation passed during the 2017 regular session; and for her commitment to public safety through her

efforts to maintain the current law with regard to weapons on campus.

Martin was recognized for his support of higher education in his role as a member of the Oklahoma House and for his leadership as chair of the Appropriations and Budget Education Subcommittee, where he played a key role in securing funding for the Endowed Chairs backlog; for his efforts to increase funding to higher education; to minimize budget cuts to higher education; and for his efforts in sponsoring a 2013 bill that allowed the State Regents to switch to a prudent man investment policy, allowing an enhancement on returns for the Endowed Chairs Trust Fund.

Research Day at the Capitol: Spotlighting the State's Top Undergraduate Researchers

The 23rd annual Research Day at the Capitol was held March 27. Research Day at the Capitol, an annual event sponsored by the State Regents, the Oklahoma Experimental Program to Stimulate Competitive Research (OK EPSCoR) and the National Science Foundation, is a showcase of the outstanding research conducted by undergraduate students enrolled at Oklahoma's colleges and universities. This year, participants included 25 students representing 19 colleges and universities, who were nominated by the state's campus presidents.

Students presented scientific research posters during the event. Research posters and oral presentations were competitively judged by an independent panel that selected the top seven researchers in three categories — one overall winner, three regional university winners, and three research-intensive institution winners. Awards were

announced during a ceremony at the State Capitol the following day.

Prior to the awards ceremony, students visited one-on-one with members of the State Legislature to discuss the high-quality research they are performing. This year's research topics addressed important issues such as disease, water quality and alternative energy.

2018 Award winners:

- **Grand Prize**
Devin Laurence, University of Oklahoma
- **First Place, Regional University and Community College Category**
Payton Whitehead, Southeastern Oklahoma State University
- **First Place, Research-Intensive Institution Category**
Nicholas Paul Foster, Oklahoma State University

- **Second Place, Regional University and Community College Category**
Myshal Morris, Langston University
- **Second Place, Research-Intensive Institution Category**
Austin Fehr, University of Tulsa
- **Third Place, Regional University and Community College Category**
Lindsey Hendricks, Southwestern Oklahoma State University
- **Third Place, Research-Intensive Institution Category**
Grace Katherine Ogden, Oklahoma State University

Social Media Spotlight

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Applications Now Accepted for Free STEM Summer Academies

This summer, middle and high school students can experience life on a college campus while exploring exciting and varied fields of study at the free 2018 Summer Academies in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM).

STEM Summer Academies, sponsored by the State Regents, are open to upcoming eighth- through 12th-graders. Each academy explores the latest trends in science, technology, engineering and math through fun, hands-on activities

and innovative software as students experiment both in the classroom and outdoors. Many academies also include field trips to some of the state's top companies, science facilities and museums.

Applications are now being accepted for the academies, and many have deadlines. Because the academies are free and enrollment is limited, students are encouraged to apply early. To qualify, students must be entering eighth through 12th grade this fall. Officials emphasize the academies are not exclusive

to top students, but instead are designed to give all students an opportunity to increase their interest and confidence in science, technology, engineering and math and, ultimately, expand their career and educational aspirations. Academy descriptions and contact information are available at www.okhighered.org/summer-academies. Students can also get information from their school counselors or by calling (800) 858-1840.

2018 State Regents Business Partnership Excellence Awards

Twenty-seven business and higher education partnerships throughout the state were recently recognized for innovative collaboration that further the education of Oklahoma's workforce. The luncheon was held on the University of Central Oklahoma campus. Speaking at the presentation were Chancellor Glen D. Johnson and Secretary of State, Education and Workforce Development, Dave Lopez, who highlighted the importance of higher education in the state's economic development.

The State Regents' Business Partnership Excellence Award is designed to highlight successful partnerships between higher education institutions and businesses and to further cultivate the higher learning environment through State Regents' Economic Development Grants.

Institutions involved in these partnerships provide \$500 for tuition waivers to employees of the partnering businesses; internships that enable current students to work at the partnering businesses;

faculty externships with the partnering businesses; and/or enhancement of the partnerships with additional equipment, materials or supplies. The State Regents provide a \$500 match to the waivers. To date, the State Regents have awarded \$143,500 to 287 business and education partnerships.

2018 recognized partnerships:

- Cameron University, Affinitee Graphics
- Carl Albert State College, The Community State Bank
- Connors State College, Saint Francis Health System
- East Central University, Oklahoma Heritage Bank
- Eastern Oklahoma State College, the Oklahoma Small Business Development Centers
- Langston University, ImageNet Consulting
- Murray State College, the Family Health Center of Southern Oklahoma Inc.
- Northeastern Oklahoma A&M College, Grand River Dam Authority
- Northeastern State University, Grand River Dam Authority
- Northern Oklahoma College, Diemer Construction Company LLC
- Northwestern Oklahoma State University, AllianceHealth Woodward and AllianceHealth Ponca City
- Oklahoma City Community College, American Honda Motor Company
- Oklahoma Panhandle State University, Anchor D Bank
- Oklahoma State University's Robert M. Kerr Food, Agricultural Products Center (FAPC), 1907 Meat Co.
- Oklahoma State University Institute of Technology, OG&E
- Oklahoma State University-Oklahoma City, JPMorgan Chase Foundation
- Redlands Community College, God's Helping Hands Mission
- Rogers State University, She Brews Coffee House
- Rose State College, Moog
- Seminole State College, Seminole Public Schools
- Southeastern Oklahoma State University, BrucePac
- Southwestern Oklahoma State University, Pioneer Cellular
- Tulsa Community College, Arvest Bank
- University of Central Oklahoma, Paycom
- University of Oklahoma, Envoy
- University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma, the Chickasha Community Foundation
- Western Oklahoma State College, Holder Land and Cattle LLC

MORE-OFFN Facilitates Ground-Breaking Research at Regional Universities

A National Science Foundation (NSF) grant is helping connect four new institutions into Oklahoma's current dedicated research network. Providing regional universities with connections to Oklahoma's Friction Free Network (OFFN) will increase research opportunities for more rural students and researchers across the state.

The Multiple Organization Regional OneOklahoma Friction Free Network (MORE-OFFN) is a new extension of OFFN, a 10 Gbps network ring that leverages OneNet's existing network to provide research institutions with dedicated internet pathways to facilitate research that requires large data transfer and speed. This network improves research in Oklahoma by bypassing internet highways filled with traditional network traffic.

The MORE-OFFN collaboration began with a desire to expand the availability of OFFN to rural, regional, non-PhD granting universities in Oklahoma. Oklahoma has numerous regional universities that serve a large portion of the state's students. Providing more researchers and students with access to advanced data transfer channels increases their educational potential and improves education as a whole throughout the state.

Recipients of the NSF grant are Northeastern State University (NSU), Southwestern Oklahoma State University (SWOSU), Southeastern Oklahoma State University (SE) and Rogers State University (RSU). All of these institutions serve communities in rural parts of the state with less than 20,000 residents.

Dr. Richard Reif, chief information officer for NSU, sees the grant as a way to facilitate greater research collaboration across the state.

"NSU is excited to work with our partners to bring our faculty researchers increased

access to the world of high-performance computing," Reif said. "We are especially grateful for the assistance given to us by OneNet and the members of the OneOklahoma Cyberinfrastructure Initiative group, an amazingly talented and collaborative group."

MORE-OFFN expands opportunities for current researchers at regional universities by providing increased data transfer speed and streamlined connections across the state and around the nation. From atomic gas turbulence research at RSU to molecular modeling for computational chemistry at SWOSU, professors and undergraduate students can expand their research scope to engage in ground-breaking projects previously only accessible at large research institutions.

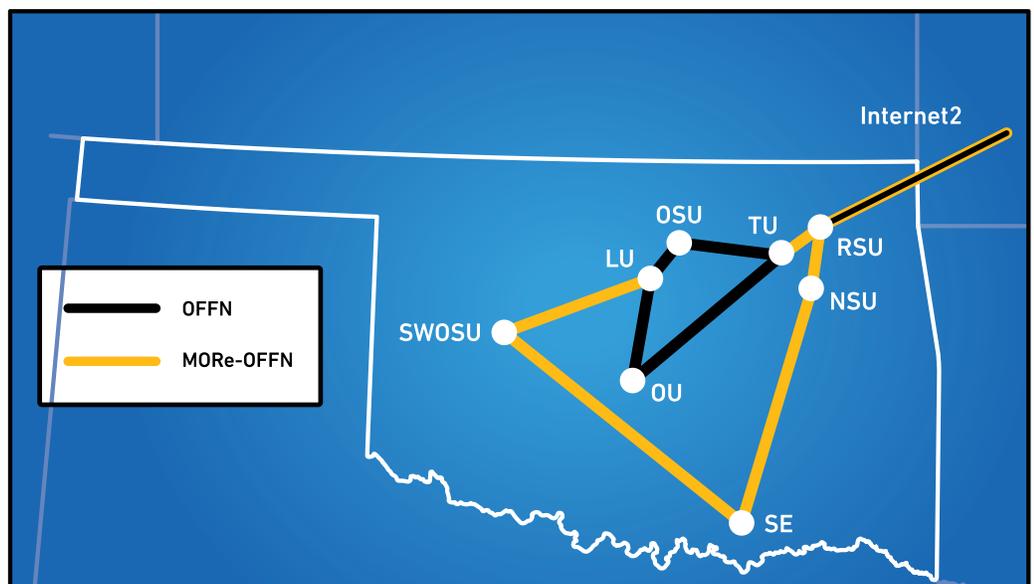
OneNet plays a key role in facilitating MORE-OFFN by furnishing the network backbone that connects all participants across the state. In addition, OneNet provides these schools with a connection to Internet2, a nationwide internet network dedicated to education and research. As an extension of the

Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, OneNet is the only provider in Oklahoma connected to Internet2's robust research platform. Because of this partnership, members of MORE-OFFN now have improved data transfer options that will allow them to collaborate with researchers across the nation.

Von Royal, OneNet executive director, views reliable connectivity as critical to research in Oklahoma.

"OneNet's role is to facilitate research and education in Oklahoma," he said. "By expanding access to research networks like MORE-OFFN, we hope to also increase the quality of education in our state."

As these regional institutions gain access to higher quality network channels and participate in more collaborative research projects, students and professors will have more opportunities to engage in ground-breaking initiatives that will impact Oklahoma and beyond. Through this collaborative initiative, OneNet, MORE-OFFN and the participating institutions are helping change the face of rural education.



OKcollegestart.org Spring Workshops

OKcollegestart.org, the State Regents' student portal for college planning, hosted five training workshops this spring to instruct educators on ways to use the student portal and electronic transcript exchange system. High school counselors, whether new or experienced, were encouraged to attend. These workshops were held at the State Regents' office and on the campuses of University Center of Southern Oklahoma in Ardmore, Oklahoma State University — Tulsa and Northwestern Oklahoma State University in Enid.

Site features explored included:

- Middle school component
- User friendly navigation

- Dynamic student planner
- Career choice assessments and exploration tools
- College planning tools for students and parents
- Personalized, robust student portfolio
- Individual Career and Academic Plan feature

"OKcollegestart is designed to assist educators as they prepare students to be college and career ready," said Theresa Shaklee, Student Portal Coordinator for OKcollegestart.org. "We're pleased to be part of the support system for not only counselors, teachers and administrators, but also for the students

and families they serve." OKcollegestart.org provides free resources to help students and parents plan, apply and pay for education and training beyond high school. All user registrations come with a free email address that can be used to communicate with counselors and colleges. The dynamic Professional Center, a website for Oklahoma schools to use in conjunction with OKcollegestart.org, allows counselors to send transcripts from high school to high school and from high school to college, follow student activities on **OKcollegestart.org** and customize academic plans for individual students.

2018 Higher Education Day at the State Capitol

Tuesday, Feb. 13, students, faculty and representatives from Oklahoma's public colleges and universities gathered at the Capitol to promote the value and importance of higher education in the state.

Speakers included Gov. Mary Fallin; Sen. Roger Thompson; Rep. Jadine Nollan; State Regents' chair Ronald H. White, M.D.; State Regent Gen. Toney Stricklin; State Regent Jeffrey W. Hickman; and President Jerry Steward, Oklahoma City Community College.

Higher Education Day is designed to give students, alumni, faculty, staff and friends of public colleges and universities the opportunity to meet with legislators to discuss campus needs and share their successes. Some of the issues addressed include the state system budget request; key higher education initiatives, such as Complete College America and Oklahoma's Promise; weapons on campus; and the importance of higher education to our state's workforce development and economic health. Students also have the opportunity to see how state government works, speak to state legislators about the issues facing higher education, and engage as advocates for their institution and other students in Oklahoma.

Oklahoma's Promise Day at the State Capitol

Monday, April 16, students, faculty, representatives from Oklahoma colleges and universities and other supporters gathered at the Capitol to celebrate more than 25 years of state support of the Oklahoma's Promise program and encourage elected officials to continue keeping the promise to our students.

Featured speakers during the event were Lt. Gov. Todd Lamb; Lori Carter, Director of Legislative Affairs for the Oklahoma Attorney General; Sen. Jason Smalley; Rep. Cyndi Munson; State Regent Mike C. Turpen; Chancellor Glen D. Johnson; and Oklahoma's Promise recipient Erica Stephens.

The purpose of the annual Oklahoma's Promise rally is to show appreciation for Governor Fallin and the Legislature's ongoing support of the Oklahoma's Promise program and encourage elected officials to continue to support the program's dedicated funding source.

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