



# DEGREES OF PROGRESS

eNews from the State Regents for Higher Education

Volume 7, Issue 2 | Spring 2022

OKLAHOMA STATE REGENTS  
FOR HIGHER EDUCATION  
*Improving our future by degrees*



## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

OU Increases Nursing Class Sizes.....	1,4
Partnerships Build Up Ranks of Future Physicians .....	2
Quarterly News.....	3
Oklahoma Higher Education News.....	3
OneNet Fast Facts .....	3
2022 Regents Business Partnership Excellence Awards...	4
2022 STEM Summer Academies.....	4
Did You Know? .....	5

## OU TO MEET STATE WORKFORCE NEEDS BY INCREASING NURSING CLASS SIZES

The University of Oklahoma recently announced a plan to dramatically increase enrollment in the bachelor of science in nursing (BSN) program. Beginning this fall, the college will expand the size of its nursing class by accepting all qualified applicants, allowing more students the opportunity to pursue a nursing career and, in turn, building up the state's nursing workforce at a time when nurses are needed more than ever. For the incoming fall 2022 class, OU admitted all 555 qualified applicants, compared to fall 2021 when the university was unable to admit more than 225 qualified applicants. Moving forward, OU will admit all qualified applicants to both its traditional BSN program and the accelerated BSN program.



"One of the University of Oklahoma's most important responsibilities is to leverage our strengths to serve the wider interests of our state," said OU President Joseph Harroz Jr. "For over a century, OU nurses have performed heroic, life-changing work, and increasing our nursing class sizes will extend their impact to even more people and communities across our state. We are incredibly grateful for the support from our state leaders, who share in our vision of building a better future for Oklahoma."



*The* UNIVERSITY *of* OKLAHOMA

According to the Oklahoma Nurses Association, the state has 712 nurses per 100,000 residents, ranking Oklahoma 46th in the nation in terms of nurses per capita. The last two years have intensified this issue, with the COVID-19 pandemic causing additional strain and a large portion of the Oklahoma nursing workforce nearing retirement.

To help support this initiative, the university is using funds generated through the sales tax exemption for the University Hospitals Authority and Trust – a new state law approved by the Legislature and Gov. Stitt during the 2021 legislative session, additional appropriations from the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, and internal university resources, which includes generous donor support.

Increasing enrollment is only one of the many ways OU is supporting the state's need for more nurses. In 2021, the university announced it would offer its bachelor of science in nursing degree at two additional locations, partnering with Norman Regional Hospital and Duncan Regional Hospital. The expansion adds to the college's existing locations that offer the traditional BSN – the OU Health Sciences Center in Oklahoma City, the OU-Tulsa Schusterman Center and Cameron University in Lawton.

## Keep in touch with OSRHE

[www.okhighered.org](http://www.okhighered.org)

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*Continued on page 4*

# PARTNERSHIPS BUILD UP RANKS OF FUTURE OKLAHOMA PHYSICIANS

By Johnny R. Stephens, President, OSU Center for Health Sciences and OSU-Tulsa

If ever there has been a time to educate more quality physicians to serve Oklahoma, it's now.

While the pandemic has presented unprecedented health care challenges, the last two years have only served to exacerbate an existing health care workforce shortage. And this same workforce is getting older.

According to the American Medical Association, our state's primary care physician workforce is aging, with 57% of rural doctors at the age of 55 and 27% over the age of 65. In addition, "America's Health Rankings 2021," a recent report by United Health Foundation, ranked Oklahoma 45th in the nation for health outcomes, a situation intensified by a lack of health care access in many rural areas.

For 50 years the Oklahoma State University College of Osteopathic Medicine has been working hard against these statistics. In 1972, and with dwindling numbers of primary care physicians in rural Oklahoma, the charge by the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education was to "train doctors of osteopathic medicine in the field of general practice."

The demand is expected to intensify as baby boomers age and the need for quality health care continues to increase in both urban and rural settings across Oklahoma.

I'm incredibly proud of what this medical school has achieved. What began with an inaugural class of 36 here in Tulsa is now one of the top osteopathic colleges in the nation and boasts more than 3,700 graduates, most of whom went on to practice across the state of Oklahoma.



With that in mind, the OSU College of Osteopathic Medicine at the Cherokee Nation in Tahlequah was created in 2020 with a goal to educate physicians in rural Oklahoma and inspire them to someday practice in a rural environment. This landmark partnership established the nation's first tribally affiliated medical school in the heart of the Cherokee Nation reservation.

Doubling down on supporting our local teaching hospital is also an important part of the solution. According to the American Hospital Association, most teaching hospitals are anchor institutions in their communities, contributing significantly to the health, economic and social well-being of area residents. Many teaching hospitals

our mission possible, most recently seen in the collaboration between OSU, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, the Zarrow Foundation, our congressional delegation, state legislative leaders, the city of Tulsa and Tulsa County to bring forth a game-changing project known as the Veterans Hospital in Tulsa.

This project anchors what will become a downtown academic health care district that includes the teaching hospital, a new mental health hospital, research centers and a parking structure.

The new downtown district will add 100 new residency positions to help underscore our commitment to educating tomorrow's physicians — and it will go a long way toward addressing the pressing need of better health outcomes in our state.

No one can predict the future, but the next 50 years undoubtedly will bring increasing health care challenges. With the support of our loyal alumni, donors and community partners, the OSU College of Osteopathic Medicine will still be here, serving on the front line in Oklahoma.



## CENTER FOR HEALTH SCIENCES

In the Tulsa area alone, 385 of our alumni are practicing today in family medicine as well as pediatrics, OB/GYN, cardiology, anesthesiology and other subspecialties.

Keeping these physicians in our state is a priority. Our data show that medical students are most likely to establish a practice within 90 miles of where they complete their residency.

provide social services and interventions that are targeted to address health disparities and other needs that are unique to their community.

Supporting OSU Medical Center is tantamount to supporting the heart of Tulsa.

As a land grant institution, OSU is focused on providing solutions that solve society's most pressing needs. Partnerships help make



## QUARTERLY NEWS AT A GLANCE

- [Sen. Bill Coleman Receives Higher Education Distinguished Service Award](#)
- [Seven Oklahoma High Schools Named Scholarship Champs](#)
- [Students, Higher Education Representatives Gather at State Capitol for Higher Education Day](#)
- [Students, Supporters Gather at State Capitol for Oklahoma's Promise](#)



## OKLAHOMA HIGHER EDUCATION NEWS

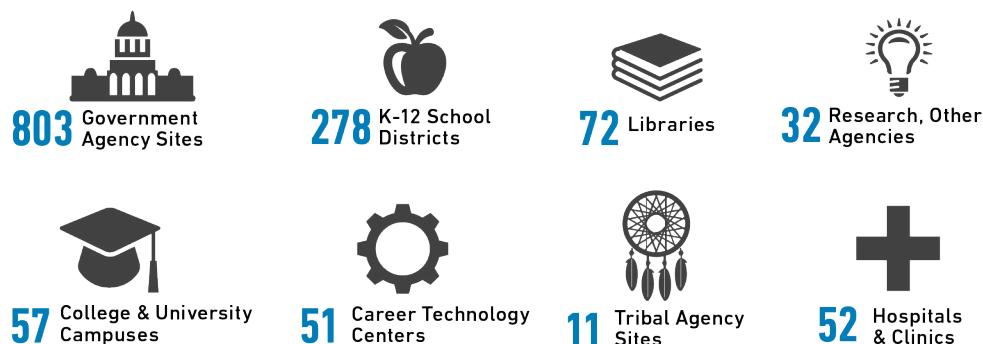
- [UCO, RSC Establish Transfer Student Partnership](#)
- [Amazon Teams with Five State Colleges and Universities](#)
- [ECU School of Nursing Doubles Accepted Applicants to Meet Demand](#)

# ONENET FAST FACTS

## BY THE NUMBERS

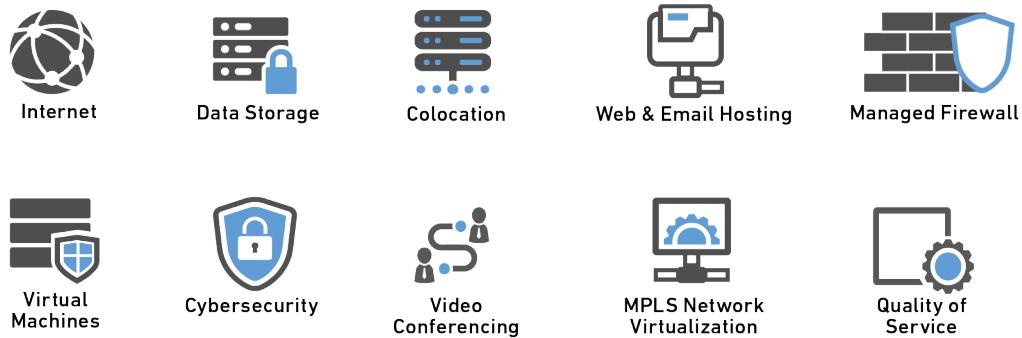
- [2,718 miles](#) of high-speed fiber
- More than [800 Gbps](#) to the rest of the world
- [500+ million gigabytes](#) of data transported annually
- [2+ petabytes](#) of archive storage in data center
- [More than 1,500 connections](#) spanning the state
- Helped Oklahoma scientists and researchers garner nearly [\\$50 million in grants](#)

## SUBSCRIBERS SERVED



*Data as of 9/21*

## SERVICES PROVIDED



## FAST FACTS

- Division of the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education
- Mission is to advance technology across Oklahoma
- Enhances economic growth by meeting the mission-critical needs of the state's education, research, health care and public service communities
- Operates a 24/7/365 service desk to provide the highest possible level of service to subscribers
- Operates and maintains the Oklahoma Community Anchor Network, a 10Gbps optical connection spanning more than 1,100 miles across the state

## Keep in touch with OneNet

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# 2022 STATE REGENTS BUSINESS PARTNERSHIP EXCELLENCE AWARDS

Twenty-six business and higher education partnerships throughout the state were recently recognized for innovative collaboration that furthers the education of Oklahoma's workforce.



The State Regents' Business Partnership Excellence Award is designed to highlight successful partnerships between higher education institutions and businesses, and to 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 \$197,000 to 394 business and education partnerships.

Learn about each partnership recognized with a 2022 Regents Business Partnership Excellence Award at [okhighered.org/econ-dev/partner-excellence](http://okhighered.org/econ-dev/partner-excellence).

## 2022 STEM SUMMER ACADEMIES

This summer, middle and high school students will be able to experience life on a college campus while exploring exciting and varied fields of study at the free 2022 Summer Academies in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM).

The State Regents' STEM Summer Academies are open to rising 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.



The academies will be offered at several of Oklahoma's college and university campus locations in May, June and July, and will last from five days to two weeks. Some academies require students to live in the campus residence halls, while others require that students travel to and from campus each day.

Academies 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 after high school.

The full list of 2022 STEM Summer Academies is available on the [OKcollegestart website](http://OKcollegestart website).

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The OU College of Nursing has also expanded its online degree offerings in recent years. Programs that are offered fully online are the RN to BSN (with clinical practicum hours), Master's in Nursing Administration, Ph.D. in Nursing and the Doctor of Nursing Practice in Executive Leadership.

OU's nursing programs have earned high honors in nationwide rankings. In its 2022 rankings, U.S. News & World Report placed OU No. 29 in its list of best online master's in nursing programs, and No. 58 for best bachelor of science in nursing programs. OU's RN to BSN online program is ranked No. 2 in the nation by [nurse.org](http://nurse.org).

In collaboration with the Oklahoma Career Tech system, the OU College of Nursing also updated a nurse refresher course geared toward RNs and LPNs whose nursing licenses have become inactive but who would like to rejoin the workforce. The refresher course reduces the learning and time barriers to reactivate one's nursing license – in turn, increasing the number of available registered nurses and licensed practical nurses in Oklahoma.

### Keep in touch with OCAP

[OCAP.org](http://OCAP.org)

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ReadySetRepay

UCanGo2

OKcollegestart

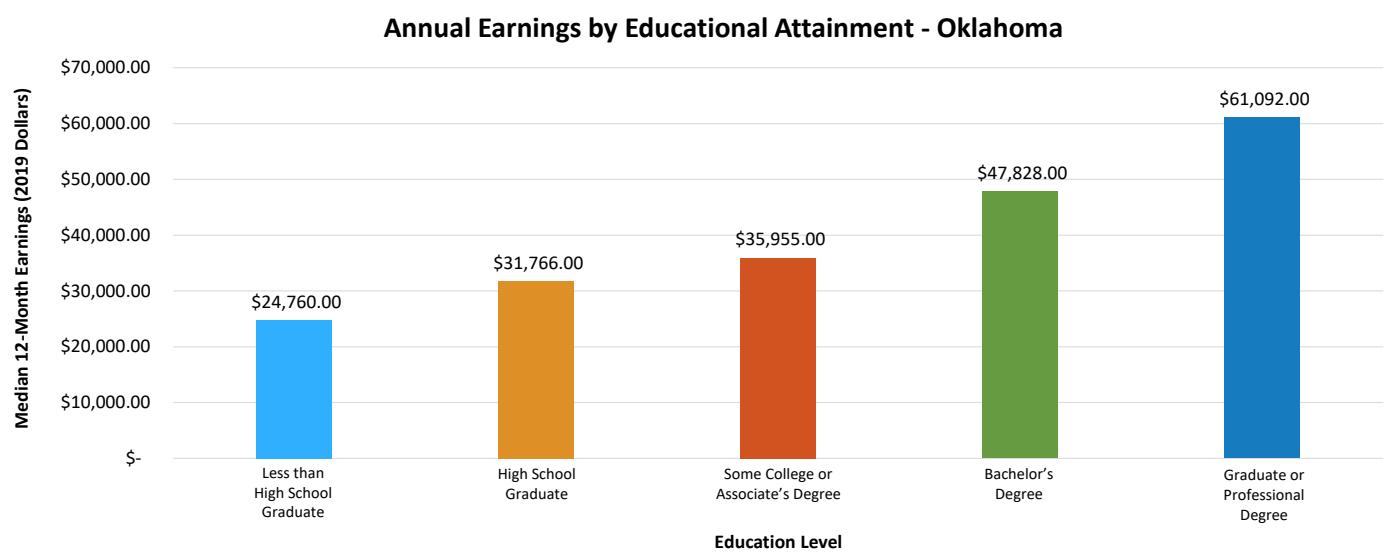
OKCollegeAssistance

# DID YOU KNOW?

For every \$1 of state appropriations invested, the state system of higher education generates **\$9.40** in economic return.



## A College Degree Pays More



SOURCE: US Census Bureau, 2019 ACS 1-Year Estimates



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