BLUEPRINT 2030: A STRATEGIC PLAN TO BUILD TOMORROW’S WORKFORCE

By Chancellor Allison D. Garrett

Public higher education plays a vital role in meeting Oklahoma’s workforce development goals. The majority of our state’s critical occupations require a college degree, yet our level of educational attainment remains well below the national average.

This puts Oklahoma at a disadvantage in attracting new businesses and helping our existing employers grow. To compete nationally, we need more residents with a college degree.

To address this workforce challenge, Oklahoma needs a solid roadmap — a comprehensive plan within which objectives are forged, strengths and challenges are studied, strategies are identified and performance benchmarks are set.

That’s why the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education recently approved a new strategic plan to guide the state system of higher education over the next several years. Blueprint 2030: Innovating and Elevating Oklahoma Higher Education for Tomorrow’s Workforce looks ahead to our state’s bright future, which requires a responsive, forward-thinking, data-driven public higher education system.

Developed in partnership with a wide cross-section of stakeholders — including businesses, legislators and policymakers, community organizations, K-12, CareerTech, regents, and college and university representatives — Blueprint 2030 provides a framework to increase educational attainment in our state, align higher education programs with workforce needs and maximize system resources.

Blueprint 2030 embraces four fundamental goals: produce workforce-ready graduates, grow the student pipeline, focus on student success, and improve system efficiency and effectiveness.

How do we graduate more students who are ready for tomorrow’s workforce? We align higher education programs even more closely with employer demand, with a goal of producing 100,000 degrees and other credentials in STEM and critical occupations by 2030.

We will expand STEM programs in nursing, engineering and computer science; recruit and retain students in other high-need areas, such as teaching; and incentivize our graduates not only to learn here but to stay and earn here, too.
WOSC, SWTC PARTNER TO STRENGTHEN OKLAHOMA’S WORKFORCE

By Chad Wiginton, President, Western Oklahoma State College

As neighbors with the same goal, Western Oklahoma State College (WOSC) and Southwest Technology Center (SWTC) have cultivated a 10-year partnership to prepare students for Oklahoma’s workforce.

One example is our Project Lead the Way biomedical sciences program. Through this collaboration, students utilize both campuses to prepare for study in the medical or life science fields at the university level. The program combines four courses required by Project Lead the Way and four WOSC courses in math and science: college algebra, statistics, biology, and chemistry. The agreement between WOSC and SWTC provides all college tuition, books, and fees at no cost to those enrolled in the program.

Beth Braddock completed WOSC and SWTC’s joint biomedical sciences program in 2014. She said the program provided the excellent preparation and foundation she needed to push onward, complete her degree and land her dream job as a physician assistant.

This academic partnership provides students with hands-on experiences in the biomedical sciences field, and the ability to receive college credit positions students to be ahead of schedule once they graduate from high school and begin their college career. That was the case for Beth, who earned her degree in only three years — largely because she had already completed 30 hours concurrently at WOSC while in high school and participated in the joint biomedical sciences program. She says the concurrent classes improved her readiness for university-level courses.

The sustainability of rural Oklahoma hinges on quality healthcare. WOSC and SWTC are working together to expose students to various fields in the industry and, ultimately, preparing these highly motivated individuals to fulfill critical workforce needs.

We will engage Oklahoma employers to meet their evolving needs in real time and connect them with our students through internships and other engaged learning opportunities.

To elevate Oklahoma’s share of college-educated citizens, we must have a larger student pipeline. To increase college enrollment 10% by 2030, we seek to strengthen Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) completion among high school seniors. Today, Oklahomans leave more than $60 million on the table annually by not completing the FAFSA. We will also simplify the college admission process and provide more grants, scholarships and tuition waivers.

As a system, how do we ensure that every student we serve has the best chance for success? Data analytics will allow us to identify students most in need of support while there’s still time to intervene and assist them. Recognizing that adult learners have unique needs, we will help adult students connect to over 300 fully online associate and bachelor’s degrees currently offered by our institutions and further increase flexibility by developing more competency-based programs and stackable micro-credentials.

Moving forward to implement Blueprint 2030, we will continue to be good stewards of state resources by continuously improving our efficiency and effectiveness as a system. With those objectives top of mind, we will help fund innovative collaborations and consolidations, reduce administrative costs through a shared services center, and incentivize excellence by developing a new performance funding formula for our public colleges and universities.

Sharing our strategic plan is just the beginning. Later this year, our website will feature interactive dashboards to illustrate our progress as we execute the bold strategies outlined in Blueprint 2030. Your state system of higher education is committed to translating individual student success into the educated workforce we need to grow our state’s economy.
ONENET FAST FACTS

- Division of the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education
- Oklahoma's research and education network
- 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

SUBSCRIBERS SERVED

798 Government Agency Sites
273 K-12 School Districts
71 Libraries
36 Research, Other Agencies
57 College & University Campuses
47 Career Technology Centers
10 Tribal Agency Sites
61 Hospitals & Clinics

SERVICES PROVIDED

Internet
Data Storage
Colocation
Web & Email Hosting
Managed Firewall
Virtual Machines
Cybersecurity
Video Conferencing
MPLS Network Virtualization
Quality of Service

BY THE NUMBERS

- Uses over 2,800 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
- 1,450+ connections spanning the state
- Helped Oklahoma scientists and researchers secure nearly $54 million in grants
2023 STATE REGENTS BUSINESS PARTNERSHIP EXCELLENCE AWARDS

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

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.

Learn about each partnership recognized with a 2023 Regents Business Partnership Excellence Award at okhighered.org/econ-dev/RBPEA/partner-excellence.

2023 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 2023 Summer Academies in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM).

The State Regents’ STEM Summer Academies 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.

The 2023 academies will be offered at several of Oklahoma’s college and university campus locations in May, June, July and August, 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 STEM fields and, ultimately, expand their career and educational aspirations after high school.

The full list of 2023 STEM Summer Academies is available on the OKcollegestart website.
DID YOU KNOW?

Despite an enrollment decline over the last decade, annual degree and certificate production at state system colleges and universities increased more than 8% in that time period. Additionally, fall 2022 preliminary enrollment figures for first-time entering freshmen at our public colleges and universities show an enrollment increase of 3% over fall 2021.

State System Enrollment and Degree Production Trends

State system degree production in nursing increased more than 26% over the last 10 years.

State system degree production in computer and information sciences increased more than 19% over the last five years.