

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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Oklahoma's Promise: An Investment in Oklahoma's Future

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

The Oklahoma's Promise program was created by the Legislature in 1992 to encourage more students to aspire for college, prepare themselves academically in high school and ultimately, earn college degrees. Since its inception, more than 85,000 Oklahoma students have earned the scholarship, helping them attend postsecondary education at a time when a college degree has never been more valuable.

At the State Regents' request, the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) recently conducted a comprehensive review of the Oklahoma's Promise scholarship program. SREB's findings show that Oklahoma's Promise is both effective and efficient as a key driver to increase educational attainment levels in our state. The report describes Oklahoma's Promise as one of the premier student support initiatives in the

nation and an example of how a state can invest valuable resources in its students and see a strong return on that investment.

The Oklahoma's Promise scholarship pays tuition at any Oklahoma public college or university until the student receives a **bachelor's degree or for five years, whichever comes first. It also covers a portion of tuition at accredited Oklahoma private institutions or career technology centers.** The scholarship does not cover the cost of fees, books, or room and board. To be eligible for Oklahoma's Promise, the student's family income must not exceed \$55,000 at the time of application and must not exceed \$100,000 while the student attends college. To receive the scholarship, students must successfully complete a college preparatory curriculum in high school, meet a high school GPA requirement, attend class regularly, and refrain from drug and alcohol abuse and delinquent acts.

Students completing the Oklahoma's Promise program continue to succeed academically, with high school GPAs, college-going rates and freshman college GPAs that exceed the state average and ACT scores that exceed those of comparable middle- and lower-income peers. Oklahoma's Promise students also achieve above-average full-time college enrollment rates, retention rates and degree-completion rates. Additionally, Oklahoma's Promise college graduates are employed and stay in Oklahoma at a higher rate than the general student population.

Approximately 17,000 students are expected to receive the Oklahoma's Promise scholarship in college this year. By law, Oklahoma's Promise has a dedicated funding source to ensure that the program is fully funded each year. Over



the past 26 years – even during severe state funding shortfalls – every earned Oklahoma's Promise scholarship has been fully paid.

National data show that states with more college degree-holders have higher levels of per capita income. Oklahoma's Promise college graduates honor the state's investment by becoming engineers, teachers, business leaders, legislators, nurses, information technology specialists, law enforcement officers, and countless other valuable professionals. Oklahoma's Promise has a significant impact on our workforce and economy that will continue for generations. This transformational scholarship represents a "game-changing" investment that our governor, our legislature and our State Board of Equalization have made in our students.

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Oklahoma's Regional Universities Create Chances to Succeed

Mark Stansberry, Chair, RUSO Board of Regents



A recent article by The Oklahoman's Kathryn McNutt is an excellent example of the significant impact regional universities have on our students and Oklahoma's workforce. McNutt wrote about two national studies that show Regional University System of Oklahoma institutions are outperforming the national average for upward social mobility by 38 percent. That means, financially, these graduates are far exceeding their families' income compared to when the students began college.

We know that getting a college degree significantly leads to higher income and better quality of life. The social mobility studies show that RUSO institutions offer much more than that — new opportunities, broader and diverse experiences, connections — and they open doors that would otherwise have been locked.

As the largest four-year university system in the state, RUSO governs six public universities: East Central University in Ada, Northeastern State University in Tahlequah, Northwestern Oklahoma State University in Alva, Southeastern Oklahoma State University in Durant, Southwestern Oklahoma State University in Weatherford and the

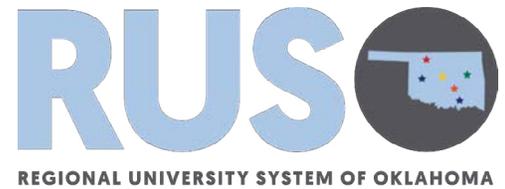
University of Central Oklahoma in Edmond. Combined, they enroll more than 40,000 students who come from diverse geographical and economic backgrounds. Many don't fit the narrow definition of "traditional college student." In fact, a third of the population are nontraditional — transfer students, part-time or returning students, or those who start or finish outside of the traditional time frame.

There are many first-generation students who didn't imagine a career or lifestyle outside of their own experiences until they attended college. Several prominent Oklahomans, such as Native American leader Lisa Johnson Billy and Paycom CEO Chad Richison, tell stories of not knowing if they could even go to college. Their college experiences helped them see more possibilities, make choices based on diverse experiences and be inspired to dream bigger than they had before.

**Our students
deserve equally
engaged support
systems that are
proven ladders
to success.**

Last year, RUSO created 27 benchmarks to track the effectiveness of its universities. Social mobility is just one area where our institutions excel. Metrics also show that fewer than half

of RUSO graduates have accumulated debt; their median annual salary for one year after graduation is \$4,280 higher than the state's graduate annual median; and 84 percent of graduates remain in Oklahoma, compared with 76 percent for all Oklahoma institutions. Combined, these outcomes show that RUSO institutions are not only helping our students achieve success, but also strengthening our state's economy and workforce.



We welcome Gov. Kevin Stitt, Lt. Gov. Matt Pinnell and 57 new legislators to session this year. As our metrics show, it's important to understand that regional university students have diverse challenges requiring grit and determination. Our students deserve equally engaged support systems that are proven ladders to success. I encourage our incoming legislators to learn more about RUSO institutions and their efforts to keep the doors of opportunity open for all students. And, I encourage regional university graduates to share their stories and the importance of education with elected officials.



2019 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. The luncheon was held on the University of Central Oklahoma campus. Speaking at the presentation were Chancellor Glen D. Johnson and Oklahoma Secretary of Commerce Sean Kouplen, 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 \$157,000 to 314 business and education partnerships.

2019 recognized partnerships:

- Cameron University, McMahon Foundation
- Carl Albert State College, First National Bank
- Connors State College, Warner Hardware
- East Central University, City of Ada
- Eastern Oklahoma State College, Health and Wellness Center
- Langston University, Love's Travel Stops and Country Stores
- Murray State College, BancFirst
- Northeastern Oklahoma A&M College, Architects in Partnership
- Northeastern State University, Northeast Oklahoma Regional Alliance
- Northern Oklahoma College, Renfro Family Foundation
- Northwestern Oklahoma State University, LaDeeda
- Oklahoma City Community College, Dell
- Oklahoma Panhandle State University, Goodwell Public Schools
- Oklahoma State University's New Product Development Center, Bullet Fence Systems LLC
- Oklahoma State University Institute of Technology, Komatsu
- Oklahoma State University-Oklahoma City, Amazon
- Redlands Community College, Symbiotic Aquaponic
- Rogers State University, moreClaremore
- Rose State College, Advantage Bank
- Seminole State College, City of Seminole
- Southeastern Oklahoma State University, Julian Construction
- Southwestern Oklahoma State University, Leadership Weatherford
- Tulsa Community College, Community Food Bank of Eastern Oklahoma
- University of Central Oklahoma, City Management Association of Oklahoma
- University of Oklahoma, Pat Tillman Foundation
- University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma, Chickasha Festival of Light Board of Directors
- Western Oklahoma State College, Comanche County Memorial Hospital

QUICK FACT

Oklahoma's public higher education system supported **\$8.2 billion** in total economic output in FY16.



Oklahoma's Promise Champions

Eight Oklahoma high schools have been named "Oklahoma's Promise 2018 State Champions," leading the state in the number of graduates who met the requirements to receive an Oklahoma's Promise scholarship. Oklahoma's Promise is a state program that allows students from families whose annual income is \$55,000 or less to earn a tuition scholarship for college or certain programs at public career technology centers.

More than 85,000 Oklahoma students have been afforded the opportunity to pursue their college education through the Oklahoma's Promise scholarship program since its inception more than 25 years ago. Oklahoma high schools have done an

exceptional job encouraging and supporting their students' participation in Oklahoma's Promise. High schools named Oklahoma's Promise 2018 State Champions are:

- Class B, Thackerville, with 11 Oklahoma's Promise graduates.
- Class A, Co-Champions: Empire and Soper, with 11 Oklahoma's Promise graduates each.
- Class 2A, Caddo, with 17 Oklahoma's Promise graduates.
- Class 3A, Idabel, with 33 Oklahoma's Promise graduates.
- Class 4A, Southeast (Oklahoma City), with 71 Oklahoma's Promise graduates.

- Class 5A, Santa Fe South (Oklahoma City), with 72 Oklahoma's Promise graduates.
- Class 6A, Union (Tulsa), with 154 Oklahoma's Promise graduates.

SOCIAL MEDIA SPOTLIGHT



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2019 Higher Education Day at the State Capitol

Tuesday, Feb. 12, 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: Lt. Gov. Matt Pinnell; Sen. Roger Thompson; Rep. Jadine Nollan; State Regents chair Jay Helm; Chancellor Glen D. Johnson; and President Tim Faltyn, Oklahoma Panhandle State University. 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 and economic development. 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.

2019 Oklahoma's Promise Day at the State Capitol

Tuesday, April 9, students, faculty and 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 Oklahoma Deputy Attorney General Dara Derryberry; State Regent Michael C. Turpen; Chancellor Glen D. Johnson; Sen. Jason Smalley, Oklahoma State Senate; Rep. Jadine Nollan and Rep. Cyndi Munson, Oklahoma House of Representatives; State Chamber Executive Vice President of Government and Political Affairs Mike Jackson; and Oklahoma's Promise recipient Sarah Kellogg. The purpose of the annual Oklahoma's Promise rally is to show appreciation for the Governor 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.



Oklahoma Native American Attainment Convening Focuses on Higher Education Best Practices for Serving Native Students

More than 100 participants representing 17 higher education institutions, tribal education offices and workforce development centers registered to attend the Oklahoma Native American Attainment Convening at Rose State College on Feb. 27. The convening, sponsored by the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, Oklahoma Works, and Reach Higher, the State Regents' adult degree completion initiative, was held to allow recipients of the Native American Serving Nontribal Institutions (NASNTI) grant and Oklahoma's non-NASNTI designated institutions to share best practices with colleagues from across the state.

Featured speaker Dr. Courtney Brown from Lumina Foundation shared data related to attainment, equity, and workforce gaps, and provided information about key attainment benchmarks for the Native student population. Panelists from tribal higher education departments and colleges and universities focused on a variety of topics with a specific emphasis on serving Native students, including student support resources, financial assistance, and program funding opportunities.

The State Regents entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with the Tribal Education Departments National Assembly (TEDNA) in May 2017 to formalize the state system's commitment to serving tribal members seeking higher education in Oklahoma. The agreement with TEDNA has strengthened public institutions' relationships with tribal education offices to meet the higher education needs of tribal members across the state. Additionally, Reach Higher works directly with tribal education offices across the state to increase the number of tribal citizens seeking a degree in Oklahoma.

2019 Research Day at the Capitol: Spotlighting the State's Top Undergraduate Researchers

Twenty-two undergraduate student researchers, representing 16 Oklahoma colleges and universities, gathered at the State Capitol on March 26 for the 24th annual Research Day at the Capitol.

Students were hand-selected by their institutions to present scientific research posters during the prestigious event, which is designed to showcase the outstanding research being conducted on Oklahoma's campuses.

Members of the State Legislature and Capitol guests viewed students' poster displays to learn more about the research projects, which covered important topics such as water quality, cancer and recidivism.

Research posters and oral presentations were competitively judged by an independent panel. The top seven researchers in three categories were selected—one overall winner,

three regional university winners and three research-intensive institution winners. The students below received awards during a ceremony at the conclusion of the event.

2019 award winners:

Overall Grand Prize

- Matthew Baier
University of Oklahoma
Health Sciences Center

First Place, Regional University and Community College Category

- Karissa Hodge
Northeastern State University

First Place, Research-Intensive Institution Category

- Sarah Gutierrez
The University of Tulsa

Second Place, Regional University and Community College Category

- Anna Paraskevopoulos
Cameron University

Second Place, Research-Intensive Institution Category

- Marjorie Sheaff
The University of Tulsa

Third Place, Regional University and Community College Category

- Tu Doan
University of Central Oklahoma

Third Place, Research-Intensive Institution Category

- Julia Tang
University of Oklahoma

OneNet Expands Partnerships to Boost Local and Regional Connectivity

OneNet is building on regional partnerships to boost connectivity in the state of Oklahoma and throughout the south central region. OneNet's geographic location as a crossroads uniquely positions the network to expand high-speed services across the region.

"Historically, some have classified Oklahoma as a 'fly-over' state," said Vonley Royal, OneNet's executive director. "Now we are a participant in facilitating high-bandwidth connections for the entire region."

OneNet, along with Oklahoma data centers and telecommunications providers, has created a new partnership, the Oklahoma City Internet Exchange or OKCIX. This partnership formalizes OneNet's content delivery network (CDN) project and provides a safe, collaborative place for Oklahoma-based telecommunications and content providers to connect with each other.

OneNet is facilitating the new fiber connections into Oklahoma City area data centers, where participants connect with OneNet's network. Through this connection, participants can access OneNet's CDN services, which include content providers such as Netflix, Facebook, Akamai, Microsoft, Amazon, Google and Valve. OKCIX partners can reduce costs through CDN services and by peering with other participants.

A new technology, node slicing, will also reduce costs for both local and regional partners. Node slicing is the ability to virtualize multiple router instances inside a single physical router. OneNet is deploying node slicing to enable multiple organizations to utilize equipment more efficiently. This new technology will reduce the cost of colocation in participating data centers and provide virtual resources for public/private partners.

OneNet's current partnerships with Great Plains Network and Western Regional Network have provided regional connectivity for the south central states and connections to the West Coast. Through these partnerships, OneNet is connected to Internet2 and the Pacific Wave International Exchange, which support advanced research and scientific discovery.

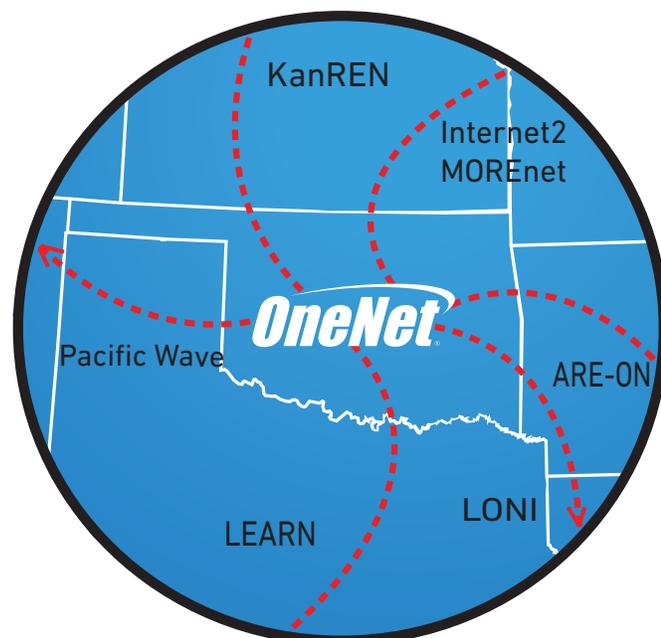
OneNet's leadership identified the need to build on these partnerships and establish more direct connections within Oklahoma and among surrounding states. These new connections support regional research and education networks, content providers and telecommunications partners.

Multiple regional networks have formed the Dallas Consortium with the goals of increasing connectivity, lowering costs and bringing more content to member states. The consortium includes OneNet in Oklahoma, ARE-ON in Arkansas, KanRen in Kansas, LEARN in Texas, LONI in Louisiana and MOREnet in Missouri.

Consortium members are provisioning fiber and wave services across state lines to deploy more direct connections for the research networks.

These direct fiber connections improve access to resources for member networks and the organizations they serve, such as higher education institutions and health care providers. These connections generate cost savings and enable organizations on the network to communicate more effectively across the region.

"OneNet plans to build on these new partnerships to deliver world-class connectivity to Oklahoma and its neighboring states," said Royal. "These partnerships are a key strategy for fulfilling our mission of advancing technology across Oklahoma and offering better services and improved quality of life in Oklahoma and throughout the south central region."



OKcollegestart.org Spring Workshops

OKcollegestart.org, the State Regents' student portal for college planning, hosted four training workshops this spring to instruct educators on ways to use OKcollegestart.org to implement Individual Career Academic Plans (ICAPs) in their schools. 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 Oklahoma State University-Tulsa, Eastern Oklahoma State College in McAlester and Northwestern Oklahoma State University in Enid.

Participants received hands-on support as they selected ICAP activities, customized and assigned an ICAP to their students, and

learned to track student progress and identify how to use activity outcomes in advising.

"Educators across the state are preparing to implement Individual Career Academic Plans in their schools this fall, so it was important we help them prepare," said Theresa Shaklee, student portal coordinator for the Oklahoma College Assistance Program. "We're excited to be a part of the college and career readiness process on which their students are embarking."

Participants also learned about new OKcollegestart.org features, including a redesigned Professional Center and customizable surveys.

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.

Inaugural Oklahoma College Access Conference Held

The Oklahoma College Assistance Program's (OCAP) Outreach Team held the inaugural College Access Conference on Feb. 6. Held at Oklahoma City Community College, the free conference was designed to deliver vital information to the counselors, educators and community partners that OCAP Outreach works with on a daily basis.

OCAP's goal was to share best practices and updated information to professionals who have daily contact with students. Over 70 professionals attended.

Some of the topics covered at the conference included what college admissions specialists look for in potential students, finding and applying for scholarships, assisting underserved students and working with Individual Career Academic Plans (ICAPs).

"With the growing necessity for a college education to match the future job market and the implementation of ICAPs in all

schools this coming fall, we felt this would be a great time to offer assistance and guidance to our schools," said OCAP Assistant Director for Outreach Services Kelli Kelnar. "We had a full house with lots of interaction, participation and overall appreciation. Our first College Access Conference was a great success."



OCAP's Outreach Team is excited to continue hosting the conference annually. "We received a lot of positive feedback from our attendees, a diverse group of professionals including K-12 counselors and administrators, Upward Bound/TRiO personnel, financial literacy specialists and other community partners," said Kelnar.

"We plan to continue growing this conference to become the premier college access event in the state."

Increasing college access is the primary objective of UCanGo2, OCAP's comprehensive college access outreach initiative. OCAP, an operating division of the State Regents, provides college access, aid awareness, financial literacy and student loan management programs and services that benefit students, parents, schools and community partners. To learn more, visit OCAP.org and UCanGo2.org, like UCanGo2 on Facebook and join OCAP's mailing lists at ocap.org/News/subscribe.

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