

# Degrees of Progress

News from the State Regents for Higher Education



OKLAHOMA STATE REGENTS  
FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

*Improving our future by degrees*

Volume 4, Issue 4 | Fall 2019

## Higher Education Drives Economy, Workforce Development

By Chancellor Glen D. Johnson

The Georgetown Center for Education and the Workforce tells us that by next year, 67% of job vacancies in Oklahoma will require an associate degree or additional postsecondary education and training, and 37% will require an associate degree, bachelor's degree, or higher. Clearly, Oklahoma's economic growth into the future requires a well-educated workforce. However, while approximately 33% of Americans older than age 25 hold a bachelor's degree or higher, only 26% of Oklahomans hold at least a bachelor's degree.

The State Regents remain focused on initiatives that improve college readiness and increase degree completion in our state. Strategies developed by the Task Force on the Future of Higher Education focus on concurrent enrollment, expanding scholarships and financial aid opportunities, and strengthening adult degree completion efforts.

Concurrent enrollment allows eligible high school juniors and seniors to earn college credit while still in high school, which strengthens student preparation, reduces family college costs, and decreases the time required to complete a degree. The \$7.5 million in additional appropriations for concurrent enrollment provided in FY19 moved the needle to cover approximately 87% of the cost to our campuses. The additional \$3.3 million provided by Gov. Stitt and the Legislature in the 2019 legislative session allowed for full funding of the concurrent enrollment program for high school seniors in FY20.

The Oklahoma's Promise scholarship program encourages more students to aspire for college, prepare academically in high school and earn college degrees. Oklahoma's Promise students are more likely to enroll in college full-time, persist through college, earn a degree, get a job in Oklahoma, and stay in our state than comparable peers. More than 85,000 eligible students have earned the Oklahoma's Promise scholarship since 1992. Protecting the dedicated funding source for Oklahoma's Promise remains a state system priority.

Our adult degree completion initiative, Reach Higher, offers academic programs and support services through the FlexFinish and DirectComplete programs that are specifically designed to meet the needs of working adults who have some college credit, but have not completed an associate or bachelor's degree. The FlexFinish program offers flexible class options and enrollment for working adults pursuing a Reach Higher associate or bachelor's



degree. Reach Higher DirectComplete, funded by a grant from Lumina Foundation and delivered in partnership with businesses, tribes, workforce agencies and nonprofits, offers comprehensive services and support to adult students returning to pursue degree programs that lead to employment in Oklahoma's critical occupations.

Students, families, and the business community benefit from Oklahoma's investment in concurrent enrollment, Oklahoma's Promise, Reach Higher, and the many other essential programs developed and delivered by our state system of higher education. A study from the State Chamber Research Foundation shows that for every dollar of state appropriations invested, the state system of higher education generates \$9.40 in economic output. There is no better return on investment than the investment our policy leaders make in higher education.

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## Innovative Higher Education Partnerships

### Seminole State College, East Central University Hire Shared English Instructor

*Katricia Pierson, President, East Central University*  
*Lana Reynolds, President, Seminole State College*

Seminole State College (SSC) and East Central University (ECU) recently began a partnership to share the employment of a full-time English instructor. Sharing this employee is an example of a unique partnership between our institutions to better utilize resources allocated by the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education and the Oklahoma Legislature.

In an effort to focus on cost-saving services, we reviewed possible positions that could be shared. The English position was a great fit – filling a need we had at both institutions. The shared position will devote approximately 40% of service time to ECU and 60% to SSC, and will teach 15 hours of language arts courses each year for SSC and hold office hours on campus.

SSC and ECU have a long history of working together to provide academic and cultural programs for our students and communities. Our campuses have previously worked together to create a smooth transition for students seeking an education degree, and the shared faculty member for our English programs shows our continued desire to share resources, grow our partnerships and, most importantly, better serve our students.



President Katricia Pierson  
East Central University



President Lana Reynolds  
Seminole State College



### Connors State College Forms Nursing Program Partnership

*Dr. Ron Ramming, President, Connors State College*

Connors State College is excited to work with the Cherokee Nation, Northeastern Health System and Northeastern State University to extend our nursing program into Cherokee County. It is our belief that this partnership will prove to be an excellent example of how public, private and tribal sectors can work together to meet workforce needs in our state. Recognizing the critical need for nurses, especially in rural Oklahoma, we are thrilled to be a part of a program that addresses this need.

The Cherokee Nation and Northeastern Health System have each agreed to fund a faculty position for the new satellite nursing program. We are incredibly grateful for all they have done to help us get this program up and running. We also thank our dedicated faculty and staff who are invested in the success of the program, and in our students. We enthusiastically look forward to the success of this program as it not only helps address the nursing shortage, but also builds bright futures for our graduates.



President Ron Ramming  
Connors State College



## Five Oklahoma Higher Education Institutions Awarded State Opioid Response Grants

Five Oklahoma colleges and universities and the State Regents are the recipients of a \$250,000 State Opioid Response – Higher Education Community Outreach Grant from the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (ODMHSAS) for 2019-20. The State Regents will serve as the grant administrator.

Northeastern Oklahoma A&M College, Northern Oklahoma College, Northwestern Oklahoma State University, Oklahoma State University and the University of Oklahoma will each receive a share of the grant money, which will fund campus efforts to prevent opioid misuse and provide referral services for those needing treatment.

“We appreciate this funding opportunity provided by our partners at the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services,” said Chancellor Glen D. Johnson. “The collaboration of state system campuses, the State Regents and ODMHSAS facilitated through this grant will provide these institutions with the resources they need to expand opioid misuse and overdose education efforts in their service areas across the state.”

Campuses will provide outreach, engagement and evidence-based prevention services, including health education, promotion and community consultation. Efforts will focus on the general student population, as well as students at risk for opioid misuse, opioid disorder and opioid overdose. Institutions will

also develop and maintain online resources for opioid abuse prevention and treatment, including materials from the ODMHSAS Prescription for Change campaign.

Additionally, grant funds will be used to support training for faculty, staff and students in the prevention and treatment of opioid misuse and overdose, including naloxone administration, access to treatment services, how to recognize and respond to an opioid overdose, and safe storage and disposal of opioids.

Peer health educators will provide campus-based student training on opioid misuse and prevention. Tribal connections are also a part of the institutions’ plans to utilize and extend access to community resources.

## State Regents Launch New Reach Higher Website

The State Regents recently launched the newly designed Reach Higher website, targeting working adults with some college credit who wish to complete an associate or bachelor’s degree.

The new site consolidates the multiple options available to adult students and provides simpler site navigation, a refreshed visual look and feel, and a responsive design that is flexible between workstations and mobile devices.

Oklahoma remains a leader in engaging adult students to return and complete higher education degrees. The redesigned Reach Higher website provides working adults with the tools they need to return to college. The improvements to this site support the State Regents’ efforts to expand access to flexible, affordable degree options for adult learners around the state, while providing an educated workforce for Oklahoma’s businesses and industries.

Reach Higher, Oklahoma’s adult degree completion initiative, offers two strands of degree completion for adult learners who have successfully completed some college coursework. **Reach Higher: FlexFinish** offers flexible enrollment and online options to working adults who wish to pursue an associate degree in enterprise development or a bachelor’s degree in organizational leadership at one of 21 participating colleges and universities in

Oklahoma. **Reach Higher: DirectComplete** offers adult students the opportunity to complete a degree in programs connected with workforce development needs that align with Oklahoma’s 100 Critical Occupations list. Learn more about Reach Higher at [www.reachhigherok.org](http://www.reachhigherok.org).



## State Regents and Partners Host Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Workshop

On September 17, 2019, the State Regents' Campus Safety and Security Task Force and Council on Student Affairs hosted a workshop focused on sexual assault prevention, education and response at Oklahoma City Community College (OCCC). Entitled "Sexual Assault Prevention: It Takes a Campus," the workshop was taught by Dr. Kimberly Dickman, U.S. Air Force.

Featuring a combination of instruction and interactive learning activities that reflected elements of behavioral psychology and mental health counseling, workshop content addressed building awareness of sexual assault as a safety and security issue, risk reduction, strengthening prevention practices, and improving immediate and ongoing response to incidents of sexual violence. Participants included campus emergency management and law enforcement personnel, student affairs administrators, campus housing staff, Title IX coordinators, advisors, and counselors.

The workshop was sponsored by the Oklahoma Office of Homeland Security, Oklahoma Women in Higher Education, OCCC, and the State Regents and accredited by the Council on Law Enforcement Education and Training (CLEET). Dr. Dickman, who also provided the keynote address at the Campus Safety & Security Summit in November 2018,

has worked for the U.S. Air Force's Sexual Assault Prevention and Response program for 12 years at both the base level as a first responder and at the headquarters level at the Pentagon. She currently works at the U.S. Air Force Academy, where she focuses on prevention of sexual violence and evaluation.



## Oklahomans Explore Opportunities to Return to College During Reach Higher: RECONNECT Week

During the week of July 27-Aug 1, approximately 420 Oklahomans — who have successfully completed some college coursework but not yet finished a college degree — had the opportunity to submit college admission applications, receive advisement and financial aid counseling, and enroll in college classes with support from knowledgeable staff members during the State Regents' Reach Higher: RECONNECT Week. Of the 420 prospective students who attended, 204 enrolled in 1,949 hours.

Reach Higher: RECONNECT Week included a series of coordinated student recruitment events held at 19 participating Reach Higher campuses across the state. Participating campuses

provided activities for the whole family, as well as giveaways such as RECONNECT Week swag, free food, door prizes and scholarships.

The primary goals of Reach Higher: RECONNECT were to increase awareness of the adult-friendly degree completion options available through the Reach Higher initiative, encourage adults who have completed some college credit to complete their degrees, increase awareness of the value of completing a college degree, and help adult learners establish relationships with colleges and universities that will lead to enrollment. Reach Higher: RECONNECT was supported by the State Regents through a grant from Lumina Foundation.

Reach Higher, the State Regents' adult degree completion initiative, offers two distinct degree completion program strands for adult learners — Reach Higher: FlexFinish and Reach Higher: DirectComplete. Learn more at [ReachHigherOK.org](http://ReachHigherOK.org).



## 2019 Student Leadership Retreat

One hundred and eighty student leaders and student affairs administrators from 21 different campuses, including a private institution of higher education and a tribal college, attended the 2019 Student Leadership Retreat at the University of Central Oklahoma in September. For the past 19 years, this annual event has been planned and hosted by the Council on Student Affairs (COSA), together with the Student Advisory Board, the Oklahoma Student Government Association, and State Regents.

Six different breakout sessions about leadership skills were conducted by student administrators and faculty from around the

state. The subjects of the sessions focused on bystander intervention, communication, cultural competence, the intersection of career interest with leadership, online identity, and resilience. The retreat also included a structured networking session, one of the most often-requested functions for the students. Student administrators gathered for several hours of professional development centered on legal issues of freedom of speech on campus provided by State Regent Andy Lester.

Chancellor Glen D. Johnson welcomed the students at lunch and encouraged them to make the most of this opportunity to meet their counterparts from other campuses, forge lines

of communication and develop leadership skills. The retreat closed with a lively keynote talk and interactive dialogue from Dr. David Surratt, vice president for student affairs and dean of students at the University of Oklahoma. Dr. Surratt opened with key lines from the musical *Hamilton*, and spoke about the benefit of centering one's self on one's own values while fully listening to others.

The Student Leadership Retreat is an event that enables the best student leaders from across the state to participate in leadership training, meet their counterparts from other campuses, establish common interests and forge lines of communication.

## 2019 Reading Conference

Oklahoma Teacher Connection was honored to host the 12<sup>th</sup> annual Reading Conference, titled *Joy, Power, Possibilities — Through Diverse Literature*, on September 20 at Oklahoma City University. 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. The purpose of the conference is to offer 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. Suzii Parsons, Associate Professor from Oklahoma State University and Dr. Liz Willner, Professor and Director of Teacher Education from Oklahoma City University, led the conference with *The Moral Life of Children's Literature* and *Exploring the BIG Questions Through Diverse Children's Literature*, respectively.

During the afternoon participants were able to choose between four literacy breakout

sessions. Claudia Swisher, a retired national board-certified teacher, led the first session titled, *Mighty Girls History Forgot*. The second session, *Engaging Diverse Readers through Rich and Powerful Literature*, included two presentations. Dr. Kimberly J. Stormer from Langston University presented *Cultural Modeling: Effective Measures for Engaging Black and Brown Readers*. Trey Hays, an elementary music, art, gifted and talented teacher, led, *Incorporating Culture and Creativity with Literature*.

The third session, *Literacy for Students who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, or Blind*, included presentations from Kristen Akerman from Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services, Oklahoma School for the Deaf, who spoke about strategies and tips for teaching reading to deaf and hard of hearing students, and Samantha Charles and Cassie Shelton from Oklahoma School for the Blind, who spoke about how literacy is learned and taught in these very important, high-need areas.

The final breakout session, *Overcoming the Effects of Poverty through Literature Rich Reading Instruction*, was presented by Dr. Lea Ann Garcia from the University of Central

Oklahoma, Dr. Ira Harris from Southwestern Christian University, and Dr. Kathren Stehno from Southwestern Christian University. This session focused on the current reality of Oklahoma students in poverty and the negative effects on academic achievement. The presenters suggested specific strategies coupled with diverse literature as a healing balm that inspires hope for poverty's children.

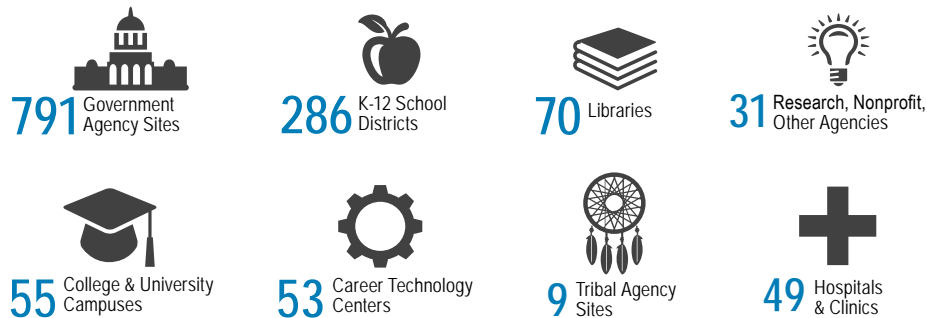


# OneNet® fastfacts

## BY THE NUMBERS

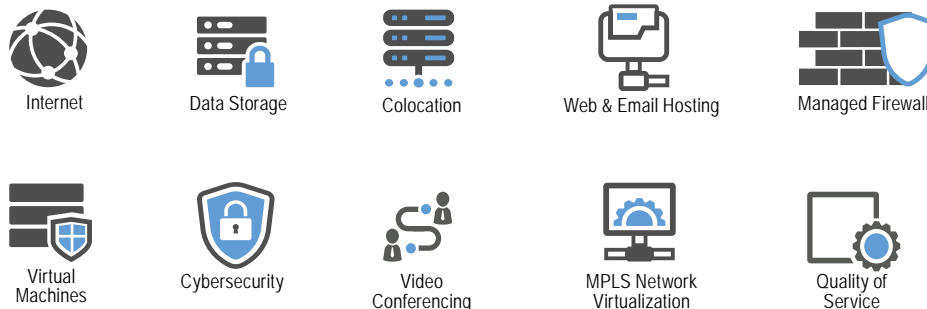
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## College Application Week 2019

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. Ninety-two schools and organizations in Oklahoma have registered for CAW 2019, representing over 9,000 high school seniors in our state.

"While these events are designed to help all students," said Oklahoma College Assistance Program (OCAP) outreach specialist and Oklahoma College Access Network (OK-CAN) member Letha Huddleston, "they're especially beneficial for those who've never considered going to college or will be the first in their family to attend."

Ninety-one Oklahoma high schools participated in CAW 2018, with 6,281 students

completing applications to 134 different colleges in 34 states and six countries. "In the exit surveys that we have received," said Huddleston, "99% of the CAW event coordinators indicate that they will hold a College Application Week again the next year. They all see this as an important event."

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 the week of Sept. 23-27. This year, school events can be held as late as the end of 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 Chancellor Glen D. Johnson of the State Regents, the Oklahoma State Department of Education and the Oklahoma State Chamber.



## UCanGo2's College Planning, FAFSA Completion Outreach

With the fall semester in full-swing and the Oct. 1 release of the 2020-21 Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), the outreach team at the Oklahoma College Assistance Program (OCAP) has been in schools and the community in full force. Its two largest objectives in the fall are promoting college preparedness and completion of the FAFSA. OCAP's outreach team has mailed over 1,000 college prep and FAFSA kits to high school counselors and has presented many college preparedness and FAFSA presentations around the state so far this fall.

### College Preparedness

The fall semester has always been the busiest time for UCanGo2, OCAP's college access initiative. Through UCanGo2, OCAP's outreach team helps counselors, teachers and administrators create a college-going culture in schools by offering on-site presentations and providing a full range of college planning resources. This includes information about

academic requirements and finding the right institutional fit, career exploration tools, financial aid educational materials, scholarship guidance and much more. In addition to presentations for students and their families, UCanGo2 also provides customized train-the-trainer sessions for educators and administrators, and UCanGo2's College Planning Toolkit empowers counselors to help students reach their higher education goals.



### FAFSA Completion

The new FAFSA became available Oct. 1, but OCAP's FAFSA awareness campaign began in August. Families are encouraged to complete the application as early as possible, while federal and state funding is available. FAFSA results are also sometimes required for state and

other scholarship applications, so timely completion serves multiple purposes.

"Our presentations and publications are designed to show students and families that the FAFSA can be completed easily," said Kelli Kelnar, OCAP Assistant Director of Outreach Services, "and everyone planning to attend college or a career technology center should apply." These grassroots efforts are also supported by a targeted digital media campaign designed to raise FAFSA awareness among Oklahoma students and families.

For additional information, like UCanGo2 on Facebook and join OCAP's mailing lists at [ocap.org/News/subscribe](http://ocap.org/News/subscribe). To learn more about the FAFSA, visit [StartWithFAFSA.org](http://StartWithFAFSA.org).

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

# Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education



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