

# 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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## Public Higher Education Responds to COVID-19 Outbreak

By Chancellor Glen D. Johnson

Without question, the COVID-19 crisis and our response to the pandemic as a state and a nation reflect an unprecedented time in American history. Such challenges often lead to exceptional discovery and growth.

Oklahoma’s public colleges and universities have responded to the challenges created by COVID-19 with flexibility and innovation. To mitigate spread of the virus, our institutions have transitioned more than 173,000 students to virtual, online, and alternative course delivery formats for the remainder of the spring semester within two weeks of the outbreak in our state. Several institutions have already announced decisions to remain in distance delivery formats for the summer session to continue to protect our students, faculty, staff and visitors.

Higher education personnel whose responsibilities do not require a

physical presence on campus have transitioned to teleworking while still accomplishing tasks that are critical to campus operations. Our colleges and universities have canceled events, including commencement ceremonies, some of which may be held virtually or rescheduled. Residence halls have been kept open — with appropriate social distancing in effect — for students with no alternative housing options. Food services have been transitioned to exclusively “grab-and-go” pick-up, and several institutions are also providing food pantries for students to address food insecurity during this crisis. Flexible grading options for students have been implemented, since grading has implications for progression/graduation, degree requirements, scholarships, and graduate admissions. All public colleges and universities have donated their Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) supplies to local and regional hospitals and other healthcare providers/facilities with which they have established partnerships, including N95 masks and respirators.

The engine driving technology solutions in connectivity during this crisis is OneNet, the State Regents’ comprehensive digital communications initiative and Oklahoma’s only statewide internet service provider. OneNet is the backbone that enables thousands of state employees to work from



home, supporting social distancing and mitigating the spread of COVID-19 while keeping essential state services running. OneNet is partnering with the State Department of Education and telecommunications partners in communities throughout the state to support distance learning and empowering health care providers to expand telemedicine services. OneNet is managing more than 25,000 Zoom licenses, and more are processed hourly as more individuals and entities transition to virtual environments.

The OU Health Sciences Center and OSU Center for Health Sciences are working on the front lines, providing laboratory resources, testing capacity, and research in support of national efforts to develop a COVID-19 vaccine and antibody testing.

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## TULSA TRANSFER PROJECT

*By President Leigh Goodson, TCC; President Steve Turner, NSU;  
President Larry Rice, RSU; President Kent J. Smith Jr., LU*

As we adapt to the current landscape of higher education, the work of the Tulsa Transfer Project has not slowed. This innovative project is guided by one shared goal: to increase the number of students who complete college degrees in northeastern Oklahoma by enhancing the success of students who transfer from Tulsa Community College (TCC) to four-year institutions in the area.

Our regional partnership, involving TCC, Langston University, Northeastern State University, Oklahoma State University-Tulsa, Rogers State University, University of Oklahoma-Tulsa, and The University of Tulsa, is working to increase the rate of bachelor's degree attainment in the Tulsa region.

We celebrated a milestone in mid-April with the formation of the Tulsa Higher Education Task Force. Along with the seven higher education institutions, the Task Force brings the City of Tulsa, Tulsa Regional Chamber of Commerce,

Tulsa Community Foundation, Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, and Impact Tulsa into the discussion.

Committed to making the path from TCC to a bachelor's degree a single student experience, the transfer work is supported by the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Foundation and the John N. Gardner Institute for Excellence in Undergraduate Education.

The overarching goal of the Task Force's work is to develop a plan for a formal structure that leverages shared institutional resources and facilitates a seamless academic and social experience for students pursuing baccalaureate degrees in the Tulsa region.

We understand this is important work. For students, this means saving time and money on their way to a degree. For us, this means making sure our students succeed and our communities thrive.

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Dr. Kayse Shrum, president of the OSU Center for Health Sciences and Cabinet Secretary for Science and Innovation, is a member of the governor's Solution Task Force and is a daily resource during the governor's press conferences on COVID-19. With or without traditional commencement exercises, Oklahoma higher education institutions will add nearly 5,000 more credentialed health care workers this spring, including nurses, doctors, public health specialists, and allied health professionals. These graduates will immediately strengthen our state's health care workforce.

Through the federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, our higher education institutions will receive approximately \$106 million in stimulus funding. More than \$50 million will be used to provide emergency financial aid grants to students for expenses related to the disruption of campus operations, including food, housing, course materials, technology, health care, and child care. The CARES Act also provides flexibility in the administration of federal financial aid and student loans. Given the state's increase in unemployment due to COVID-19 and the current decline in oil and gas production, Oklahoma higher education stands ready to partner with other key stakeholders to continue building our state's workforce and restore economic growth.

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# IMPLEMENTATION SCORECARD

## Task Force Progress – Winter 2020

RECOMMENDATION	LEGISLATION REQUIRED?	EXPLORATION	IMPLEMENTATION	COMPLETED	OUTCOMES
<p><b>Predictive Analytics</b></p> <p>Predictive analytics is beginning to emerge as a promising and powerful tool in higher education. Predictive analytics enables institution, as well as the State Regents, to evaluate the effectiveness of student success programs, improve student retention, and better target student recruitment.</p>	Yes – Budget Request		✓		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At their meeting on December 5, 2019, the State Regents voted to approve the purchase of the SAS platform to begin the implementation of predictive analytics on a system-wide basis.</li> <li>The State Regents included predictive analytics in their funding request for FY21.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Concurrent Enrollment</b></p> <p>Concurrent enrollment has proven to be a highly effective tool in developing a high school-to-college bridge that accelerates time to degree for students, improves student matriculation, and strengthens college readiness. The State Regents should support strategies that ensure the expansion of concurrent enrollment opportunities for Oklahoma students and families.</p>	Yes – Budget Request			✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Additional \$7.5 million appropriated for concurrent enrollment in FY19.</li> <li>Additional \$3.3 million appropriated for concurrent enrollment in FY20.</li> <li>Funding reimbursement to colleges and universities for high school seniors is now 100 percent.</li> <li>State Regents have expanded concurrent enrollment tuition waivers to high school juniors.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Open Educational Resources</b></p> <p>The College Board estimates that the average undergraduate student spends approximately \$1,200 on textbooks annually. Reducing the costs of textbooks through the adoption of Open Educational Resources (OER) is one way to improve college affordability for students. OER are free accessible and openly licensed digital media that can be used for teaching, learning assessment and research purposes.</p>	No		✓		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Online Consortium of Oklahoma (OCO) has created a working group consisting of higher education institutions across the state to develop and review Open Educational Resources that could provide high quality content while lowering costs to students.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Fiscal Viability Review and Assessments</b></p> <p>The State Regents should implement a financial fiscal review and long-term viability assessment of each institution. Long-term viability assessments require institutions to not only look at their current financial status but also strategically assess their capability to address fundamental changes facing higher education. Assessments consider the following metrics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Trends in enrollment, tuition rates, tuition discounting and financial aid, net revenue from tuition.</li> <li>Institutional resource allocation, budgeting, spending, and cash flow.</li> <li>Endowment assets, payouts, restrictions, and liquidity.</li> <li>Institutional debt and strategic use of debt.</li> <li>Goals and execution of fundraising strategies.</li> <li>Institutional credit rating.</li> </ul>	No		✓		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The State Regents have contracted with Huron consulting to conduct long-term fiscal viability reviews and assessments.</li> <li>The viability of the following institutions have been assessed to date:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Redlands Community College</li> <li>Eastern Oklahoma State College</li> <li>Carl Albert State College</li> <li>Oklahoma State University</li> <li>Tulsa Community College</li> <li>East Central University</li> <li>Murray State College</li> <li>Western Oklahoma State College</li> <li>Seminole State College</li> <li>University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma</li> <li>Northwestern Oklahoma State University</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>Assisting Veteran Students</b></p> <p>The State Regents and institutions should develop a statewide outreach strategy for assisting military-connect students and their families in earning a college degree.</p>	No		✓		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The State Regents' Reach Higher staff have made significant outreach to the Oklahoma Department of Veterans Affairs, and specifically with Secretary of Veterans Affairs Ben Robinson.</li> <li>We have made a commitment to have Reach Higher staff member dedicate up to two hours per week to attend TAPs (transition) sessions at installations when we are invited. Thus far, our staff has presented information on college completion at TAPs meetings at Altus Air Force Base and the Fort Sill U.S. Army base.</li> </ul>

## Senator Kim David Receives 2019 Distinguished Service Award

Oklahoma Senate Majority Floor Leader Sen. Kim David was recognized with the 2019 Distinguished Service Award for Higher Education during the Feb. 27 meeting of the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education. She was honored for her support of higher education in her role as Oklahoma State Senate Majority Floor Leader.

Sen. David was elected to the State Senate in 2010 and has been a strong and consistent supporter of higher education and effective advocate for the state system of higher education's budget request, including increasing

faculty pay, fully funding concurrent enrollment for high school seniors and providing additional funds for Section 13 offset monies, which are utilized for deferred maintenance and capital expenditure purposes at our colleges and universities.

The Distinguished Service Awards for Higher Education recognize individuals who demonstrate distinguished leadership and support of higher education in Oklahoma during the legislative session. It is the highest award presented by the State Regents and the Council of College and University Presidents.



## Oklahoma's Promise 2019 State Champions

Seven Oklahoma high schools have been named "Oklahoma's Promise 2019 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 provides an opportunity for 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 90,000 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 2019 State Champions are:

- Class B, **Moss**, with nine Oklahoma's Promise graduates.
- Class A, **Soper**, with 16 Oklahoma's Promise graduates.
- Class 2A, **Dove Science Academy** (Oklahoma City), with 23 Oklahoma's Promise graduates.
- Class 3A, **Sequoyah** (Tahlequah), with 32 Oklahoma's Promise graduates.

- Class 4A, **Southeast** (Oklahoma City), with 40 Oklahoma's Promise graduates.
- Class 5A, **Santa Fe South** (Oklahoma City), with 81 Oklahoma's Promise graduates.
- Class 6A, **Union** (Tulsa), with 164 Oklahoma's Promise graduates.

Recognized as one of the top college promise scholarship programs in the nation, Oklahoma's Promise was created in 1992 by the Legislature to help more Oklahoma families send their children to college. The scholarship pays tuition at any Oklahoma public college or university until the student receives a bachelor's degree or for up to five years, whichever comes first. It will also cover a portion of tuition at an accredited Oklahoma private institution or public career technology center. The scholarship does not cover the cost of fees, books, or room and board.





## 2020 State Regents Business Partnership Excellence Awards

Twenty-seven business and higher education partnerships throughout the state were recently recognized as innovative collaborations that further the education of Oklahoma's workforce.

The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education's 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. Oklahoma State Regent Mike Turpen served as master of ceremonies for the event. Lt. Gov. Matt Pinnell, State Regent Ann Holloway and Chancellor Glen D. Johnson also participated. Fred Morgan, former president of the Oklahoma State Chamber, was presented with the ceremony's Distinguished Service Award.

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.

### 2020 RECOGNIZED PARTNERSHIPS:

- Cameron University, Coast Audio Video
- Carl Albert State College, Sallisaw Improvement Corporation
- Connors State College, Cherokee Health Partners LLC
- East Central University, Ada Coca-Cola Bottling Company
- Eastern Oklahoma State College, The Community State Bank
- Langston University, The Lewis Group
- Murray State College, Mercy Hospital Ardmore
- Northeastern Oklahoma A&M College, Arvest Bank Miami
- Northeastern State University, Georgia-Pacific
- Northern Oklahoma College, Autry Technology Center
- Northwestern Oklahoma State University, Value Added Products
- Oklahoma City Community College, JPMorgan Chase Foundation
- Oklahoma Panhandle State University, High Plains Technology Center
- Oklahoma State University New Product Development Center, ATS Worldwide LLC
- Oklahoma State University Institute of Technology, ABB
- Oklahoma State University Oklahoma City, The Curbside Chronicle
- Redlands Community College, El Reno Public Schools
- Rogers State University, Sarkeys Foundation
- Rose State College, Northrop Grumman
- Seminole State College, Gordon Cooper Technology Center
- Southeastern Oklahoma State University, Craft Pies Pizza Company
- Southwestern Oklahoma State University, Southwest Intermediary Finance Team Inc.
- Tulsa Community College, Public Service Company of Oklahoma
- University of Central Oklahoma, Sunbeam Family Services
- University of Oklahoma, Love's Travel Stops and Country Stores
- University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma, CBTS
- Western Oklahoma State College, Hot Rod Farms

### QUICK FACT

Community and economic impact study shows Oklahoma higher education provided technical and research assistance to nearly **600** firms and communities for more than **250** projects and programs through business/industry partnerships.

## Oklahoma's Science DMZ Expands Access to High-Performance Research Computing

Scientific discovery is at the forefront of higher education's mission. From bioinformatics to galaxy formation, researchers and students are pursuing innovative investigations to further scientific knowledge and education. A vital component in furthering this mission is the network requirements for data-intensive science.

To help higher education institutions access the high-speed networks required for research computing, the Energy Sciences Network (ESnet) developed a network infrastructure to meet these networking requirements. Their Science DMZ model engineers a portion of a campus network for science applications. According to ESnet, the configuration and security policies of a Science DMZ create an environment tailored to meet high-performance scientific computing needs, including high-volume data transfer, remote experiment control and data visualization.

In 2013, a group of higher education institutions envisioned creating a dedicated, multi-institutional and

research-only Science DMZ for Oklahoma. The initial idea leveraged OneNet's network and facilities to interconnect higher education computational facilities.

The new Science DMZ project, named OneOklahoma Friction Free Network (OFFN), would extend OneNet's existing network to provide institutions with dedicated network pathways to facilitate research that requires large data transfer and speed. These dedicated pathways separate the research traffic from regular business traffic such as email and web browsing, ensuring research-grade performance.

OneNet connects OFFN institutions at a minimum of 10Gbps, transitioning to 100Gbps as it becomes available. These connections provide access to advanced data transfer channels, increasing research and education potential and improving student learning.

The OFFN network was funded through National Science Foundation (NSF) grants, beginning with \$499,961 in funding in 2013 for the initial network,

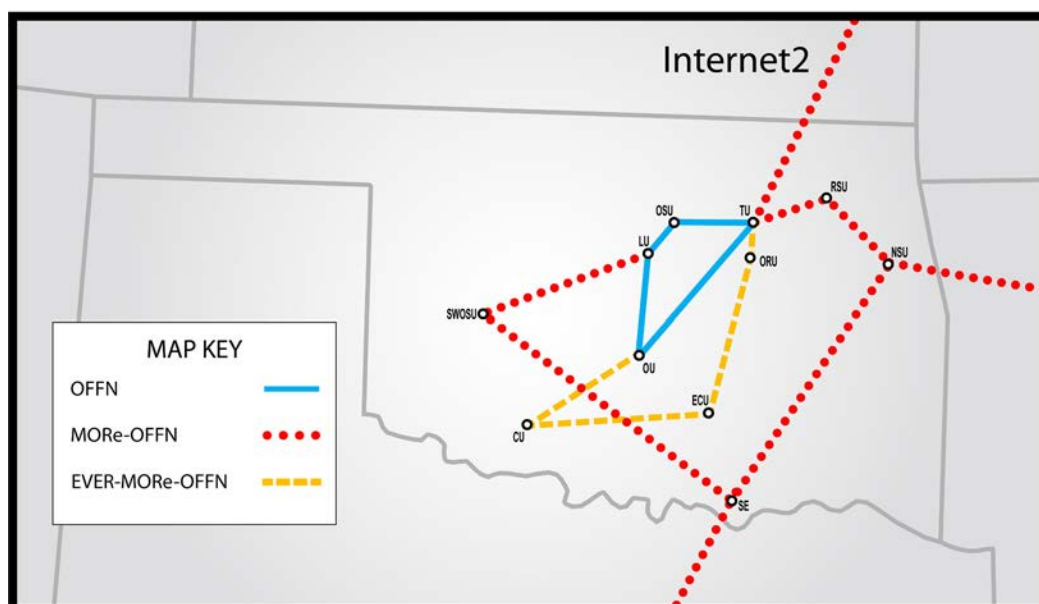
\$333,859 in funding in 2018 for the Multiple Organization Regional OneOklahoma Friction Free Network (MORE-OFFN), and \$500,000 in funding in 2019 for the Extended Vital Education Reach Multiple Organization Regional OneOklahoma Friction Free Network (EVER-MORE-OFFN).

OFFN connects 11 institutions, including the research-tier universities and several regional universities. In 2020, OneNet applied for a fourth NSF grant to connect five small institutions to the network.

Research scientists are taking advantage of data transfer speeds and shared supercomputing resources for investigation such as bioinformatics at Oklahoma State University, high-energy physics at the University of Oklahoma and Langston University, biological science in peanut studies at Southeastern Oklahoma State University and molecular modeling at Southwestern Oklahoma State University.

Other science supported by the network includes genomics at Oral Roberts University, seismic imaging at The University of Tulsa, nanoscale systems at East Central University and galaxy formation studies at Cameron University. At Rogers State University, the network enables atomic gas turbulence research, and at Northeastern State University, researchers are utilizing the network for computer science modeling.

As more higher education institutions gain access to this high-speed network, researchers will have more opportunities to engage in groundbreaking initiatives. Through this collaborative initiative, OneNet, OFFN and the participating institutions are helping change the face of research and education.





## OKMM, OMES Financial Literacy Partnership

Oklahoma Money Matters (OKMM), the financial literacy initiative of the State Regents and the Oklahoma College Assistance Program (OCAP), recently provided a personal finance workshop as part of the Office of Management and Enterprise Services' (OMES) 'Dine and Discover' program. This monthly lunch and learn series is part of OMES' Thrive initiative, a wellness program for state employees. More than 200 people participated in OKMM's student loan management workshop, which covered available repayment plans, options for deferment and forbearance, and the Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) Program.

Based on recent discussions with the Director of Statewide Learning Services for OMES, the student loan workshop was the first of what OCAP hopes will be many opportunities to share college access, financial literacy, and student loan management information and tools with OMES staff and other state employees.

"We thank OMES for the invitation to share information and resources that can help people overcome barriers to higher education and make successful student loan repayment a reality," said Melissa Neal, OCAP Executive Director. "We also look forward to future

partnership opportunities with OMES and other state agencies and community organizations to provide valuable information through OKMM's workplace education services."

For more information about OCAP's student loan management and default prevention initiative, visit [ReadySetRepay.org](http://ReadySetRepay.org). For educational resources related to personal financial literacy, visit [OklahomaMoneyMatters.org](http://OklahomaMoneyMatters.org). If you would like to explore how OKMM's workplace education services can benefit your staff, email [OklahomaMoneyMatters@ocap.org](mailto:OklahomaMoneyMatters@ocap.org).

## 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 OKcollegestart.org to implement Individual Career Academic Plans (ICAPs) in their schools. Over 100 middle and high school counselors, teachers and administrators attended. These workshops were held at the State Regents' office and on the campuses of Oklahoma State University-Tulsa, Eastern Oklahoma State College in McAlester, Cameron University in Lawton, 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 how to track student progress and use activity outcomes in advising.

State law requires every student to complete career and college interest surveys, update written

postsecondary and workforce goals annually, take an intentional sequence of courses in high school that reflect their postsecondary goals, track academic progress through college readiness tests, concurrent enrollment and career certifications, and participate in service-learning or work environments. OKcollegestart allows students to complete and track each of these requirements. In addition, students can create resumes, search for scholarships, explore postsecondary institution profiles, access free test prep materials and much more.

"Schools have started the important work of implementing Individual Career Academic Plans with their students," said Theresa Shaklee, student portal coordinator for the Oklahoma College Assistance Program. "They're making great progress, and we're happy to play a part in making ICAPs a successful initiative across the state."

OKcollegestart.org provides free resources to help students and parents plan, apply, and pay for education and training beyond high school. 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, track student activities on OKcollegestart.org and customize academic plans for students.

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