

Degrees of Progress

News from the State Regents for Higher Education



OKLAHOMA STATE REGENTS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

Improving our future by degrees

Volume 5, Issue 1 | Winter 2020

Oklahoma's State System of Higher Education Among Most Affordable in Nation

By Chancellor Glen D. Johnson

Whether we're talking about state economies or individual students, there's no question that higher education is an investment in the future. We hear statements across the nation about "skyrocketing" tuition and student debt, and we, too, are concerned about college affordability and that recent budget shortfalls have shifted more of the responsibility of paying for college to students and families. Fortunately, even in this challenging environment, Oklahoma's tuition and student debt story differs significantly from the national landscape.

In reviewing Oklahoma's higher education story, it's important to note that although we have faced substantial budget challenges, the State Regents and our public colleges and universities have continued to keep tuition affordable for Oklahoma families.

In stark contrast to the double-digit tuition increases in many other states, tuition and mandatory fees for in-state undergraduate students in Oklahoma increased an average of only 2.5% statewide for the 2019-20 academic

year. Looking back over the last decade, tuition and mandatory fee increases at our public colleges and universities have averaged less than 5% annually. The 2019 *U.S. News and World Report* ranking shows Oklahoma tuition and fees are 12th-lowest in the nation.

The nationally-recognized *Project on Student Debt* ranks Oklahoma among the 10 states with the lowest student debt level. More than 50% of Oklahoma college graduates leave college without any student loan debt, compared to 35% nationally. The average debt load for our state system graduates is \$20,746, which is 29% below the national average of \$29,200.

To ensure student loan borrowers understand their rights and responsibilities, the State Regents' Oklahoma College Assistance Program (OCAP) administers comprehensive financial aid awareness, financial literacy and student loan management initiatives. OCAP programs and services empower student borrowers to make smart borrowing choices, successfully navigate repayment, avoid loan default and, if needed, overcome loan default and get back on track. Our student loan management website, www.ReadySetRepay.org, features educational resources for borrowers and for college and university financial aid officers, who work with students and families throughout the lending process and provide student loan counseling.

The State Regents and our public colleges and universities have long recognized the critical importance of keeping tuition costs as low as possible, and we're committed to remaining one of the most affordable higher education systems in the country. We'll continue working to ensure that Oklahomans who invest in a



student loan understand their obligations and how to find the help they need to successfully manage the repayment process.

We look forward to working with Governor Siitt and our Legislature to make the case for appropriately funding public higher education during the upcoming legislative session. This will help to ensure ongoing college affordability for Oklahoma families and position our higher education system to provide the college graduates necessary to meet current and future workforce needs.

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SOCIAL MEDIA SPOTLIGHT



"Like" us on Facebook
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OneNet Is Critical to Connecting Oklahomans to Educational Resources

John McArthur, President, Cameron University

In today's world, being "connected" is no longer optional. We work, get our news and entertainment, stay connected with friends and family, and do our shopping and banking — all online. That includes education. Whether it is a middle school student doing research for a class project or a professor teaching a college course, the internet has become an indispensable part of the learning process.

Thanks to the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education and OneNet, its statewide high-speed broadband network, the infrastructure exists to serve the needs of a wide spectrum of public entities, including colleges and universities; K-12 schools; career technology centers; public libraries; local, tribal, state and federal governments; court systems; rural health care delivery systems; nonprofit organizations; and research programs. OneNet offers enhanced computing capabilities that enable each of these entities to better serve their communities.



OneNet's technology is of great value to anyone who wishes to enroll in online college courses. Now, proximity to an educational facility is no longer a barrier for rural Oklahomans seeking degrees. In the case of Cameron University in Lawton, OneNet and the Oklahoma Community Anchor Network — a broadband network more than 1,000 miles long that connects 92 community anchor institutions in 35 Oklahoma counties to the state's existing networks — have enhanced our ability to deliver quality, college-level instruction to our students.

There is absolutely no doubt that our constituents — students, faculty, staff, alumni and community supporters alike — have **benefitted from the availability of high-speed broadband**. It provides faster and more reliable connectivity to Cameron's branch campus in Duncan, as well as for coursework we offer in conjunction with Western Oklahoma State College in Altus.

OneNet has removed barriers for Cameron and other higher education institutions across the state, no matter their size. Community colleges and universities can share courses to provide enhanced educational offerings at each site. Shared resources also help keep a college education affordable. The state's comprehensive universities can connect with high-performance, scientific networks to enhance their research collaborations.

OneNet offers extraordinary broadband capabilities and technology solutions designed to support the complex computing needs of our state's educators and researchers. Major research projects depend on high broadband capabilities to share and analyze data, whether it's inside the state, across the country or around the world.

Collectively, we strive to produce more college graduates, and by doing so, we help grow Oklahoma's economy and improve the quality of life of its citizens. In today's knowledge-based world, our students, from kindergarten through higher education, need access to technology that supports and enables learning. OneNet provides Oklahoma's rural schools, colleges and universities, libraries, and hospitals the technology they need to stay competitive in today's economy.

OneNet is a catalyst to develop advanced technology in Oklahoma through the creativity and innovation of our state's higher education and research communities.



OneNet has removed barriers for Cameron and other higher education institutions across the state, no matter their size.

Distinguished Service Awards

The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education recently honored five legislators with 2019 Distinguished Service Awards for Higher Education, which recognize individuals who demonstrate distinguished leadership and support of higher education in Oklahoma during the legislative session.

Sen. Dewayne Pemberton was recognized during the Oct. 24 State Regents' meeting for his support of higher education in his role as chair of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Education and as a member of the Agriculture and Wildlife, Appropriations, Education, and Veterans and Military Affairs committees.

House Majority Floor Leader Jon Echols was recognized on Nov. 21 during a ceremony

at Oklahoma City Community College for his support of higher education in his role as House majority floor leader and as a member of the Appropriations and Budget, Higher Education and Career Tech, Joint Appropriations and Budget, Rules, and Legislative Office of Fiscal Transparency committees.

Rep. Trish Ranson was recognized on Dec. 4 during a State Regents' meeting for her support of higher education in her role as a member of the Appropriations Subcommittee on Health, Appropriations Subcommittee on Natural Resources and Regulatory Services and on the Children, Youth and Family Services and Higher Education and Career Tech committees.

Rep. Kevin Wallace was recognized at the Dec. 5 State Regents' meeting for his support

of higher education in his role as chair of the House Appropriations and Budget Committee and the Joint Committee on Appropriations and Budget, as co-chair of the Legislative Office of Fiscal Transparency, and as a member of the Banking, Financial Services and Pensions, Energy and Natural Resources, and Wildlife committees.

Sen. Brent Howard was recognized on Jan. 24 during a ceremony at Western Oklahoma State College for his advocacy of higher education in his first term. He is a member of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Health and Human Services and on the Agriculture and Wildlife, General Government and Judiciary committees.



Sen. Dewayne Pemberton



House Majority Floor
Leader Jon Echols



Rep. Trish Ranson



Rep. Kevin Wallace



Sen. Brent Howard

Eight Oklahoma Higher Education Institutions Join Degrees When Due Initiative

Eight Oklahoma colleges and universities are participating in Degrees When Due, a national initiative of the Institute for Higher Education Policy (IHEP), with the goal of assisting students with some college credit to complete their degrees.

The institutions will participate in best practices in degree reclamation and will provide targeted support while re-engaging students who have paused or stopped out of their studies. Campus participation in the

initiative is facilitated through the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education. Oklahoma is one of 20 states participating in the nationwide initiative.

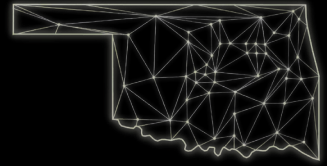
Degrees When Due will grant institutions access to a variety of resources to assist with auditing students' previously earned credits in order to determine the students' most efficient pathway to graduation. The program will benefit the many Oklahomans identified as having some earned some college credit, but no degree.

Oklahoma institutions participating in the initiative include Connors State College, Murray State College, Northeastern Oklahoma A&M College, Northeastern State University, Oklahoma City Community College, Oklahoma Panhandle State University, Redlands Community College and the University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma.



2020 Legislative Agenda

OKLAHOMA STATE REGENTS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION



FY 2021 BUDGET NEED

FY 2020 Appropriation \$802,070,058

FY 2021 Budget Need:

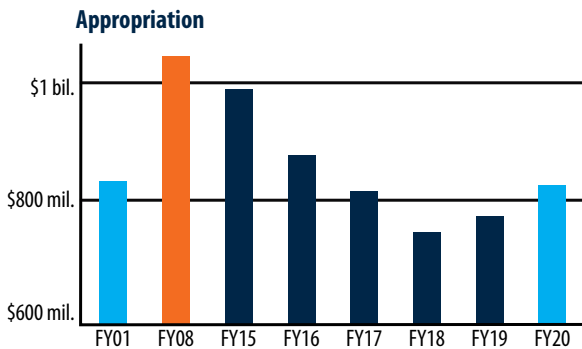
1. STEM Workforce Development Initiatives.....	\$50,200,000
a. STEM and engineering workforce needs	\$30,000,000
b. Nursing workforce needs	\$12,000,000
c. Double the number of physician residency slots (<i>per year for 10-year period</i>)	\$8,200,000
2. Operational Cost Increases	\$50,000,000
a. 3.5% faculty pay increases - Phase II	\$20,200,000
b. Systemwide mandatory cost increases	\$25,500,000
c. Restoration of scholarship programs (<i>National Guard Waiver & Teacher Shortage Employment Incentive Program</i>)	\$2,200,000
d. Strategic Innovations	\$2,100,000
3. Deferred maintenance for campus infrastructure (Section 13 Offset) - Phase II.....	\$5,800,000
4. Concurrent enrollment program: full funding for high school juniors.....	\$7,000,000
5. Endowed Chair State Matching Funds Bond Authorization and Debt Service.....	\$12,000,000
<i>\$160.9 million state match backlog</i>	

FY 2021 Total Budget Need\$927,070,058

- **\$ Difference from FY 2020 State Appropriations** **\$125,000,000**
- **% Difference from FY 2020 State Appropriations** **15.6%**

RESTORE HISTORIC BUDGET CUTS

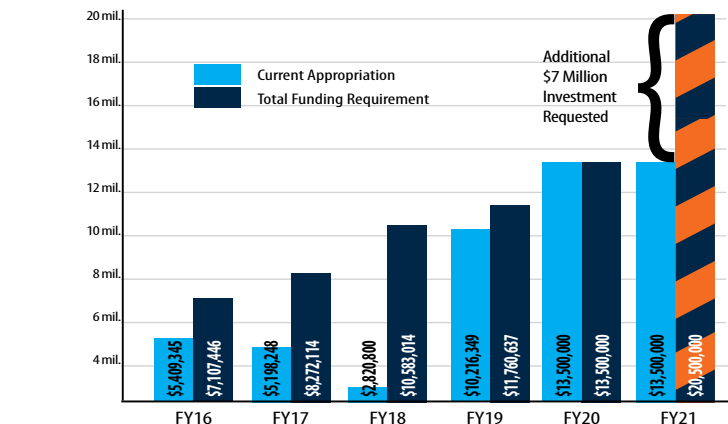
State support for Oklahoma's higher education system was cut more than \$274 million (26%) from the start of the recession through FY18.



Oklahoma is one of only six states where per-student higher education funding fell by more than 30% from 2008 to 2018, after adjusting for inflation. We must continue restoring state funding for public higher education to meet Oklahoma's current and future workforce needs.

CONCURRENT ENROLLMENT

The concurrent enrollment program strengthens student preparation, reduces family college costs, and decreases the time required to complete a degree.



The FY 2019 higher education appropriation of \$7.5 million for concurrent enrollment covered approximately 87% of the cost to state system colleges and universities, and FY 2020 funding provided the opportunity to fully fund concurrent enrollment for high school seniors. To fully fund concurrent enrollment for high school juniors would require an additional \$7 million investment.



ENDOWED CHAIRS

The endowed chairs program, which supports faculty chairs, professorships and lectureships to improve the quality of instruction and research, has enabled colleges and universities to attract approximately \$671 million in private gifts and develop meaningful public/private partnerships. Research clusters and disciplines include cancer, diabetes, mental health, neonatology, fire protection science, engineering, business, computer science, geophysics, chemistry, and meteorology. Currently, accounts in the backlog for state matching funds total \$160.9 million for 18 institutions statewide.

FACULTY SALARIES

The most recent national rankings from the Southern Regional Education Board list Oklahoma as 45th in the average faculty salary and show that average faculty salaries in Oklahoma's colleges and universities are more than 15% below other states. Additional funding for faculty salary increases is critical to our public institutions' efforts to competitively retain and recruit quality faculty in nursing, business, education, sciences, engineering and other high demand programs that are essential to meet Oklahoma's workforce needs.

OKLAHOMA'S PROMISE

The state system of higher education strongly supports protecting the dedicated funding source for the Oklahoma's Promise scholarship, which provides college funding for approximately 17,000 students and is one of the top five promise scholarship programs in the nation. Nearly 90,000 Oklahoma students have met the eligibility requirements and earned the scholarship since the program's inception.



STEM & WORKFORCE

Degree and certificate production in critical STEM disciplines has increased 53% over the last eight years. Workforce development initiatives focus on continued growth in the number of science, technology, engineering and nursing degrees conferred, as well as doubling the number of physician residency slots available in our state over the next 10 years.

TASK FORCE ON THE FUTURE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

The State Regents' Task Force on the Future of Higher Education conducted a comprehensive assessment of Oklahoma public higher education, including academic models, online education, structural reforms, fiscal services, operational efficiencies, workforce development, and information technology. After 10 months of study and deliberations, the Task Force unanimously issued a set of comprehensive cost saving, innovative strategies to increase degree completion in our state.

STUDENTS WHO LEARN HERE EARN HERE

A student with a college degree will earn \$1.1 million more in a lifetime than a high school graduate. More than 87% of Oklahoma residents who graduate with a bachelor's degree remain in the state and are employed in the state one year after graduation.



Source: 2019 Employment Outcomes Report

NATIONALLY RECOGNIZED AFFORDABILITY

U.S. News and World Report ranks Oklahoma tuition and fees as 12th-lowest in the nation and student debt at graduation as 13th-lowest in the nation.

MAINTAIN CURRENT LAW ON WEAPONS ON CAMPUS

Oklahoma higher education supports the second amendment and gun ownership. Under current law, campus presidents have the discretion to grant exceptions to institutional policy when an exception is warranted. The current law is working.

In the past 12 legislative sessions, bills have been introduced or discussed that would allow weapons on campus. Each attempt has been successfully defeated to date, and ensuring similar legislation does not become law will continue to be a state system priority.

WORKFORCE & ECONOMIC IMPACT OF PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION

According to the Georgetown Center for Education and the Workforce, by 2020, 67% of jobs in Oklahoma will require a college degree or additional postsecondary education and training, and 37% will require an associate degree, bachelor's degree or higher. Oklahoma higher education links academic programs directly to employment needs in the state's wealth-generating ecosystems.

Our public higher education system supported **\$8.2 billion** in total economic output in FY 2016. For every dollar of state appropriations invested, the state system of higher education generates **\$9.40** in economic output.

COMPLETE COLLEGE AMERICA

Oklahoma's public and private institutions and career technology centers continue working to reach the state's goal of increasing the number of degrees and certificates earned through our Complete College America initiative. In the first six years of the CCA initiative, the number of degrees and certificates earned in Oklahoma increased by 11,740, surpassing the state's benchmark of 10,200.

Additional degrees and certificates earned:

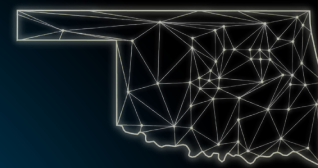


Other states are investing in degree completion. Data from the State Higher Education Executive Officers association show that Oklahoma ranks last among the 33 participating CCA states in the percentage change in state funding support since the initiative's inception in 2011.



2020 Public Agenda

OKLAHOMA STATE REGENTS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION



Goals

- Increase the number of college graduates.
- Enhance access and improve the quality of public higher education for all Oklahomans.
- Better prepare students to meet the challenges of a global economy.

Objectives

- Implement Complete College America initiatives to increase the number of degrees and certificates earned in Oklahoma by 67% by 2023.
- Enhance capacity to successfully enroll, retain and graduate students.
- Increase systemwide efficiencies and cost savings.
- Strengthen financial support for Oklahoma college students.
- Improve instructional quality and mathematics success.
- Utilize performance funding to enhance student success and academic quality.
- Target economic development activities to support economic growth.
- Advance access to and quality of technologies to support systemwide programs and services.

Key Initiatives

- Task Force on the Future of Higher Education
- Oklahoma's Promise
- Concurrent Enrollment
- OKcollegestart.org
- GEAR UP
- Adult Degree Completion
- OneNet
- Online Education Task Force
- Campus Safety and Security Task Force

Growth of Concurrent Enrollment Reflects Value of Program for Students, Families

Participation in the state system of higher education's concurrent enrollment program increased nearly 40% in the last decade, and in the previous academic year, more than 13,000 students from Oklahoma high schools enrolled in concurrent courses, generating over 122,000 student credit hours.

Concurrent enrollment allows outstanding high school juniors and seniors who meet admission and course placement requirements to earn college credit at Oklahoma colleges and universities while still in high school. The program is a key component of the nationally recognized Complete College America degree completion strategic plan, and was identified

as a priority by the State Regents' Task Force on the Future of Higher Education to improve college readiness and increase the number of college degree holders in the state.

The State Regents remain focused on initiatives that close Oklahoma's educational attainment gap. The concurrent enrollment program strengthens student preparation for college, reduces family college costs and decreases the time required to complete a college degree. Under the program, eligible high school seniors receive a tuition waiver for up to 18 credit hours of concurrent coursework in the academic year.

Fiscal year 2020 funding for public higher education provided the opportunity for 100% funding of the concurrent enrollment program for high school seniors. The state system of higher education's budget request for FY21 includes an additional investment to fully fund concurrent enrollment for high school juniors. Fully funding concurrent enrollment expands college accessibility, promotes college affordability and produces more graduates to fill the growing number of jobs in Oklahoma that require a college degree.

StartWithFAFSA.org: OCAP's All-in-One FAFSA Resource

College planning has many steps and applying for financial aid can sometimes be an intimidating process. That's why the Oklahoma College Assistance Program (OCAP) offers StartWithFAFSA.org, a website created to help students and parents gain a better understanding of financial aid and the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) process. StartWithFAFSA.org content covers all aspects of financial aid, with categories that include FAFSA completion, Federal Student Aid (FSA) ID, grants and scholarships, student loans, helpful resources and more. StartWithFAFSA.org also includes sections for frequently asked questions, FAFSA video tutorials in both English and Spanish and links to FAFSA publications and tools.

The FAFSA is used to determine how much federal and state financial aid a student may be able to receive to help pay for college. The 2020-21 FAFSA became available Oct. 1.

Even for those who don't think they qualify, it's important to complete the FAFSA anyway.

Many scholarship applications now require a completed FAFSA. Submitting a FAFSA does not automatically sign the applicant up for student loans or commit them to a college, it simply gives the college(s) the student is interested in attending an opportunity to discuss financial aid options. High school seniors and current college students who will need financial aid in the fall should complete the FAFSA as soon as possible!

There are many misconceptions about the FAFSA. Some students don't submit the FAFSA because they believe their families make too much money to qualify for financial aid. However, most people qualify for some type of aid, and it's best to know all options available. Parents who submitted the paper version of the FAFSA in previous years are often concerned the process is tedious and

complicated. With the online and mobile FAFSA; however, submitting the application has never been easier. Help is available every step of the way.

Join OCAP's mailing list at ocap.org/news/ subscribe to receive the most important FAFSA updates and visit StartWithFAFSA.org, the all-in-one resource for questions and answers about the FAFSA.

startwithfafsa.org

QUICK FACT

Since the site's inception in January 2015, StartWithFAFSA.org has reached over **473,000** people.

Oklahoma College Assistance Program: 2019 By the Numbers

Over **82,500** publications distributed



WEBSITE VISITS

OCAP pages had more than **6 million** visits by almost **550,000** users

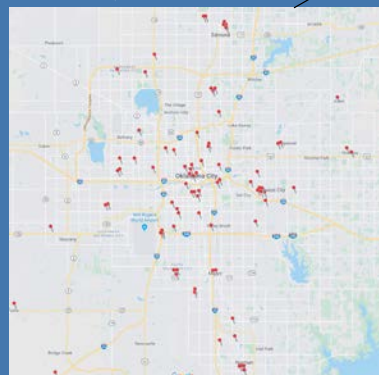
New OKcollegestart user accounts in 2019 totaled nearly **105,000**

Active OKcollegestart user accounts currently total nearly **270,000**



Over **240** campus and community education events statewide

2019 OCAP EVENTS



Over **9,000** attendees



approximately
= 430 individuals

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