

# Degrees of Progress

News from the State Regents for Higher Education



OKLAHOMA STATE REGENTS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

Improving our future by degrees

Volume 6, Issue 1 | Winter 2021

## LEGISLATIVE TOURS OUTLINE STATE SYSTEM FY22 BUDGET REQUEST

By Chancellor Glen D. Johnson

The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education are requesting \$859.2 million for FY22 for the state system of higher education, which reflects an increase of \$88.8 million or 11.5% over the FY21 appropriation of \$770.4 million. We recently had the opportunity to share our FY22 budget request and legislative priorities during five regional virtual legislative events hosted by our public colleges and universities across Oklahoma. Participants in these events included lawmakers, community leaders, and higher education regents and presidents, with legislators having the opportunity to comment on higher education's budget needs and legislative agenda.

Increasing college degree completion to address Oklahoma's current and future workforce needs remains a top priority for the state system of higher education. As we continue working to implement the recommendations of the Task Force on the Future of Higher Education, we are focused on expanding workforce development initiatives, further enhancing academic offerings, and fully funding the cost of concurrent enrollment tuition waivers for

eligible high school seniors and juniors. Public higher education's FY22 funding request clearly demonstrates our commitment to building Oklahoma's workforce and reflects the need for additional investment in several critical areas.

The State Regents are requesting \$33.8 million for STEM workforce development initiatives, including funds to help meet engineering, nursing, and teacher education workforce needs, increase the number of physician residency slots in the state, and develop microcredentials and rapid re-employment strategies.

Requests to restore financial aid and scholarship programs (\$9.8 million), to fully fund the concurrent enrollment program for high school seniors and juniors (\$4 million), and to provide Endowed Chair state matching funds bond authorization and debt service (\$10.4 million) are also top priorities in the budget request.

We are also requesting \$30.8 million for operational cost increases, including systemwide mandatory fixed costs, Section 13 Offset deferred maintenance for campus infrastructure improvements, and funds to support STEM Summer Academies.

Another state system priority in the upcoming legislative session will be to maintain the current law regarding weapons on higher education campuses. Oklahoma higher education supports the second amendment and gun ownership. Under current law, campus presidents have the discretion to authorize who may carry weapons on campus when the individual circumstances warrant it. The State Regents and the presidents of all



Chancellor Glen D. Johnson

25 state system institutions strongly believe that the current law with regard to weapons on campus is working.

The State Regents will also continue efforts to preserve the dedicated funding source for the Oklahoma's Promise scholarship. Recognized by the Southern Regional Education Board as one of the top college access scholarship programs in the nation, Oklahoma's Promise is considered a national model that combines emphases on academic preparation and financial support for college. More than 95,000 students have earned college tuition scholarships through Oklahoma's Promise since the program's inception in 1992.

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## COLLABORATION SHAPES THE FUTURE OF FARMING WITH AQUAPONICS

By Dr. Janet Wansick, President, Eastern Oklahoma State College

Imagine a year-round garden that requires no soil or chemicals and only a fraction of the water and space needed for traditional farming. Aquaponics is changing the way we grow food. Through a collaborative partnership with Symbiotic Aquaponic, Eastern Oklahoma State College has emerged as a state leader in teaching the sustainable farming technique.

Aquaponics is an innovative approach to farming that allows for year-round production in a greenhouse environment such as Eastern's. Using a recirculating water system, growers can raise and harvest all-natural plants and fish together in a symbiotic environment. Crops can be produced with one-tenth the amount of water needed by traditional farming. No waste water, no eroding soil and no chemicals result in improved sustainability.

Students in Eastern's horticulture, agriculture education, agronomy and forestry classes get hands-on experience by maintaining the aquaponics beds for research and experiments, as well as propagation for vegetable and bedding plant sales to the public.

Eastern students aren't the only people interested in learning more about the aquaponics farming concept. Eastern and Symbiotic Aquaponic began offering the first aquaponics certificate classes in Oklahoma in 2014. The one-day continuing education courses are now



President Janet Wansick



offered quarterly and provide an introduction to aquaponic topics such as system designs, scientific principles of aquaponics and the selection of plant and fish species.

Our partnership expanded in 2017 with an Agri-Business Incubator Program that was the first of its kind in the state and the only program in the nation that includes instruction on the processes and procedures involved in earning organic certification from the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

In our most recent joint effort, we began offering an organic CBD production course. The 90-day class teaches participants to grow organic hemp using aquaponics, learn the business procedures surrounding CBD production and receive assistance with setting up a legal entity and licensing.

Thanks to this public-private collaboration, Eastern and Symbiotic Aquaponic have worked together to foster economic development, create jobs, provide continuing education opportunities to the community and help conserve precious natural resources.



Dr. Janet Wansick, Symbiotic Aquaponic CEO Kaben Smallwood

## 2021 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
- Workforce Development
- OKcollegestart.org
- GEAR UP
- Adult Degree Completion
- OneNet
- Online Education Task Force
- Campus Safety & Security Task Force

## DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARDS

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

Senate Minority Floor Leader Kay Floyd was recognized with the 2020 Distinguished Service Award for her support of higher education in her role as Senate Minority Floor Leader and as a member of the Senate Appropriations, Finance, General Government and Judiciary committees.

State Sen. Mary Boren was recognized with a 2019 Distinguished Service Award for her advocacy and support of higher education in her role as a member of the Education committee. She also serves on



*Senate Minority Floor Leader Kay Floyd*



*Sen. Mary Boren*



*Rep. Rhonda Baker*

the Agriculture and Wildlife, Energy, and Judiciary committees.

State Rep. Rhonda Baker was recognized with a 2019 Distinguished Service Award for her support of higher education in her role as Chair of the Common Education Committee, as a member of the Appropriations and Budget Committee, and as a member of the

Appropriations and Budget Subcommittee on Education. She also served as a member of the Judiciary Committee.

The Distinguished Service Award for Higher Education is the highest award presented by the State Regents and the Council of College and University Presidents.

## CHANCELLOR JOHNSON APPOINTED TO AASCU COUNCIL OF STATE REPRESENTATIVES

Chancellor Glen D. Johnson has been appointed to serve on the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) Council of State Representatives. AASCU is a membership organization of nearly 400 public colleges, universities and higher education systems that works to expand student access, success and opportunity; promote world-class teaching and experiential learning tied to career advancement; and support applied research and service that advances economic development and quality of life in communities across the country. Previously, Johnson served on the AASCU Board of Directors from 2003-06 and again from 2013-16.

"We at AASCU are honored that Chancellor Johnson has agreed to serve on the Council of State Representatives," said AASCU President Mildred García. "His experience as both a campus president and as the chancellor of the Oklahoma State System of Higher Education will be a tremendous asset to all our campuses."

The Council of State Representatives, AASCU's public policy development arm, frames AASCU's federal and state policy priorities and guides its public advocacy efforts. The Council consists of appointed presidents and chancellors of member institutions and higher education systems.

"I appreciate the opportunity to serve AASCU in this capacity," said Johnson. "The work of this council is vitally important to the member colleges and universities as well as the faculty, staff and students they serve. I look forward to collaborating with my colleagues as higher education state systems and institutions across the nation continue to navigate this challenging landscape in the wake of COVID-19."



# 2021 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

## OKLAHOMA STATE REGENTS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

### FY 2022 BUDGET NEED

FY 2021 Appropriation .....\$770,414,742

#### FY 2022 Budget Need:

<b>1. STEM Workforce Development Initiatives .....</b>	<b>\$33,800,000</b>
a. Engineering workforce needs	\$10,500,000
b. Nursing workforce needs	\$12,000,000
c. Expand physician residency slots	\$7,000,000
d. Teacher education shortage needs	\$2,500,000
e. Develop microcredentials and rapid re-employment strategies	\$1,800,000
<b>2. Operational Cost Increases.....</b>	<b>\$30,800,000</b>
a. Systemwide mandatory fixed cost increases	\$24,000,000
b. Deferred maintenance for campus infrastructure (Section 13 Offset)	\$6,300,000
c. STEM Summer Academies	\$500,000
<b>3. Financial Aid and Scholarship Programs .....</b>	<b>\$13,800,000</b>
a. Concurrent enrollment program	\$4,000,000
b. Restoration of scholarship programs	\$7,800,000
i. National Guard Tuition Waiver program	\$2,000,000
ii. Teacher Shortage Employment Incentive Program	\$1,100,000
iii. Oklahoma Tuition Aid Grant	\$4,700,000
c. Adult Degree Completion and Workforce Re-entry Scholarship	\$2,000,000
<b>4. Endowed Chairs State Matching Funds Debt Service.....</b>	<b>\$10,420,000</b>
<i>\$161 million state match backlog</i>	

FY 2022 Total Budget Need .....\$859,234,742

- **\$ Difference from FY 2021 State Appropriations** ..... **\$88,820,000**
- **% Difference from FY 2021 State Appropriations** ..... **11.5%**

### WORKFORCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES

Higher education will further enhance its strong, data-driven connections between academic programs and high-growth, high-demand occupations and industries. More than 87% of our resident students who graduate with a bachelor's degree are employed in the state one year after graduation. Degree and certificate program production in **critical STEM disciplines** has increased 54% over the last nine years. Workforce initiatives focus on continued growth in nursing, medicine, allied health, science, technology, engineering, teacher education and business.

Strategic innovations include development of **microcredentials**, alternative learning pathways directly aligned with high-demand skills requested by employers. Microcredentials help individuals adapt and succeed, equipping both students pursuing a degree and current degree-holders to fill critical workforce needs.

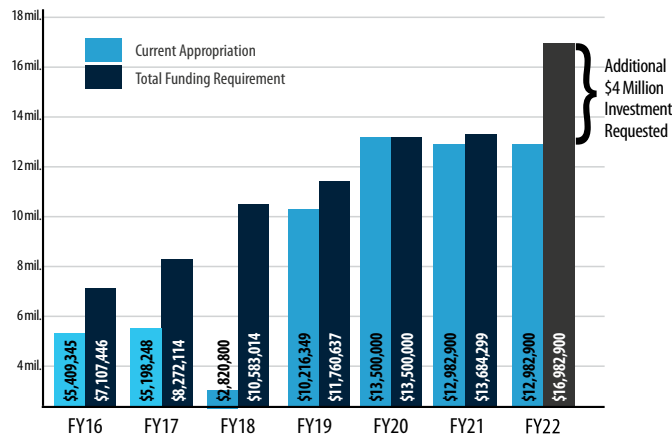
The State Regents support streamlining the process of sharing workforce data with the Oklahoma Employment Security Commission and Oklahoma Department of Career & Technology Education to better serve the business community.

The economic impact of our state system of higher education cannot be overstated. 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.

### 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 seniors and juniors in FY 2022 would require an additional \$4 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 \$161 million for 17 institutions statewide.

### TASK FORCE ON THE FUTURE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Work continues to implement the cost-saving, innovative strategies reflected in the recommendations issued by the State Regents' Task Force on the Future of Higher Education in 2018. Advancements to date include completion of college and university long-term fiscal viability reviews, full funding for the concurrent enrollment program for high school seniors, initial implementation of systemwide predictive analytics, and development of a review protocol for Open Educational Resources for students.

### COMPLEMENTING OUR STATE'S RESPONSE TO COVID-19

Since the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic, our public colleges and universities have prioritized the health and safety of our students, faculty, staff and visitors while continuing to offer a top-quality, affordable learning environment. State system institutions have partnered with county health departments and donated Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) supplies to local hospitals and health care providers. OU Medicine, the OU Health Sciences Center, OSU Medicine and the OSU Center for Health Sciences have all played critical roles in research, testing and vaccine development, and both OU Medicine and OSU Medicine have served as designated COVID-19 hospitals. Additionally, the OU Health Sciences Center was engaged in early studies focused on utilizing convalescent plasma as a COVID-19 treatment protocol, the OSU Center for Health Sciences collaborated with OSU Veterinary Medicine to convert a veterinary medicine laboratory to a dedicated COVID-19 testing lab, and OSU Medicine has expanded health care access to underserved communities through increased use of telemedicine.

### 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 authorize who may carry weapons on campus when the individual circumstances warrant it. The current law is working.

In the past 13 legislative sessions, bills have been introduced or discussed that would alter current law pertaining to 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 in partnership with the business community.

### OKLAHOMA'S PROMISE

The state system of higher education strongly supports preserving the dedicated funding source for the Oklahoma's Promise scholarship, which provides college funding for approximately 17,000 students and has been named by the Southern Regional Education Board as a top promise scholarship program in the nation. More than 95,000 Oklahoma students have met the eligibility requirements and earned the scholarship since the program's inception.



### ONENET DRIVES DIGITAL LEARNING, CONNECTIVITY

OneNet provides the technology and connectivity necessary to support advanced higher education academic research and enhance the quality and delivery of online education opportunities in changing learning environments. OneNet operates Oklahoma's most advanced research, education and technology network, providing the infrastructure required for high-speed broadband services at an equitable rate.



### NATIONALLY RECOGNIZED AFFORDABILITY

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

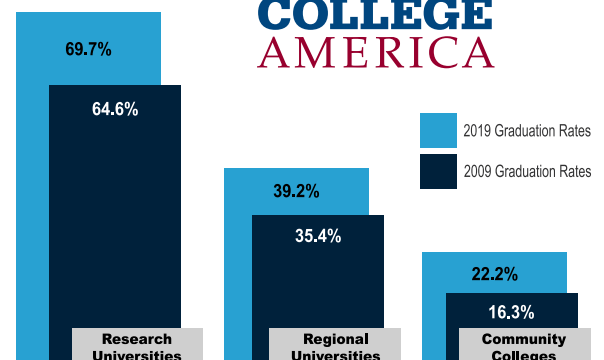
### INCREASING DEGREE COMPLETION

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. Despite budget cuts to public higher education exceeding 26% since inception of our state's CCA initiative, degree and certificate completion has increased by more than 98% of the target benchmark to date.

Since joining the CCA initiative, the State Regents and our public colleges and universities have collaborated to transform developmental education. As a result, the direct-from-high school remediation rate has decreased from 40.1% to 34.6% since 2014.

The State Regents' Reach Higher adult degree completion programs provide specialized advising and support systems to help adult students return and complete degrees in high-demand fields.

### COMPLETE COLLEGE AMERICA



## CELEBRATING 25 YEARS OF ADVANCING TECHNOLOGY

It seems like just a short time ago the State Regents celebrated OneNet's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary, and now OneNet is celebrating 25 years of connecting Oklahoma's citizens to education, research, health care and public services.

When OneNet first began delivering services in 1996, it operated with a hub and spoke network, utilizing the higher education institutions to house its network equipment. OneNet has come a long way in the last 25 years. OneNet is still connected through the higher education institutions and now delivers high-speed internet with connections up to 100 Gbps.

As a division of the State Regents, OneNet proudly serves as Oklahoma's research and education network. Networks like OneNet across the country connect researchers, schools and higher education institutions to high-speed internet services. As one of these networks, OneNet provides research-grade connectivity to Oklahoma's research community.

Thanks to this high-speed connectivity, OneNet has helped Oklahoma's higher education institutions garner \$46+ million in research computing grants since 2009. OneNet's 100 Gbps research network and Oklahoma's Science DMZ, a network dedicated to research computing, enable research in areas such as high-energy physics, genomics, climate modeling, bioscience, weather forecasting and supercomputing.

As Oklahoma's research and education network, OneNet also has partnerships regionally and nationally to boost connectivity within the state and across the southcentral region. OneNet participates with three other research and education networks as part of the Midsouth U.S. Internet Exchange, or MUS-IX, with the goals of increasing connectivity, lowering costs and bringing more content to member states.

OneNet also serves as Oklahoma's connector to Internet2, a nationwide 100 Gbps network dedicated to research and education. Internet2

enables Oklahoma's researchers to move big data across the country and around the globe.

While these global connections are vital, connecting communities in Oklahoma is a priority for OneNet. OneNet provides connectivity to approximately half of Oklahoma's K-12 schools, many libraries and most of the career technology centers. Rural hospital and clinics connect through OneNet.

OneNet also serves a significant number of government agencies, which means when you visit your local tag agency, department of health, department of human services or other public service agency, you're using OneNet. Even when you watch OETA's PBS broadcasting, you're using OneNet!

The Oklahoma Community Anchor Network, a grant-funded network managed by OneNet, also plays an important role in connecting Oklahoma's rural communities. OCAN's 2,072 miles of optical infrastructure span 35 counties, bringing high-speed broadband to underserved areas. OCAN connects 93 community anchor institutions to the network and provides broadband services to private-sector telecommunications providers.

Another key to OneNet's success is public-private partnerships with more than 30 telecommunications providers throughout the state. These providers connect OneNet customers to the network through last-mile services. Last year, OneNet reinvested nearly \$12.5 million statewide with last-mile providers. These funds support broadband services in local communities.

Cybersecurity continues to be a priority. OneNet's security team has deployed a layered strategy to protect the integrity of the network. From managed firewall services to DDoS mitigation, OneNet utilizes next-generation technologies to keep customers' data safe. OneNet is committed to working to identify new cyber defenses and promote security best practices across all of its end-users.



Internet connectivity is more vital than ever as the state manages impacts of the coronavirus pandemic. As entities quickly transitioned to virtual delivery of education, health care and public services, OneNet adjusted service delivery to ensure customers had the access they needed. OneNet will continue to seek partnerships that create solutions as the operating environment evolves.

As OneNet celebrates 25 years, the team wants to send a special thanks to customers, partners, vendors and other supporters. The OneNet team appreciates the relationships built over the last quarter century. OneNet's leadership also wants to thank the OneNet staff—current and past—who have dedicated themselves to serving OneNet, the State Regents and Oklahoma's citizens.

The State Regents and OneNet look forward to another 25 years, growing stronger than ever together and fulfilling the mission of advancing technology across Oklahoma.

### SOCIAL MEDIA SPOTLIGHT

 [www.facebook.com/onenetok](http://www.facebook.com/onenetok)

 [www.twitter.com/onenetok](http://www.twitter.com/onenetok)

 [www.linkedin.com/company/onenet](http://www.linkedin.com/company/onenet)

## OCAP COLLEGE PLANNING RESOURCES

The Oklahoma College Assistance Program (OCAP) provides college access, aid awareness, financial literacy and student loan management programs and services that benefit students, parents, schools and community partners. OCAP initiatives and programs include:



Resources to help students plan, prepare and pay for college. Search scholarship listings, access free printed and online publications and request speakers for college planning and FAFSA events.

[www.UCanGo2.org](http://www.UCanGo2.org)



A personal finance education program that empowers Oklahomans to make positive financial choices. Visit the website to access money management information and tools, including consumer podcasts, online learning modules, interactive calculators and a resource clearinghouse.

[www.OklahomaMoneyMatters.org](http://www.OklahomaMoneyMatters.org)



Helps students make smart borrowing decisions and successfully repay student loans. Access free publications and resources for students.

[www.ReadySetRepay.org](http://www.ReadySetRepay.org)



Students can compare schools, explore careers, send transcripts, plan and track high school course requirements and learn about financial aid. Educators can use the Pro Center to send and receive electronic transcripts, customize Individual Career Academic Plans (ICAP) and track student progress.

[www.OKcollegestart.org](http://www.OKcollegestart.org)



Everything you need to know about submitting the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), including videos in English and Spanish.

[www.StartWithFAFSA.org](http://www.StartWithFAFSA.org)



During College Application Week, high school seniors receive hands-on assistance while completing their applications to college.

[www.OKCollegeAppWeek.org](http://www.OKCollegeAppWeek.org)



The Oklahoma College Access Network is a centralized hub for college access initiatives. Participate in discussions and trainings, find information and tools for College Application Week and much more.

[www.OKcollegeaccess.org](http://www.OKcollegeaccess.org)



The Oklahoma FAFSA Data Portal allows high school counselors to check the completion status of student FAFSAs, so they can assist students to increase FAFSA completion statewide.

[www.UCanGo2.org/FAFSAPortal.html](http://www.UCanGo2.org/FAFSAPortal.html)

# Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education



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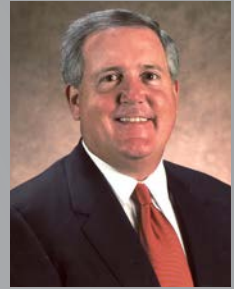
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