



DEGREES OF PROGRESS

eNews from the State Regents for Higher Education

OKLAHOMA STATE REGENTS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

Improving our future by degrees



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DRIVING WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT, MEETING WORKFORCE NEEDS

By Chancellor Allison D. Garrett

Serving as a vice president in one of the country's largest companies and in the public higher education sector has taught me that investing in the right team is essential. Oklahoma's investment in higher education defines your future workforce.

Data from *Unlocking Career Success*, an initiative of the U.S. Departments of Education, Commerce and Labor, forecasts that 70% of jobs across the country will require education beyond high school by 2027. In Oklahoma, more than half of our 100 critical occupations — and each of the top 29 highest-paying professions — require an associate degree or higher.

The state system of higher education is focused on supporting student success and increasing college degree completion in high-demand fields. Continued investment in young Oklahomans and in higher education is necessary. While we have increased bachelor's degree production in STEM disciplines by 42% and nursing degree and certificate production by more than 26% over the last decade, we need more engineers, computer scientists, doctors, nurses and teachers.

The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education recently approved a budget request for an increased investment of 12.2% for FY25. This increase will support crucial workforce development initiatives, providing funds to increase enrollment and graduation in STEM disciplines and expand nursing education program and medical residency capacity to address the state's shortage of nurses and doctors. Funds will be used to re-engage adult learners, including additional scholarships for



adult students nearing completion of a college degree or pursuing an industry-recognized micro-credential or certificate.

Our budget request includes full funding for concurrent enrollment, which allows eligible high school students to complete college coursework. Funding will also support the Inspired to Teach program, which is specifically designed to recruit more students into the teaching field and help keep them in Oklahoma classrooms.

The State Regents seek support for performance-based institutional allocations to address operational needs and rising risk management costs, strengthen college access and academic success services for students, and fund strategic collaborations and shared services to drive long-term efficiencies across the state system. The budget request also includes capital funding for deferred facility maintenance and system and structure upgrades to enhance campus safety and cybersecurity.

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RSU PARTNERS WITH CLAREMORE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TO OFFER MICRO-CREDENTIAL SCHOLARSHIPS

By Larry Rice, President, Rogers State University

With the population growth found in Rogers County and as the Claremore area continues to experience a period of rapid development, new jobs have opened across various industry sectors.

To support those looking to begin a new career journey, Claremore Economic Development is offering a new micro-credential scholarship program in partnership with Rogers State University. This initiative aims to provide a pathway for Rogers County residents to advance their education beyond a high school diploma. With RSU leading the way across the state in offering 33 approved micro-credential options, this partnership is a win-win for both RSU and Claremore Economic Development. To date, RSU has produced 75 micro-credential completions, the second highest number of any institution in Oklahoma.

Through this program, Rogers County residents can apply for a scholarship to complete an approved micro-credential program at no cost. Eligible micro-credential programs include Basic Accounting, Accounting for Managers, Business Analytics, Human Resources Management, Management and Supervisory Skills, Organizational Conflict Management, Personal Finance Management, Social Media Marketing, Community Policing, Drone Pilot, Information Technology Help Desk Technician, Information Security Practitioner, Microsoft Office Practitioner, Programming Technician, Website Technician and Law for Managers and Entrepreneurs.



ROGERS STATE UNIVERSITY

More than \$100,000 was distributed to program applicants in fall 2023, when the scholarship partnership launched.

Providing affordable and accessible opportunities for Rogers County residents to improve their skill sets and marketability is a focus for RSU. We are honored to partner on this effort with Claremore Economic Development as we work together to build a well-educated workforce.

To learn more about micro-credentials at RSU, visit www.rsu.edu/degrees.



DRIVING WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT, MEETING WORKFORCE NEEDS

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Higher education provides an exceptional return on investment for both individual Oklahomans and for our state. U.S. Census Bureau data show a substantial difference in employment rates and annual earnings for Oklahoma college graduates. The labor participation rate for citizens with a bachelor's degree is 17.2 percentage points higher than for those with only a high school diploma, and college graduates command higher salaries. Median annual income for associate and bachelor's degree holders is 14% and 51% higher, respectively, than for those with only a high school diploma.

Of Oklahomans who graduate from our state system colleges and universities, 96% remain and work here one year after graduation, serving in our labor force and contributing in their communities. We are also retaining the vast majority of our STEM graduates. Of STEM degree earners, more than 84% remain in our workforce one year after graduation.

Producing more college graduates to address the needs of Oklahoma's business community is our top priority and central to the success of our *Blueprint 2030* strategic plan. We are deeply thankful for the support public higher education received last year, and we developed our FY25 budget request to honor that investment by building on successful workforce development initiatives and supporting ongoing academic and operational innovations at our public colleges and universities.

OKLAHOMA PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION GRADUATES LEARN HERE, EARN HERE

Of Oklahomans who graduate from an Oklahoma state system college or university, 96% remain and work in the state one year after graduation, according to the State Regents' 2022 *Employment Outcomes Report*.

Employment outcome rates reflected in the report are calculated from data matched between the State Regents, Oklahoma Employment Security Commission (OESC) and Oklahoma Tax Commission (OTC) records to determine the percentage of state system graduates who remain in and are employed in the state one year and five years after graduation.

The report shows that five years after graduation, more than 88% of Oklahomans who graduate from a state system college or university remain and work in the state.

Of STEM graduates from our state system colleges and universities, more than 84% of resident students remain and work in Oklahoma one year after graduation. Five years after graduating with a STEM degree from a public institution, more than 70% of Oklahomans still live and work here.

Over 84% of engineering graduates earning a bachelor's degree are working in the state one year later. Of teacher education graduates from our public institutions, 88% are employed in Oklahoma one year after graduation. More than 95% of nursing graduates at all degree levels are employed in the state one year after graduation, and more than 90% remained five years later, meeting a critical workforce need.

Most Oklahoma's Promise students also stay and work in the state after earning a degree.

More than 96% of Oklahoma's Promise graduates remain and work in Oklahoma one year after graduation. Over 91% of Oklahoma's Promise graduates are still living and working in the state after five years.

The report also examines how education level impacts earnings. The 2022 study supports national data that link salary to educational attainment. Consistent with national trends, data for graduates of Oklahoma's public colleges and universities confirm that the higher the degree a student earns, the higher the salary they are likely to earn. Additionally, wages increase five years after graduation at all degree levels.

The report is available online at <https://okhighered.org/econ-dev/statewide-employment-outcomes/>.

2024-25 FAFSA NOW AVAILABLE TO OKLAHOMA STUDENTS

The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is the gateway to access federal financial aid, including grants, scholarships, and work-study programs. It's important for high school seniors and current college students to submit their 2024-25 FAFSA as soon as possible.

The FAFSA is used to determine how much financial aid students may be able to receive to help pay for college. A completed FAFSA is also required for some state aid, including the Oklahoma's Promise scholarship and the Oklahoma Tuition Aid Grant program. Many students underestimate their financial need

or assume they won't qualify for financial aid, but every student should complete the FAFSA as soon as it becomes available during their senior year of high school and every subsequent year that financial aid will be needed during college.

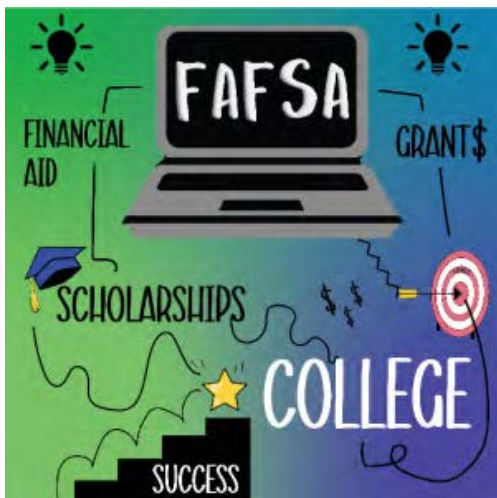
The 2024-25 FAFSA can be completed online at [FAFSA.gov](https://fafsa.gov). The shorter, simplified online FAFSA features skip-logic technology that eliminates irrelevant questions based on previous answers, and information from applicants' 2022 tax returns will be transferred directly to their FAFSA. Additionally, through formulas updated by the U.S. Department of Education (USDE), more students will be eligible for the federal Pell Grant.

To complete and submit the FAFSA online, students and one or both parents will each need to create a Federal Student Aid ID (FSA ID), which serves as their electronic signature on the FAFSA and certain student loan applications and allows them to access other FSA websites. It is beneficial for families to create FSA IDs at least five days before starting the FAFSA to speed up the application process. The USDE estimates the form will take most families less than one hour to complete.

Campus financial aid offices can confirm institution-specific deadlines and provide assistance to families during the application process. There is no charge to complete or submit the FAFSA, so families should be wary of organizations that charge a fee for these services.

startwith
fafsa.org

The State Regents' Oklahoma College Assistance Program (OCAP) division offers free FAFSA tools and workshops to support school- and campus-based FAFSA education for families across the state. For more information about the FAFSA process and to access free educational resources, visit OCAP's FAFSA completion website, StartWithFAFSA.org.



ONENET: OKLAHOMA'S PARTNER IN RESEARCH, SCIENTIFIC DISCOVERY

Scientific discoveries at Oklahoma's research institutions are advancing innovation in global research initiatives from high-energy physics to bioscience to climate modeling. These initiatives require high-capacity bandwidth to support big data movement in real-time across the country and around the globe.

OneNet is Oklahoma's partner in providing the high-speed connectivity required for innovation and scientific discovery. OneNet serves as Oklahoma's research and education network and is strategically positioned within higher education to support research computing and networking, including the following projects.

ATLAS PROJECT

The Oklahoma Center for High Energy Physics (OCHEP) is a collaboration of researchers at the University of Oklahoma, Oklahoma State University and Langston University. OCHEP scientists are conducting research for the ATLAS project, a high-energy physics experiment at the Large Hadron Collider at the European Organization for Nuclear Research. ATLAS explores the fundamental nature of matter and the basic forces that shape our universe by examining head-on collisions of protons of enormously high energy. These particle physics experiments have large data transfer requirements supported by OneNet.

GENOMIC RESEARCH

Researchers at OSU are utilizing high-performance supercomputers and OneNet's network to evaluate the use of fungi in biofuels, study pathogens that damage poultry populations, analyze the human genome for diseases and numerous other experiments that have real-life implications. OSU's participation in this research is making genome mapping to scan for genetic risks like cancer a routine health assessment for everyone. OSU collaborates with researchers across the country to advance these research initiatives and requires big data movement among research partners.

NOAA FORECASTING TESTBEDS

OU's Center for Analysis and Prediction of Storms (CAPS) periodically runs ensembles of high-resolution weather prediction forecasts covering the continental United States. These forecasts are produced on National Science Foundation High Performance Computing resources in collaboration with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration National Weather Service testbeds, which test new forecast products in a quasi-operational setting. CAPS utilizes OneNet's network to exchange forecasts across the country during each of these experiments.



EQUIPPING STUDENTS

Oral Roberts University leverages OneNet's network for a variety of scientific research, including molecular modeling, subatomic physics modeling, computational fluid dynamics, seismic imaging, bioinformatics and molecular spectroscopy. Low-latency, high bandwidth data motion capabilities enable researchers to participate in large-scale collaborations, moving large datasets across the state and around the world. ORU undergraduate students are gaining substantial experience that greatly enhances their skill sets and scientific understanding, making them competitive for the next step beyond graduation.



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OKCOLLEGESTART SUPPORTS ICAP EFFORTS

OKcollegestart.org is the free college and career planning portal provided by the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education and the Oklahoma College Assistance Program (OCAP) for students, parents and educators. OKcollegestart offers a series of advanced, interactive tools for planning, preparing and paying for education after high school. Key features include robust academic mapping and career planning tools, financial aid resources, campus profiles and the online Oklahoma's Promise scholarship application. Free OKcollegestart accounts are available to Oklahomans of any age, and site text is mobile-friendly and available in more than 100 languages.

As required by state law, students at public high schools are completing an Individual Career Academic Plan (ICAP) in grades nine through 12. During the ICAP process, students complete career and college interest surveys; update written postsecondary and workforce goals annually; take an intentional sequence of courses in high school that reflects their postsecondary goals; track academic progress through college readiness tests, concurrent enrollment and career certifications; and participate in service-learning or work environments.

OKcollegestart educator tools include a customizable ICAP feature used by over 60% of public Oklahoma high schools to fulfill and track the ICAP graduation requirement.



Through workshops, webinars, and one-on-one training, the OKcollegestart team assists school counselors, teachers and administrators in the planning and implementation of ICAP with students. "Schools across the state are creating a support system for students as they make plans for life after high school," said Theresa Shaklee, OCAP's student portal coordinator. "OKcollegestart is pleased to be a part of that support system for students and families."

Recent improvements to the site include an updated Plan of Study feature used by students to track and plan their high school coursework, streamlined Financial Aid 101 resources, and information about Oklahoma's inclusive postsecondary programs.

OKcollegestart accounts belong to users for life, so graduating students continue to have access to past work and can make use of job search and resume building tools, the scholarship search feature and other career and postsecondary education planning tools.



OKLAHOMA HIGHER EDUCATION NEWS

- [OU unveils new advanced manufacturing lab to support military and aerospace](#)
- [OSU, Boeing, Choctaw Nation team up to advance STEM education from space](#)
- [ECU receives \\$5 million gift from Chickasaw Nation for nursing, STEM programs](#)
- [NSU recognized as top college for public service education](#)
- [RSU offers AI training to boost workforce skills](#)
- [SE, Choctaw Nation, partners address logistics challenges](#)
- [UCO launches first doctoral degree, opens crime scene house to become leader in forensic science](#)
- [LU, OU, SWOSU partner to reduce health disparities through recruitment](#)
- [CASC, NEO partner for \\$4 million grant](#)
- [MSC, ECU, SE, career techs to help workers affected by tire plant closure](#)
- [How OCCC is offering education through the new Mexican Consulate](#)

The screenshot shows the OKCOLLEGESTART.ORG website. At the top, there are social media icons (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube) and a search bar. Below that are navigation links for "CAREER PLANNING", "HIGH SCHOOL PLANNING", "COLLEGE PLANNING", "FINANCIAL AID PLANNING", and "YOUR PORTFOLIO". The main content area features a large blue banner with the headline "How do I succeed in high school?" and a sub-headline "Explore what classes you need to graduate and how those courses align with your career goals." Below the banner are "Sign In" and "Create an Account" buttons. At the bottom, there are six icons representing different user groups: Middle School, High School, College, Adult, Parent, and Professional.

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OCAP.org

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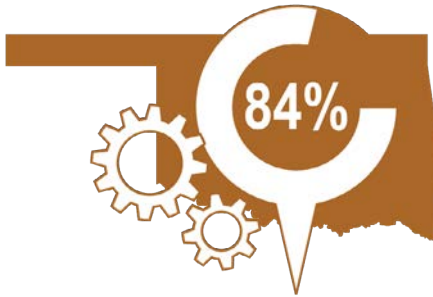
ReadySetRepay

UCanGo2

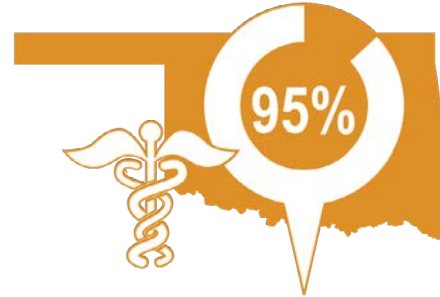
OKcollegestart

OKCollegeAssistance

DID YOU KNOW?



Of engineering graduates, more than **84%** of bachelor's degree earners are working in the state one year after graduation.



At all degree levels, more than **95%** of nursing graduates were employed in the state one year after graduation and more than **90%** still remained five years after graduation, meeting a critical workforce need.



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