



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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HIGHER EDUCATION IS KEY TO ECONOMIC GROWTH

By Chancellor Allison D. Garrett

This is the time of year when I haunt the live plant areas at local greenhouses and big box stores, dreaming about how the plants or seeds I buy will flourish. Earning a college degree is like planting and nurturing a beautiful plant.

Graduates leverage new skills and knowledge into opportunities that bear lifelong fruit in the form of personal growth and development, career advancement and higher earning potential. College degrees bear fruit for both individual students and our state.

Recent data from the American Community Survey show that in 2022, those with bachelor's degrees earned an average hourly wage 66% higher than high school graduates. The Georgetown Center for Education and the Workforce reports bachelor's and associate degree holders earn 75% more and 25% more, respectively, than those with only a high school diploma.

By 2030, over half of Oklahoma's top 100 critical occupations for economic growth will require an associate degree or higher. Yet, despite a nearly 6% increase in annual degree production over the last decade, our state ranks near the bottom for the number of adults earning degrees.

Through our strategic plan, *Blueprint 2030*, the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education prioritizes the production of workforce-ready graduates by aligning degree programs with employer demand, improving business community engagement, increasing student internships and other experiential learning



opportunities, and reconnecting adult learners who earned college credit, but no degree.

As our public colleges and universities align offerings to meet workforce demands, overall degree production continues to grow. Engineering degrees and certificates increased 43.1% in the last 10 years, and STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) degree and certificate production increased by 19.2% at all levels.

Nationally, while some employers have removed degree requirements from job descriptions, data show that many companies still choose to hire college graduates over those without a degree. Skills developed in higher education — critical thinking, communication, resilience — help graduates thrive in their current jobs and position them for success in future jobs that will be created or refined by advancing technology.

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EMPOWERING HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS: SWOSU PARTNERS WITH INTEGRIS HEALTH

By Diane Lovell, President, Southwestern Oklahoma State University

In response to the growing demand for skilled healthcare professionals in Oklahoma, Southwestern Oklahoma State University (SWOSU) is proud of our transformative partnership with INTEGRIS Health. This collaboration represents a significant step forward in addressing the state's critical workforce needs and advancing healthcare education.

As president of SWOSU, I am thrilled to join forces with INTEGRIS Health to offer tuition support opportunities for first-semester enrollees in various nursing programs. These programs include the LPN-RN/BSN program, RN-to-BSN program, traditional BSN program, and MSN program at SWOSU.

Integris Health, Oklahoma's largest not-for-profit health system, is renowned for its commitment to providing exceptional care to communities across the state. By extending tuition assistance to caregivers pursuing nursing degrees at SWOSU, INTEGRIS Health is investing in the future of healthcare and nurturing the next generation of nursing professionals.

This partnership is a testament to SWOSU's dedication to providing accessible, high-quality education to our students while addressing the evolving needs of the healthcare industry. Through collaborative efforts with INTEGRIS Health, we are not only preparing students for successful careers in nursing but also strengthening the healthcare workforce in Oklahoma.

SWOSU and Integris Health's commitment to excellence in education and workforce development has been recognized through the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education's Business Partnership Excellence Awards Program. We were honored to recognize INTEGRIS Health in this endeavor and extend our gratitude to them for their steadfast support.

At SWOSU, we understand the transformative impact of education on individuals and communities. I commend the dedication and passion of everyone involved in making this partnership a reality. Together, we are forging a path toward a healthier, more prosperous future for all.



For more information about SWOSU's nursing programs and opportunities for partnership, please visit www.swosu.edu/nursing.



HIGHER EDUCATION IS KEY TO ECONOMIC GROWTH

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As we rightly focus on degree production in STEM and other high-demand fields, we also recognize the value of humanities education in building a competitive workforce. Humanities and arts cultivate essential skills and traits like problem-solving, adaptability, creativity, professional writing and public speaking, each of which is increasingly vital to hiring businesses. A recent national study showed that over 90% of employers are looking for "soft skills" like these on resumes as an indicator of a candidate's capability to navigate complex challenges and work collaboratively as part of a team. Across the country, companies are working with colleges and universities to develop a human-centric approach to disciplines such as aerospace, technology and engineering.

When we equip Oklahomans to fully realize their God-given potential, we attract high-wage employers to our state and help our existing businesses prosper. Our public colleges and universities prepare Oklahoma's workforce with the education and training required for an economy that blooms today, thrives tomorrow.





OKLAHOMA HIGHER EDUCATION NEWS

- [OU invited to join federal consortium on AI](#)
- [OSU-CHS hosts 'Operation Orange' for high school students](#)
- ['Re-imagine what is possible': How an OSU-OKC program is helping turn around lives](#)
- [ECU awarded \\$2M federal grant to enhance academic support](#)
- [Upright Education, NSU partner to empower tech talent in Oklahoma](#)
- [SE's John Massey School of Business reaffirms accreditation with AACSB](#)
- [SWOSU and RSC Sign agreement for music, business, nursing programs](#)
- [OPSU communications department named among top in the nation in the Collegiate Advertising Awards Program](#)
- [USAO, RCC expanding partnership](#)
- [CSC admits first class of Classrooms to Clinicals Students](#)
- [MSC receives \\$5 million grant for new nursing education center](#)
- [NOC participates in the Oklahoma Future Teacher program](#)
- [RSC's new facility to help generate more aerospace and cybersecurity jobs in Oklahoma](#)
- [TCC, NSU receive \\$4 million to support low income, Native transfer students](#)

2024 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, businesses and the community to further cultivate the higher learning environment through State Regents' Economic Development Grants. Lt. Gov. Matt Pinnell, State Regents' Chair Jack Sherry, State Regent Ann Holloway and Chancellor Allison D. Garrett participated in the ceremony, held at the University of Central Oklahoma.

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.

"Producing more workforce-ready graduates by partnering with the business community and connecting students to the workforce is fundamental to meeting Oklahoma's future workforce needs," said Garrett. "We are proud to recognize these partnerships, which demonstrate successful collaborations with public, private and nonprofit partners to strengthen Oklahoma's economy."

The partnerships recognized for 2024 are:

- ▶ Cameron University and Arvest Bank
- ▶ Carl Albert State College and the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services
- ▶ Connors State College and Saint Francis Health Systems
- ▶ East Central University and Pontotoc Technology Center
- ▶ Eastern Oklahoma State College and City of Wilburton
- ▶ Langston University and Griffin Media
- ▶ Murray State College and SouthernTech
- ▶ Northeastern Oklahoma A&M College and City of Miami

- ▶ Northeastern State University and City of Broken Arrow
- ▶ Northern Oklahoma College and First National Bank of Oklahoma
- ▶ Northwestern Oklahoma State University and Alva Public Schools and Cherokee Public Schools
- ▶ Oklahoma City Community College and Oklahoma City Fire Department
- ▶ Oklahoma Panhandle State University and Golden Mesa Casino
- ▶ Oklahoma State University and Osage LLC
- ▶ Oklahoma State University Institute of Technology and Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma
- ▶ Oklahoma State University-Oklahoma City and AT&T
- ▶ Redlands Community College and Russell-Murray Hospice
- ▶ Rogers State University and Claremore Economic Development
- ▶ Rose State College and 72nd Air Base Wing and Oklahoma City Air Logistics Complex, Tinker Air Force Base
- ▶ Seminole State College and Seminole Tourism Council
- ▶ Southeastern Oklahoma State University and Choctaw Nation Small Business Development
- ▶ Southwestern Oklahoma State University and INTEGRIS Health
- ▶ Tulsa Community College and Tulsa Innovation Labs
- ▶ University of Central Oklahoma and Regional Food Bank of Oklahoma
- ▶ University of Oklahoma and Weathernews Inc.
- ▶ University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma and The First National Bank & Trust Co.
- ▶ Western Oklahoma State College and Western Oklahoma State College Foundation

For more information about RBPEA and this year's partnerships, visit <https://okhighered.org/econ-dev/rbpeal>.

2024 STEM SUMMER ACADEMIES

This summer, many middle and high school students will have the opportunity to experience life on a college campus while exploring exciting fields of study at the free 2024 Summer Academies in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM).

STEM Summer Academies, sponsored by the State Regents, are open to upcoming eighth-through 12th-graders. Each academy explores the latest trends in science, technology, engineering and math through fun, hands-on activities and innovative software as students experiment both in the classroom and outdoors. Many academies also include field trips to some of the state's top companies and science facilities.

The 2024 academies will be offered by 14 Oklahoma colleges and universities in May, June, July and August. The 17 unique academies will be offered statewide and last from four days to two weeks. Some academies require students to live in the campus residence halls, while others require that students travel to and from campus each day. This year, there are seven residential academies and 10 unique commuter academies.

"Oklahoma needs more STEM graduates to meet growing workforce demands," said Chancellor Allison D. Garrett. "Our Summer Academies encourage middle school and high school students to explore STEM disciplines and prepare academically to pursue them. Students who participate in STEM Summer Academies are more likely to enroll in college and earn a degree."



Applications are now being accepted for the academies, and many have deadlines. Because the academies are free and enrollment is limited, students are encouraged to apply early. To qualify, students must be entering eighth through 12th grade this fall. The academies are not exclusively for top students, but instead are designed to give all students an opportunity to increase their interest and confidence in STEM fields and, ultimately, expand their career and educational aspirations.

The full list of 2024 STEM Summer Academies is available on the [OKcollegestart website](https://okcollegestart.org).



QUARTERLY NEWS AT A GLANCE

- [Students, higher education representatives gather at State Capitol for Higher Education Day](#)
- [State Regents, CareerTech sign statewide nursing articulation agreement](#)
- [Seven Oklahoma high schools named Scholarship Champs](#)
- [Students, supporters gather at State Capitol for Oklahoma's Promise Day](#)
- [Teach Oklahoma conference motivates aspiring educators](#)
- [State Regents' Free Speech Committee hosts training for campus personnel](#)

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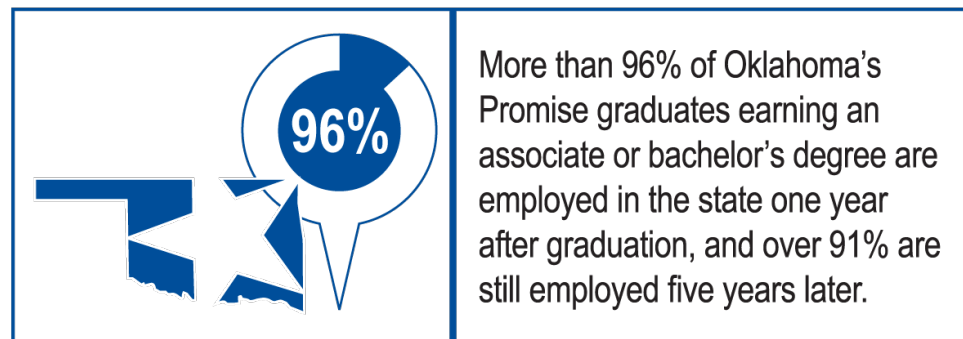
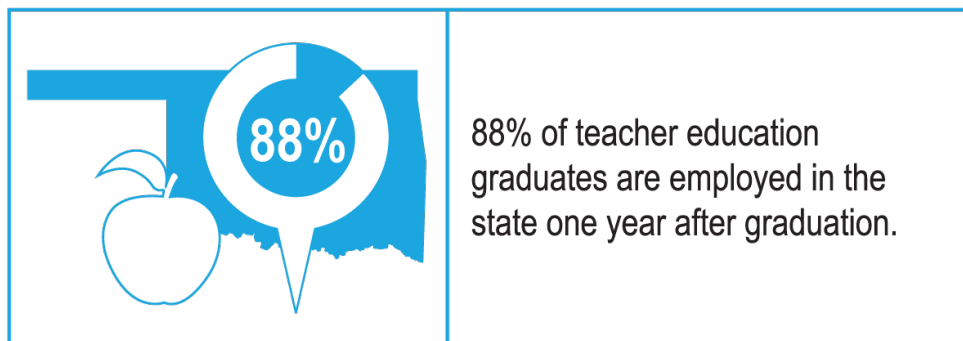
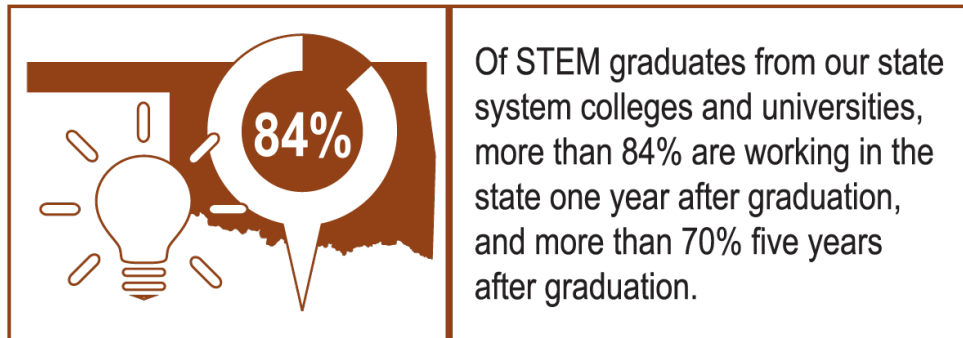
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DID YOU KNOW?



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