



# Brain Gain 2010

## Building Oklahoma Through Intellectual Power

Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education





# The Vision

It's 2010, and Oklahoma and its citizens are thriving in a vibrant, global economy. Over the past 12 years, Oklahoma has targeted its efforts toward increasing the proportion of its population with college degrees, and the impact has been phenomenal. Oklahoma, with 38 percent of its population holding associate degrees or above, now ranks in the top one-third of all states for its educational and economic performance.

Businesses and industries from around the world are looking at relocation opportunities in Oklahoma, attracted in large part by the state's growing and highly-qualified college-educated workforce.

A new entrepreneurial spirit spurred in part by Oklahoma's investment in its intellectual capital, as well as the state's internationally-acclaimed telecommunications system, has also spawned record-levels of business expansions and start-ups in both metropolitan and rural regions. Much of the business growth has been in the areas of information technology, telecommunications, biotechnology and high-tech manufacturing. And many businesses are offering products that hadn't even been dreamed of just a decade earlier. The innovative

environment has also fueled Oklahoma's move from a producer of raw materials to an international exporter of finished goods.

In this dynamic climate, Oklahomans are earning more than ever before, with the state's per capita income at a record high. They're also enjoying an unparalleled standard of living as their disposable income and savings rates increase, and the state's unemployment, teenage birth, crime and divorce rates fall. The explosion of knowledge-based, environmental-friendly companies is also ensuring that Oklahomans for generations to come can enjoy the state's diverse natural resources.

Oklahoma is also enjoying a significant infusion of new state funds as the incomes of both individuals and businesses continue to grow. The new funds have allowed the state to make unprecedented

progress in improving its interstates and highways; moving welfare recipients into the workforce; and educating all citizens, regardless of age, for success in a complex and changing environment.

Oklahoma has become a strong global contender and has successfully secured the future of its citizens. And it has accomplished this feat by building its intellectual power.

**Brain Gain 2010 calls for 28 percent of Oklahoma's population age 25 and older to hold a bachelor's degree or higher by 2010, and 10 percent of Oklahoma's population to hold an associate degree. In 1996, 20.1 percent held a bachelor's degree or higher and 5.0 percent held an associate degree.**



# The Plan

Recognizing that Oklahoma's future prosperity rests more on its intellectual capital than on any other factor, the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education are developing a long-range plan to build the state's intellectual power and help move Oklahoma to the top one-third of all states for its educational and economic performance.

The plan's objective is for Oklahoma to meet or exceed the national average for the proportion of its population age 25 or older holding associate degrees or higher by 2010. National figures show that states with the greatest economic success have the highest percentages of college-educated citizens. Currently, Oklahoma ranks in the bottom one-third of all states for the educational attainment of its citizens, and, consequently, for its economic performance. Although Oklahoma has made some progress in recent years to increase Oklahomans' educational attainment, the state is not keeping pace with increases nationally.

For example, the proportion of Oklahomans 25 years and older who hold associate degrees or higher increased 2.3 percentage points from 1990 to 1996, compared to 4.3 percentage points nationally. In 1996, an estimated 20.1 percent of Oklahoma's population age 25 and older held bachelor's degrees or higher,

ranking the state 39th in the nation. An estimated 5.0 percent of Oklahoma's population held associate degrees. On the national level, 23.6 percent of the population 25 years or older held bachelor's degrees or higher and 7.2 percent held associate degrees.

To meet and slightly exceed the national average by 2010, Oklahoma will need to double its expected growth rate of college degree holders age 25 and older. At the bachelor's degree level, that means Oklahoma will need to add 203,000 degree holders to its population, 94,000 more than what is currently projected. At the associate degree level, Oklahoma will need to add 140,000 degree holders, 70,000 more than what is currently projected.

The Regents will seek to increase the proportion of Oklahomans with an associate degree or above by

1. undertaking a comprehensive strategy to increase the number of Oklahomans who earn a college degree;
2. working with other state leaders to develop strategies to keep more Oklahoma graduates in Oklahoma; and
3. working with other state leaders to attract to Oklahoma college degree holders from outside the state.

**Through the year 2006, occupations that require bachelor's or associate degrees are projected to grow the fastest at 25.4 percent and 22.2 percent, respectively, and offer higher than average earnings.**



# The Strategies

## Increase the Number of Oklahomans Earning A College Degree

To increase the number of Oklahomans earning a college degree, the State Regents will focus on two areas – increasing the number of students who go to college directly from high school and improving Oklahoma college and university graduation rates.

Specifically, the Regents will undertake initiatives to help high school students better prepare for college, both academically and financially, and ensure that once students get to college, they have the support they need to stay in school and complete a degree.

While new strategies will undoubtedly emerge as the plan unfolds, a summary of initial strategies is presented below.

### Increasing college enrollment and student success rates

#### Enhance student preparation for college by

- strengthening college and university admission requirements by a) increasing the number of math units that high school students should complete from three to four, b) directing high schools to incorporate a writing component into English courses required for college entry, and c) recommending high school students take at least three lab science courses;
- attracting larger numbers of qualified teachers to Oklahoma schools by seeking funding to provide higher salaries to those who teach high demand subjects and in low supply parts of the state and studying the development of a student loan forgiveness program; and
- encouraging high schools to use technology to deliver high-quality, high-demand courses to other high schools.

#### Expand information services by

- strengthening feedback systems that help ease students' transition from high school to college and ensure high schools are prepared to give students the tools they need to succeed in college and the workplace;
- providing higher education orientation experiences for high school freshmen;

- initiating a statewide program to inform parents, students and teachers about the academic and financial preparation required to qualify for scholarships and grants and to prevent the need to borrow large amounts of money for college;
- undertaking a comprehensive communications campaign to inform Oklahomans about the value and benefits of obtaining a college degree and the academic, financial, and career planning programs available to help them achieve their education and career goals; and
- developing a consumer-oriented report that publicizes the performance of state colleges and universities, especially retention and graduation rates and graduates' employment information.

### Improving college and university graduation rates

#### Link student preparation to graduation by

- creating a statewide college scholarship program that is based on a student's academic performance in high school and college;
- expanding the Oklahoma Higher Learning Access Program (OHLAP), which awards scholarships to students with financial need who have demonstrated a commitment to academic success in high school, so that more students are aware of and can participate in the program; and
- supplementing work-study funding for college students who tutor high school students and undertake other related community involvement activities.

#### Provide incentives and services that encourage students to stay in college and graduate, such as

- subsidized child care and family health care services, and
- tuition subsidies or discounts for students who complete their degrees within a specified time period.

#### Strengthen college courses by

- further integrating technology into the student learning process to improve instruction and encouraging colleges and universities to deliver more courses electronically.

# The Strategies

## Encourage more flexible delivery of college courses by providing incentives for colleges and universities to:

- import courses and programs directly targeted toward improving Oklahomans' participation in higher education;
- develop modular or flexible offerings to fit the schedules and needs of working adults, especially in areas of the state where participation in higher education and degree attainment is low;
- develop and publicize additional advanced standing opportunities for college credit;
- explore avenues for offering college credit for competency-based learning; and
- create streamlined and innovative degree plans as well as training-oriented degrees.

**To meet the plan's goal, Oklahoma will need to add 203,000 bachelor degree holders and 140,000 associate degree holders age 25 and older to its population by 2010.**

## Strengthen services that support instruction by:

- enhancing academic advisement by allocating funding for colleges and universities to acquire and operate advanced student information systems, such as automated degree auditing and other advising support functions;
- stimulating more effective enrollment management at the state's colleges and universities that can assist in the development of institutional strategies to increase student recruitment and retention;
- initiating policies and practices that further enhance the transfer of students from two-year colleges to four-year universities; and
- providing colleges and universities with resources to hire more full-time faculty and academic counselors in an effort to make student advising more effective and to improve student retention.

## Keep More Oklahoma College Graduates in the State

Although reports released annually by the State Regents show that less than 20 percent of Oklahomans who earn bachelor's or associate degrees at state colleges and universities leave the state within five years of graduation,

the Regents believe it is imperative that Oklahoma help keep more of these graduates in the state.

In this vein, the State Regents will work with other state leaders to develop and implement strategies to keep more Oklahoma college graduates in Oklahoma and ensure they are appropriately employed. As a foundation for this effort, the Regents will refine their annual employment outcomes report so that state leaders can examine more closely which college and

university programs are producing graduates that stay in Oklahoma and which are producing graduates that leave the state to work. The Regents will also continue efforts to bring online a career and employment services Web site designed to connect Oklahoma college students and graduates with Oklahoma jobs.

Other initiatives may include tax breaks for employers or students, the creation of a student loan repayment program for Oklahoma graduates who agree to work in the

state for a specified period, development of a state recruitment office and enhancement of one-stop education and career centers.

## Attract College Degree Holders From Outside the State

For Oklahoma to meet or exceed the national average for the proportion of its population age 25 or older holding associate degrees or higher by 2010, the state will need to attract college degree holders from other states.

For decades, Oklahoma higher education has recruited faculty and top administrators from around the nation, bringing hundreds of advanced degree holders to the state on an annual basis. In addition, the State Regents have awarded individuals coming to Oklahoma to work full-time and their families with immediate residency status, allowing them to participate in higher education opportunities at in-state costs. The State Regents are committed to working with other state leaders to build on these initiatives and develop the additional strategies needed to attract more college degree holders from outside the state.

# The Conclusion

At no other time in Oklahoma's history has the state been better positioned to build its intellectual power and become recognized as a national economic leader.

Initiatives to strengthen the state's intellectual capital that were implemented by the State Regents and Oklahoma's legislative leaders during the last 10 years are already beginning to make a difference. The proportion of Oklahomans younger than 25 years of age who are earning a college degree is rising. And six-year graduation rates for students earning a bachelor's degree have increased slightly over the last decade.

However, much more must be done to ensure Oklahoma and its citizens are prepared to successfully compete in the global, knowledge-based economy of the 21st century.

The 12-year plan being developed by the State Regents is both aggressive and far-reaching. And it promises to generate unprecedented opportunities for growth and success. The State Regents look forward to working with other state leaders to achieve a better educated citizenry, for it is only through intellectual power that Oklahoma can rechart its course.

For more information, please call the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education at 405.524.9180, or visit Oklahoma higher education's Web site at [www.okhighered.org](http://www.okhighered.org) under Studies and Reports.



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This publication, printed by Paragon Press, is issued by the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education as authorized by 70 O.S. 1991, Section 3206. 2,500 copies have been printed at a cost of \$1606.68. Copies have been deposited with the Publications Clearinghouse of the Oklahoma Department of Libraries. This publication was produced by the Communications Department of the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education in January 1999.