

# Degrees of Progress

News from the State Regents for Higher Education



OKLAHOMA STATE REGENTS  
FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

*Improving our future by degrees*

Volume 2, Issue 4 | Fall 2017

## Higher Education Has Never Been More Valuable

*Chancellor Glen D. Johnson, Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education*

Oklahoma's economic future greatly depends on a well-educated workforce. More than 90 percent of national earnings growth over the last decade has been driven by citizens with a college degree. When state support for higher education drops, more of the cost shifts to parents and students. As a result, a college education could become out of reach for some Oklahomans at a time when a college degree has never been more valuable to our citizens and our state.

Oklahoma must reverse course and start investing again in our higher education system. Our colleges and universities drive economic advancement, collaborating with business and industry partners to link academic programs directly to employment needs in the

state's wealth-generating ecosystems, including our top four areas of degree production — business, health occupations, education and engineering — and critical STEM disciplines. The number of STEM degrees and certificates conferred has increased 32 percent over the last six years. Participation in our concurrent enrollment program, which allows outstanding juniors and seniors the opportunity to earn college credit while still in high school, now exceeds 11,700 student course enrollments generating more than 103,000 credit hours. A vital campus service that strengthens student preparation and drives student success, concurrent enrollment lowers family costs for college and reduces the time required to complete a degree.

While state funding for Oklahoma public colleges and universities has been cut nearly 25 percent through successive reductions, other states are investing in higher education. According to a recent study by Illinois State University, budget cuts to Oklahoma public higher education from FY12 through FY17 were the deepest in the nation, compromising campus efforts to improve college access and increase degree completion. Our state system remains committed to the Complete College America (CCA) initiative, which calls for a 67 percent increase in degrees and certificates conferred by 2023; however, the State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO) association reports that Oklahoma is ranked last among the 33 CCA states in percentage



*Chancellor Glen D. Johnson*

change in state appropriations from FY12 to FY17. Additionally, our concurrent enrollment program is now funded at less than 27 percent of the cost to state system colleges and universities. Despite these devastating budget cuts and the significant impacts across the state, our public higher education system is nationally recognized for affordability.

As the Task Force on the Future of Higher Education continues its work to ensure the state system is designed to best serve Oklahoma students and businesses tomorrow, our public colleges and universities continue to innovate and excel today, strengthening our state's workforce and economy. We remain focused on increasing the number of degree-holders in Oklahoma and leveraging strong partnerships with common education, CareerTech and the business community to meet our state's workforce needs.

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## Guest Commentary: Opening the Door for Adult Learners

State Regent Ann Holloway



Regent Ann Holloway

When most of us think about college, we picture bright, eager, young people with incredible potential transitioning from high school to college. This is a vision realized by many Oklahoma families. There is, however, another view of college that is less visualized, but realized more every day: enrolling, educating and serving adult college students.

As Oklahoma's workforce training and education needs grow, so does the population of adults who need to finish a degree they started or retrain in a different field. State Regents' research indicates there are more than 300,000 Oklahomans who have successfully completed some college coursework, but have not earned a degree. These students invested time and money to pursue a degree, and demonstrated they had the ability to go to college — but something got in the way. For many students, those barriers come in the form of inflexible work schedules, family obligations and financial hardship.

These individuals are Oklahoma assets who have not yet realized their full workforce potential. As an Ardmore resident and an adult learner — who returned to Murray State College for an associate degree and went on to Southeastern Oklahoma State University to earn a bachelor's degree as a married mother of three with a full-time job — I look at the needs of both traditional and non-traditional students in my community. Approximately 20 percent of Ardmore residents age 25 or older hold a bachelor's degree, compared to 25 percent of Oklahomans. Data from the Georgetown Center for Education and Workforce tell us that by 2020, 37 percent of jobs in Oklahoma will require an associate degree, bachelor's degree or higher. This knowledge gap represents evolving workforce demands that put Ardmore — and the state of Oklahoma — at a significant disadvantage. We must do better.

Oklahoma public higher education took on the challenge of serving adult students in 2007 with the launch of Reach Higher, Oklahoma's adult degree completion program. Through this program, more than 4,000 adults have returned to complete degree programs. Building on the successes and lessons learned through the current Reach Higher program, the State Regents were awarded a three-year grant from the Lumina Foundation in June 2017 to create a "promise" program that would provide tuition and other financial assistance for adult students. As we develop and implement this new program over the next year, our goal is to find full support for adult learners to complete

degrees that correlate to the 100 Critical Occupations list created through the Governor's Oklahoma Works initiative. We're partnering with businesses, tribes, agencies, and non-profit service providers to execute this vision.

**"We must continue engaging adult learners to complete their degrees and utilize their skills, expertise and life experiences to strengthen Oklahoma's economy and workforce."**

A student with a college degree will earn approximately \$1 million more in a lifetime than a high school graduate, and students who learn here, earn here — more than 87 percent of Oklahoma residents who graduate with a bachelor's degree remain in the state and are employed in the state one year after graduation. I hope my experience encourages other adult students to pursue higher education. We must continue engaging adult learners to complete their degrees and utilize their skills, expertise and life experiences to strengthen Oklahoma's economy and workforce. My motto is, you're never too old to advance your education.

## Higher Education Chancellor Elected as SHEEO Chair-Elect

Chancellor Glen D. Johnson was recently elected chair-elect of the State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO) Executive Committee. In this role, he will serve as chair-elect during 2017-18 and as chair during 2018-19.

Johnson served the SHEEO Executive Committee as treasurer during 2016-17. He was previously elected to the Executive Committee in 2015 and 2014, and also served consecutive two-year terms in 2008 and 2010.

SHEEO, the national association of the chief executives of statewide governing boards and coordinating boards for

postsecondary education, assists state efforts to develop and sustain excellent systems of higher education. The Executive Committee is responsible for shaping SHEEO's federal priorities and strategies and for leading its communications with Congress, the U.S. Department of Education and other federal agencies.

Johnson was named chancellor of the Oklahoma State System of Higher Education in January 2007 following a national search. Before assuming the role of chancellor, he served as the 16th president of Southeastern Oklahoma State University in Durant for 10 years.

He was also director of public policy and adjunct professor of law at the University of Oklahoma College of Law. Prior to his work at OU, he served in the Oklahoma House of Representatives from 1982 to 1996 and was speaker of the House from 1990 to 1996. At the time of his election as speaker, he was the youngest sitting speaker in the United States. Johnson is an honors graduate of OU with an undergraduate degree in political science and a juris doctorate from the OU College of Law, and is a member of Phi Beta Kappa. He was inducted into the Oklahoma Hall of Fame in 2006 and the Oklahoma Higher Education Hall of Fame in 2016.

## College Prep Materials Shared With Oklahoma 8th-12th Graders

Thousands of Oklahoma eighth-through 12th-grade students will receive valuable information to help them plan and prepare for a college education.

The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education recently distributed approximately 241,000 copies of preparing for college brochures to middle, junior high and high schools statewide.

State Regents officials produced two grade-specific brochures for eighth-through 10th-grade students and for 11th- through 12th-grade students. Both versions of *Do You Have A Plan for College?* inform students about the courses they must take in high school to be admitted to an Oklahoma public college or university.

The publications feature financial aid information and details regarding admission standards and placement

scores, as well as information about **OKcollegestart.org**, the state's online college planning and preparation portal for students, parents and school counselors. The brochures outline estimated college costs, salary expectations for various jobs, and information about campus comparison and selection.

The brochures were sent directly to public school counselors to distribute to their students. In addition, brochures were sent to counselors at private schools accredited by the State Department of Education or Oklahoma Private School Accreditation Commission-recognized accrediting associations. The brochures will also be sent to home-school organizations, libraries and various educational, tribal and faith-based organizations.

High school counselors were also provided a link to the online *Counselors' Resource Book: Oklahoma Colleges*

*and Universities*, which profiles each Oklahoma college and university and includes information about preparing for college, college costs and financial aid, including grants, scholarships and federal student loans.

The State Regents believe now is the time for students to begin thinking about their future plans after high school. These free publications provide students and their parents the tools they need to make their plans for college.

Students, parents and counselors can view, print or order the materials online at [www.okhighered.org/students/publications](http://www.okhighered.org/students/publications).

For additional information about planning, preparing and paying for college, visit [www.OKcollegestart.org](http://www.OKcollegestart.org), call the State Regents' toll-free Student Information Hotline at 800-858-1840 or email [studentinfo@osrhe.edu](mailto:studentinfo@osrhe.edu).



## College Application Week 2017

Oklahoma College Application Week (CAW) 2017, an opportunity for high school seniors to receive hands-on assistance from knowledgeable volunteers while completing their applications to college, has been going strong. So far, 111 GEAR UP and non-GEAR UP schools and organizations in Oklahoma have registered for CAW 2017, a significant increase over last year's enrollment of 63. Those who are currently registered represent over 8,000 high school seniors in our state.

"While these events are designed to help all students," said Oklahoma College Assistance Program (OCAP) Outreach Specialist III and Oklahoma College Access Network (OK-CAN) member Letha Huddleston, "they're especially beneficial for those who've never considered going

to college or will be the first in their family to attend."

Oklahoma GEAR UP piloted CAW in its 24 school districts in 2012 and 2013. In 2014, all high schools across the state were invited to participate. In 2015, OCAP and OK-CAN joined GEAR UP in promoting CAW, which officially took place the week of Sep. 18-22 this year, though school events can be held as late as the end of November. Invitations were extended not only to Oklahoma high schools, but also to libraries and technology centers, resulting in five enrollments from those sectors in 2017. GEAR UP and OCAP offer free promotional materials and have used webinars and conference calls to introduce CAW to the event coordinators and walk them through the program materials and resources.

College App Week is part of a national initiative sponsored by the Kresge Foundation, the Lumina Foundation and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation for the American Council on Education. At the state level, the project is endorsed by Chancellor Glen D. Johnson of the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, the Oklahoma State Department of Education and the Oklahoma State Chamber.



## NT4CM Workshops

The Oklahoma College Assistance Program (OCAP), state coordinator for National Training for Counselors and Mentors (NT4CM), offered four NT4CM half-day workshops in late September. The workshops were offered in Oklahoma City, Ardmore, Weatherford and Tulsa. NT4CM is a comprehensive training program that provides free training and support for counselors and mentors who assist students and their families in preparing financially for college. OCAP provided workshops highlighting college planning services offered through the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education. Seventy-five counselors and mentors attended the provided workshops.

At each workshop, OCAP's outreach team presented new information and highlights for the 2018-19 FAFSA, the [UCanGo2.org](http://UCanGo2.org) college planning website, instructional

materials provided by NT4CM, and updates on the new features of [OKcollegestart.org](http://OKcollegestart.org), including the integration of Google Translate and the electronic transcript function that now allows high schools to send transcripts to out-of-state colleges. The new guidelines for Oklahoma's Promise were covered in detail and the Oklahoma Money Matters team offered a presentation on the financial education resources they provide to schools and families across the state. Information was shared regarding federal student loans, new interest rates, and the importance of empowering students to make smart borrowing choices. Attendees were directed to [ReadySetRepay.org](http://ReadySetRepay.org), OCAP's student loan management website. Presentation materials and publications were made available to all participants.

NT4CM workshops continue to contribute to OCAP's ongoing mission to provide

schools and community partners the support required to empower students and families to reach their educational goals. Through NT4CM, OCAP offers informational sessions for Oklahoma's high school and middle school counselors, financial aid administrators, Native American program specialists and various community partners.

## Social Media Spotlight



"Like" us on Facebook

[facebook.com/RepaymentScoop](https://facebook.com/RepaymentScoop)

## Rep. Leslie Osborn Receives 2017 Distinguished Service Award

The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education recently recognized Rep. Leslie Osborn with a 2017 Distinguished Service Award.

On Oct. 19, Osborn was honored during the State Regents meeting for her continued support of higher education in her role as a member of the Oklahoma House of Representatives and as chair of the House Appropriations and Budget Committee; for her assistance in minimizing budget cuts to higher education; and for her support of the Oklahoma's Promise program, including efforts in support of reform legislation during the 2017 regular session.

For 22 years, Osborn owned and operated Osborn Pick-Up Accessories. She was elected to the Oklahoma House of Representatives District 47 in 2008. She has chaired the Revenue and Taxation Committee and the Appropriations Sub-Committee on Natural Resources, and was the first female in the House of Representatives to chair the Judiciary Committee. In December 2017 she was named the first Republican female chair

of the House Appropriations and Budget Committee. Key achievements in the legislature include landmark workers compensation reform that changed Oklahoma from an antiquated judicial system to an administrative system, saving businesses across the state an average of 35 percent in insurance costs; passage of Real ID implementation; and implementation of a pay for success program to move 100 women per year out of incarceration and into an intensive therapy and placement program called *Women in Recovery*.

Osborn, who is the mother of two children, earned her Bachelor of Science in business administration from Oklahoma State University and resides in Mustang.

The Distinguished Service Awards for Higher Education program was established to recognize individuals who demonstrate distinguished leadership and support of higher education in Oklahoma during the legislative session.



OCCC President Jerry Steward, State Regents Chair Ron White, Rep. Leslie Osborn and Chancellor Glen D. Johnson

## State Regents, OSDH Sign Memorandum of Understanding

The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education and the Oklahoma State Department of Health (OSDH) recently signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) that will further develop and strengthen the relationship between state employers and colleges and universities, while providing experiential learning opportunities for college students and a workforce pipeline for OSDH.

"The State Regents and the Oklahoma State Department of Health share a mutual interest in improving

educational opportunities and helping to better prepare students to meet Oklahoma's workforce demands," said Chancellor Glen D. Johnson. "The State Regents are proud to formalize this partnership agreement to facilitate hands-on learning experiences in public health."

The MOU was developed by the State Regents' Council on Student Affairs and the State Regents' Council on Instruction to assist OSDH in meeting its employment goals through student internship opportunities. Participating students will be able to link their higher education

coursework directly with OSDH career experiences and earn income, which mitigates financial barriers to degree attainment and reduces dependence on student loans while positioning these students for potential permanent employment opportunities after graduation. In turn, the partnership will assist the State Regents in meeting student retention objectives and the state's Complete College America degree and certificate completion goal to increase the number of college graduates by 67 percent by 2023.

## Legislative Tour Highlights OneNet's Mission, Partnership With Oklahoma State University Center for Health Sciences

In August, OneNet had the opportunity to host legislators for a tour of OneNet's headquarters in Oklahoma City, as well as Oklahoma State University Center for Health Science's (OSU-CHS) mobile telemedicine bus. Rep. Rhonda Baker (R-El Reno), Rep. Michael Rogers (R-Broken Arrow), Rep. Todd Thomsen (R-Ada) and Rep. Tammy West (R-Oklahoma City) spent the day with representatives from OneNet and OSU-CHS.

OneNet Executive Director Vonley Royal shared OneNet's mission and role as Oklahoma's digital network for research and education. As a division of the State Regents, OneNet is uniquely positioned to serve education institutions at all levels, from higher education research institutions to K-12 schools. In addition, OneNet's position within higher education generates cost savings for the educational institutions it serves, as well as other OneNet end-users.

OneNet's mission not only includes advancing technology to rural areas across the state, but also expanding broadband availability and driving down costs for community institutions, such as K-12 schools and libraries. OneNet does this through public-private partnerships with telecommunications providers in local communities. Through these partnerships, OneNet advocates for broadband expansion and better pricing for internet services.

Royal gave legislators a tour of OneNet's network operations center, where OneNet engineers ensure the network is running smoothly for OneNet customers. He also provided a tour of OneNet's recently expanded data center, which not only serves OneNet and the State Regents, but also houses the equipment for a variety of OneNet customers from across the state.

Royal emphasized OneNet's vital support of Oklahoma's world-class research initiatives, such as high energy physics, storm analysis and prediction, bioinformatics and radar research. OneNet's high-speed network and connection to Internet2 enables researchers to transfer massive research data across the country and around the globe.

Another key priority Royal discussed with legislators was cybersecurity. Cyberattacks on community institutions, such as those OneNet serves, is a growing concern. Every day, OneNet deploys measures to secure its network and end-users' digital assets, and OneNet's leaders are working to bring its end-users together to share best practices that secure the entire system.

Legislators learned how OneNet is serving community anchor institutions in each of their districts. From Redlands Community College and El Reno Public Schools to Central Oklahoma Family Medical Center and Chickasaw Nation Child Support Services in Ada, OneNet connects higher education institutions, career technology centers, K-12 schools, libraries, rural

hospitals and clinics, tribal agencies and governmental agencies in communities in all 77 counties across the state.

Legislators also learned about the partnership between OneNet and OSU-CHS and how it impacts constituents in their districts. OneNet provides connectivity that supports OSU-CHS' telehealth program, which gives rural physicians the specialty knowledge needed to treat medical conditions and offer collaborative assistance with specific cases.

Legislators finished the day with a tour of the mobile telemedicine bus. OSU-CHS staff shared how the bus, which has logged more than 100,000 miles traveling across the state, meets the health care needs of rural and under-served communities in Oklahoma.

"OneNet is consistently at the forefront of advancing technology," said Chancellor Glen D. Johnson. "The leading technology OneNet provides is essential to meet the health care needs of our state's rural communities. This connectivity is not just affecting lives, it is saving lives."



Front row left to right: Rep. Tammy West, Chancellor Glen D. Johnson and Rep. Rhonda Baker  
Back row left to right: Rep. Todd Thomsen, Rep. Michael Rogers and OneNet Executive Director Vonley Royal



## 2017 Student Leadership Retreat

One hundred and sixty student leaders and student affairs administrators from 24 different campuses, including several private institutions of higher education, attended the annual Student Leadership Retreat (SLR) at Rose State College Oct. 6. For the last 17 years, this event has been planned and hosted by the Council on Student Affairs (COSA), together with the Oklahoma Student Government Association, Student Advisory Board, and the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education.

Students attended interactive sessions with leadership themes, conducted by the top student administrators and faculty from around the state. They

also participated in a networking session, an event the students ask for each year. The student administrators gathered for two hours of professional development centered around legal issues involving Title IX, DACA, Fair Labor Standards Act and Gainful Employment, as well as technology tools for student engagement.

The day was highlighted at lunch with a welcome from Rose State College, statewide student organization leaders and a keynote address from State Regent Andy Lester, who was introduced by Chancellor Johnson. Both Chancellor Johnson and Regent Lester spoke about the current budget situation in

state funding for higher education and emphasized the importance of student participation in civic involvement and engagement with their elected government leaders. Regent Lester's keynote message dealt with issues involving freedom of speech on campus.

The SLR is an event that enables the best student leaders from across the state to participate in the best instruction in leadership issues affecting students, regardless of the resources available on the student's home campus. Students also value this opportunity to meet their counterparts from other campuses, establish common interests and forge lines of communication.

## 2017 Reading Conference

Literacy was the force and the driver to accelerate the 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Reading Conference: *Looking Back... Moving Forward*. On Sept. 15, common and post-secondary educators statewide reflected upon the past decade of lessons learned to help construct futuristic reading and writing objectives, a transformative professional development purpose.

The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, in conjunction with higher education institutions, offer an annual reading conference for school teachers, administrators and higher education faculty that is focused on substantive reading professional development and curriculum alignment, effecting emergent and conventional reading.

Keynote speaker, Dr. Misty Sailors, professor and assistant department chair from the University of Texas at San Antonio, took teachers on a

metaphorical journey, a platform of imagery, which navigated educators into the future. With research and practice backing her up, Sailors facilitated *Re-Imagining Literacy in the 21st Century*.

In just two short years, Sailors, alongside a research team, teachers, students and community stakeholders, transformed and enhanced the academic performance and the social-emotional development of the low-performing, Title I school, Somerset Independent School District in Somerset, Texas. Sailors said a wide range of data, strategies and methods, as well as community and civic engagement activities, also elevated the school's expectations and mindset, constructing a changed culture.

Other nationally and internationally recognized speakers included Dr. Renee Hobbs, professor at Harrington School of Communications and Media, School of Education and founder of the Media

Education Lab from the University of Rhode Island; Doug Buehl, education consultant and author from Madison, Wisconsin; and Dr. Nell Duke, professor of literacy, language and culture in the School of Education at the University of Michigan.

The conference targeted Generation Z, the up and coming learners, who are web-savvy and app-friendly, also nicknamed iGen.

Past conference literacy topics have included literacy development, technology, culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms, tools and practices.

### QUICK FACT

In 2015-16, Oklahoma Teacher Connection granted 14 Collegiate Grants, which are one-year grants that encourage the recruitment, retention and placement efforts of teachers in Oklahoma.

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