



DEGREES OF PROGRESS

eNews from the State Regents for Higher Education
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INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Thriving Agriculture Industry
Requires STEM Workforce.....2

Regional Workforce Calls
for Focused Degree Programs3

OK Higher Ed News3

NSU, OneNet Strengthen
Connections Through
Collaboration4

2025 STEM Summer Academies5

Quarterly News at a Glance5

Did You Know?6

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NURSING PROGRAMS: RURAL HEALTH CARE LIFELINE

By President Kyle Stafford, Northeastern Oklahoma A&M College

As we enjoy spring at Northeastern Oklahoma A&M College (NEO), I am filled with excitement and optimism for the opportunities ahead. Exciting developments are unfolding within NEO's nursing program, solidifying its role as a vital contributor to the region's health care system.

Availability of quality health care is a growing concern nationwide, particularly as the population ages and people are living longer than ever before. In rural Oklahoma, the challenge is amplified by limited resources and a higher dependency on health care services. Ensuring access to health care is not just a priority — it's a necessity for the well-being of our communities.

For more than 50 years, NEO has been a regional cornerstone in nursing education, producing more than 2,000 dedicated professionals to meet the unique challenges of Oklahoma's rural communities head-on.

Continuing that legacy, the launch of NEO's state-of-the-art nursing simulation lab will be a vital resource for health care practitioners-in-training in Northeast Oklahoma. This cutting-edge facility, made possible through ARPA funds allocated by the Oklahoma State Legislature and generous contributions from the Wyandotte Nation, provides students with hands-on, realistic training experiences that mirror real-world health care scenarios. This investment in technology and education reflects NEO's commitment to equipping future nurses with the skills necessary to thrive in a fast-evolving medical landscape.

NEO's innovative "Fast Track" program exemplifies its dedication to addressing workforce demands efficiently. Designed for Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs) transitioning to Registered Nurses (RNs), this program



streamlines the educational process while maintaining rigorous standards. Through a unique partnership, Fast Track programming is now also offered at Northeast Technology Center- Kansas Campus, making it accessible to more students across the region. This collaboration highlights how educational institutions and community organizations can unite to ensure a robust and qualified health care workforce in rural Oklahoma.

The impact is tangible. After a recent dip in enrollment, NEO's nursing program is seeing a resurgence, particularly through the Fast Track initiative. What's more impressive is that approximately 75% of NEO's nursing graduates remain in northeast Oklahoma, becoming vital members of the local health care workforce. This retention rate is a testament to the program's success in fostering professionals who are not only skilled, but deeply committed to serving their communities.

Continued on page 2

THRIVING AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY REQUIRES STEM WORKFORCE

By President Ruth Ray Jackson, Langston University

In Oklahoma, job opportunities in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) industries continue to grow. One such industry is agriculture, which is being rapidly transformed by technology, all the while creating new opportunities for graduates and businesses alike.

Just as with industries like aviation, health care and biotechnology, a workforce with the necessary training and experience has been key to growth and modernization of the agriculture industry. The demand for educated professionals is expected to grow significantly in the next few years, with agricultural and food science technician roles projected to increase as much as 8% by 2033.

Experience in technologies and methods including automation, robotics, analytics, and GPS monitoring are highly relevant to agriculture today. Professionals should also be well-equipped to address issues such as food security along with environmental and sustainability challenges.

At Langston University, we are dedicated to preparing the next generation of professionals to thrive now and into the future. An 1890 land-grant institution, Langston is committed to advancing agricultural science, education, and outreach by empowering our students with the tools to thrive in modern agriculture.

Langston University produces highly trained graduates capable of tackling today's challenges. Students across all disciplines have access to contemporary research, academic initiatives, dynamic leadership opportunities, and extensive extracurricular engagement. Field experience is critical for students to feel prepared to succeed in their careers. Graduate and undergraduate students are given the opportunity to do meaningful research shoulder-to-shoulder with professors and researchers, supporting partners such as NASA, the United States Department of Agriculture, and the Oklahoma Medical Research Foundation.

Our Sherman Lewis School of Agriculture and Applied Sciences is home to the E (Kika) de la Garza American Institute for Goat Research



(AIGR), a globally renowned research institution providing actionable research and information for producers and researchers. As part of the institute's mission, students can join researchers as they travel internationally to work with goat farmers on best practices like how to most effectively raise a herd, or how to most efficiently utilize all parts of a goat. AIGR's current research includes ways to minimize methane production and how drones can be used to manage herd populations.

For over a decade, Langston has exceeded the national retention rate for STEM students. Since 2019, the Sherman Lewis School has also seen a 112% growth in STEM majors. Langston University has a proven record of success with career placement. After graduation, 98.8% of our Oklahoman graduates and 72% of our out-of-state students are employed in the state one year after graduation.

To keep Oklahoma's agriculture industry thriving, we must empower the next generation with the knowledge and hands-on classroom experience necessary to keep pace. Langston University welcomes partnerships with industry and local businesses, including creating internship opportunities. With food and agricultural natural resources being one of the nation's largest and most vital industries, let's work together to keep our students and our state bound for success.

NURSING PROGRAMS: RURAL HEALTH CARE LIFELINE

Continued from page 1

As rural health care continues to evolve, nursing programs like those at NEO are crucial in bridging the gap between demand and available resources. By investing in modern training facilities, forming strategic partnerships, and focusing on retaining local talent, NEO is shaping the future of health care in our region.

I am proud of what we've accomplished and look ahead to all that we will achieve together. Thank you to the Oklahoma State Regents, Oklahoma Board of Nursing, the A&M Board of Regents and all members of the NEO community. We look forward to the growth and innovation that will define the next half-century.

REGIONAL WORKFORCE CALLS FOR FOCUSED DEGREE PROGRAMS

By President Janet Wansick, Eastern Oklahoma State College

Regional higher education institutions are adept at collaborating with local communities to develop degree and certificate programs. These programs meaningfully impact the lives of local students and support the long-term development of the local workforce.

At Eastern Oklahoma State College (EOSC), we endeavor to establish varied academic opportunities, from our highly rated nursing program to our agriculture division, that directly address our community's needs and buoy the industries in southeastern Oklahoma.

Our Division of Health Sciences offers nursing associate degrees, including a hybrid option, and prepares students to become registered nurses. The hybrid degree allows students to take courses online while attending clinical rotations in person. Expanding to online studies has opened doors. EOSC doubled enrollment and is making continued progress toward addressing the growing need for health care professionals.

Our nursing program is regularly named one of the top programs in the state for our consistently high NCLEX-RN pass rates which surpass the national average. Our faculty's **tenure and retention rates are a significant factor** in our continued success. They create a consistent learning environment to shape the **next generation of health care professionals** in southeastern Oklahoma.

EOSC's partnerships with regional hospital systems, like Choctaw Nation's Indian Health Services and the Paris Regional Health hospital system in Paris, Texas ensure we are training students to successfully enter the workforce. Through these partnerships, our students gain practical experience and build relationships as those same hospitals look for qualified graduates.

EOSC's Division of Agriculture's unique degree programs, including meat processing and food safety, ranch operations and forestry degree programs, provide hands-on learning opportunities to industries important in our area of the state. The highly specialized meat processing and food safety certification allows students access to an on-campus USDA-certified meat processing plant, staffed



largely by students and certified staff who teach practical application. The plant works closely with industry leaders, including private companies like Tyson Foods, to ensure the future workforce is prepared for a career in meat processing.

Additionally, in our ranch operations degree program, students work closely with instructors and professional ranchers to learn small business operations skills from an agricultural perspective. Students in the program can buy cattle at a discounted rate to raise and eventually sell for a profit at graduation. Through the program, students also have access to EOSC's 4,000-acre ranch and over 15,000 head of stocker cattle through partnerships with local ranchers.

Rural students face barriers to higher education, and our mission is to open the door wider for students to enter the classroom and gain lifelong skills for a successful career. By offering one- and two-year programs and hybrid courses, we aim to make it achievable. Students have the flexibility to work or fulfill familial obligations while pursuing an education — setting them and their families up for success.

With five semesters of consecutive increasing enrollment at EOSC, we're building the workforce in Southeastern Oklahoma one graduate at a time. Our graduates are prepared and ready to excel as the next generation of workforce professionals.



OKLAHOMA HIGHER EDUCATION NEWS

- [OU preps tomorrow's medical providers to care for body and mind in rural Oklahoma](#)
- [MidAmerica, Northeast Tech, OSUIT sign MOU to expand workforce training](#)
- [Rural administrators flock to ECU's new rural education doctoral program](#)
- [NSU's master's in nursing program earns top national ranking for 2025](#)
- [SWOSU'S LPN to BSN program ranked 2nd in Oklahoma](#)
- [CU retains designation as Military Friendly® School](#)
- [LU, UCO receive new research designation from national group](#)
- [Advancing Oklahoma's vision: OPSU's commitment to BluePrint 2030](#)

NSU, ONENET STRENGTHEN CONNECTIONS THROUGH COLLABORATION

By Rodney Hanley, President, Northeastern State University

Northeastern State University (NSU) has always been committed to providing **exceptional educational opportunities** and fostering technological innovation. A cornerstone of this mission is its long-standing partnership with OneNet, Oklahoma's premier provider of internet services, data storage and cybersecurity solutions. For decades, NSU and OneNet have collaborated to advance technological infrastructure and services, **benefiting students, faculty and staff** while contributing to the broader higher education community in Oklahoma.

One of the most significant milestones in NSU's partnership with OneNet occurred over the past year, with a major upgrade to the university's internet connectivity. Working together, NSU and OneNet enhanced the network connections at the Muskogee and Broken Arrow campuses, increasing bandwidth to a robust 10 Gbps. This upgrade **represents a significant leap forward, ensuring faster and more reliable internet access across these campuses.**

For a modern university, reliable high-speed internet is not a luxury but a necessity. The enhanced connectivity directly impacts NSU's ability to support cutting-edge research, facilitate online learning and enable seamless access to digital resources. It also empowers our faculty to integrate innovative teaching tools and methods into their classrooms while ensuring that students can take full advantage of online collaboration and learning platforms. Furthermore, staff members benefit from improved systems that streamline operations and enhance communication across campuses.

NSU's relationship with OneNet is more than a transactional partnership; it's a collaborative effort rooted in shared goals and mutual respect. For decades, NSU has been a proud supporter of OneNet, participating in technology committees, conferences and professional development initiatives. These activities have fostered a culture of innovation and collaboration, enabling NSU to stay at the forefront of technological advancements in higher education.

Through our involvement in these initiatives, NSU has also contributed to shaping technology policies and strategies that benefit not only our own campuses, but also other educational institutions across the state. The university's active engagement with OneNet underscores its commitment to leveraging technology to improve education and drive economic development in Oklahoma.

In addition to connectivity upgrades and professional engagement, NSU takes full advantage of several statewide contracts negotiated by OneNet. These contracts provide cost-effective solutions for various technological needs, ensuring that NSU can **allocate resources efficiently while maintaining high-quality services.**

NSU has played a pivotal role in establishing a consortium of institutions that utilize Blackboard, a leading learning management system. This consortium represents a model of statewide collaboration, resource sharing and cost savings. By pooling resources and expertise, the consortium has enabled member institutions to access Blackboard's powerful tools at a reduced cost while promoting a consistent and efficient user experience across campuses.

NSU has taken on the technical leadership role for this consortium, providing guidance and support to other member institutions. Meanwhile, OneNet serves as the fiscal lead, managing the financial aspects of the collaboration. This partnership exemplifies how NSU and OneNet work together to create innovative solutions that benefit the broader educational community.

The collaborative efforts between NSU and OneNet have a direct and positive



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impact on our students, faculty and staff. For students, improved internet connectivity and access to advanced learning tools translate into a **richer educational experience.** They can participate in virtual labs, access high-quality video lectures and collaborate with peers and professors seamlessly, regardless of their physical location.

Faculty members benefit from the ability to integrate cutting-edge technology into their teaching and research. Enhanced connectivity and access to tools like Blackboard enable our faculty to deliver dynamic and engaging coursework, fostering a more interactive and impactful learning environment. Additionally, staff members gain access to reliable systems and resources that streamline administrative tasks, allowing them to focus on supporting the university's academic mission.

As technology continues to evolve at a rapid pace, our partnership with OneNet remains vital to NSU's success. Together, we're **exploring new opportunities to enhance connectivity, improve cybersecurity and implement innovative solutions that address the changing needs of higher education.**

Through our shared commitment to excellence, NSU and OneNet are shaping a future where technology serves as a powerful enabler of education, innovation and community development. The successes of our partnership stand as a testament to what can be achieved when institutions work together toward a common goal.

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2025 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 2025 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 2025 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.

Registration for academies opened March 1. Academies are free, enrollment is limited and many have deadlines, so 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 2025 STEM Summer Academies is available on the [OKcollegestart website](https://okcollegestart.org).



QUARTERLY NEWS AT A GLANCE

- [Seven Oklahoma High Schools Named Scholarship Champs](#)
- [Oklahoma 529 Plan Growth Echoes Value of Higher Education](#)
- [Students, Higher Education Representatives Gather at State Capitol for Higher Education and Oklahoma's Promise Day](#)

The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education offer **FREE STEM Summer Academies** for students entering the 8th-12th grade.

Don't miss your chance to attend —
STEM Academies fill up quickly!
Registration opens March 1.

STEM Summer Academies

science • technology • engineering • math

STEM Career

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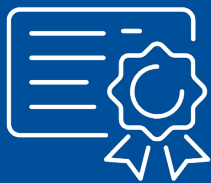
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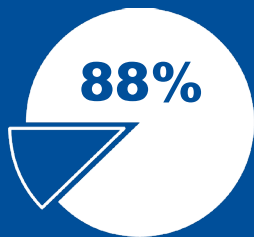
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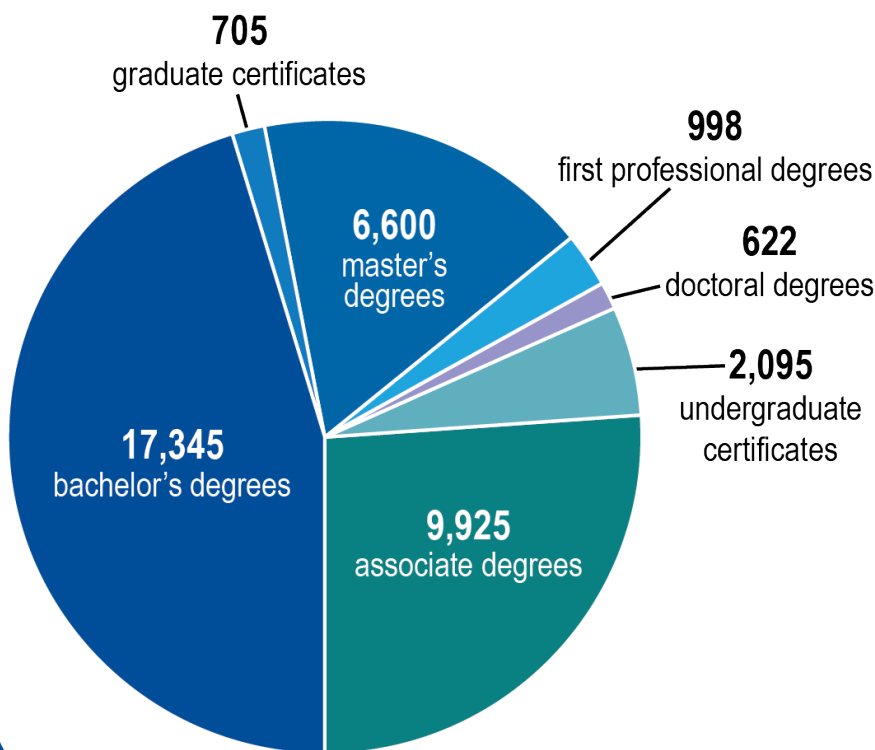


Degrees and certificates awarded in AY24: **38,290**



Of AY24 degrees and certificates awarded, percent in critical occupations: **88%**

Of AY24 degrees and certificates awarded:



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