



DEGREES OF PROGRESS

eNews from the State Regents for Higher Education
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OKLAHOMA STATE REGENTS
FOR HIGHER EDUCATION
Improving our future by degrees



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INVESTMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION A WIN FOR OKLAHOMA AND OKLAHOMANS

By Chancellor Sean Burrage

State investment in public higher education impacts more than just individual students; it is a remarkable driver of statewide economic activity.

A recent economic impact study conducted by the University of Cincinnati Economics Center reports that in FY24, our state system colleges and universities drove a total economic impact of \$14.61 billion and generated \$461.8 million in tax revenue for state, county, and local governments. Data also show that for every dollar the state invests in our public institutions, Oklahoma higher education generates \$17.48 in total economic output. Clearly, public higher education is the engine that powers growth and prosperity, and our campuses provide an exceptional return on investment.

The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education are deeply grateful to the Legislature and Gov. Stitt for advancing state investment in public higher education for FY26, including retained funds for rapidly rising campus property insurance premiums, accelerated funding to help address deferred maintenance needs on campuses, and ongoing support of the Oklahoma's Promise scholarship program.

Our public colleges and universities continue their work to improve degree completion across academic programs, with a concerted effort to strengthen outcomes in critical STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) fields like engineering, computer science, data analytics, and nursing. STEM careers are expected to grow 10.4% by 2033 – nearly three times the anticipated growth of non-STEM careers - and are more likely to pay higher salaries.

Over the past decade, STEM degrees earned at state system institutions increased 22% at



all levels. In FY23, the State Regents allocated at-risk funds specifically to incentivize increased degree production in STEM and healthcare. Given the resulting growth in degrees conferred, the State Regents have reallocated that funding to institutions based on credit hour and degree production in STEM and healthcare fields for an additional three-year period to compel continued focus on these crucial degree programs.

Additional targeted funding will bolster special campus-based initiatives to support intensive K-12 mathematics tutoring at the University of Oklahoma, the Forensic Science Institute at the University of Central Oklahoma, and STEM education and cybersecurity at Cameron University. The State Regents also allocated funding in FY26 for financial aid and scholarship programs to support degree completion, including concurrent enrollment and the new Rising Scholars Award program, which is designed to retain our best and brightest high school students at in-state colleges and universities.

Continued on page 2

STUDENT SUCCESS REAPS WORKFORCE REWARDS

By President Bo Hannaford, Northwestern Oklahoma State University

Oklahoma has a need for qualified employees in critical industries, like healthcare and education. I am proud that at Northwestern Oklahoma State University, we are dedicated to creating and investing in programs that increase our students' employability and long-term success, all while remaining affordable.

Student success is Northwestern's top priority. By ensuring that higher education remains affordable, we empower our students to pursue their dreams without the burden of overwhelming debt. Nearly 50% of our students graduate with zero educational debt. Those who do accrue debt, on average, take out loans totaling half the national average. An affordable education allows students to take a running start at becoming Oklahoma's future workforce and community leaders.

Our 2025 spring enrollment was 8.23% higher compared to last year. We are thrilled to see this continued growth in our student body. Over the past three years, Northwestern has seen consistent growth in our healthcare-focused undergraduate programs. With the ever-present need for new healthcare professionals in Oklahoma, we're regularly updating and defining new opportunities to expand the accessibility of our healthcare programs for students. This is especially true of our nursing programs.

Our nursing degrees have seen exciting growth and success—the nursing bachelor's (BSN) program has a 95% NCLEX pass rate, expanding the healthcare outreach available in nearby communities. Northwestern is also one of only five public universities in Oklahoma to offer a Doctorate in Family Nurse Practitioner (DNP) degree and is the only Oklahoma university to offer a BSN to DNP program track. Our DNP program is specifically designed to give back to the local communities by being the only program in the state that emphasizes nursing in rural communities.

Northwestern's educational programs regularly find new pathways to meet Oklahoma's education workforce demands. Beyond the growth of our undergraduate education majors, graduate enrollment in programs like the new Superintendent Certification Program and the Educational Leadership Program for



principal certification have broken enrollment records. The first cohort of the Superintendent Certification Program achieved a 100% pass rate on the OSAT (Oklahoma Subject Area Tests), which is part of the CEOE (Certification Examinations for Oklahoma Educators).

Partnerships across the state bolster our education curriculum. With an investment from the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, Northwestern has supported 145 emergency and alternatively certified teachers in obtaining the necessary coursework to serve Oklahoma's public schools. Through our partnership with Northern Oklahoma College, we recently launched a Para to Degree program to offer students new ways to complete associate or bachelor's degree programs, with traditional, online or hybrid course options.

As I finish my third year as president at Northwestern, I am proud of how we have continued evolving to serve Oklahoma and our students by remaining focused on their success. Over 80% of our graduates find employment in Oklahoma after graduation and are still employed after five years. Through commitment to affordability and career-aligned degree programs, Northwestern plays a vital role in producing skilled professionals who contribute to Oklahoma's long-term success, especially in rural communities.

INVESTMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION A WIN FOR OKLAHOMA, OKLAHOMANS

Continued from page 1

By 2031, 72% of U.S. jobs will require education or training beyond a high school diploma. Our higher education system must be equipped to prepare current and future generations for a dynamic workplace. Fortunately, our commitment to boosting STEM degrees has already strengthened our workforce. One year after graduation, more than 84% of STEM undergraduates and nearly 95% of nursing graduates remain and work in the state.

Oklahoma's investment in public higher education serves employers in need of an educated workforce, attracts more businesses to operate here, and supports Oklahomans pursuing their version of the American dream. By any definition, that's a win for our state and our citizens.

OKLAHOMA HIGHER EDUCATION NEWS

- [OU's Gaylord College ranked No. 1 media program in the nation](#)
- [Partnership with OSU Medical Authority will bring top-tier trauma center to St. Francis](#)
- [OSU CHS ranked again at the top for commitment to underserved areas](#)
- [NSU expands cybersecurity, AI programs to meet growing job demand](#)
- [SWOSU signs international agreement at Paris Air Show](#)
- [USAO enters into partnership with OCCC](#)
- [NOC to become Purple Heart College](#)
- [State's first sim tech degree coming to RSC](#)

COMMUNITY COLLEGE PARTNERSHIPS BOOST WORKFORCE SUCCESS

By President Lana Reynolds, Seminole State College

Growing up, my family owned and operated a small rural, community grocery store. It was a place where neighbors would frequently gather and discuss community issues and needs. There, I learned how vital partnership, conversation and adaptability are to the continued success of a community. That lesson has helped shape my work serving Oklahomans as president of Seminole State College (SSC).

From maintaining affordability, flexibility and accessibility, to improving our degree programs to reflect the needs of rural Oklahoma businesses, student success is at the forefront of our decision making. On average, SSC students save around \$1,000 per semester compared to the statewide average of all public higher education institutions. Students at SSC pay less than half the cost of tuition and fees assessed at our state's research institutions. Here students are encouraged to find a degree program that fits their individual needs, choosing from in-person, online, eight-week courses, or a blend of these modalities.

Oklahoma has the highest rate of students attending community colleges who transfer to a four-year institution within six years. By aligning course offerings with typical student behaviors we provide students with increased opportunities after graduation. SSC recently launched some new 2+2 Programs which aid students in seamlessly transferring to complete a bachelor's degree for several high-demand occupations. SSC now offers two additional degree tracks: a computer science to cybersecurity track with the University of Oklahoma's Polytechnic Institute and an agricultural education program with Oklahoma State University. By designating clear pathways for degree completion, we alleviate transfer stress and increase clarity for students, while also providing a way for students to cut down on the cost of a degree.

For students interested in vocational degrees in high-paying, health care careers, we've partnered with the Gordon Cooper Technology Center (GCTC) to expand our offerings. We offer courses for physical therapy assistants, medical lab technicians, and engineering technicians



through the GCTC Shawnee Campus. These courses can be completed in as little as 18 months, ensuring a quick turnaround so students can fast-track their careers.

There is a constant need for healthcare professionals in rural Oklahoma. Over the past five years, SSC has endeavored to revamp and reenergize our nursing program, culminating in a new nursing simulation lab that will open this fall. Since the revision of curriculum, the program has seen drastic student improvements, including the graduating class of Fall 2024's 100% pass rate of the NCLEX, the nursing licensure exam.

Feedback from local businesses is crucial to keeping our programs relevant to workforce needs. We host the Rural Business and Resources Center, funded by the Oklahoma Department of Commerce. There, SSC assists businesses with training and resources and provides networking among community leaders and state agencies.

We take great care to adapt our degree programs to meet rural Oklahoma's economic and educational needs. Launching new programs and establishing partnerships specifically tailored to meet these needs, we're able to drive lasting benefits for students, businesses and communities alike.



QUARTERLY NEWS AT A GLANCE

- [Innovative institution, business partnerships receive Regents Business Partnership Excellence Awards](#)
- [State Regents allocate funds for Oklahoma colleges, universities](#)
- [Morrison resident Dennis Casey reappointed as State Regent](#)
- [Five outstanding seniors named Chancellor Hans Brisch Scholars](#)
- [Seamless course transfer through the CEP continues to strengthen Oklahoma's workforce pipeline](#)
- [State Regents continue to keep tuition affordable](#)
- [Oklahoma's higher education system drives state economic impact exceeding \\$14.6 billion](#)
- [New officers elected to lead State Regents](#)
- [State Regents' Council for Online Learning Excellence honors outstanding work of faculty, staff, administrators](#)

SECOND PHASE OF ONENET'S 400G NETWORK CONNECTS OKLAHOMA'S RESEARCH UNIVERSITIES

OneNet's engineering team has completed the second phase of a 400G network upgrade. This phase connects Oklahoma's largest research universities, Oklahoma State University and the University of Oklahoma, to OneNet's new 400G network backbone.

The 400G connections to these campuses will support the increasing research computing requirements for faculty and researchers. The expanded capacity will provide space for **future growth in research traffic for our state's largest universities.**

OneNet's network team began the upgrade earlier this year to increase the amount of **traffic that can travel across the network and boost network speed for subscribers.**

The initial driving forces for the upgrade were OU's participation in the ATLAS high-energy physics experiment at CERN and the new OAK supercomputing system that will be housed at OSU.

"The ATLAS experiment generates petabytes of data every year, and as a Tier2 Computing Center, OU receives hundreds of TB a month delivered to process on Schooner," said Dr. Horst Severini, computing coordinator for OU's High Energy Physics Group. "We are about to replace our old storage with 1 PB of new storage with 200 Gbps access, so we look forward to being able to use OneNet's new 400 Gbps link to transfer ATLAS data in and out of that new storage."

The new OAK supercomputer at OSU will elevate the research capabilities of the state and provide supercomputing resources for researchers in Oklahoma, Arkansas and Kansas (OAK).

"The reason supercomputers are important is that a lot of new research discoveries are now being driven by modeling, simulations and data analysis," said Dr. Pratul Agarwal, OSU associate vice president of research cyber-infrastructure and the director of HPCC. "The volume of data which has been collected is tremendous. For instance, in the field of genomics, a single research lab can now regularly generate hundreds of terabytes of data for a single project. In the age of AI, we need capabilities to move and aggregate large data sets. Researchers across OAK regions

will rely on high-speed transfer to be able to benefit from the computing and storage resources at OSU."

OneNet's new 400G network backbone will support the ever-increasing volume of data that OU and OSU transfer across the state and around the world for these two initiatives.

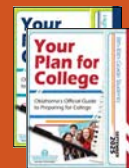
Planning for the 400G upgrade started over a year ago, and OneNet has been running proof-of-concept tests since late October. Since the 400G standards have matured, the cost for equipment has become more affordable, making it cost-effective for OneNet to run 400G across the network. Looking to the future, this new equipment will enable OneNet to eventually support upgrades to 800G and 1.6T as technology evolves over the coming years.

The next phase of the project will deploy 400G connections at Cameron University, which will facilitate OneNet subscriber traffic to Dallas, a major internet exchange hub where OneNet connects with other regional and national networks.

2025-26 COLLEGE PLANNING PUBLICATIONS

This fall, the State Regents will offer free online college planning publications for Oklahoma students and school counselors.

YOUR PLAN FOR COLLEGE



These digital brochures for students in grades 8-10 and 11-12 outline the courses they must take in high school to be admitted to an Oklahoma public college or university, as well as financial aid information, estimated college costs, salary expectations for various jobs and information about campus comparison and selection.

COUNSELORS' RESOURCE BOOK



This online publication for school counselors provides information about preparing for college, choosing the right courses, college costs, financial aid and additional helpful resources.

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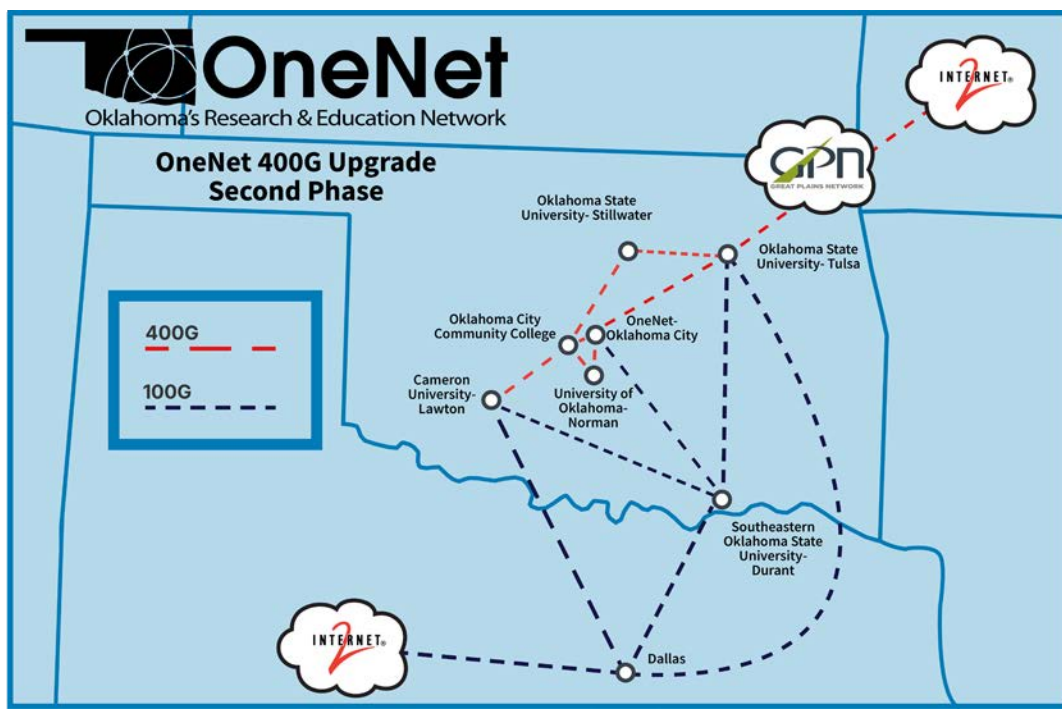
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DID YOU KNOW?

Total Economic Impact of
Public Higher Education
(FY24): **\$14.61 billion**



Every \$1 of state
appropriations invested in
state system colleges and
universities generates
\$17.48 in economic output



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Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education
655 Research Parkway, Suite 200
Oklahoma City, OK 73104
Phone: 800-858-1840 or 405-225-9100
okhighered.org

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