November 2017

LAUNCH OKLAHOMA
Strategic Plan

OKLAHOMA WORKS

www.oklahomaworks.gov

About Oklahoma Works

Oklahoma Works is an initiative designed to increase the wealth of all Oklahomans by facilitating the quality employment necessary for workers to increase wealth and improve the availability of highly skilled talent for business and industry. Our aspiration is to provide education and training for citizens to obtain quality employment and to implement wealth-generating policies across the state, helping all Oklahomans to achieve the American Dream.

Since 2014, Oklahoma Works has been striving to create a better workforce development infrastructure in the state by aligning education and training with employer needs and coordinating private and public strategic priorities and plans across education, training and economic agencies. The initiative is a coalition of state agencies, educational institutions, businesses and other partners working together on four main objectives:

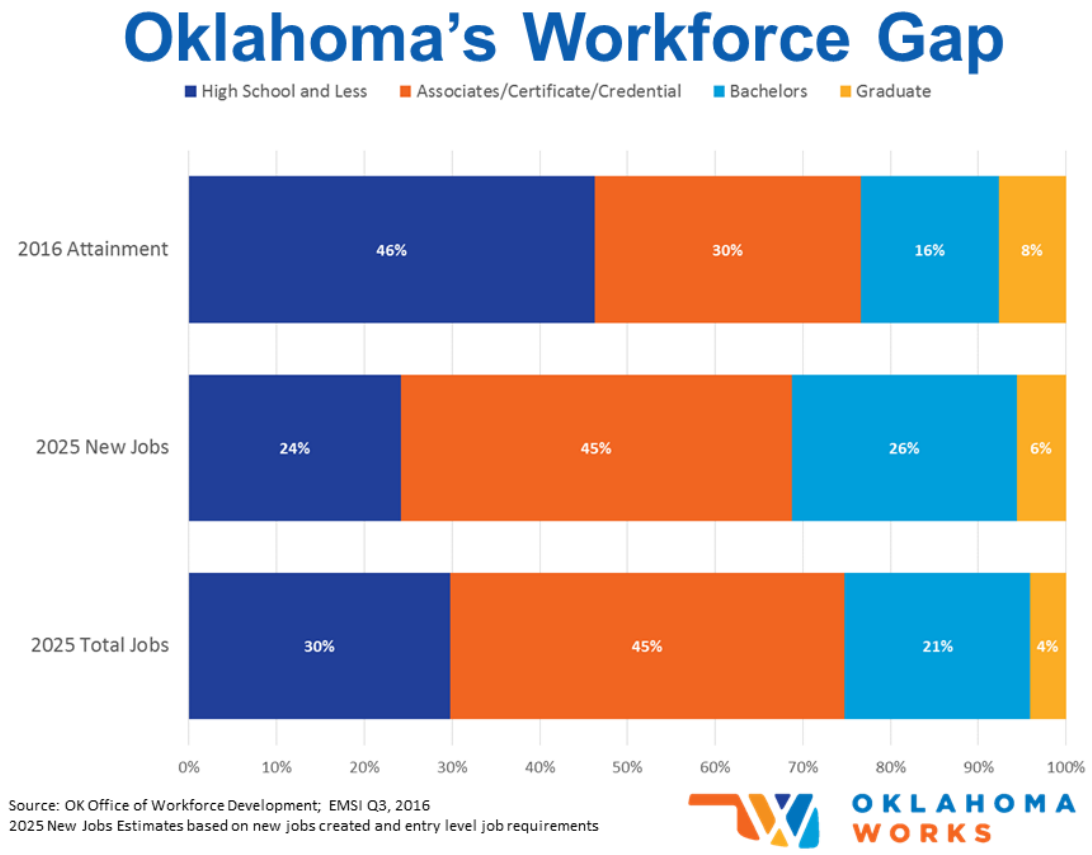
- Aligning and connecting the education and training pipeline with the needs of the state's regional economies;
- Integrating and using workforce and economic development data to inform policy, track progress and measure success;
- Building partnerships between local industry and education at the regional level; and
- Optimizing the use of resources and incentives.

Governor Mary Fallin recognized that the establishment of a statewide educational attainment goal is the next step in further concentrating Oklahoma Works' efforts on targeted populations, geographic regions and high-demand occupations. This initiative to urgently boost the state's attainment and close the workforce skills gap is known as Launch Oklahoma.

Executive Summary

In recent years, Oklahoma has continuously ranked among the most business-friendly environments in the nation. Industries like Energy, Aerospace and Defense, Agriculture and Biosciences, Information and Financial Services, and Transportation and Distribution drive Oklahoma's economy. Additionally, Health Care, Construction, Education and Creative Industries complement the state's economic growth and further spur wealth generation.

As thriving industries like advanced manufacturing, health care, and information technology look to locate and expand in Oklahoma, the need for a highly skilled workforce is growing rapidly. However, Oklahoma is currently facing a substantial skills gap in its workforce. Recent estimates show a 16 percentage point gap between Oklahoma's existing workforce and the skilled workforce needed by 2025. Data further indicate the state's greatest challenge lies in increasing the number of Oklahomans with the middle skills needed to fill demand occupations, that is individuals with workforce credentials, certificates and associate degrees. In order for Oklahoma to meet these labor demands, for businesses to grow and prosper, and for Oklahomans to start businesses or succeed in wealth-generating occupations, we must understand the new minimum for success moving forward will increasingly include education and training beyond high school.



Increasing education and training attainment is vital to improving Oklahomans' quality of life and strengthening the state's economy. A well-educated workforce leads to increased revenue, requires fewer social services, and contributes to increased workforce participation, higher wages, employer benefits, lower unemployment and improved overall health. A highly educated and skilled workforce attracts new business and industries to Oklahoma and allows existing companies to grow within the state.

In response to fulfilling immediate needs, Governor Mary Fallin issued Executive Order 2016-41 in December 2016, calling for the implementation of a statewide educational attainment goal. The goal, known as Launch Oklahoma, is to increase the number of Oklahomans 25-64 years-old having education or training beyond high school to 70 percent by 2025.

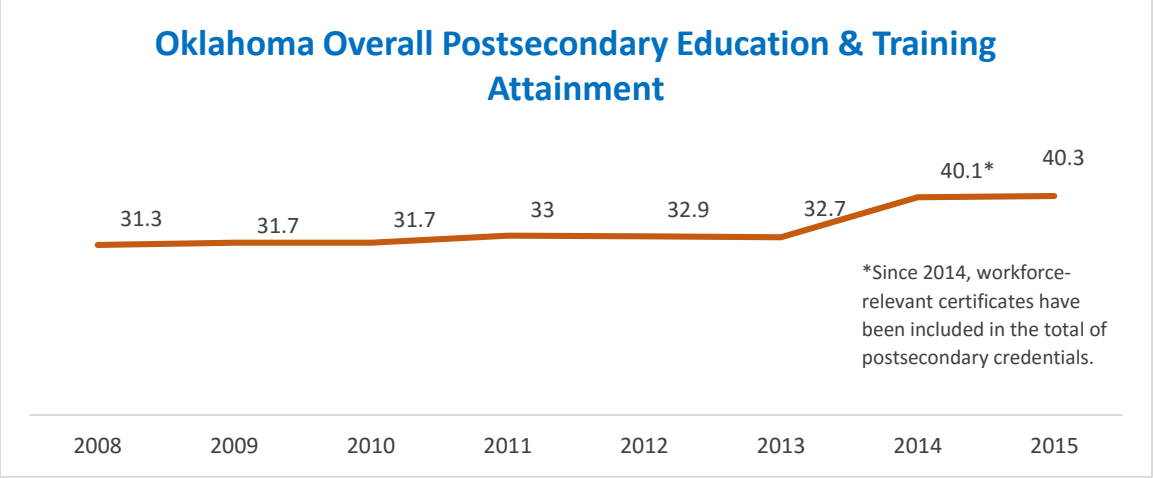
The Oklahoma Works Leadership Team was charged with recommending a strategic plan to accomplish the stated postsecondary education and training goal. The ten-member team, under the direction of the Secretary of Education and Workforce Development, began convening in January 2017 to:

- Analyze data related to education attainment and workforce development;
- Develop and recommend strategies to include in a plan to achieve the stated goal;
- Assess the alignment of postsecondary degrees, certificates and other credentials awarded by Oklahoma institutions to high-demand job needs and job-placement rates; and
- Establish metrics and benchmarks to measure progress toward reducing inequities in postsecondary enrollment and attainment, as well as increasing the number of traditional-age students and adults with degrees, certificates and other credentials.

Three subcommittees were formed to focus on: traditional students transitioning into postsecondary education without a gap in enrollment; adult and non-traditional students participating in postsecondary education; and success strategies to better support students while they are in education and training programs. Each subcommittee reviewed data, identified barriers and best practices, and ultimately crafted strategic recommendations designed to meet the governor's goal of increasing postsecondary education and training attainment. The resulting goals and strategies, when implemented at the local and state levels, will contribute to increased postsecondary attainment among Oklahomans.

Addressing the Challenge

While Oklahoma ranks 43rd in the nation for postsecondary education and training attainment, Oklahoma's challenges are not unique.[1] The national rate of educational attainment beyond high school for working-age Americans is just 45.8 percent, well below the national goal of 60 percent attainment by 2025.[2] The U.S. also faces a substantial skills gap in its workforce. The National Governor's Association estimates by 2030, the country will have a 16 percentage point gap between the training and education American workers have and what will be required to meet occupational demands.[3] The same is true of Oklahoma's projected skills gap in 2025.



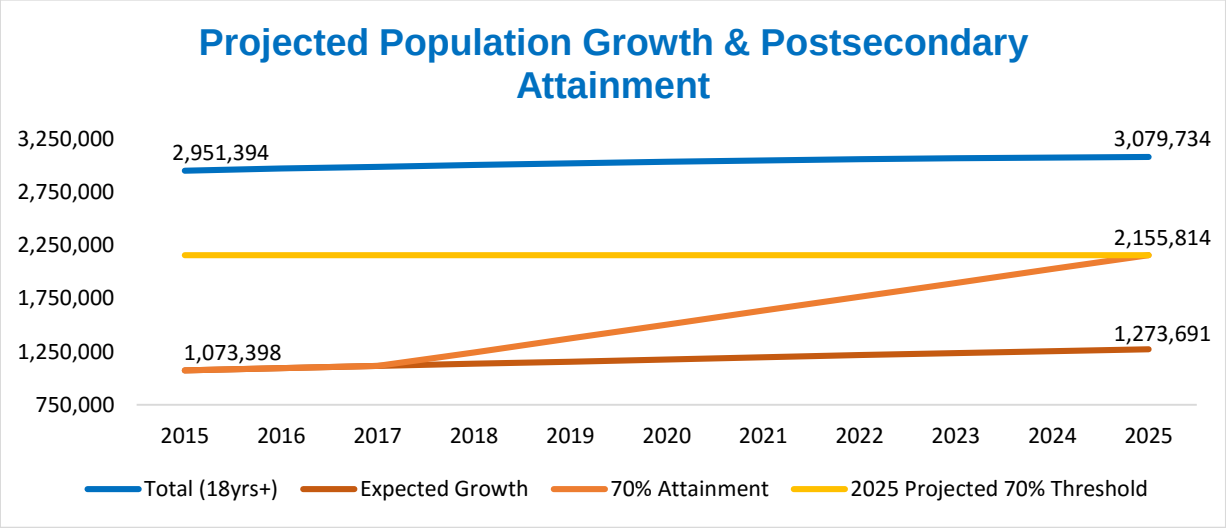
Source: Lumina Foundation. 2017. A Stronger Nation: Learning beyond high school builds American talent

In Oklahoma, working-aged adults had an education and training attainment rate for associate degrees and higher of just 33.3 percent, with an additional 7 percent attainment rate for high-quality professional credentials, totaling 40.3 percent attainment overall in 2015. While Oklahoma is above the national average of 4.9 percent attainment for high-quality professional credentials, the state still falls short of the overall attainment rate for associate degrees and higher when compared to the national average. In fact, Oklahoma's overall college degree attainment remains well below the national average. Analysis of the workforce needs to fill positions within the state's 100 critical wealth generating occupations indicates that more than half of these positions require a college degree.

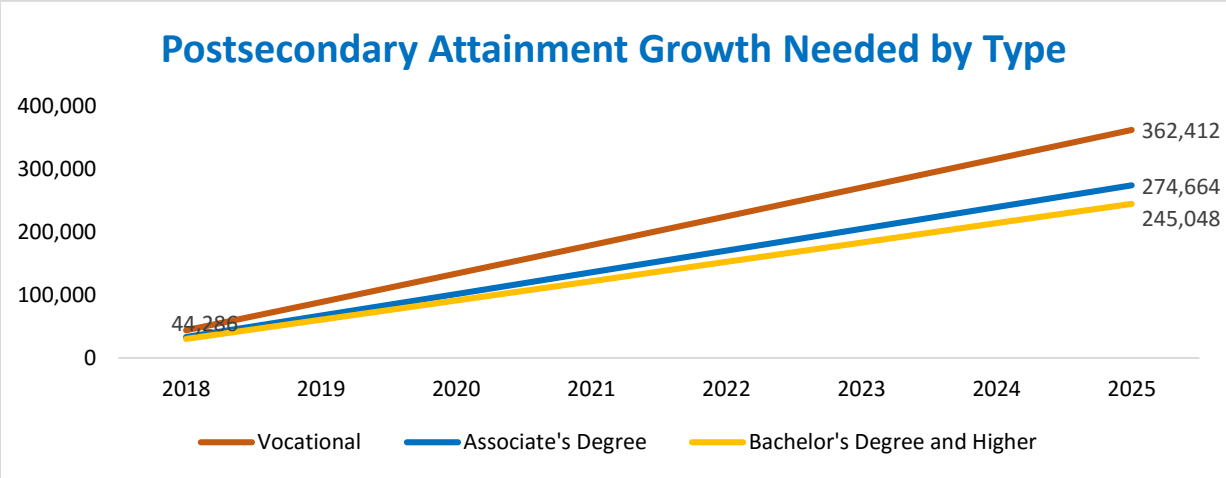
Oklahomans must earn more post-secondary degrees and credentials to meet workforce needs. Projections indicate 70 percent of the state's occupations will require an certificate, professional credential or degree by 2025; however only 40 percent of the workforce has such education and training.[4] Currently, Oklahoma's State Regents for Higher Education reports producing between 38,000-

[1] Lumina Foundation. (2017). A stronger nation.
[2] Ibid.
[3] National Governor's Association. (2014). America Works: Education and training for tomorrow's jobs.
[4] Based on EMSI Q3, 2016 data from the Oklahoma Office of Workforce Development.

39,000 degrees and certificates each year.[5] The Department of Career and Technology Education produces an additional 14,000 certificates per year, not including soft skills credentialing currently administered, including WorkKeys and Career Ready 101.[6] To meet future workforce demand and achieve an overall attainment goal of 70 percent, higher education and career technology education will need to produce nearly a combined additional 110,300 degrees and certificates each year through 2025. That number represents a total of 882,123 degrees, certificates and credentials more than the expected growth in attainment by 2025. Of those additional degrees, certificates and credentials needed, 41 percent represent vocational training, certificates and professional credentials, 31 percent Associate degrees, and 28 percent Bachelor's degrees or higher. In 2014, 1,073,398 Oklahomans had an associate degree, certificate or high-quality credential.[7] By 2025, Oklahoma will need to increase this number to 2,155,814 (70 percent). *See Appendix I for regional attainment goals.*



Source: U.S. Census Bureau. American Community Survey.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau. American Community Survey.

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[5] Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education. (2016). 2014-2015 Degrees and Certificates Granted in Oklahoma Public and Private Institutions: http://www.okhighered.org/studies-reports/outcomes/Degrees%20Granted/2014-15degrees-granted-public-private.pdf.

[6] Oklahoma Department of Career and Technical Education. (2016). CareerTech FY16 Annual Report: Powering Oklahoma's Economy. https://www.okcareertech.org/about/careertech-system/annual-report/fy16-annual-report.

[7] U.S. Census Bureau. (2014). American Community Survey, 1-year data set.

KEY FINDINGS

The Oklahoma Works Leadership Team began its work by reviewing state and national data, research and best practices in order to better understand the current state of postsecondary education and training attainment and the existing barriers to increasing attainment among the state's workforce. The team identified the following key findings.

Too many Oklahomans have not completed a high school diploma or equivalency. Nearly 14 percent of the state's population over the age of 18 years (393,461 people) has less than a high school education.[8] That number soars as high as 30 percent when looking at specific counties in the state. Of those without a high school diploma, one in four (25.3%) lives in poverty. This population represents a significant opportunity for increasing postsecondary education and training, increasing workforce participation and decreasing poverty.

A significant number of Oklahomans have some college credit, but have no degree. In 2014, one in four (24.5 percent) Oklahomans between 25-64 years of age had attained some college education but had not earned a degree.[9] This population represents a significant opportunity to quickly upskill the state's workforce by re-engaging former students with degree completion programs and supportive services necessary to assist them in successfully earning a degree, certificate or high quality professional credential. Data indicate this population represents 30 percent of the total population needed to increase postsecondary education and training attainment.

Annual CareerTech and college enrollment has decreased in recent years despite the need for a more trained and educated workforce. While the state's population has grown, the number of Oklahomans' enrolling in postsecondary institutions has not kept pace. Over the past five years, full-time adult enrollment in the state's CareerTech institutions has declined, decreasing from a high of 12,387 in FY 2011 to 10,480 in FY 2016.[10] The number of high school students enrolled in CareerTech programs has remained relatively stable over the past several years, falling between 80,500 and 83,000 students annually.[11] Annual enrollment in public colleges and universities in Oklahoma reached a high in 2011-12 with more than 256,000 students. Since then, that number has slowly declined each year, reaching just

[8] US Census Bureau Educational Attainment and EMSI 4Q 2016 population projections.
[9] Ibid.
[10] Oklahoma Department of Career and Technical Education. Unduplicated student enrollment counts.
[11] Ibid.

over 231,500 in 2014-15.[12] The headcount enrollment in Oklahoma public colleges and universities decreased 0.3 percent between fall 2015 and fall 2016, and the headcount enrollment in private institutions was essentially unchanged.[13] Moreover, the direct high school to college going rate in Oklahoma is just 47 percent, well below the national average of 69 percent.[14,15] In 2014, 38,024 students graduated from Oklahoma high schools with only 17,669 enrolling in college the following fall semester. Research shows participation in concurrent/dual enrollment by high school students can lead to increased enrollment in postsecondary education and training following high school, higher rates of persistence in college, greater credit accumulation, lower educational debt and increased rates of credential attainment. However, less than 10,000 students participated in dual enrollment programs in 2016.[16] Research also indicates students enrolled full-time in college are more likely to graduate, accumulate less debt, and do better in school. But the number of Oklahoma students enrolling full-time in classes decreased 1.1 percent from fall 2015 to fall 2016.[17]

Inequities in postsecondary education and training attainment must be addressed. When considering early indicators of long-term academic success and educational attainment, stark differences in achievement emerge. National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) scores[18] show African American (17 percent), Hispanic (21 percent) and Native American (33 percent) students performed worse on 4th grade reading assessments than their White (37 percent) peers. Similarly, African American (8 percent), Hispanic (14 percent) and American Indian (18 percent) students performed worse on 8th grade math assessments than their White (29 percent) peers. When considering college enrollment,[19] Hispanic (7.7 percent) and American Indian (8.1 percent) students went on to attend college less often than their White (11.9) or Asian/Pacific Islander (31.7%) peers. Interestingly, African American students enrolled in college at higher rates than White students (18.2 vs. 11.9 percent); however, White students are more likely to obtain a degree (36.2 percent) than African American (26.8 percent), American Indian (24.6 percent) or Hispanic (13.1 percent) students.[20] A contributing factor to lesser degree attainment is lower persistence rates among minority populations in Oklahoma. White students (74.1 percent) are more likely to return to a higher education institution for their second year, while African American (57.8 percent), American Indian (62.6 percent) and Hispanic (70.1 percent) students persist into their second year of higher education at lower rates.[21] *See Appendix II for persistence rate and on-time graduation data*.

Better data are needed to understand current attainment rates and progress toward meeting the Launch Oklahoma goal. While the state can count the number of Oklahomans completing certificate and credential programs within the state's CareerTech system, there are currently no reliable Census Bureau data available regarding the proportion of the state's population that has obtained a professional certificate or credential. Such information is vital to understanding the current

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[12] Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education. (2016). Annual Enrollment in Oklahoma Public Colleges and Universities, Unduplicated within Institution (Ten-Year Trend). http://www.okhighered.org/studies-reports/enrollment/Trends/10-yr-comparison-chart-0506-1415.pdf
[13] Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education. (2016). Fall Enrollment Survey for Oklahoma Higher Education, Fall 2016.
[14] Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education. (2016). High School to College Going Rates for Oklahoma High School Graduates to Oklahoma Colleges. http://www.okhighered.org/studies-reports/preparation/interactive/2014-HSIR-College-Going-Rates.xlsx.
[15] National Center for Education Statistics. (2016). Immediate College Enrollment Rate. http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_cpa.asp
[16] Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education. (2016). Fall Enrollment Survey for Oklahoma Higher Education, Fall 2016.
[17] Ibid.
[18] National Center for Education Statistics. (2016). Oklahoma's 2015 Report Card.
[19] Lumina Foundation. (2016). A stronger nation.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education. (2017). Fall to fall persistence rates.

postsecondary educational attainment rate and informing data-driven strategic decision-making, continuous improvement efforts, and accountability toward progress. The Launch Oklahoma Leadership Team is relying on nationally representative data from the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce to estimate certificate and credential attainment in the absence of Census Bureau or other reliable data sources. Additionally, limitations of certain state data sources require careful consideration of what is being counted and whether available data are the best measurement of success (such as graduation rates versus completion rates).

BARRIERS

Oklahomans frequently experience barriers to attaining postsecondary degrees, certificates and professional credentials. A 2017 Postsecondary Attainment Study[22] released by the Oklahoma Office of Workforce Development explored the reasons why more Oklahomans do not enroll in postsecondary education and why those who begin do not complete programs and obtain degrees, certificates or professional credentials. Results revealed regional, personal, social and cultural factors, including:

Education is not perceived as having value, relevance or importance. Those with the lowest educational attainment (some high school, high school diploma and some postsecondary education) perceive the lowest need for educational advancement. In fact, many Oklahomans quit because they did not see the degree or credential as relevant to their employment, career, or life's journey. Perceived return on investment in postsecondary education and training attainment matters. Businesses must consider offering appropriate pay scales for the job skills required in order to incentivize Oklahomans to complete degrees, certificates and credentials.

Personal and family issues interfere with completing education and training. Many Oklahomans who did not finish their degree, certificate or credential experienced a family crisis, bullying, substance abuse, unplanned pregnancy or other significant health problem, suspension, arrest, or struggled with a learning disability. Once the student left education and training, the school frequently failed to follow up with the student to provide linkages to supportive services, programs, or offer alternative education and training plans that could have assisted the student in finishing the education or training program.

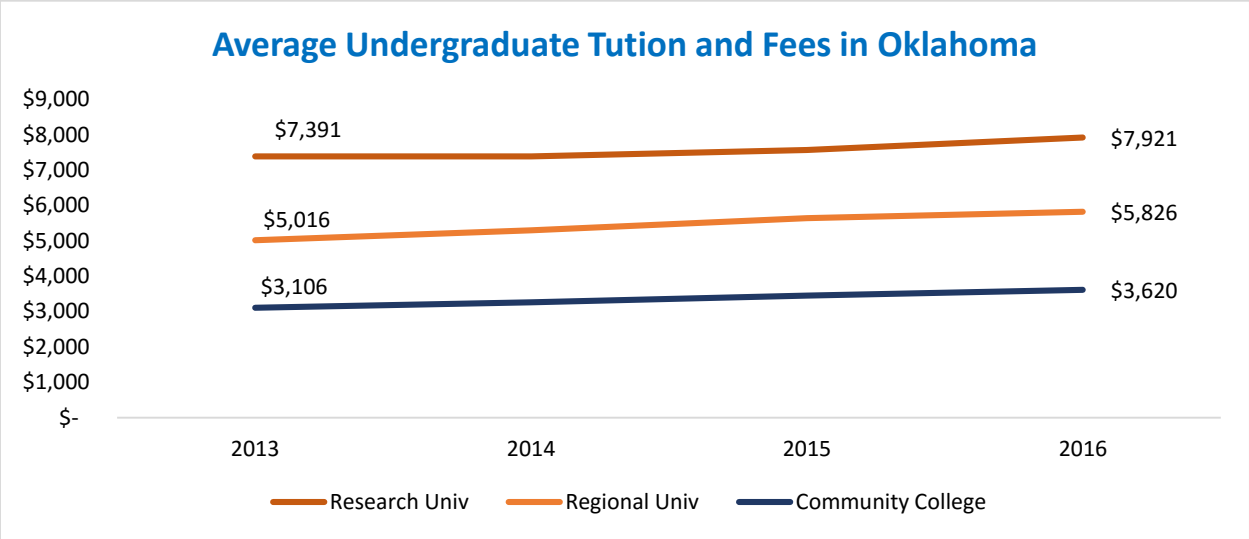
Expectations to complete degrees, certificates and credentials are low. Expectations from spouses/partners, parents, children, friends and employers are essential to increasing the likelihood of individuals taking action toward degree completion, and in some instances, to fulfilling that desire and returning to classes. This is especially true when the expectations come from multiple external influencers.

Additional qualitative research also revealed:

Students struggle to pay tuition expenses or lack access to needed social supports. The cost of tuition, fees, books, training materials and other educational expenses keep many Oklahomans, particularly those with low-incomes, from postsecondary education and training. There are very few tuition assistance opportunities specifically targeting adults and scholarships can be difficult to identify. If these scholarships are available, it is often challenging to find adult students who recognize their eligibility and follow through with submitting applications. But it's not just the cost of education and training that can keep Oklahomans from degrees, certificates and professional credentials. Things like a lack of reliable vehicle or access to public transit routes, lack of child care for adult students with families, and a lack of

[22] Oklahoma Office of Workforce Development. (2017). 2017 Study Results: Postsecondary Educational Attainment.

individualized attention needed by many non-traditional students returning to education after long absences can pose significant barriers.



Source: Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education. Degrees of Progress: The State of Higher Education in Oklahoma. Based on 30 credit hours (full-time study) per year.

Students and parents may perceive CareerTech and community college as less prestigious options for postsecondary education and training. Oklahomans often associate career and technical education with a limited number of "blue-collar" trades, such as carpenters, plumbers, welders and mechanics. While, such skilled-trade programs are cornerstones of career and technical education, CareerTech offerings are much more expansive in scope, requiring rigorous academic components. The same can be said for the state's community colleges, which offer robust associate degree programs leading to demand occupations. Oklahomans may hold misconceptions about the types of jobs and wages available to students completing CareerTech and 2-year degree programs. Moreover, students and parents may not understand the important role CareerTech and community college programs can play as a stepping stone for future academic endeavors, particularly for students who may not be fully prepared to succeed in a 4-year degree program directly following high school graduation.

BEST PRACTICES

Research identifies many policies, model programs, initiatives and other best practices to reduce or eliminate barriers experienced by youth and adults seeking to obtain degrees, certificates or credentials. The Oklahoma Works Leadership Team began the process of developing Launch Oklahoma goals and strategies by using this research to identify successful models and best practices currently being implemented within the state (see Appendix III). Findings reveal:

Postsecondary opportunities for high school students are helpful in ensuring students enroll, persist and complete postsecondary education and training without course duplication. Research shows students who participate in postsecondary education while still in high school are more likely to graduate from college, enroll in postsecondary education after high school, and obtain a degree, certificate or credential. These students also graduate faster and with less debt. Oklahoma boasts a multitude of institutional partnerships that allow students to obtain postsecondary credit or credentials

while attending high school, including: concurrent and dual enrollment, AP courses, and career and technical education. Oklahoma's CareerTech centers partner with institutions through cooperative alliances and contractual agreements to create a seamless entry for students into college programs without course duplication. Such offerings aid in eliminating barriers for traditional students entering and completing postsecondary education.

LAUNCH OKLAHOMA best practice

EXCELerate Dove

EXCELerate Dove is a dual enrollment partnership between Dove Science Academy in Oklahoma City and Oklahoma State University-Oklahoma City that combines the final two years of high school and the first two years of college into a single two-year program. At the completion of the program, seniors graduate with a high school diploma and an associate's degree. Participation in the program allows students to obtain a degree nearly debt-free, while also providing students the ability to achieve their college and career goals more quickly.

Work-based learning provides traditional and non-traditional students the opportunity to combine classroom learning with hands-on experience. Quality work-based learning opportunities benefit students, employers, schools and communities. Work-based learning allows students to: assess personal interest and aptitude in varied occupations and educational programs; increase motivation and engagement by applying academic and technical learning in real-world settings; improve post-graduation employment opportunities; and in some cases, provide earned wages while learning valuable professional skills. Work-based learning takes many shapes in Oklahoma, including: student internships, Registered Apprenticeships, project-based learning, and job shadowing.

LAUNCH OKLAHOMA best practice

Registered Apprenticeship Program, City of Edmond

The City of Edmond has partnered with Francis Tuttle Technology Center to create a registered apprenticeship program that is the first of its kind in the U.S. The program trains journeymen as field services professionals in public works. Cross-trained in water distribution systems, sanitary sewers, stormwater collection systems, asphalt and concrete road repair, and driveway returns and sidewalks, these apprentices receive a portable credential that is invaluable to maintaining critical infrastructure.

Courses offered in non-traditional formats help adults and parents returning to postsecondary education complete degrees, certificates and credentials. Fast-track courses, night and weekend courses, online courses, and shorter degree programs all aid in reducing barriers to postsecondary education and training. Many state colleges, universities and career and technology centers have expanded such offerings. Many Oklahoma colleges and universities even offer reverse transfer programs, in which students who transfer to a 4-year institution before receiving an associate degree

can transfer college credit back to a 2-year institution to earn the associate degree. These types of initiatives have helped hundreds of students quickly obtain associate degrees.

LAUNCH OKLAHOMA best practice

Reach Higher

Reach Higher, Oklahoma's degree completion program, allows students who have completed 18 credit hours toward an associate degree or 72 credit hours toward a bachelor's degree to quickly obtain a degree through accelerated, on-campus and online course options. The program features the dedicated on-campus staff needed to assist adult learners through the process of enrolling, identifying financial aid options, and linking students to supportive services as needed.

Traditional and non-traditional financial assistance policies and programs help students access, persist, and complete postsecondary education and training. Qualifying Oklahoma students have the opportunity to access programs that provide free tuition and fees through waivers from community colleges and career and technology centers, and college tuition scholarships offered by the state. Universities have begun adopting banded or flat-rate tuition to help students graduate on time and reduce the cost of education by allowing students to pay one rate for tuition for enrollment within a specific range, usually 12-18 credit hours. Other programs available offer students and families financial planning and assistance in paying for postsecondary education and training. All of these efforts help remove barriers for first-time and returning students struggling to afford to enter and remain in certificate, credential and degree programs.

LAUNCH OKLAHOMA best practice

Military and Veteran Tuition Waiver

Active duty military and veterans are eligible for full tuition waivers to complete adult and continuing education classes at some Oklahoma Career and Technology Centers. These courses assist transitioning and former military in filling gaps in training to allow service members to step into a civilian career or learn a completely new set of skills.

Postsecondary preparedness and transition programs help students enter and succeed in education and training. Oklahoma schools have been making strides in exposing students to career pathways, internships, career and STEM academies, and even transitional courses aimed at decreasing remediation rates in postsecondary education and training programs. Such efforts ensure students apply classroom learning in real world settings, as well as raise awareness of the demand industries and occupations the state has to offer, while assisting students in graduating on time and avoiding the expense of remedial courses.

LAUNCH OKLAHOMA best practice

College Career Math Ready

Recognizing the need for math courses that assist students in transitioning from high school to postsecondary education, training and careers, the Oklahoma State Department of Education partnered with higher education and career and technology education to implement College Career Math Ready. The course helps students solidify foundational math skills before entering college and provides an opportunity for students who do well to immediately begin taking entry-level, credit-bearing classes in their first year of college.

Strategy Recommendations

After reviewing data, research and best practices, the Oklahoma Works Leadership Team sought additional stakeholder comments about how to most effectively increase education and training attainment in the state from business and industry, Tribal partners, public and private education and training institutions, veteran service organizations, workforce development partners, and other community organizations. The following strategies represent a broad range of perspectives and are recommended as ways to:

- Increase enrollment in postsecondary education and training institutions;
- Increase the number of students persisting in education and training;
- Increase the number of Oklahomans who have obtained a degree, certificate or credential;
- Increase awareness among Oklahomans of the importance of postsecondary education and training;
- Increase equity in the number of Oklahomans enrolling, persisting and obtaining degrees, certificates or credentials;
- Increase alignment of postsecondary degrees, certificates and credentials awarded by Oklahoma institutions with high-demand job needs and job-placement rates; and
- Increase participation in work-based learning that contributes to, or culminates in, a degree, certificate or professional credential.

GOAL: INCREASE AWARENESS

- Inform students about the importance of postsecondary education and training, the need for critical and demand occupations, and the availability of relevant education and training programs.
- Change perceptions about CareerTech and community colleges as viable options for obtaining workforce skills to enter and succeed in jobs with middle-class wages.
- Ensure workforce partners use consistent messaging to promote education and training assistance.
- Engage parents and the community in efforts to encourage postsecondary participation.
- Target underserved populations via targeted media channels and recruitment efforts.

Expected Outcomes:

- *Increase in the number of Oklahomans enrolling in education and skills training*
- *Increased equity among Oklahomans enrolling in education and skills training*
- *Increase in the number of Oklahomans with some college credit re-enrolling in degree completion and/or certificate programs*
- *Increase utilization of career planning tools like OKCareerGuide, OKCollegeStart and OKJobMatch*

GOAL: ENSURE ACCESS

- Increase outreach to students, particularly first-time, first-generation students, about the process for enrollment and transfer.
- Implement scholarships or tuition waiver opportunities for students to obtain a high school equivalency then immediately transition into a 2-year degree program or career technical training program.
- Expand outreach to military and veterans about transition programs and financial benefits available for education and training.
- Identify and implement a consistent way to link adult and non-traditional students to scholarship opportunities or other tuition assistance, especially for those that do not qualify for Pell.
- Ensure more students are aware of and complete the Free Application for Student Aid (FAFSA) by making the FAFSA an opt-out graduation requirement for all Oklahoma high school students.
- Expand opportunities for tuition assistance that lessens the up-front cost to students.
- Offer more flexible course schedules that help working students and parents complete education and training, including:
    - Increased access to online, accelerated/fast-track and evening courses
    - Implementing structured scheduling when possible
- Identify and link students to support services that help meet their needs.
- Establish and promote one centralized location for directing students to tuition assistance and scholarship opportunities.
- Develop high school equivalency attainment program online that leads to admission and enrollment in a 2-year degree program or career and technical education program.
- Increase flexibility with high school equivalency exam scheduling to better meet student needs, including the co-location of testing with other services like workforce centers or skills-based training centers.

<u>Expected Outcomes</u>:

- *Increase in the number of Oklahomans enrolling in education and skills training*
- *Increase in the number of Oklahomans with some college credit re-enrolling in degree completion and/or certificate programs*
- *Increase in the number of veterans utilizing GI Bill benefits for education and training programs including transition and apprenticeship programs*
- *Increase in the persistence rate of current students from first year to second year*
- *Increase in the number of Oklahomans obtaining degrees, certificates and credentials*
- *Increase in the number of students completing the FAFSA*

GOAL: ENSURE COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS

- Expand career awareness and exposure to career options and pathways for middle and high school students through means, including Individual Career and Academic Plans (ICAPs), online tools (e.g. OKCareerGuide and OKCollegeStart), and career planning courses.
- Build innovative partnerships to diversify and expand internship, apprenticeship and work-based learning opportunities (e.g. Tribal casinos).
- Increase postsecondary opportunities in high school, including AP, concurrent, dual-credit and technical education courses.
- Establish agreements that create high school program tracks that, upon completion, result in acceptance into a regional college program.
- Develop partnerships for college and career readiness workshops and college prep courses, including instruction on writing and math skills, financial literacy, and employability skills.
- Establish a statewide internship and work-based learning network.

- Expand access to character-building curriculum and other proven dropout prevention and high school completion initiatives.
- Create more near-peer mentorship programs to encourage high school students to continue on to postsecondary education and training.
- Continue to refer students behind in math to Math Ready Transition courses.
- Implement policies for incentivize dual credit enrollment
- Identify partner agencies serving immigrants and provide outreach to staff about adult basic education and postsecondary training and education programs available, including ESL services.
- Rework cooperative alliance so it meets HLC requirements
- Designate resources devoted to addressing inequities and closing achievement gaps among identified populations

Expected Outcomes:

- *Increase in the number of Oklahomans with a high school diploma or equivalency*
- *Increase in the number of students taking and passing AP exams*
- *Increase in the number of students participating in career academies, Project Lead the Way and concurrent/dual enrollment courses*
- *Decrease in the number of students required to take remedial math in postsecondary programs*
- *Increase in the number of students receiving course credit for internship, apprenticeship and work-based learning opportunities*
- *Increase in the number of Oklahomans enrolling in education and skills training without a gap from secondary to postsecondary education*
- *Increase in the number of students graduating on time*

GOAL: ENGAGE EMPLOYERS

- Expand the engagement of employers in postsecondary education and training through apprenticeships, internships, externships, business advisory boards, and other industry partnerships.
- Foster partnerships between business and education institutions to pair students with work-based learning opportunities, particularly for high-demand and hard-to-fill jobs.
- Consult business and industry to determine degrees and training of value.
- Identify businesses willing to support tuition assistance programs emphasizing critical and demand occupations and ecosystems.
- Explore tax credits and other incentives to encourage investments in education and training focused on high-demand and high-wage occupations.
- Increase outreach to professional associations and Human Resource professionals to promote best practices for employer-supported upskilling of existing workforce, particularly for demand and critical occupations and hard-to-fill positions.

Expected Outcomes:

- *Increase in the number and diversity of work-based learning programs in the state*
- *Increase in the number of business partners offering education benefits and/or tuition assistance*
- *Increase in the number of teachers completing externships in demand industries*
- *Improved ease of access for employees seeking information on education and training opportunities*

Appendix I: Regional Attainment Goals

STATE OF OKLAHOMA

Year	All Postsecondary	Vocational Certificate/Credential	Associate Degree	Bachelors & Higher
2018	108,229	13,954	33,629	30,314
2019	217,378	27,912	67,574	60,782
2020	327,359	41,880	101,805	91,388
2021	438,028	55,835	136,274	122,102
2022	548,974	69,780	170,842	152,845
2023	660,072	83,713	205,463	183,601
2024	771,168	97,632	240,086	214,343
2025	882,123	111,533	274,664	245,048

CENTRAL KEY ECONOMIC NETWORK

Counties: Canadian, Cleveland, Hughes, Lincoln, Logan, Okfuskee, Oklahoma, Pottawatomie, Seminole

Year	All Postsecondary	Vocational Certificate/Credential	Associate Degree	Bachelors & Higher
2018	72,327	26,103	20,233	25,992
2019	109,676	39,633	30,692	39,351
2020	147,534	53,380	41,301	52,854
2021	185,814	67,308	52,034	66,472
2022	224,244	81,304	62,811	80,129
2023	262,740	95,331	73,607	93,802
2024	301,219	109,354	84,398	107,467
2025	339,611	123,342	95,164	121,105

EASTERN KEY ECONOMIC NETWORK

Counties: Adair, Cherokee, McIntosh, Muskogee, Okmulgee, Sequoyah, Wagoner

Year	All Postsecondary	Vocational Certificate/Credential	Associate Degree	Bachelors & Higher
2018	1,800	767	689	344
2019	11,197	4,775	4,287	2,135
2020	20,599	8,788	7,887	3,924
2021	30,012	12,807	11,493	5,712
2022	39,427	16,829	15,099	7,499
2023	48,841	20,851	18,706	9,284
2024	58,249	24,871	22,311	11,067
2025	67,647	28,886	25,912	12,848

NORTHEAST KEY ECONOMIC NETWORK

Counties: Craig, Delaware, Mayes, Nowata, Ottawa, Rogers, Washington

Year	All Postsecondary	Vocational Certificate/Credential	Associate Degree	Bachelors & Higher
2018	2,726	1,122	1,019	584
2019	8,476	3,493	3,169	1,814
2020	14,244	5,875	5,325	3,044
2021	20,028	8,266	7,488	4,274
2022	25,807	10,656	9,648	5,503
2023	31,581	13,045	11,807	6,729
2024	37,344	15,430	13,962	7,952
2025	43,094	17,810	16,112	9,172

SOUTH CENTRAL KEY ECONOMIC NETWORK

Counties: Caddo, Comanche, Cotton, Grady, Jefferson, McClain, Stephens, Tillman

Year	All Postsecondary	Vocational Certificate/Credential	Associate Degree	Bachelors & Higher
2018	3,217	1,442	993	783
2019	12,470	5,588	3,852	3,029
2020	21,748	9,746	6,725	5,277
2021	31,040	13,911	9,606	7,523
2022	40,351	18,085	12,496	9,770
2023	49,666	22,261	15,389	12,017
2024	58,979	26,436	18,281	14,262
2025	68,284	30,607	21,171	16,506

SOUTHERN KEY ECONOMIC NETWORK

Counties: Atoka, Bryan, Carter, Choctaw, Coal, Garvin, Haskell, Johnston, Latimer, LeFlore, Love, Marshall, McCurtain, Murray, Pittsburg, Pontotoc, Pushmataha

Year	All Postsecondary	Vocational Certificate/Credential	Associate Degree	Bachelors & Higher
2018	3,368	1,565	1,240	563
2019	6,735	3,129	2,480	1,126
2020	18,150	8,435	6,687	3,028
2021	29,565	13,741	10,900	4,924
2022	40,966	19,041	15,111	6,814
2023	52,359	24,337	19,321	8,701
2024	63,741	29,628	23,528	10,584
2025	75,109	34,913	27,730	12,466

TULSA KEY ECONOMIC NETWORK

Counties: Creek, Osage, Pawnee, Tulsa

Year	All Postsecondary	Vocational Certificate/Credential	Associate Degree	Bachelors & Higher
2018	34,641	11,824	11,196	11,621
2019	54,777	18,715	17,715	18,348
2020	75,072	25,671	24,291	25,110
2021	95,520	32,690	30,924	31,907
2022	116,007	39,729	37,573	38,705
2023	136,520	46,784	44,234	45,502
2024	157,021	53,839	50,892	52,290
2025	177,480	60,881	57,536	59,063

WESTERN KEY ECONOMIC NETWORK

Counties: Alfalfa, Beaver, Beckham, Blaine, Cimarron, Custer, Dewey, Ellis, Garfield, Grant, Greer, Harmon, Harper, Jackson, Kay, Kingfisher, Kiowa, Major, Noble, Payne, Roger Mills, Texas, Washita, Woods, Woodward

Year	All Postsecondary	Vocational Certificate/Credential	Associate Degree	Bachelors & Higher
2018	7,446	3,020	2,121	2,305
2019	19,345	7,934	5,573	5,836
2020	31,284	12,883	9,038	9,362
2021	43,215	17,843	12,502	12,869
2022	55,149	22,814	15,967	16,369
2023	67,086	27,791	19,432	19,864
2024	79,034	32,775	22,900	23,358
2025	90,979	37,759	26,368	26,853

Appendix II: Persistence Rates & On-Time Degree Completion

OKLAHOMA STATE REGENTS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

Fall-to-Fall Persistence and Degrees within 100% (4 years) at Oklahoma Public Research and Regional Institutions for 2012-2013 First-time, Full-/Part-time Cohort and 4-year Degrees (Bachelor, Master, First Professional)

	Original Cohort	Fall-to-Fall Persistence	Persistence Rate	100% Time Degrees	Graduation Rate	% of Degrees	
ETHNICITY							
American Indian/ Alaska Native	1,118	700	62.61%	182	16.28%		
Asian, Middle Far East	438	370	84.47%	139	31.74%		
Black/African American	1,673	967	57.80%	141	8.43%		
Hispanic/Latino	1,218	854	70.11%	255	20.94%		
Multiple	1,938	1,278	65.94%	353	18.21%		
Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	19	9	47.37%	5	26.32%		
Non-Resident Alien	530	373	70.38%	108	20.38%		
Unknown	175	123	70.29%	39	22.29%		
TOTAL NON-WHITE	**7,109**	**4,674**	**65.75%**	**1,222**	**17.19%**	**1,222**	**27.72%**
White	**10,276**	**7,617**	**74.12%**	**3,186**	**31.00%**	**3,186**	**72.28%**
TOTAL	**17,385**	**12,291**	**70.70%**	**4,408**	**25.36%**	**4,408**	**100.00%**
GENDER							
Male	8,222	5,582	67.89%	1,657	20.15%	1,657	37.59%
Female	9,163	6,709	73.22%	2,751	30.02%	2,751	62.41%
TOTAL	**17,385**	**12,291**	**70.70%**	**4,408**	**25.36%**	**4,408**	**100.00%**

Appendix III: Best Practices and Model Programs

13th year and Beyond CTE Scholarship assistance: Many technology centers throughout Oklahoma offer scholarship assistance to graduating high school seniors who wish to continue their postsecondary training. The scholarship assistance amounts and number of years provided vary by technology center.

Academic Enhancement Centers: Many Oklahoma colleges and career and technology centers provide academic enhancement centers that offer academic, personal and career support programs, including individualized tutoring, test preparation services, study skills instruction, and writing consultations.

Adult Basic Education (ABE): Oklahomans receive basic skill instruction resulting in a high school equivalency certificate and/or improved English language skills. Instruction is provided through the statewide CareerTech system and by some community colleges. The Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education, which oversees Adult Basic Education, has over 30 ABE providers at 67 sites across the state.

Advanced Placement (AP) Courses: The Advanced Placement program allows for college-level curricula and examinations to be offered to high school students. By completing AP exams with a qualifying score, high school students can be awarded postsecondary credit.

Banded or Flat-Rate Tuition: Several Oklahoma colleges offer banded or flat-rate tuition which is designed to help students graduate on time and reduce the cost of their education by allowing students to pay one tuition rate for a band of credit hours enrolled, typically 12 to 18 credit hours.

Career Academies: Oklahoma City Public Schools host 13 career academies that combine classroom learning with real-world work experience like job shadowing and internships.

CareerAdvance: Sector-based workforce development program offering job training to low-income parents in high-demand healthcare careers. The program is offered through CAP Tulsa and pays for tuition, books and child care, as well as offers career coaching and connections to local employers.

Career Clusters: Career Clusters are groups of occupations and industries that share a set of foundational knowledge and skills. There are 16 nationally recognized career clusters with multiple career pathways. As a student progresses from elementary through high school and beyond, career clusters serve as a guide to assist students and families with course selection and opportunities for students beyond the school day.

Career Pathways: Career Pathways are multi-year programs of academic and technical study that prepare students for a full range of options within each of the 16 career clusters. There are 79 nationally recognized pathways that are organized within the 16 career clusters. These pathways provide a context for exploring career options at all levels of education and expose students to the full range of postsecondary options needed for future education and employment.

Career Readiness Certificates: The Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education offers a nationally recognized career readiness certificate using the ACT WorkKeys and CareerReady 101 assessments.

CareerTech Military Initiative: The *CareerTech for Vets* initiative provides outreach to military veterans across Oklahoma. The Initiative serves former and transitioning military members, and their families, by

leveraging the extensive career-building and skills training resources available through the statewide career technology center system.

College Ready Math Ready Course: This free course is designed for high school seniors who have completed Algebra I, Geometry and Algebra II, and need a transition course to get ready for college-level coursework. The course emphasizes understanding mathematics concepts and real-world applications. The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education pays for all students to take the Pre-ACT exam. When students score less than 19, they may be referred to take a fourth year of math.

Concurrent and Dual Enrollment: Oklahoma's concurrent enrollment program allows qualified juniors and seniors the opportunity to earn college credit while still in high school. Seniors may also be eligible for a tuition waiver of up to six credit hours per semester for concurrent courses.

Cristo Rey: Cristo Rey provides low-income high school students with a rigorous college preparatory curriculum integrated with a relevant work-study experience so that students graduate ready to succeed in college and in life.

EXCELerate Dove: This dual enrollment partnership between Dove Science Academy and Oklahoma State University-Oklahoma City combines the final two years of high school and the first two years of college in a single two-year program allowing high school seniors to graduate with an associate's degree.

High Schools That Work: Oklahoma has partnered with the Southern Regional Education Board's *High Schools That Work (HSTW)* to enhance partnerships and focus school improvement efforts across the state. *HSTW* connects college-ready academics, challenging career pathways and hands-on workplace learning to credentials and degrees in Oklahoma's high-demand and emerging career fields. *HSTW* provides leaders and teachers with tools to increase graduation rates and readiness for success after high school.

Individual Career Academic Plan (ICAP): An Individual Career Academic Plan (ICAP) uses a multi-year process to guide students as they explore their own career and academic opportunities using career clusters, career pathways and programs of study. An ICAP identifies student interests, skills, secondary/postsecondary coursework, certificates, credentials, degrees and workforce experiences that lead to a meaningful program of study that charts the progress needed to prepare students for college and career.

Military Tuition Waiver: All of Oklahoma's public institutions of higher education offer tuition waivers to active duty members of the Oklahoma National Guard. In addition, several Oklahoma CareerTech Centers offer tuition and fee waivers for military veterans, including National Guard members.

New Skills for Youth Vision: The vision is to ensure all students have the opportunity and support to successfully secure a postsecondary degree or industry certification that reflects each individual's passion and skills.

Non-Traditional Course Structures: Most postsecondary institutions offer academic programs that cater to working adults. Such non-traditional course offering include: fast track courses and one-year certificate programs, night and weekend courses, and online courses and degree programs.

OK Career Guide: Online tool available to Oklahomans aged 6th grade through adult to explore and guide their future. The system allows users to take assessments, identify occupations, establish education plans and connect to employers. See website for more information about training, desktop tutorials, curriculum and other resources.

OKCollegeStart: OKCollegeStart is the State Regents' comprehensive, web-based college planning and preparation system for students, parents, and educators. The site empowers students to create individual portfolios, complete career planning assessments and link career information to high school and college planning tools, and features access to a national scholarship database, ACT and SAT test prep tools, detailed profiles of Oklahoma colleges and universities, extensive information about federal and state financial aid, and an online application for the Oklahoma's Promise scholarship program. Site content is available in multiple languages, and a companion site for educators allows K-12 and higher education counselors and instructors to access and assign a system-defined Individual Career Academic Plan (ICAP) to specific grades and send and receive electronic transcripts to/from school to school, school to campus, and campus to campus.

Oklahoma Academic Standards: Oklahoma's 2016 Academic Standards are closely aligned with college and career technology education readiness, particularly in English Language Arts and Mathematics.

Oklahoma College Assistance Program: Offers Oklahoma students and families financial planning and assistance through three initiatives: UCanGo2 (helps students prepare, plan and pay for education after high school), Oklahoma Money Matters (assistance developing and expanding financial education services), and Ready Set Repay (helps students make smart borrowing decisions and successfully repay student loans).

Oklahoma Gear Up: GEAR UP helps prepare middle and high school students for college through academic preparation programs and scholarships for students, professional learning opportunities for educators and college access information for students and parents.

Oklahoma's Promise: Oklahoma's Promise allows students whose families earn $55,000 or less annually, and who meet academic and conduct requirements, to earn a postsecondary tuition scholarship.

Operation Degree Completion: An initiative of the University of Central Oklahoma that assists students with nearly enough college credit to graduate return to degree completion programs. The initiative also features staff who review student records to identify students who had potentially completed an associate's degree if they were to transfer their credits back to the original community college (see Reverse Transfer).

Policies Supportive of Students: Many Oklahoma postsecondary institutions are adopting policies and practices to remove barriers for returning adult students. Such efforts include waiving institutional fees (e.g. parking fines) and opportunities for emergency funding to keep students from dropping out.

Prior Learning Assessments: Many Oklahoma colleges and career and technology centers offer students the opportunity to obtain course credit toward a degree, certificate or credential based on the student's previous work experience or demonstration of competencies through testing.

Programs of Study: Programs of Study are sequences of courses that follow a logical progression of secondary and postsecondary components that are connected to each career pathway. Programs of study include opportunities to earn college credit, earn an industry-recognized credential or certificate and/or an associate or baccalaureate degree. Programs of study can also include participation in formal internship or apprenticeship options while in high school.

Project Lead the Way: Project Lead the Way provides pathways in computer science, engineering and biomedical science that engage K-12 students in hands-on activities and problem solving. Courses are offered at career technology centers and K-12 school districts across the state.

Reach Higher: Oklahoma's degree completion program allows students who have completed 18 credit hours toward an associate degree or 72 credit hours toward a bachelor's degree to quickly obtain a degree through accelerated, on-campus and online course options. The program also features dedicated staff on campuses to assist returning adult learners in navigating the enrollment and degree completion processes, identifying eligibility for financial assistance, and linking students to supportive services.

Reverse Transfer: Process of awarding an associate degree to students who have previously attended a community college and fulfilled the associate degree requirements while working toward a bachelor's degree.

STEM Academies: Oklahoma higher education and career and technical education institutions host summer STEM academies, which combine STEM courses with rigorous academics, for students in grades 6-12. Oklahoma CareerTech also offers STEM academies as a part of regular school instruction in both K-12 schools and technology centers across the state. Academy programs include Biomedical Sciences, Biotechnology, Computer Science and Pre-Engineering. The academies play a critical role in growing a talent pipeline of Oklahoma students who will be ready for viable careers in Oklahoma's targeted industry sectors.

Technology Centers That Work: Oklahoma has partnered with the Southern Regional Education Board's *Technology Centers that Work (TCTW)* to enhance partnerships and focus school improvement efforts across the state. *TCTW* unites centers, home high schools and postsecondary institutions around career pathways that give students a head-start on an industry valued certification or degree. Both *TCTW* provides leaders and teachers with tools to increase graduation rates and readiness for success after high school.

Veteran College Student Centers: Designated offices on college and university campuses that offer support and services for military connected students pursuing a degree program. Services range from training on military culture for faculty and staff to designated study and lounge spaces for military-connected students to individual assistance with understanding and utilizing VA education benefits.

Work-Based Learning: Work-based learning is a program, typically sponsored by an education or training organization, that links knowledge gained at the work site with a planned program of study. Experiences range in intensity, structure, and scope and include activities as diverse as site visits, job shadowing, paid and unpaid internships, structured on-the-job training, and the more formal work status as apprentice or employee.