

IT'S 2032.  
WHERE IN THE WORLD IS OKLAHOMA?

## FINAL REPORT

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At the Oklahoma Academy's 12<sup>th</sup> annual Town Hall entitled "IT IS 2032. WHERE IN THE WORLD IS OKLAHOMA?" participants were asked to commit three days to developing new, creative, and bold ideas to improve the future of Oklahoma. The task was not limited to the immediate future, but rather focused on 2032.

Looking back in time two decades, it's easy to see how much and how quickly the world has changed. In Eastern Europe, communist USSR had fallen and a number of independent nations emerged including Russia, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Serbia, Bosnia, Ukraine, Czech Republic, Slovenia and Belarus among others. While South Africans voted to end apartheid, other nations in Africa such as the South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo did not even exist. In China, reforms established a social market economy and the first McDonald's opened in Beijing.

In 1992, George Herbert Walker Bush was the 41<sup>st</sup> President of the United States, but he would face competition from Texan Ross Perot and Governor of Arkansas Bill Clinton. The latter would become the 42<sup>nd</sup> President. A gallon of gas cost \$1.05 and the average American earned just over \$30,000. Technology was quickly changing how people communicated. Though early in the decade mobile telephones were rare (If you had a mobile phone, it likely remained in your car because it was a large, bulky bag.), advances in cellular and computer technology would rapidly change how people communicated by the mid-90s. Oklahoma was recovering from the collapse of the energy business in the early 1980s. Employment and population were beginning to increase. Oklahoma's delegation was primarily democratic, though more Oklahomans voted for George H.W. Bush than Bill Clinton in the election.

Considering the amazingly profound changes the United States and Oklahoma experienced in the previous 20 years, the challenge of fashioning a vision for the next 20 years seems daunting. However, the participants in this Town Hall were up for the challenge and provided a multitude of ideas to ensure that Oklahoma improves its position relative to other states in the United States and other countries around the world.

Now the challenge is to move these ideas into action.

### **The State of Public Discourse in Oklahoma and the United States**

The responses to this question varied greatly among panels. Some panels suggest the public policy discourse in the US may have remained the same, but appears to be more toxic partly due to new media technology such as Facebook, Twitter, and text messaging. Another panel suggested that it seems more toxic in the media, leaving open the possibility that it has remained the same. Another group, however, clearly believed that Oklahoma's public policy discourse in the media has become more about entertainment than moving Oklahoma forward. Further, that panel clearly stated that the current public policy discourse is not producing the needed results. While there was no clear consensus on whether the public policy discourse has become so toxic as to be counter-productive, there is a consensus that politics on the state level is less toxic than at the federal level, perhaps because they know one another on a personal level. One panel specifically opined that at the state level, legislators are still able to come together to find common solutions to big issues.

### **The future of public policy discourse: Will it get better, stay the same, or become worse?**

Most panels believe that without making substantial changes, the political discourse will only get worse. Things that panels believe will cause the discourse to become worse are failing to learn to responsibly share information through media/social media, a continued audience for

extremist discourse, and impressionable children observing adults' lack of respect for other ideas. It is suggested that the civil discourse will only get better when we stop the 140 character debate and people get fed up with the dysfunction. Another panel, however asserted that partisan politics is cyclical and that in 10-15 years, the cycle will return to a more moderate climate.

### **Restoring civility to America's (Oklahoma's) public policy discourse in the next 20 years**

The greatest consensus on this topic revolves around ensuring that everyone has better, more fact-based information to make decisions. Currently, information sources are fragmented. The information an individual obtains about a given topic can be significantly different depending on where they obtain the information. One panel gave an example of the difference in information that is typically obtained from watching MSNBC and FOX discussing the same story. Most information on political issues is obtained from either a television or radio program that combines news and entertainment (not just fact based reporting), or social media. Unfortunately, polarizing statements that support a person's personal beliefs are deemed entertaining and draw high ratings. The problem is exacerbated because "people communicate in the circles of commentary that reinforces what they like to hear." Liberals and conservatives each tend to watch the programs that support their current beliefs. Most people simply do not do any research to obtain objective, factual information.

In order to counter the use of extremist, polarizing statements, voters must be able to obtain factual information and differentiate what information is factual and what information is opinion. The simplicity of political communication in the form of sound bites and the overwhelming amount of available information, both true and false, has resulted in false information too often being accepted as true.

This problem is most readily seen in social media where people pass along false news stories without verifying their accuracy. These false news stories obtain an undeserved level of credibility because someone familiar forwarded the story. Generally, the public needs to be more responsible with how we share information. This heightened responsibility is especially important when passing along stories without verifying their accuracy. The faceless format of Twitter, Facebook, blogs and other forms of social media encourage people to be extreme. The anonymity of social media has caused the political discourse to become less civil. The social network platforms that allow for instant communication and the sharing of ideas regardless of the credibility of the information is part of the problem. These social media platforms, however, when used responsibly, have the potential to enable voters to think more critically and obtain otherwise unavailable information.

Another suggested solution is increasing the voter pool to increase the number of interests represented, which may diminish partisanship. Further, we should consider on-line voter registration and on-line voting. It was suggested that Election Day could be made a national holiday or elections could be conducted on Saturdays and/or Sundays to increase involvement.

Another recommendation to improve the civility of the political discourse is to develop some means to ensure that elected representatives get to know each other on a personal level. The rationale of this recommendation is that it is much more difficult to vilify an opposing candidate or the candidate's ideas if you personally know that opposing candidate. Further, developing personal relationships would likely improve elected officials' ability to compromise because sometimes compromise requires politicians to negotiate behind closed doors rather than in public.

We need to develop a means to use social media and technology to hold representatives accountable. Social media and technology should also be used by politicians and elected officials to reach back out to their constituents to get the public engaged. We must make politicians more representative of their constituents rather than their party. When people don't believe they can make a difference, often they become disengaged.

Civic education in K-12 should be re-programmed and expanded to include education on the backgrounds of the political parties to foster better understanding of their beliefs and the rationale for those beliefs. The new civic education program must embed civil discourse as a competency into our school's core curriculum. It must take a pragmatic approach to promote voting, getting more people interested in voting and getting more people interested in participating in the discourse. We must focus education on teaching critical thinking skills rather than memorizing facts.

We need to change the time limitations placed on legislators. It is suggested that two year terms for representatives should be extended to four year terms and four year terms for state senators should be extended to six years. The current terms provide too little time to form relationships; less time to accomplish goals; less time to learn the art of compromise, especially considering the 12 year cap on service in elected office to the State House of Representatives and the State Senate. Further, it is suggested that terms limits should be extended or eliminated altogether.

In Oklahoma, other suggestions include campaign finance reform such as placing limits on super PAC's and eliminating the treatment of corporations as people; changing to non-partisan or open primaries; avoiding gerrymandering by using computers to draw district lines rather than politicians; eliminate straight party voting option; developing structured debate formats for elections; reinforcing a basic respect for positions of leadership regardless of the holder (i.e. respect for the office); embracing the art of compromise rather than viewing every issue as a win or a loss.

### **Long-term systemic changes and short term actions Oklahoma needs to make in the area of Higher Education to become a more competitive player in the global marketplace.**

An obstacle to developing a more cohesive and effective higher education system in Oklahoma is that there are three distinct education systems in Oklahoma consisting of PreK-12 education, Career Tech, and Higher Education at the state's colleges and universities. Implement a Career Pathways methodology that integrates PreK-12, Career Tech and Higher Education (both public and private) while horizontally meeting the needs of business and industry to provide Oklahoma with a homegrown workforce that is competitive in the global economy of the future. A PreK-20 system should be integrated in Oklahoma, developing a "One Oklahoma" model taking a comprehensive approach to the education system in Oklahoma. The higher education system needs solid, well-prepared students from the secondary education system in Oklahoma to raise the level of training and education for all participants in the higher education system.

Beginning in the primary and secondary levels of education, students should be trained in civic responsibility, career preparation, and college preparation, in that order. In addition, beginning career counseling at an earlier stage in educational development, such as middle school, will help students understand the practical application of their education and assist them in crafting an appropriate education and training program. Such an approach should integrate Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) curriculum with critical thinking

and problem solving skills to maximize student preparation for both professional development and success in higher education. Throughout the course of a student's participation in this unified PreK-20 model, their curriculum and career development opportunities would be linked by a common goal, that of being proficient in STEM curriculum and working towards a profession enabled by participation in programs available either through the Career Technology system and/or Oklahoma's higher education system. While students would not be forced to focus on one specific profession or academic track, such an integrated educational approach would allow the student to select the most effective academic and professional training plan for their desired profession.

Collaboration among the state's higher education institutions, including the University of Oklahoma, Oklahoma State University, the University of Tulsa, and the regional universities, alongside the career technology centers will vastly improve Oklahoma's competitive edge in higher education. In addition, entities such as the Oklahoma Center for the Advancement of Science and Technology (OCAST) and i2E should be part of the strategic development of a unified Oklahoma higher education model.

Specific short term actions in the area of higher education to increase competitiveness in the global marketplace include enhanced career counseling, greater incorporation of the private market and industry in development of curriculum and training programs, and enhancing study abroad/cultural exchange programs. In addition to the previous comments on enhanced career counseling in primary and secondary education, career counseling should be strengthened for each degree program, incorporating industry-specific recommendations on academic curricula and changing market trends. Financial counseling should be available for students and specifically focus on the burden of student debt and the ability to pay back such debt in the targeted career field.

Oklahoma needs to fight the perception that its higher education institutions are not as competitive as out-of-state schools by managing and strengthening public/private partnerships. A stronger public-private relationship will best situate the research departments at universities to attract both public and private capital. Working models such as OCAST and the Blue Cross Blue Shield scholarship program should be emulated to strengthen this relationship. Business and industry need to communicate closely with higher education to craft curriculum that will develop critical skills needed in the workplace. The Oklahoma higher education system should recognize the successes in the Career Tech system where benchmark vocational education is built upon immediate contact and collaboration between private industry and the educational institution. As such, an industry advisory council should be consulted within each degree or training program, indicating which courses are essential, updating the curriculum based upon industry trends. Private industry should assist with enhanced career counseling through both curriculum recommendations and creating more in-depth internship or apprenticeship programs to help students gain "real world" professional experience, while identifying their career path. Such apprenticeship/internship programs should qualify for college credit or become part of the specific degree program. The State should work with private industry to develop incentives for the development of these enhanced training programs. One group specifically recommended that an associates degree in science and technology be developed with the guidance of industry.

Recognizing the cultural and educational benefits gained by students participating in study abroad programs, numerous panels discussed expanding study abroad programs and incorporating potential sponsorship models, such as corporate sponsorship and job training while participating in the program. Additional recommendations include examining teacher education

programs for maximum effectiveness and embracing national common core standards for teaching.

A variety of long-term systemic changes were recommended for Oklahoma Higher Education to increase its competitiveness in the global market. As discussed above, a unified approach as “One Oklahoma” incorporating a PreK-20 model would be much more comprehensive and systemic in nature. A focal point in such a unified model would be the incorporation of a heavy STEM curriculum with highly qualified teachers and professional development opportunities for professionals. Providing debt forgiveness programs to qualified STEM teachers would greatly increase the quality and quantity of effective educators in Oklahoma, ultimately impacting Oklahoma’s Higher Education system. Students should continue to receive a liberal arts education to develop their understanding of civic responsibility, but should focus on STEM curriculum, in addition to a life skills program highlighting professional behavior, financial responsibility, and effective communication skills.

As a unified education model, our higher education institutions could effectively collaborate and coordinate their academic programs, avoiding costly and unnecessary duplication and competition. With the politicization of our current higher education system, duplication, competition and inefficiency often result. One group specifically recommended that centralized non-political leadership at the State Board of Regents would help address this problem immensely. With a single Board of Regents exercising strong oversight of regional boards and a single set of policies, more effective leveraging of resources to develop centers of excellence for specific programs would result. Increasing the coordination between higher education institutions would allow each entity to focus on specific areas of expertise, while providing opportunities for local students to utilize their facilities for distance learning through courses offered by the other universities for specific programs. It is recognized that more investment is required in telecommunications to enable a strong regional distance education program, specifically upgrading the state’s broadband network. Additionally, costs may be decreased by increasing the accessibility of quality education by leveraging our faculty talent in much more of an economical manner, such as through the use of technology and virtual global learning. Concerted efforts must be made to control the cost of higher education to make it more accessible. This includes a moratorium on higher education appropriated budget cuts and expanding the share of public institutions of higher learning’s budgets paid for by the state.

**The graduates of our Common Education System (Pre-K - 12) represent the pipeline of potential candidates for our higher education system. Over the next 20 years, what long term systemic changes and short term (1 to 5 years) actions need to occur in our Common Education System to ensure that their graduates are fully prepared for an enhanced higher education curricula and experience?**

In order to improve the common education system in Oklahoma to ensure graduates are fully prepared for the higher education and workforce curriculum, extensive changes are required, including development of a state education plan, greater incorporation of private industry and workforce training into secondary education, ensuring proficiency in STEM subjects during primary and secondary education, and both attracting and retaining quality instructors through competitive pay, evaluation, and incentive programs.

One group recommended that Oklahoma needs an “Education Plan” following the model of the Comprehensive Statewide Water Plan, incorporating input from the whole community, in each region, including parents, the private sector, non-profits, and the schools themselves. A

statewide plan should identify the effective adoption of a STEM curriculum, buttressed with liberal arts principles and life skills training. Expanding the Oklahoma School of Science and Mathematics curriculum model is a possible model on which to base local education planning.

As recommended above, a unified PreK-20 approach should be implemented, affording students an opportunity to receive consistent academic and career counseling throughout the educational process, access to mentoring and internship/training opportunities with potential employers and vocational education, and more integration of opportunities to earn vocational and higher education credits while still in secondary school. The state should remove the six credit hour cap on earning college credit while in secondary school. In an effort to provide students with more continuity and learning opportunities, the primary and secondary calendar should be modified to a continual learning model. Additionally, throughout the process, student progress should be monitored across the system using new software and technology programs, monitoring their academic progress, potential for career placement/higher education focus, and risk for students falling through the cracks.

Much like with the recommendations for improving Oklahoma's Higher Education system, common education in Oklahoma should collaborate more effectively with the state's Career Tech system and incorporate more support/direction from the private sector. The state could offer incentives to businesses that encourage and allow their employees to participate in primary/secondary mentoring and career counseling programs.

Ultimately, local school boards and administrations must be held responsible for the success of its students and teachers. Successful student education needs to be redefined in a more comprehensive manner, rather than based upon End of Instruction (EOI) examinations. Some panels recommended consolidation of school administration for more efficiency and incentive to perform. Providing incentives, such as loan forgiveness for quality STEM teachers and incentive pay for educators working in high risk schools, is an effective means to attracting and retaining effective teachers; however, teacher evaluation criteria must be heightened beyond the tenure model, encouraging the most effective instructors to receive the highest merit. Furthermore, Oklahoma needs to fully fund the endowed chair obligations in place at the state education institutions, matching private sector contributions to the program, as recommended by the Oklahoma Academy Conference in 1986. To achieve an equitable funding matrix, local school districts and the state must identify the proper level of funding to attract the most qualified, effective teachers and compete with private industry for high caliber instructors. School boards must ensure that appropriate funding is dedicated to education programs and not drained by athletics budgets or administrative expenses. School districts should also coordinate partnerships to hire qualified teachers during the summer or in part time capacity to ease the payroll burden on the school district, while providing "real-world" on the job learning and application for the instructor. For example, Amoco did hire teachers with Masters of Science degrees during the summer, which provides additional income, training, and "real world" reflection for development of curricula.

**There remains a large number of jobs in the US economy today...And in the future...that will not require a Bachelors degree. Most jobs (90%) will require some post-secondary training including Associates degrees, specialized training, and certification, like those offered at our community colleges and career technology centers. Additionally, according to Career Technology officials, "one of our fastest growing markets is individuals who already have college degrees." Over the next 20 years, what long term systemic changes**

**and short term actions need to occur in our Career Tech system to ensure that graduates are adequately prepared for work and for a global marketplace?**

In order for our Career Technology Centers to prepare graduates for work in Oklahoma and the global marketplace, we first need to emphasize the idea that all work, whether blue or white collar, is honorable and can be very financially rewarding. The stigma attached to career technology training needs to be addressed at the primary and secondary levels of education, highlighting the programs and opportunities available through their programming. One recommendation is that secondary students be required to enroll in at least one course at a local Career Technology center if available.

While Oklahoma's Career Technology programs are effectively educating and training students across the state where access to higher education programs may be limited or inappropriate, Career Tech can improve its programs by focusing on becoming more proactive than reactive to the needs of business in the face of a changing business environment. For example, the market forces and regulatory impact upon the CDL industry should have been foreseen, allowing for the Career Tech program to coordinate employment and training placement with private employers, rather than not being able to keep up with the demand. As with the aforementioned recommendations for primary, secondary, and higher education, business advisory councils should be consulted with on curriculum development, job placement, and internship/apprenticeship opportunities.

Finally, in creating a more integrated PreK-20 educational system in Oklahoma, alliance agreements between the Career Technology Systems and Oklahoma's higher education institutions should allow for college credit to transfer more readily and apply to specific degree or certification programs. Additionally, the expansion of alliance agreements should include opportunities for concurrent enrollment and structuring of degree/certification programs for a more well rounded, professionally appropriate education. Programs at both Oklahoma's higher education and Career Technology institutions should incorporate more requirements aimed at enhancing student preparedness for international business and competition. For example, industries with heightened amounts of business dealings with foreign nations or business entities may require students in that specific education program to study the appropriate foreign language, business practices of that nation, or study abroad in the appropriate regions, when available.

**What long term (systemic changes) and short term (1 to 5 years) actions does Oklahoma need to make to attract the ambitious, energetic, imaginative entrepreneur over the next 20 years?**

In order to attract the ambitious, energetic, imaginative entrepreneur, over the next 20 years the State of Oklahoma should pursue strategies in foreign exchange programs, state image and quality of life investments, higher education and investment in entrepreneurship, business and research developments.

Oklahoma should better utilize and consider expanding already existing student exchange, study abroad, and sister city programs to recruit top international students and entrepreneurs to Oklahoma and its universities. These programs not only attract new talent to our state but also give our native students and entrepreneurs exposure to foreign cultures and new business opportunities. The state might consider creating a central coordinating office to organize, promote and, in some cases, provide financial support for study abroad.



Recognizing the difficulty in acquiring work visas and the loss of Oklahoma educated talent that often results, a proposal should be made to the federal government to raise the H-1B and EB-1 visa allocations and/or a demand should be made to our federal delegation for immigration reform, especially to allow certain creative individuals to come to or stay in Oklahoma.

While that is being pursued, Oklahoma should consider the following pro-immigration measures: work with the legislature to create legislation that allows foreign students, entrepreneurs and guest workers to come and flourish economically in our state; pursue or create a fast-track visa application process that would pre-screen students for citizenship as they apply to schools; invest in federal programs, such as EB5 Centers, that develop and promote Oklahoma projects through the utilization of foreign direct investment. EB5 programs might also allow eligible aliens to establish legal residence in Oklahoma.

In order to attract and retain foreign and out of state talent to Oklahoma, we must begin to market both the benefits of doing business in Oklahoma as well as the hospitable and friendly nature of the state and its citizens. Yet, perceptions about Oklahoma's people and history are conflicting. On the one hand, it has a rich history of diversity and opportunity, and the people are known as being friendly and warm. On the other hand, perception is often negative, focusing on historical images of the untamed Wild West and the Great Depression and on the intolerant, close-minded attitudes of a xenophobic culture.

We must work to unite and improve the image of Oklahoma through positive marketing to both our own citizens and outsiders. In marketing and promoting Oklahoma to outside investors and talent, The State Chamber of Commerce and The State Department of Commerce could partner to educate Oklahomans about the competitive advantages of being in Oklahoma, so we can sell Oklahoma to others.

Considering that many immigrants are coming from more densely populated urban areas, Oklahoma should focus on creating more comfortable environments for young professionals, such as MAPS in Oklahoma City and the improvements in downtown Tulsa. Additionally, Oklahoma should invest in accessibility with investment in mass transit infrastructure such as light rail, CNG bus systems and bike routes. Improvements in the quality of life Oklahoma can provide will not only attract new talent but also retain talent.

Higher Education institutions, including research universities, regional colleges, community colleges and career techs, should collaborate rather than compete. These institutions can collaborate on projects such as the "One Oklahoma" program mentioned by Secretary of Science and Technology Dr. Stephen McKeever.

CareerTechs and regional colleges can collaborate on business incubators and innovation centers. For example, the OSU Cooperative Extensions, Small Business Development Centers ("SBDS") and similar programs could work together with the CareerTech program to focus resources on business development programs. Business incubators could collaborate with foreign partners, which might help with limitations related to the current visa requirements. Additionally, immigrant students and workforce should be welcomed into business incubators.

Recruiting and encouraging international study should begin early in a student's education, perhaps by partnering classrooms across the world. Oklahoma should use its strengths in industries such as aerospace and energy to attract the brightest students. Additionally, offering financial incentives such as in state versus out of state tuition might help attract and retain more students. Higher education institutions also need to focus on making themselves more attractive

to inventors and researchers to fill teaching positions. The state can bolster these efforts by continuing to support a robust research structure.

In order to recruit and retain talented individuals in a range of fields, Oklahoma should implement more reciprocal licensing agreements, encourage more venture capital, enhance public funding for research centers, attract investment capital, consider covering federal fees for inventors and invest in super-computing to advance our state's technology and attract out of state and global talent

Additionally, entities devoted to leadership, community involvement, entrepreneurship and business develop must be invested in, marketed and promoted to the public. In this spirit, Oklahoma could consider: making OCAST competitions international to allow for commercial opportunity, enhanced partnership opportunities and place a greater emphasis on sharing research; creating entrepreneurial gardens and cultivating a place where small businesses want to be; market Oklahoma as a place where companies can outsource things like cyber security; and create a research entrepreneurial triangle.

### **What long term (systemic changes) and short term (1-5 years) actions does Oklahoma need to make, institutionally and individually, to vastly improve our physical and mental health outcomes by 2032?**

#### **EDUCATION**

Oklahomans should be educated about available preventative care options. The state should develop a single site resource identifying all low cost or free preventative care available at the municipal, county and/or state level.

Oklahoma should develop a standardized education program for health, nutrition and exercise to teach young Oklahomans about healthy habits and healthy lifestyles. Not only schools, but parents and doctors should be included in teaching children healthy habits. We should include meaningful physical education programs in every school's curriculum PreK-12. We should extend the school day, if necessary, to include these physical education programs. These physical education programs should teach children to have at least 30 minutes of activity every day and should teach them exercises they can continue throughout their life. We need to ensure healthy food choices are available to Oklahoma's children. Schools should ensure that all vending machines in schools have healthy options. Healthy school meals should be prepared on site and lunch periods should be expanded. Oklahoma should expand/encourage the Farm to School program and add it back as a line item in the Department of Agriculture's budget.

Schools could be used as locations to provide preventative health services. These services could be funded through joint efforts of government and non-profits. Support exists for placing a nurse in each school.

#### **HEALTH CARE**

A strong consensus developed regarding the need to improve preventative care. One suggestion is to use social impact bonds, to be re-paid with savings on back-end, to fund better health care by investing in preventative care. Another suggestion in this vein is to increase insurance incentives for preventative care. Further, Oklahoma should opt into the Medicaid expansion under the Affordable Care Act in order to improve primary and preventative care.

We need to increase the number of doctors per capita in Oklahoma. This goal can be accomplished by funding residency programs in Oklahoma and recruiting doctors from other states. Oklahoma can further expand providers by increasing funding to medical based programs

for doctors, physician's assistants (PA) and nurse practitioners (NP). This expanded funding would be required to increase professors and facilities. Oklahoma could incentivize these medical professionals to enter into general practices by offering debt forgiveness. Oklahoma could further expand the number of providers by expanding the authority of non-physician medical providers (PA, NP) to provide services independent of physicians.

In order to fund education for doctors to practice in rural areas, Oklahoma can increase taxes on cigarettes and alcohol.

## FOOD DESERTS

In order to counter the problems of "food deserts," we should expand public transportation to food sources. We could work to eliminate these food deserts by partnering food producers/marketers with schools and/or post offices to serve as distribution hubs for food delivery/pick-up.

## CITIES

If cities became more walkable and/or bike-friendly, it would help to increase health and decrease obesity. Cities should develop their own comprehensive plan, to be updated at least every ten years, defining the public policies to support a healthier community.

## BUSINESSES

Businesses could include in-house fitness centers or pay for gym memberships for their employees. Further businesses could allow employees time off work to exercise. They could develop weight loss programs or challenges. Businesses should expand the use of standing desks.

## MENTAL HEALTH

To improve mental health, Oklahoma should provide additional funding for transportation for mental health patients requiring protective custody and civil commitment proceedings. Most significantly, Oklahoma should work to end the stigma of mental illness & addiction, so people will seek treatment. One suggestion was that Oklahoma provide opportunities to re-direct non-violent offenses relating to substance abuse from the general criminal justice system and treat them as mental health and substance abuse issues.

Nearly one half of people incarcerated in Oklahoma's prisons suffer from mental illness. The criminalization of mental illness results in part to deficiencies in Oklahoma's mental health system. Therefore, it is recommended that the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Service's (ODMHSAS) Smart on Crime Initiative receive the necessary resources to be fully implemented. Prevention and treatment is less expensive than incarceration and re-incarceration. The ODMHSAS will be sufficiently resourced to provide incentives that make access to doctoral level psychologists and psychiatric services available statewide. Additionally, the Oklahoma Department of Corrections will be resourced sufficiently to provide effective treatment of incarcerated offenders who suffer mental illness and/or addiction. Also, it is recommended that the Department of Corrections and ODMHSAS should form a meaningful partnerships to align services to mentally ill offenders who are re-entering society.

## LOCAL FOODS

Oklahoma should encourage local food production as a means to stimulate economic development and improve public health. We should encourage research into “green roofs,” “community gardens” and small and mid-sized farms to decrease the cost of local produce. Oklahoma should incentivize locally grown food, and enhance opportunities for direct-to-consumer local food purchasing, such as farmers’ markets, on-farm purchasing, and online retailers, such as the Oklahoma Food Cooperative. Oklahoma should expand the acceptance of government provided health and nutrition benefits at farmers markets, direct-to-consumer purchasing outlets, and online retailers. It is also recommended that businesses find ways to form wholesale produce markets in OKC and Tulsa.

## SMOKING

It appears that there is universal agreement that to improve health outcomes, Oklahoma must deter smoking. Oklahoma should stop state pre-emption of more stringent smoking regulations by cities. Repeal state labor law that treats smokers as a protected class.

## MISCELLANEOUS

Other potential changes to improve physical and mental health outcomes are to improve healthcare for veterans; implement affordable, comprehensive healthcare for college students and evidence-based sex and drug education for common education system at the appropriate level; expand “sober” high school programs where drug rehabilitation and recovery treatment are offered on-site during the school day; replace the existing state meal with a healthy preparation of the same food ingredients; collapse the multitude of programs into one central program to teach healthy lifestyles; change SNAP card to no longer allow to be used to buy junk food like WIC; change USDA rules regarding domestically raised products in WIC and other federally funded food programs; relax strict regulations on federally funded food programs; expand stem cell research for treating our aging population.

### **Small/Large Business, Energy, and Biosciences**

In Oklahoma, nearly 80% of the 1.6 million wage and salary jobs reside in the private sector. Our overall economy continues to outperform the US economy in terms of both output and income growth rates. According to the results from the FallinforBusiness.com survey, Oklahoma business optimism remains quite high and they are optimistic about their futures in Oklahoma. Yet, only half believe the regulatory climate is favorable and workers compensation costs ranked as the lowest business climate factor.

### **What long term systemic changes and short term actions does Oklahoma need to make to ensure its overall business climate?**

Oklahomans should work to ensure passage of SQ 766. Passage of SQ 766 would prevent taxation of intellectual property, such as company names, logos and patents, by counties.

Oklahoma could alleviate the cost to Oklahoma companies of obtaining and maintaining patents by providing a tax credit to businesses to offset the cost of fees paid to the US PTO by qualifying business. This tax credit would only be available to companies incorporated in Oklahoma.

Oklahoma must expand the available venture capital to Oklahoma companies. Two means suggested are regionalization and crowd funding. Regionalization has been used

effectively by the Oklahoma Department of Tourism. Regionalization gives greater control and more choices to regions. Crowd Funding allows individuals to contribute small amounts of capital to form large investment pools.

Oklahoma should consider restructuring the Corporation Commission. Currently three elected commissioners who have final decision-making authority over all matters lead the Corporation Commission. A possible new structure would divide the commission into two separate divisions. One division would regulate oil and gas and transportation. The other division would regulate all other regulated industries. Each division would have three commissioners. These six commissioners would be appointed rather than elected.

Oklahoma should create an "Oklahoma Opening Fund." This fund should initially be created with annual funding of \$10 million and be a one-stop funding source for Oklahoma start-up and growing businesses. Its purpose should be to assist existing Oklahoma companies making capital improvements required to expand or grow the business. The Opening Fund could further be used to bridge the funding gap between start-up and complete ramp-up. Companies accepting these funds would be required to remain in Oklahoma. In order to continue receiving any funding from this source, the Oklahoma company would be required to prove continued growth. Eventually, the Oklahoma Opening Fund annual funding should be increased to \$50 million.

Oklahoma should consider funding micro-loans of \$50k or less to Oklahoma businesses for start-up or expansion. The same restrictions should be applied to the micro-loans as the Oklahoma Opening Fund.

Oklahoma should conduct a regularly scheduled survey of private sector employers to assess the needs of Oklahoma businesses. This survey should be conducted by the Governor's office or the Department of Commerce.

In order to make it easier and more streamlined to start a new business, Oklahoma could establish a common state database for all agencies' licensing and permit requirements and forms.

Oklahoma should continue its efforts to recruit new businesses from outside the state, but first and foremost, we should focus on new growth and expansion of Oklahoma companies and Oklahoma start-ups.

Oklahoma should review and if necessary revise/reform the tax structure, the workers' compensation system, and the existing rules and regulations that impede business development and expansion. The review of the tax structure should be conducted by a blue-ribbon panel formed by the governor. Tax reform should aim to achieve a tax structure that is conducive to growth, fair to all Oklahomans, and provides adequate funding for Oklahoma's needs. The workers' comp system should be reformed to provide an-opt out option. The workers comp system could also reduce costs and improve predictability by changing it from a judicial system to an administrative system.

Oklahoma should build alliances with native American tribes. Oklahoma should host a conference to be attended by Oklahoma's federal delegation, Oklahoma's governor, and elected leaders of Native American Tribes to develop a strong plan for doing business together.

State agencies need to form formal and informal relationships with Native American tribes for consultation on mutual interests, similar to Executive Order 13175. Each agency has an employee designated to work with tribes. The current tribal liason position for Tribal affairs should be made a cabinet position.

The Angel Fund Network in Oklahoma should work with the Tribes to link capital to business opportunities.

Oklahoma should renew its focus and adequately fund incubator programs already in place like OCAST and I2E. Oklahoma's investments in these programs should be based on clearly articulated, outcome based criteria that ensures a sufficient return on investment. Oklahoma should make rural and urban areas more attractive to young professionals.

Oklahoma should consider consolidating county governments and services. Agencies should be reformed to make them more streamlined and user friendly, and less redundant.

## ENERGY

The success of the oil and gas industry in providing abundant, cheap energy is one of the main reasons for the unprecedented prosperity enjoyed by the US and the rest of the developed world. Oklahoma -- first as a Territory, then as a State -- has been one of the most rewarding areas to look for these energy products. According to the IPAA 2010-11 report, Oklahoma ranks 4th in natural gas production and 7th in oil production.

### **Addressing our current State Energy Plan, what are the strengths and weaknesses and what improvements need to be made?**

The *Oklahoma First Energy Plan* proposed by Governor Mary Fallin and Secretary of Energy Mike Ming, provides a balanced approach to energy development, electric generation, and economic development through the following objectives:

1. Encourage the continued responsible development of natural gas and oil and promote new and existing market opportunities that enhance reliance on Oklahoma resources for economic growth.
2. Encourage the robust build out of Oklahoma's wind industry by strategically connecting Oklahoma wind resources to primary load centers across the state and to export markets, as well as encourage the naturally complementary partnership of wind and natural gas.
3. Promote opportunities to enhance Oklahoma coal production and streamline state processes to create effective regulation.
4. Harness the potential of all Oklahoma resources to promote diverse reliable, and affordable power generation that makes the system smarter, more efficient, and more environmentally sound.
5. Empower consumers with the tools and information necessary to make informed energy decisions, taking advantage of efficiency opportunities that are economically feasible, in order to minimize life-cycle energy costs, maintain comfort and services, and help minimize the need for new power generation.
6. Establish efficiency targets that work to preserve energy affordability while precluding the need for new generation capacity.
7. Drive a coordinated effort between states to reach a tipping point for the production of functional and affordable original manufacturer alternative vehicles.
8. Provide the foundation for a competitive, trained world-class energy workforce.
9. Leverage all Oklahoma resources to provide a clean environment and spur economic growth.
10. Establish Oklahoma as the nation's capital for unconventional and renewable biofuel resource development.

The panel members support many of the provisions of the *Oklahoma First Energy Plan* and largely agree with pursuing a diverse energy portfolio maximizing energy efficiency, responsible oil and natural gas production, renewable energy (wind, solar, geothermal)

development and infrastructure build-out, Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) infrastructure investment, and retention and attraction of an efficient, highly-trained energy workforce.

First, an Oklahoma energy strategy must prioritize consumer sensitivities, such as affordability, reliability, and environmental sustainability. While electric portfolio diversification is a priority for most Oklahomans, broad support exists for finding the most cost-effective energy production. Accordingly, continued support for production and enhanced consumption of natural gas for electricity generation is apparent as a means to keep costs low for consumers, while driving economic development in Oklahoma. With enhanced recovery techniques increasing access to natural gas fields, an abundant supply of the low-cost energy source is available; however, electric generating entities are wary of price fluctuations in the natural gas market having a detrimental impact on price stability and affordability. It is recommended that the use of long-term natural gas supply contracts or hedging be encouraged to provide stable rates of electricity generated from natural gas and to ensure an outlet for the readily available Oklahoma resource.

In order to supply Oklahoma natural gas to in-state and out-of-state purchasers, expanded and updated infrastructure must be developed to ensure effective transport of the fuel source. More importantly, as identified in the *Oklahoma First Energy Plan*, infrastructure expansion for CNG vehicles must occur locally and nationally. Continued support for incentives must be supported to ensure such a transition, including tax credits for installation of CNG fueling infrastructure, vehicle conversion kits, and incentives for converting vehicle fleets. One panel recommended providing incentives through tax credits for research related to converting CNG to diesel, as a means of increasing CNG use without widespread implementation of CNG infrastructure. One panel discussed the creation of an energy stabilization fund with the goal of reinvestment in research and development of production efficiencies and technological advancements in the oil and gas industry. Another panel discussed creating a fund generated by natural gas revenue to ensure protection of Oklahoma's water, environment, and rural communities impacted by natural gas exploration and development.

The panelists broadly supported increasing Oklahoma's investment in infrastructure for and usage of energy generated from renewable resources, including wind, solar, and geothermal. It is specifically recommended that Oklahoma adopt a voluntary energy portfolio goal such that by 2032, Oklahoma utilize electric generation from renewable sources, including wind, solar, and geothermal, for twenty five percent (25%) of its total electric portfolio. One panel mentioned nuclear energy as an option in a balanced electric portfolio.

While the cost of solar generated electricity may not make financial sense at this time, Oklahoma should strive to identify barriers to effective use of solar panels (photovoltaic, cellular, etc.) for power generation and self-sufficiency by the year 2032. Steps could include increased investment in renewable energy research and development at our state universities and encouraging concurrent use of natural gas and wind easements for solar development to maximize transport corridors. In particular, research and development of solar and wind storage devices, such as batteries, should be a focal point of investment in the energy plan.

According to the United States Department of Energy, Oklahoma ranks as one of the top ten states with the most installed wind generated electricity in the nation and the most potential for wind development. Unfortunately, the most productive locations for wind energy development are located long distances from heavy electric load centers, such as Oklahoma City, Tulsa, Dallas, and Denver. The absence and cost of constructing transmission systems for these wind centers is a major impediment to developing this abundant, clean resource. The panelists

urge swift approval of transmission infrastructure and removal of regulatory hurdles at the appropriate state and federal agencies. Also, it is recommended that Congress authorize the production tax credit for wind energy development on a longer, more reliable basis, and that the Oklahoma Legislature and Governor should commit to providing Oklahoma ad valorem exemptions and other incentives for the wind industry, independent of Congressional action on the production tax credit. As with solar energy, more research at the state-funded institutions of higher education needs to be focused upon addressing storage of energy produced by wind and solar sources.

Another renewable source of energy readily available in Oklahoma is generated through geothermal systems. With one of the largest geothermal development companies in the world located in Oklahoma City, it is imperative to utilize this readily available resource that is highly efficient. As a policy, the state should make geothermal energy a preference in all state-owned facilities and schools under new construction or renovation to encourage efficiency and environmental sustainability. Also, the state should incentivize both commercial and residential installation of geothermal systems by allowing either rebates or tax credits for their purchase and installation.

Energy conservation and efficiency programs, such as demand side management, should be more emphasized in the *Oklahoma First Energy Plan*. Conservation and efficiency programs are considered the “low hanging fruit” in addressing energy independence and security. Reducing the amount of energy supply required for our state ultimately impacts pricing, supply, and infrastructure. The state and its agencies, including the Oklahoma Corporation Commission, should encourage more robust efficiency and conservation programs, incentivize residential and commercial retrofits with tax credits and rebates, and swiftly approve aggressive energy efficiency plans for Oklahoma’s electric utilities and their residential, commercial and industrial customers.

A longterm goal for an energy plan in Oklahoma should include recruiting, training, and retaining qualified workers for new energy projects and related infrastructure. One panel recommended offering training programs in this field for members of the United States military no longer on active duty. Additionally, the panel recommended training prisoners to perform duties in the traditional and renewable energy field and connecting them with energy companies upon their release for employment, since energy companies are struggling to fill all open positions with qualified candidates in Oklahoma.

In order to increase tax revenue from the oil and gas industry, one panel recommended that Oklahoma close the tax exemptions for horizontal drilling, since it was originally offered to encourage investment in the risky new process, and horizontal drilling is now an accepted industry practice. Regulatory agencies responsible for the oversight and enforcement of laws applicable to the energy industry should be fully funded and not dependent upon revenue generation through fees or punitive fines. Also, as the “Big Ideas Taskforce” determined that Oklahoma’s regulatory burdens are relatively light, a focus should be placed on providing efficient, effective customer relations by the agency for the public and the regulated entities.

Another panel recommended the consolidation of all energy related agencies and commissions into a single Oklahoma Department of Energy, including for example the Oklahoma Corporation Commission, the Oklahoma Department of Mines, the LP Gas Commission, to effectively implement the Oklahoma energy plan.

Oklahoma should encourage water reuse in the energy production process.



One panel recommended that a regional plan should be developed addressing energy production, consumption, transmission and distribution. Another panel recommended that Oklahoma's elected leadership encourage the adoption of a National Energy Plan reflective of the principles set forth in *Oklahoma First Energy Plan*.

**What specific recommendations would you make to accelerate its growth and contribution to jobs, wealth, and life-changing innovation in our State?**

Oklahoma needs to invest on a large scale in bioscience to create critical mass. Oklahoma must provide more funding support, through seed capital, at the entry level of bioscience research. We must increase available capital to construct and/or improve facilities in public and private research facilities, bioscience plants and laboratories. To create this additional capital, Oklahoma should raise taxes and/or seek private funding/investment.

Oklahoma should support and adequately fund OCAST and similar programs. Reconstitute the EDGE fund or a similar fund to provide an endowment to provide funding and incentives to bioscience companies.

Oklahoma must expand the available venture capital to Oklahoma companies. As discussed earlier, two means suggested are Regionalization and Crowd Funding. Another suggestion is that Oklahoma create a billion dollar endowed fund dedicated to providing investment capital to private entities performing research and development in high-tech fields. Further, the earlier suggestion of tax credits for filing and maintenance fees paid to the USPTO would be useful in making Oklahoma a technology friendly business environment.

Oklahoma should create partnerships between the state, the universities and private industry to expand bioscience research and development. The money spent on research by these entities needs to be increased. We need more students involved in bioscience research.

Oklahoma needs to incentivize banks, venture capitalists and retirement funds to invest in entrepreneurs in Oklahoma. Oklahoma should create a program to provide micro- finance loans to bioscience companies.

Oklahoma should ensure that all start-up companies receiving equity funding from any state program be required to include a provision in their contracts that such funding be repaid if they cease operating in Oklahoma.

Schools need to include biosciences in their curriculum to develop the workforce needed to attract bioscience companies to Oklahoma. Oklahoma could provide additional funding to Oklahoma's Universities to train professionals for the bioscience industry. It is suggested that in order to attract high tech bioscience research and jobs, Oklahoma must improve its math and science achievement. Oklahoma should hire teachers with specializations in physics and life sciences. Teachers with subject expertise should be utilized to teach math and sciences. Further, Oklahoma should expand funding to the Oklahoma School for Science and Mathematics. Math and science teachers already in the classroom should be required to attend faculty development institutes to enhance their skills.

Oklahoma should specifically recruit bioscience companies. Oklahoma should encourage continued and expanded research in bioscience fields where we already have a competitive advantage, such as agricultural biosciences.

Oklahoma should modernize and re-structure the current economic development programs to create new technology-based economic development programs. However, we must protect and preserve the economic development financial incentives already in place. In order for this to be effective, we must find or create an adequate funding source .

In order to avoid the negative stigma Oklahoma receives based on the introduction of bizarre legislation related to biosciences, it was suggested that the legislative staff should consult with a scientist who is an expert in the field before legislation related to biosciences is introduced.

**What long term systemic changes and short term actions does Oklahoma need to make to increase the rate of exporting over the next 20 years?**

Any effort to expand the rate of export from Oklahoma over the next 20 years begins with developing a sound understanding and appreciation for international business and culture during the education of our future workforce. A specific recommendation is that students begin foreign language training in primary school, with the goal of having a foreign language immersion program or school in each community across Oklahoma within 20 years. Educating students on the importance of Oklahoma's export economy and international culture should be emphasized at the primary, secondary, post-secondary, and continuing education levels. Oklahoma's current and future workforce should be trained in the logistics of international business and trade, opportunities and available resources for international trade, and the guiding principles of international business, including foreign trade laws, tariffs, and other import/export policies.

Institutions of higher education with specialized programs or networks in international trade should partner with the State Department of Commerce, Chambers of Commerce, and small business organizations to offer language training, cultural assistance, business opportunity networking, and research on international industry trends. Programs offered, like those at the University of Tulsa that provide specific foreign language training for business programs focused on certain regions, should be emulated and offered in institutions across the state. Additionally, post-secondary institutions should partner with private industry, the Department of Commerce, and Chambers of Commerce to conduct research on international trade trends and markets for Oklahoma products.

One panel recommended the creation of an International Language Center in Oklahoma through a university or community college to educate Oklahoma businesses on the cultures with which they are doing business and offer foreign language training with an emphasis on trade language.

Oklahoma has a vast amount of resources available to encourage and further develop its rate of export and international trade; however, many businesses are unaware of each individual program, necessitating a more centralized exchange of information and resources. Such a centralized database/exchange/clearinghouse should be developed between private industry, trade associations (Chambers of Commerce, etc.), the Oklahoma Department of Commerce, and the state's institutions of higher education to expand the volume and variety of information that is critical to successfully exporting Oklahoma products. To ensure maximum effectiveness, such a clearinghouse must be adequately and consistently funded with enough resource specialists to help Oklahoma businesses with their international ventures. In addition to containing comprehensive information regarding foreign trade laws, import/export policies & practices, international standards and specifications for international trade, the clearinghouse should offer web-based seminars and trainings for Oklahoma businesses and students to better understand the opportunities and procedures involved with conducting international business. The clearinghouse should feature information on how to access and communicate with United States Trade Delegates, the United States Department of Agriculture Foreign Markets Division, US

Export Assistance Centers, Foreign Trade Zones, OSU SBDC International Trade Center and the Oklahoma Quality Awards Foundation, Creation of Export/International Business Strategy, opportunities for Foreign Direct Investment, and the programs available through each of these entities. This one-stop-shop would be a highly effective resource for companies engaging in international trade and export.

One panel recommended that the state require at least one international trade specialist at each Small Business Development Center paid for from revenues generated from fees on businesses that successfully export their products from Oklahoma. Another panel recommended that the Department of Commerce track international exporting from Oklahoma and seek foreign direct investment from countries with the most frequent trade with Oklahoma. Oklahoma needs to target foreign business incubator programs that would bring new technologies to our state and in turn benefit our economy by potential foreign direct investment. The Department of Commerce and the Chambers of Commerce need to communicate more effectively to fully develop direct foreign investment opportunities. One panel recommended the creation of an Immigrant Investment Regional Center to serve as a source of capital for foreign direct investment, identify new trade markets, and coordinate with the US Trade Office in Oklahoma City. Specifically, the Governor's International Team should develop a strategic plan to increase exporting and foreign direct investment. Another panel recommended the state develop a statewide Export Plan like the *Oklahoma First Energy Plan*.

Through monitoring and collecting data on Oklahoma export trends, the Department of Commerce should expand its presence globally to countries with trade relationships with Oklahoma companies, much like it has with China, even placing representatives from the Department in those countries. Oklahoma should establish an import/export exchange under the Department of Commerce that mitigates risk to Oklahoma businesses that export products overseas.

As a tool for keeping business costs low by managing tariffs, Foreign Trade Zones should be better publicized and marketed by the Department of Commerce, the Chambers of Commerce, and the Governor's International Team. One panel recommended expanding satellite locations for the Foreign Trade Zones to encourage more investment in trade in areas across the state and streamline trade and manufacturing processes. For example, Foreign Trade Zones can be utilized to gather components for wind turbine development, assembly of the product, and export of the finished product to international wind farms. Another recommendation is to make the entire state of Oklahoma a Foreign Trade Zone.

As one of the largest employers and economic developers in the state, partnerships with tribal governments and their economic development entities should be pursued as a means of expanding import and export opportunities, in addition to expanding Foreign Trade Zone business. Tribal governments and businesses are already engaging in international trade and should be consulted with to identify and maximize trade relationships due to their unique access to federal programs and international business opportunities. The Department of Commerce and the Chambers of Commerce should seek to partner with tribally owned businesses, such as Small Business Association designated 8(a) corporations, to identify opportunities for federal and international contracting.

The export of value-added products, energy technology and services, and aerospace components is one of the largest components of Oklahoma's export trade. As such, Oklahoma should build upon these successes and continue to identify and develop these products for trade in other nations. Greater investment in value-added exports should include pharmaceutical

products, medical equipment, energy technology and equipment, intellectual property and electronics. Food and agricultural based value-added products are great options for exporting beyond Oklahoma's borders; however, we also need to identify opportunities for enhancing the supply chain and processing facilities in Oklahoma, thus reducing the need to export the raw and value-added product and vertically integrating the process within our state's borders.

Instrumental to maintaining and expanding Oklahoma's export industry is the infrastructure for transporting these products. Oklahoma must dedicate ample funding for the maintenance and construction of Oklahoma's roadways, bridges, railways, airports, and navigable rivers to ensure continued growth in export and international trade, regardless of barriers for funding at the federal level. The state must make a commitment to its infrastructure and develop a plan for addressing it, independent of federal funding. Specifically, the state must address the deficiencies with the Port of Catoosa and the Kerr-McClellan Navigation System by implementing a plan for dredging, expanding and deepening the Port and the System, raising the bridges and relocating rail access to the Port. One recommendation is that the powers of the Port Trust Authority be expanded to authorize them to address and assess regional transportation needs. Another recommendation is that the State of Oklahoma, the State of Arkansas, the impacted Tribal Governments, and the City of Tulsa form a partnership to collaborate on the longterm maintenance and development of the Navigation System and its support infrastructure, initially conducting a Return on Investment study on a strategic plan for this system.

In light of Oklahoma's health crisis and costs, ranking 49<sup>th</sup> and 50<sup>th</sup> in many health indicators, community health professionals and appropriate planning disciplines should be involved in the planning and implementation of public infrastructure.

Efforts at developing intermodal transport, such as those occurring in Tulsa, must be supported to provide adequate infrastructure and attract investment, both domestic and foreign. In addition, facilities such as the intermodal transload facility in Oklahoma City should be expanded throughout the state. A public-private partnership on developing these facilities and upgrading and maintaining critical rail and road infrastructure should be a commitment of the state.

Representatives from State government, municipal government, Department of Transportation, utility companies, tribes, and other vested public and/or private companies and planning agencies should work together to prioritize and allocate funding for infrastructure. In any event, Oklahoma needs to find or create a very large, dedicated funding source for infrastructure improvements.

## POSSIBLE FUNDING SOURCES

Oklahoma could issue state bonds while interest rates are so low. In order to accomplish this, we need to start building support across the state for long-term bonding to fund infrastructure.

Form public-private partnerships to raise funds for infrastructure. In these partnerships, the public entity would transfer property rights to the private entity. The private entity would invest in infrastructure and sell use of the infrastructure. Once the private entity receives an agreed upon return on investment or passage of a pre-determined amount of time, the private entity would transfer the improved property back to the public entity.

Create State infrastructure Bank that has two independent agencies. One agency would be dedicated to handling SIB revolving funds. The second agency would be dedicated to

handling appropriations and/or bond issues for infrastructure projects other than roads and bridges.

Oklahoma could sell the income stream from the turnpikes to create a large amount of immediately available cash.

Increase partnerships between municipal/county/state governments and tribal governments to fund infrastructure improvements within those tribal nations. Many tribal nations are already making substantial contributions to the infrastructure within their nations, through partnerships and on their own.

Oklahoma could institute a state run vehicle inspection program. It was suggested that an inspection could be conducted every two years at the cost of \$30 per inspection. These funds would be dedicated to improve roads and bridges.

Oklahoma could charge an additional fuel tax on commercial trucks to pay for the additional stress they place on the roads and bridges. Again, this additional revenue should be dedicated to improve roads and bridges.

## PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Oklahoma should develop a regional multi-modal public transportation system. It should include the existing bus systems and a new high-speed passenger rail system. The high-speed rail system should connect each of the metropolitan areas of Oklahoma to other metro areas in the region. The development of the high-speed rail system should be done through public-private partnerships. The development of the intermodal system should incorporate existing technology to enhance its efficiency.

## TELECOM

Oklahoma needs to expand broadband in urban and rural areas. We should expand broadband networks in the metro areas by implementing minimum bandwidth requirements. This could enable city-wide WiFi networks. We should study cities that have already been successful in this endeavor. Oklahoma should extend broadband connectivity to rural areas to increase accessibility for business uses, educational uses and individual uses.

## PORT OF CATOOSA

Oklahoma must work to secure federal funds for repairs and improvements to the Port of Catoosa. Oklahoma should be mindful of the compatibility with containers used at Oklahoma's ports when developing infrastructure. It is important to be aware of the compatibility of trucks and rail transportation when developing the infrastructure at the ports.

## CNG

Oklahoma should support Governor Fallin's initiative to increase use of CNG in the state's fleet. Oklahoma should invest in the infrastructure to allow widespread use of CNG. These investments would include ensuring that CNG fueling stations are placed throughout the state. Based on new market forces and trends, more private companies in Oklahoma are beginning to include CNG fueling systems at their traditional gas stations.

## ROADS

Oklahoma must prioritize the allocation of funds for roads based on need rather than popularity. We need to find or develop a private funding source for roads and bridges.

Oklahoma should initiate a study to determine the impact and value of existing toll roads, identifying the potential additional opportunities for toll systems, and verifying Oklahoma toll roads are based on a rational pricing model that properly reflects the utilization and time-value of money. In order to improve safety, Oklahoma should expand the installation of cable guards on highways.

We should maintain the present allocation to the roads fund for the Bridge Improvement Modernization Plan over the next seven years.

## CYBER SECURITY

Widespread concern about the potential for a terrorist cyber attack was expressed. Oklahoma must put in place top-notch cyber security to protect critical infrastructure.

## WATER/ WATER SYSTEMS

Oklahoma needs to diversify the ways we fund municipal water systems. Suggested possibilities include a state funded water program for the entire state, or privatization of every rural water district so they can obtain private financing. A proposed plan to manage the state's water distribution systems is to encourage and incentivize regionalization.

Additionally, Oklahomans can reduce the stress on our water systems by conserving water. We should encourage voluntary water conservation measures such as those identified in the Water for 2060 Act that was enacted in the 2012 session of the Oklahoma Legislature. It was even suggested that we stop washing our cars and watering our lawns (unless using grey water).

### **What long term (systemic changes) and short term (1 to 5 years) actions does Oklahoma need to make to increase the effectiveness of regionalism over the next 20 years?**

The Oklahoma Academy Town Hall recommends abolishing or consolidating the current county structure by 2032. The current system is antiquated; the state no longer needs 77 counties. The historic county lines, while well reasoned and useful at the time of statehood, have become arbitrary and are blurred by the increasing use of technology. Additionally, the current system is inefficient, ineffective and increases competition among municipalities and counties for resources. Further, regionalization or consolidation could help municipalities and regions resolve existing conflicts over resources such as water and reliance on sales tax income.

While the Town Hall overwhelmingly agreed that consolidation would be in the best interest of not only the individual regions but the state as a whole as well, there was little agreement in regard to what regionalization or consolidation would look like or how it would be accomplished. Because consolidating the county structure will require a constitutional amendment, the Town Hall made a number of suggestions as to how to approach and incentivize regionalization over the next one to five years.

In the short term, an approach to regionalization (be it abolition, consolidation, modernization or rightsizing) should be determined based on not only the current but predicted cultural and economic trends. One panel suggested reviewing a map of Oklahoma without the county lines to identify the natural order and boundaries of population density, topography and economic activity. Such a review would assist the resulting regional structures in identifying a common vision and creating a strategic plan. Universities could also be utilized for identifying best practices for regionalism, and the Oklahoma Academy could hold regional Town Halls focusing on consolidation.

The cost of providing many government services such as jails, courts, schools, roads and administrative services is high and these services are often unnecessarily duplicated. Oklahoma should encourage intergovernmental and inter local cooperation to reduce the duplication of services and increase the efficiency and effectiveness of services. An example given by one panel included reintroducing legislation that allows municipalities to create fire districts, which requires people in the district to pay a tax to support the service.

Communities and community leaders could be induced to act in a collective manner through education and incentives. They should be made aware of the existing entities, resources and vehicles dedicated to collaboration that are available to them such as Oklahoma Municipal League, Leadership Oklahoma and the Oklahoma Academy. These organizations also encourage and help community leaders develop relationships.

Other organizations like the Tulsa Metro Chamber, OneVoice, Southwest Oklahoma Impact Coalition (SOIC) and the USDA SET (Stronger Economies Together) program are examples of models that bring people to the table to discuss regional issues. Raising awareness of these organizations and the positive impacts from their efforts can encourage regional thinking and help combat fear that smaller rural areas will be controlled by or left out by larger areas. Additionally, the proven successes of these programs could demonstrate the potential savings of consolidation.

The Town Hall discussed a number of other opportunities for consolidation including the state's more than 500 K-12 school districts, higher education institutions and workforce development projects. While individual schools should mostly remain intact, school districts could be consolidated. We encourage further research by Oklahoma's elected officials, education stakeholders, and other vested parties to arrive at strategies of greatest benefit to the state of Oklahoma.

Workforce investment projects are divided up like counties; oversight is difficult and highly polarized. Taking a regional approach to workforce development would better address the needs of industries. The Southwest Oklahoma Impact Coalition is a good model for regional workforce development. SOIC is the collaboration between industries and education. Modeling regional workforce development after SOIC could be successful because it demonstrates how community representation, strong leadership, perseverance and collaboration lead to the successful implementation of regional projects.

While there was overwhelming support for consolidation amongst participants of the Town Hall, there was a minority who expressed concern. Short term approaches to regionalization that identify demographic, topographical and economic commonalities and collaborations could help reveal the benefits of consolidation as well as ease concerns. Keeping municipalities intact as counties consolidate will help preserve local identity and access to government representatives and officials.

As an alternative to mandated consolidation, one panel suggested Mutually Beneficial Associations (MBAs), which would be self-selected based on common interests and goals. MBAs could build on already existing regional collaboration and could include multi-state regions. Savings from cost sharing could be returned to MBA members. Examples of MBAs include the partnership of public and private entities in SW Oklahoma to pursue economic development in the region and the Center for Innovation in Arlington, TX, which serves a multi-state region as a collaborative effort to advance the needs of the region with a special emphasis on technology. Implementation of MBAs should be assisted with meetings, progress could be measured with identified benchmarks and findings could be shared state wide.

## **Describe Oklahoma 2032 -- Prosperity Unleashed: Utilizing the Society, Technology, Economy, Environment, and Politics (“STEEP”) model.**

After discussing these broad-ranging topics, their impact on Oklahoma, and potential methods of implementing solutions, our panelists were asked to describe their vision of Oklahoma in 2032. What would they like Oklahoma to be like in 20 years and what do they think will remain the same? We hope that the discussions above will help Oklahoma reach the goals set forth below.

The Oklahoma of 2032 will unleash a new level of prosperity, community, and economic development through improvements in education, innovation, job creation, and transformation. The Oklahoma of 2032 will benefit from a diverse and robust energy economy, rich and healthy natural resources, and strong families! While our economy and technology will change over 20 years, our values will remain the same, centered around healthy communities, families, and environments. Prosperity will no longer be tied to a monetary evaluation, but to the level of being content with their community and interpersonal relationships.

### **SOCIETY**

In 2032, Oklahoma will no longer rank near the bottom of the 50 United States in categories such as obesity, hunger, education, high-school drop outs, female incarceration, sex trafficking, and infrastructure. Incarceration rates will be nowhere near where they are today due to successful criminal justice reform, decreases in drug and alcohol abuse, and world-leading rehabilitation and drug court programs.

While the divide will continue to persist between our urban, suburban and rural communities, the demographics in each area will shift to a more religiously, culturally, and ethnically diverse population, with a minority-majority, younger average age, and better educated community. Oklahoma will have a strong middle class, with talented individuals from Oklahoma and around the world who reside in Oklahoma because of the strong communities, quality education, excellent infrastructure, and quality jobs. Additionally, due to an aging population, the wealth will shift to a new generation of young professionals. Also, Oklahoma will be safe for women and will include more ethnic, religious, and sexual based minorities in local government.

By 2032, Oklahoma will have adopted a Pre K-20 education model, integrating all levels of education in Oklahoma, including primary, secondary, vocational, and post-secondary. The university system will work in a “One Oklahoma” model, collaborative working to build strong programs unique to each institution and sharing resources on all fronts. With the most qualified instructors from STEM fields and liberal arts programs, our children will be the best-prepared students for their profession or post-secondary education in the nation. Our children will also be proficient in life skills. The major universities in Oklahoma will achieve and maintain their status as Tier One research universities.

Through strong communities come swift, organized responses to disasters. In 2032, a statewide initiative will have been adopted for each community to implement neighborhood disaster plans. Social impact bonds will be sold by agencies and non-profits to private foundations and will be paid as benchmarks of community impact are attained. With a drastic increase in wealth and prosperity, more money will be donated to non-profit organizations that will effectively work to address our societal issues alongside limited government programs. The wealth generated in Oklahoma will be reinvested in the people of Oklahoma.



Strong, functioning families will be the norm in Oklahoma, with a reduction in single-parent households, out-of-wedlock births, and dependence upon government assistance. By 2032, government assistance and non-profit programs will be coupled with single card technology that will make it possible to manage service delivery and discourage individual abuse of public and non-public resources while avoiding “cost-shifting” and maximizing delivery of services to those needing it.

## TECHNOLOGY

A prosperous Oklahoma in 2032 will include technologically advanced, affordable health systems, a superior statewide intermodal public transportation system, and a robust technology economy based upon advances in traditional and renewable energy production and delivery, aerospace, nanotechnology, and healthcare. The Oklahoma of 2032 will be a global leader in biotechnology.

Utilizing advanced technology for health records and medical diagnostics will revolutionize the quality of care provided across Oklahoma, allowing the most rural community to access medical specialists and the best equipment.

Advances in telecommunication will empower Oklahoma in 2032 to have an advanced statewide broadband network, empowering students to have virtual classrooms, effective distance learning, and global interaction with classrooms in various cultures and countries. Students will use the best technology available to maximize resources and prepare students for professional development, moving beyond hard-cover textbooks and oversized classrooms.

In 2032, Oklahoma homes and businesses will have self-sufficient energy systems due to advances generated from research conducted in Oklahoma on solar, wind, geothermal, natural gas, and energy efficiency technologies.

## ECONOMY

In 2032, Oklahoma’s economy will be much more diversified than in 2012, relying not simply on commodity and natural resource production, but on value-added products, biotechnology, energy technology and delivery systems, and entrepreneurial development based on our pioneering spirit. Sound infrastructure will exist across the state with vast public projects, funded through programs based upon the MAPS model implemented in Oklahoma City.

Oklahoma in 2032 will embrace public-private partnerships including non-profit and for-profit businesses working with the government to accomplish the objectives discussed throughout this document. Additionally, collaborative efforts between tribal governments and economic development entities, the private sector, and the state government will increase to a level equaling an unprecedented level of resource leverage and job creation.

As a center of excellence for research and development, energy innovation, and biotechnology, quality employers will locate their headquarters to Oklahoma communities, providing quality jobs and stable economies. Oklahoma City’s Will Rogers International Airport will be a global hub for domestic and international airlines, transporting products and people from around the world. As such, Oklahoman’s will have a broader international presence with extensive cultural exchanges, presence of foreign consulates in Oklahoma, export arrangements, and direct foreign investment. Oklahoma’s drastic economic improvement and global attitude will put our state in a position to compete for the World Olympics.

Oklahoma will have a Clinton-Sherman corridor from Burns Flat to Fort Sill with restricted airspace to allow flights of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV) at unrestricted speeds

and altitudes. In addition, an increased focus on research and development opportunities in UAVs and Unmanned Aerial Surveillance in an effort to lead the world in such development. Connected to this effort will be an international space port at Burns Flat that includes the most advanced landing infrastructure for space transport and interplanetary remotely piloted vehicles.

Rural and urban areas will enjoy a boom in food and value-added product development through micro-farms, local food hubs, and integrated food systems.

Create an Oklahoma entertainment hub as a means to nurture and retain Oklahoma's wealth of musical talent and attract tourism.

## ENVIRONMENT

Communities in Oklahoma in 2032 will have safer, cleaner air and water, with soundly planned transportation corridors, effective public transportation, and roads and sidewalks that encourage walking and biking. An abundance of water will be available across the state, providing the needs of each region without taking from another region's resources. As such, water will give Oklahoma a competitive advantage and be recognized for its recreational and ecological value.

Oklahoma will focus on developing products that are able to be recycled and have efficient systems for recycling products into useable, exportable products.

## POLITICS

In 2032, there will be an underlying aspirational attitude at all levels of state and local governments and the citizens of Oklahoma. Due to technological advances, government services will be highly transparent and accountable at all levels of government. Local government will shift to the regional level, rather than county fiefdoms. The state, local and regional governing efforts will be less dependent upon the federal government to address our issues. Government services will be provided on a more limited and efficient basis after identifying which services were considered "core" and implementing technological efficiencies.

The extremism evident in the political environment in 2012 will be diminished because of a highly educated populace and changes to the political system in Oklahoma. Oklahoma will operate on a plurality party system, a system where we can elect a third-party or independent candidate without restriction. Some panels recommended that in 2032 political parties will no longer be the dividing line in Oklahoma politics because elections will be non-partisan.

We recommend that the Oklahoma Academy Board consider a Town Hall with the suggested theme and title of "The Oklahoma Family and Prosperity."

## CONCLUSION

Where will Oklahoma be in 20 years? We hope to reach the goals listed above and address the issues discussed throughout this document in an efficient, successful manner. As with previous visioning processes facilitated by the Oklahoma Academy, many of the recommendations included herein will become policy recommendations, and some will become law. Ultimately, each one of us bears an obligation to implement these changes for a more prosperous, healthy Oklahoma.