

# Oklahoma's Nursing Times



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# Allie Sanders, RN

Career includes working in the liver transplant unit at INTEGRIS Baptist Medical Center for six years before joining Community Hospital.

story and photo by James Coburn, Staff Writer

Allie Sanders, RN, said there were no big surprises when transitioning to HPI Community Hospital North, located in Oklahoma City, where she works pre-op and phase two nursing at the hospital. It was smooth sailing.

However, a lot of learning was involved after coming from a different facility.

Her career includes working in the liver transplant unit at INTEGRIS Baptist Medical Center for six years before joining Community Hospital.

"I really enjoyed it, but I wanted a change of pace and a different schedule," Sanders said. "I really like it here. Hospitals are great, but here it truly is a community. You have friends that are going to become lifetime friends. It's like a family setting. We have great

bosses that support you and I like all the physicians. They know your name. They are not just somebody who's calling. They can trust in you, know who you are and will say hi."

She will greet patients after they are registered. After asking them a series of questions to document their health history, medications, and allergies. Antibiotics and medications may be given. Sometimes, some shaving and compression hose are provided prior to surgery. Sanders said it's nice to be a calming person to alleviate their nervous tension.

"You will see somebody when you get them out of the waiting room, and you can physically tell they are just so scared of their procedure," Sanders explained.

She sees a lot of high school wrestlers, baseball, basketball, and

football players.

"It might be someone's first time having a surgery because we do get teens and people in their early 20s that have just never had anything done, and they're shaking. Some of them are crying. And you be the person that explains everything, calms them, makes them laugh."

She tries to get to know young athletes by asking what sports they play and talk about what they enjoy doing — all this to distract their emotions away from fear.

Nobody likes being poked and prodded for an intravenous injection. It's human nature.

"Everybody is nervous about going back. And that's the time they have a lot of questions, and their blood pressure is high," Sanders said. "We just try to smooth the way for them, so they have a good surgery."

The post-op part of surgery involves taking the patient to "phase-2 recovery." Education is provided during this time that includes a family member or a primary caretaker. Patients are taught what they will need during their recovery process at home. They learn when their dressing

may be removed, if they can put weight on their extremity, and about 911 calls. Patients are evaluated if they need to go home with crutches, ice packs, among other items.

Patients remember Community Hospital, and if needed, will return there for different surgeries. She also assists in pain related procedures. So, it becomes even more common for her to see the same people who return for pain procedures. These patients normally have a series of injections.

The nursing staff is updated on best practices by having quarterly staff meetings. These staff meetings occur sooner when necessary. Nurses learn of impending changes.

"I feel like our anesthesiologists do a really good job here in keeping up with what's pertinent to the time," she continued.

The longevity of the nursing staff speaks for an atmosphere of shared governance where nurses' opinions matter. Nurses bring their learned experiences to

Seeg SANDERS Page 3

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Allie Sanders, RN, is a team member who brings an empathetic love for patients at HPI Community Hospital North, located in Oklahoma City.

**SANDERS**  
Continued from Page 2

the forefront of building careers.

“We all come together and work really well as a team,” Sanders said. “I think if we’ve worked as nurses for a while, we understand how important that is.”

A gift from her career has brought an awareness that as a young woman, she can handle more challenges than she ever dreamed of achieving.

“Sometimes things are really stressful and there’s a lot going on, but I’ve definitely learned how to prioritize and stay focused,” she said.

Sanders said nursing has made her more patient. And she notices that people have more dimensions than she realized.

“Not everything is black and white, and what you see is not necessarily why they are acting the

way they are,” she said.

Sanders has come a long way since 2016 when she earned an Associate Degree in Nursing at OSU/OKC, and later achieved her Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree at Oklahoma Panhandle State University, located in Goodwell.

Her life is well structured. Sanders recently arrived at work at 5 a.m., an hour not uncommon for many nurses. And she left work mid-afternoon.

“I would say when I go home, I like to walk,” she said.

She enjoys dinner time and trying new restaurants with family. And she responds when family members or friends ask her for advice when feeling sick. Plus, her smile is good medicine.

For more information about HPI Community Hospital North visit <https://communityhospitalokc.com/>

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# McCabe Returns to School to Pursue Degree in OCU's Accelerated Bachelor of Science in Nursing Program

by Van Mitchell - staff writer

Karen McCabe graduated from Southern Arkansas University with a degree in biology and chemistry in 1996, with plans to go to medical school.

Those plans changed after feeling burnt out from school, and wanting a break.

"My original goal was to go to med school back then. That's what my degree was scheduled for and that's the track that I was on," she said. "I decided I needed to rest a little bit and never went back. I went to work for Tyson Foods, and later worked for American Freightways. I got married and had kids and was a stay-at-home mom for 14 years after that."

McCabe and her husband Shane, a State Farm reinspector, moved to Cashon in 2007. She later was recruited as a teacher for Cashon Public Schools.

"They could not find anybody to come out and teach any of the physical sciences in a rural school at that time," she said. "The superintendent found out what my degree was and asked if I would come and teach physics and chemistry and physical science, and I ended up teaching a little bit of psychology too. I did that from 2015 all the way to 2023."

McCabe said it was former students who inspired her to reignite her medical journey. She is a student with Oklahoma City University's 12-month accelerated Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) program.

"I was always encouraging them to go into the medical field and if they really enjoyed science, go all the way with it and finish big. I tried to inspire them in that way," she said. "In the end, my students ended up inspiring me to go back and do something that I should have done a long time ago."

McCabe said her goal is to become a nurse anesthetist.

"My ultimate goal now that I'm in my later years, I'm 49, is not to be a family physician. I also don't think spending 15 years or so

to specialize as a dermatologist or gastroenterologist will work best for me, either," she said. "I still want to get a doctorate of some sort, so I think I want to go the nurse anesthetist route. To do that, you have to be a nurse with a bachelor's degree, and this works really perfectly."

OCU's accelerated BSN program is the state of Oklahoma's first and only 12-month accelerated BSN. The program provides an opportunity for individuals with a non-nursing associate or bachelor's degree to earn a BSN degree in less time than a traditional baccalaureate program. This is an in-person program that consists of 56 credit hours spread over three full-time semesters during the 12-month program.

Some key features of Oklahoma City University's 12-month accelerated BSN are:

- Program consists of 56 credit hours over 12 months
- Direct transfer of previous associate or baccalaureate degree credits
- Clinical experiences at major hospital and community sites in the Oklahoma City metro area

The program will prepare you to sit for the National Council Licensure Exam (NCLEX-RN), which all prospective nurses must pass in order to be licensed in their state.

Due to the intensity of the accelerated BSN, it is strongly recommended that students do not seek employment for the duration of enrollment in the program.

"There's no way I could work and do this at the same time. I am either in class, reading my material, studying, eating, or sleeping. It's been all-consuming," McCabe said. "You have to make a 75 to pass in your courses. For some people, 75 is fine. I'm not one of those people. I put a lot of effort into making sure I know the material. It's much more rigorous than a standard four-year program."

McCabe said it has been an interesting experience being one of the older students in class.

"It's been very eye-opening



Karen McCabe is pursuing her accelerated Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree at Oklahoma City University's Kramer School of Nursing.

on what the student experiences nowadays versus when I went to school back in the 1990s. That's been quite an adjustment for me," she said.

McCabe credits OCU's Kramer School of Nursing for creating a trailblazing program.

"I feel like we are all trailblazers," she said. "OCU really thought outside

the box and implemented an incredibly marketable fast-track program, and we, as students, are going to be the first 12-month BSN graduates in the history of the state of Oklahoma. It's a pretty incredible feat for us and the university.

For more information about OCU's Kramer School of Nursing visit <https://www.okcu.edu/nursing>.

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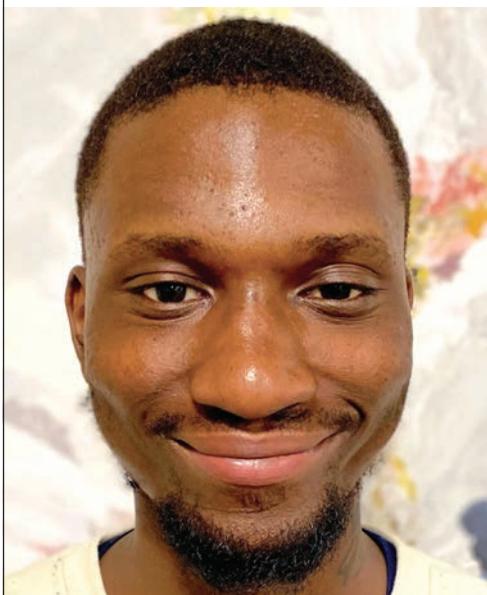
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# NURSE TALK



What was your favorite subject in grade school?

*"Definitely science, by far. They had all the field trips and dissections, and stuff like that."*



Lawrence Gaillard, CNA

*"It was history because I love to know all about the world, what's going on in the past, my country, other countries."*



Aaron Peters, CNA

*"It was math, I really loved doing it. Maybe it was the teachers I had because they were really good."*



Yerat Nieto, CNA



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# Mercy Welcomes New Chief Nursing Officer in Oklahoma City

Stephanie Clements has joined Mercy as vice president and chief nursing officer at Mercy Hospital Oklahoma City. She will also serve as community chief nursing officer with strategic oversight over nursing at Mercy hospitals across Oklahoma.

Nearly 2,400 nursing co-workers serve in Mercy facilities across Oklahoma, which represents 32% of Mercy's workforce in the Sooner State.

"We are really excited to welcome Stephanie to this important role because of her clear connection to our mission and Mercy heritage and her strong background in helping organizations excel," said Betty Jo Rocchio, chief nurse executive at Mercy. "She brings the lens of an evidence-based bedside nurse into every operational and strategic decision she makes."

Clements comes to Mercy from Baylor Scott & White Surgical Hospital in Fort Worth, Texas where she previously served as CEO and chief nursing officer.

Clements began her career in health care as a registered nurse and worked in a variety of medical specialties including labor and delivery, outpatient infusion, perioperative services, neonatal intensive care unit and medical surgical nursing. She has held every nursing position from floor nurse to charge nurse, and house supervisor to unit manager.

"The future is bright for health care in Oklahoma, and I am grateful to join Mercy at such an exciting time," said Clements. "I'm so impressed



Stephanie Clements, vice president and chief nursing officer at Mercy Hospital Oklahoma City.

with our Mercy nurses and their dedication to excellence. They are committed to delivering high quality care while also thinking outside of the box to advocate for the patients they serve. Nurses provide the framework around which care is delivered, and I believe our nurses honor that responsibility in all they do."



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SCAN ME

# Health Care Training is a Core Area of Francis Tuttle

Among the most highly regarded career training programs at Francis Tuttle Technology Center are those in the health sciences. From programs for adults looking for a new career to those designed to prepare high school students to earn a living while exploring other health career options, many are available to help people considering pursuing a career in the helping professions of health care. Francis Tuttle has experienced faculty who have worked extensively in the industry, with state-of-the-art equipment used in health and medical facilities throughout the metro area and around the country and a dedicated focus to help fill a looming skills gap. Below is a brief description of each of Francis

Tuttle's program offerings.

The **Pre-Nursing** program for adult and high school students is an exciting opportunity to explore a healthcare pathway and see what careers are available with additional training. Students gain knowledge about the broad spectrum of health professions. Students can obtain certification as a Nurse Aide (CNA) and an Advanced Unlicensed Assistant (AUA) through the program.

The unique **Respiratory Care** program for adult students works cooperatively with Oklahoma City Community College. Upon completion, students receive a Certificate of Completion from Francis Tuttle and an Associate of Applied Science degree from OCCC. Students are trained to



assist with treating individuals with pulmonary and cardiac disorders and obtain eligibility to take the national examinations to earn a Registered Respiratory Therapist (RRT) credential and apply for an Oklahoma Respiratory Care Practitioners License.

The **Practical Nursing (LPN)** program prepares adult students to provide quality health care in various settings. Three enrollment options are available to best-fit student needs: full-time, blended online, and the 1+1 program. Upon completion, students can take the

National Council Licensure Exam (NCLEX) to become a **Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN)**.

Each program offers the potential for a high-paying career, and Francis Tuttle is dedicated to serving the growing demand for a highly qualified workforce in the healthcare industry. If you're interested or know someone looking to expand their horizons through the expanding medical care field, check out these and other programs at:

<https://www.francistuttle.edu/> and get started on your future today!

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(AS PUBLISHED IN THE 2023 EDUCATION GUIDE TO NURSING)

# RSU Building Legacy of Compassionate Nurses

The RSU Department of Health Sciences offers programs in nursing and pre-allied health fields. Nursing programs include the traditional BSN in nursing, leading to RN licensure; the RN2BSN online program which allows registered nurses with an associate degree to complete a bachelor's degree; and the bridge to traditional BSN entry for LPNs or paramedics to earn their bachelor's degree. Allied health sciences options include pre-athletic training, pre-physical therapy and pre-occupational therapy. The Master of Business Administration (MBA) program at RSU now offers a concentration in Healthcare Management.

With a history of over 40 years of academic excellence, RSU's nursing program provides academic rigor and a reputation that gives RSU graduates an edge in the competitive job market. Upon graduation, RSU nursing graduate NCLEX pass rates exceed the state and national average. Approximately 95% of students report having obtained an RN position before graduation. These outcomes are credited to a quality curriculum, outstanding students, and a caring and dedicated faculty. RSU's nursing

faculty have more than 130 years of experience in both academic teaching and practical experience. Several low and high-fidelity laboratories are utilized to provide hands-on learning so that students are well prepared to deliver safe, high-quality nursing care in a variety of settings.

Students interested in attending medical school complete their undergraduate studies in medical/molecular biology. RSU's biology program has seen more than 150 students move on to professional schools pursuing medical and healthcare careers.

RSU consistently earns national recognition for affordability, both for traditional classes and its online programs. The university is routinely recognized for having one of the region's lowest student debt loads with nearly half of its graduating class earning a diploma without any student loan assistance.

The traditional BSN and RN2BSN nursing program is fully accredited by the Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing (ACEN). Being the only public residential university in the metropolitan



Tulsa area, RSU gives students a traditional college experience. With the university's proximity to Tulsa, RSU is strategically positioned geographically, fiscally and reputationally to be Oklahoma's first choice in BSN education.

RSU is committed to building a

legacy of compassionate and virtuous nurses who advocate for their patients and serve the community for years to come. For more information about RSU's nursing programs or to schedule a campus tour, visit <https://www.rsu.edu/nursing> or call

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\*Length of time required to complete degree will vary depending upon student's transfer credits.

### CONTACT INFO

Dr. Amy Richards | [arichards@rsu.edu](mailto:arichards@rsu.edu) | 918-343-7641  
 Dr. Marla Smith | [marlasmith@rsu.edu](mailto:marlasmith@rsu.edu) | 918-343-6887



**ROGERS STATE**  
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# Wesleyan University Announces Professor Greg Tackett as Dean of Health and Sciences

## Announces Additional Changes



Professor Greg Tackett, Dean of Health and Sciences.

Tackett steps into the role after serving as Instructor of Exercise Science at OKWU since joining the faculty in 2020.

Before coming to OKWU, Tackett spent years at the high school and collegiate levels, including 14 years as a high school administrator. He also

was an assistant basketball coach for five years, including a stint at Liberty University.

"This wasn't really something that I was pursuing," Tackett said of the new role. "I'm grateful that Dr. Bostwick and Dr. Dunn have the confidence in me to be able to step into the role and serve in this way".

Tackett will lead OKWU's recently restructured School of Health and Sciences, which houses OKWU's nursing, math, science, and exercise science programs. He will continue to be in the classroom with students, which he values.

"I have worked with Greg for many years," said Dr. Keri Bostwick, OKWU's provost. "He is the ultimate professional, and his leadership of faculty and curriculum comes with mission-mindedness, kindness, and wisdom. He will work tirelessly to put us where we need to be, and it is an honor to serve with him."

Tackett looks forward to working closely with this team as they lead the School of Health and Sciences in the future.

"Without a doubt, I'm excited about the outstanding veteran people that are moving into new roles," he said. "Knowing that I've got people who have experience and know what they're doing in those positions is a

huge blessing."

Tackett also noted that he will continue to serve as the faculty athletic representative at the university, working with Athletic Director Kirk Kelley and the KCAC to support OKWU's athletic programs.

For more information about The OKWU School of Nursing visit <https://www.okwu.edu/nursing>

### OKWU ADDITIONAL CHANGES

Dr. Bostwick announced several other new titles within the School of Health and Sciences as part of the transition process.

- **Dr. Rosa Ketchum** has been named the Associate Dean for Nursing and will oversee OKWU's nursing programs.
- **Dr. Brian Turner** will lead the math and science programs at OKWU as the Associate Dean.
- **Dr. Anna Mangimela** will oversee OKWU's graduate nursing degree programs.
- **Professor Danny Shedd** will serve as the Director of Exercise Science.

"I am so grateful to this entire team for their willingness to step up and step in with little interruption in our service to our students and community," Bostwick said.




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# Heartland CPR Offers Free CPR Class? FA+CPR 4 D



"First Aid + CPR 4 Dummies"

## Where can you learn CPR free of charge?

We get calls all the time asking where people can get a free CPR class, and I am tasked with telling people that they won't find a free class for those whose employment or educational facility requires certification. I usually explain that AHA materials are costly (and mandatory) for every participant, and the fee the instructor (or company) must pay for those materials account for about half of the fee charged for a given class. Since 99% of those asking must have the classes for certification, that's the end of the conversation.

Some agencies have received grants enabling them to purchase the necessary supplies to teach the most basic class, often called "CPR for Family & Friends", in communities; other groups have other revenue streams so this type of course keeps employees already on the payroll busy and their teaching skills sharp, maybe on a monthly or quarterly basis. These very basic classes have different requirements than certification classes and allows instructors to teach a far greater number of students at once, which also means less overhead cost. Even these very basic classes have become harder and harder to find without charge, probably due to fewer grants being awarded for community education opportunities. If you are one of the few that simply wants to learn CPR for your own peace of mind and don't need a certification card, we have just the ticket!

Heartland CPR has developed a short PowerPoint-based class covering basic First Aid and hands-only CPR. We offer what we call "First Aid 4 Dummies" (FA4D) to the public free of charge on a recurring basis. We rolled out this program initially to capitalize on "CPR Awareness Week" in June. Putting it on is costly for our business, so we can only offer it without charge once annually. We will make nothing by offering it and will utilize our facility, equipment, instructors, and expertise; it's just our way of giving back to a community that has allowed us to be successful since 2003.

**Mark your calendars for Monday, June 3, at 9 am.** The next of these classes will be offered at our new office location near NW 122nd & MacArthur. There is no catch...this is a free class offered to those who wish to learn simple steps they can take to respond in emergency situations and potentially save lives. Instead of charging for this valuable training, we will be accepting donations for the Regional Food Bank, so please bring a canned food or non-perishable food item with you. Since we have to know how many supplies to prepare, you must pre-register and can self-register online at <https://www.heartlandcpr.com/>, by contacting Heartland CPR via email "contact@HeartlandCPR.com" or calling by phone at 405-603-6666...simply let us know your name, email address, phone number, and the number planning to attend. That's it!

Remember, this is not for certification and targeted at those wishing to learn for their own peace of mind; if you are required to take a class for your employer or education requirements, this is not the class you need (although we can still help you there). Thanks for your interest in Heartland CPR!

Direct link: <https://www.heartlandcpr.com/freecprclass.html>

## OKNT Brandi Bass

### INTEGRIS Health Medical Group Downtown Welcomes New Family Nurse Practitioner



Brandi Bass, MSN, APRN-CNP, FNP-C, is a board-certified family nurse practitioner who received her Master's in Nursing degree from the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center in Oklahoma City. She graduated the program with special distinction.

Brandi has a strong academic background and experience in nursing. She became a Family Nurse Practitioner

Brandi Bass, MSN, APRN-CNP, FNP-C.

to care for patients in the outpatient setting and help them prevent, or better manage, existing or new acute conditions before they require inpatient hospital care.

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# INJURED OKLAHOMA FIREFIGHTER HEADS HOME FROM VALIR REHAB HOSPITAL

by Jake Strickbine

A firefighter injured battling recent wildfires took his next step toward full recovery today as he is discharged from Valir Rehabilitation Hospital in Oklahoma City.

Ronald Vasquez II, 21, was cheered by hospital staff and members of the Oklahoma City Fire Department as he left the hospital this morning.

"We are so proud to have been able to assist Mr. Vasquez on the road to recovery," said Marni Leahy, Vice President, People and Culture at Valir Health. "He has a lot of work ahead of him, but he is highly motivated, works hard and remains determined to return to firefighting. We are excited to watch his continued progress toward that goal."

Vasquez was all smiles as he left Valir Rehabilitation hospital and received a handshake from each Oklahoma City firefighter present.

"He got injured fighting the wildfires last month and like I said, for us, it

is a privilege to be here, show him support, show him that we're there for him and to honor him for the work that he did in serving Oklahoma," said Capt. John Chenoweth, assistant public information officer for the Oklahoma City Fire Department and among those on hand to wish Vasquez well as he left the rehabilitation hospital.

Vasquez, who suffered a fractured pelvis in the accident several weeks ago, remains in a wheelchair as he is not yet able to put weight on his legs. When he first started therapy at Valir, Vasquez says he was surprised at how much strength he had lost in his muscles.

"I lifted my leg and put it back down and they just started quivering. And that's something I've never had happen. It shocked me at first," Vasquez said. "But they explained to me what it was and why it's happening. And that's just my goal – to try and get



Oklahoma City firefighter, Ronald Vasquez II undergoing therapy during his stay at the hospital.

stronger every day now."

He has done just that, working hard with the team at Valir Rehabilitation Hospital to build strength, especially in his upper body and core.

"Early on, we did a lot of mobility work bedside and then activities of daily living, like getting dressed again without putting weight through the legs. Lots of strength exercises. He's going to have to have really strong shoulders to help him move without standing or pivoting just yet," explained Rebecca Henry, OT, a member of Vasquez's therapy team at Valir. "He's been an absolute dream patient. He's motivated and very focused on his goals. He's going to push himself and he's not going to give up."

Vasquez, a firefighter with the Greenleaf Volunteer Fire Department in rural Oklahoma, was injured when the brush pumper on which he was riding collided with a tanker in hazy, smokey conditions while fighting recent wildfires in Oklahoma. He sustained a broken pelvis and underwent surgery at a local hospital before coming to Valir Rehabilitation Hospital for therapy.

"I knew that I'd have to put in a little bit of work, but not near this much," Vasquez said. "I'm glad they push me and want me to give them my best. And that's all I strive to give them."

The next stop on his road to recovery is home and outpatient therapy. It will still be several more

weeks until Vasquez is able to put weight on his legs.

"It's a long road, but it's going to be well worth it," Vasquez added.

Prior to the accident, Vasquez was working toward a goal of becoming a full-time firefighter with the Alva Fire Department. Alva Fire Chief Brian Miller and Oklahoma City Fire Chief Richard Kelley worked together to ensure the young man had a proper fire department send off today.

Vasquez says the accident, the care he received in the field and from the team of medical professionals and therapists in Oklahoma City, and the support he's gotten from his firefighting colleagues, friends, family and community have only strengthened his desire to be a full-time firefighter.

"It's inspired me," Vasquez said with his trademark smile. "You get a different perspective because you know what's going to happen. But then being the victim and seeing it all play out. I mean everybody's running around, but they know what job they have to do and they're all working to get the same thing done. It's like a well-oiled machine. I want to be a cog in that machine."

A fund has been established to help with the young man's medical expenses. Donations may be sent to: The Ron Vasquez II Love Fund, Alva State Bank, 518 College Avenue, Alva, OK 73717

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# Oklahoma Students Receive Scholarships at Inaugural Healthcare Career Exploration Day

To spark interest in the rewarding field of healthcare and address future workforce needs, OU Health and the University of Oklahoma hosted an inaugural Healthcare Career Exploration Day for high school students in March.

The collaboration creates a student pipeline with local high schools by increasing student interest in healthcare careers and addressing the critical shortage of healthcare professionals in Oklahoma and beyond.

"By inviting students to explore various healthcare careers through hands-on demonstrations, networking and mentorship, OU Health intends to inspire and prepare the next generation for careers in healthcare," said Jimmy Duncan, SHRM-SCP, SPHR, Chief Human Resources Officer at OU Health.

The roughly 270 students who attended the Healthcare Career Exploration Day toured all seven professional colleges at OU Health Sciences, spoke with college representatives, interacted with the OU Health executive team and explored new technology through OU Health's partnership with Siemens Healthineers.

## Surprise Scholarships

As part of the healthcare career-focused event, five randomly selected Oklahoma students were surprised with \$5,000 scholarships to study at OU Health Sciences.

Abigail Flores and Anna Telley, both of Oklahoma City Public Schools; Essence Felder and Marsette Holmes, both of Millwood High School; and Karla Aguilar, a senior at Moore Public Schools, were the lucky recipients.

"I was shaking," said Felder, who plans to study radiology after graduation. "My grandmother was in radiology on the administrative side, and my mom is also in the medical field. I just knew that's what I wanted to do. For me, it was like saying I'm in the right spot."

Holmes knows her path is in healthcare as well and said the scholarship will go far in alleviating worries about attending college.

"I'm considering getting my bachelor's in sonography," the Millwood senior said. "Just knowing I have some type of money to go towards my career is a relief."



OU Health's decision to offer surprise scholarships to five attendees underscores the organization's commitment to investing in the future of healthcare education and reducing financial barriers for students passionate about pursuing healthcare careers.

This generous gesture underscores the organization's dedication to providing a support mechanism for students to achieve their educational and professional goals in healthcare, Duncan said.

"Helping to reduce the financial burden to students and even our own employees through things like tuition reimbursement and student loan forgiveness are key strategies that will help us become an employer of choice by making the achievement of continuous education a part of everyone's career journey of growth," Duncan said.

## Addressing Healthcare Workforce Demand

The Healthcare Career Exploration Day initiative aligns with OU Health's mission of improving lives through healing and discovery, aiming to build a robust and dynamic workforce capable of meeting the current and future healthcare demands. OU Health's Winning Aspiration is to be the destination of choice for patients with complex and serious conditions and to be known as

a top-tier academic referral center. To meet that aspiration, a prepared and motivated workforce is necessary.

"Today, we are facing a pressing, operational challenge of workforce instability caused by the lack of clinical staff. It is not unique to Oklahoma; we see this nationwide," Duncan said. "Our goal is to build a best-in-class, comprehensive student pipeline model, partnering with OU Health Sciences."

This event emerged as a strategic solution to engage, educate and encourage students to consider and pursue healthcare careers. Exposing young Oklahomans to real-life stories and experiences by OU Health and

OU Health Sciences professionals fosters their interest and inspires them to explore a multitude of opportunities at OU Health, Duncan said.

"For students, it opens the door to meaningful and stable careers with the potential for impact and growth," Duncan said. "For OU Health, this event addresses the immediate and long-term need for healthcare professionals, ensuring sustainability in providing high-quality care. Additionally, it fosters a stronger connection between OU Health and the community by directly contributing to local education and workforce development."

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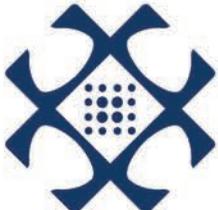
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