

To the OSU Campus,

We owe it to our employees to seriously address rising health care costs and I am pleased to announce that we have created a broad-based, high-level task force that will tackle the issue of health care costs and wellness. The team will begin work right away.

Since the year 2000 our cost of providing health care has nearly doubled. We have had to pass some of that cost along to our employees and we've reached a point where the cost of insuring family members is prohibitive for many employees. That is not acceptable.

Addressing the cost of insurance and encouraging healthy lifestyles is an urgent, pressing priority. Immediate actions are required to develop a strategy for health care cost containment while providing the highest standard of care possible and improving the health and wellness of OSU employees and their families.

I am pleased that John Fernandes, president of OSU's Center of Health Science in Tulsa, will chair this important initiative. The task force will tap state and national health care and wellness experts as needed.

The task force will explore all options as it develops a plan to help stabilize costs and lead to improved health for the OSU community. While there are no simple solutions, we can and will forge ahead to become the Healthiest Campus in America. We will keep you informed as the task force moves forward...

OSU-Tulsa hosted Friday's OSU Board of Regents meeting and I was excited to present the findings from a study that provided concrete proof of the significant economic impact the OSU System has on the state of Oklahoma.

OSU has a total annual economic impact of \$1.89 billion on the state, producing \$13 in economic output for each \$1 we receive from the state in net appropriations. In a fact that will surprise many, when compared to private employers, the OSU System and its more than 8,000 full-time employees rank second only to Wal-Mart in employees statewide.

The OSU System produces nearly \$120 million in local and state tax revenue through the sales, income and property taxes paid by students, employees and visitors. That is about half the \$241 million the OSU System received this year in state appropriations.

It is our obligation to provide the taxpayers of Oklahoma, as well as our alumni and donors, a clear picture of their return on investment at OSU. This analysis by outside experts does just that and offers real insight into the significant role OSU plays in the economic vibrancy of our state. We can all be proud of the impact we have on our state. Thanks for the part you play...

Arts and Sciences, which covers everything from A (art) to Z (zoology), will be in the spotlight as the college's student council celebrates A&S Week with an assortment of activities. I commend Dean Peter Sherwood, department heads, faculty and students for their outstanding work...

It is a busy week for athletics. Our football team plays on national TV Saturday night at Texas after a convincing win over nationally ranked Nebraska. Mike Gundy's Cowboys are getting better every week and are one win away from qualifying for a bowl game.

Congratulations and good luck to our soccer team, which is ranked 9th in the nation and closed the regular season with a win Saturday to finish 15-2-2. The Cowgirls, led by co-head coaches Karen Hancock and Colin Carmichael, are the No. 2 seed in this week's Big 12 Championship and open against OU Wednesday.

Men's and women's basketball gets started with home exhibition games this week as coaches Sean Sutton and Kurt Budke look for big things this season. I hope you will support both our Cowboy and Cowgirls basketball squads.

David Schmidly