

2025 - 2028

# East Central University Affordability and Transparency

April 27, 2025





## Office of the President



I'm pleased to share the latest **Affordability and Transparency Report** for East Central University. This report highlights our continued commitment to offering a high-quality education that remains affordable and open to everyone.

At ECU, we work hard to keep costs low so students from all backgrounds can pursue their goals without being overwhelmed by financial barriers. We're proud to be one of the most affordable public universities in Oklahoma.

Over the past year, we've taken important steps to strengthen ECU through **strategic academic and operational restructuring**. We're updating programs and services to better support student success, graduation, and long-term growth.

### **This year's report highlights:**

- Maintaining the lowest tuition among all RUSO Universities
- Expanding scholarships and need-based financial aid
- Improving efficiency to reinvest in academics and student services

Transparency matters. Our students and community deserve clear, honest information about the value of an ECU education. This report helps provide that clarity.

I invite you to explore the full report and share your thoughts.

*Wendell L. Godwin, President*



## East Central University Affordability Plan

East Central University (ECU) remains deeply committed to providing high-quality education at an accessible price point for students across Oklahoma and beyond. Our strategic focus on affordability is guided by our three foundational pillars:

- Affordability
- Student Support
- Organizational Efficiency

### ECU is making higher education more affordable:

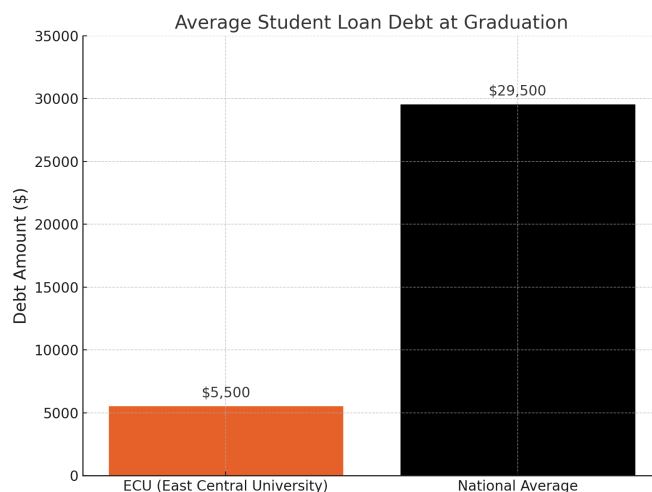
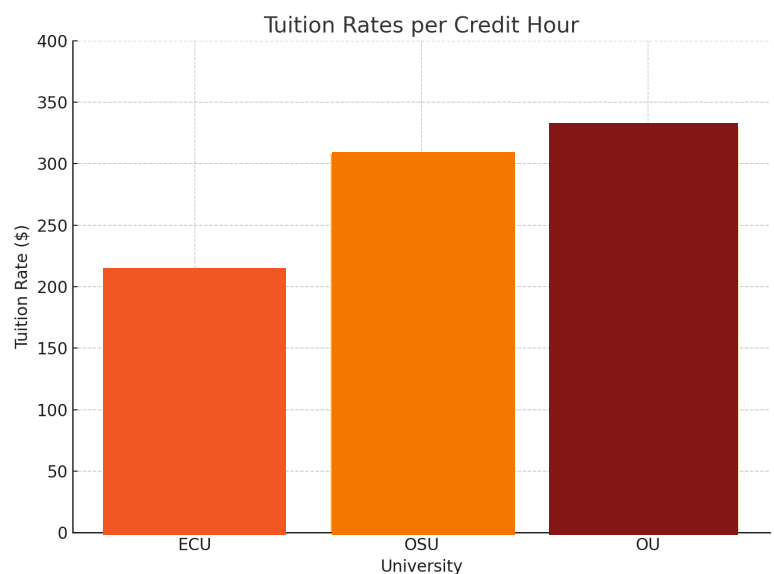
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#### 1. Keeping Tuition the Lowest in the Region

At just \$210 per credit hour, East Central University has maintained the lowest tuition among the RUSO institutions since 2021. Currently, ECU's tuition is 8% lower than the RUSO average.

Over the past five years, ECU's tuition has increased by only 11.5%, as compared to a 21% increase in the Consumer Price Index (CPI) over the same period. When factoring in mandatory fees, ECU's total cost increase remains modest and is below OU and OSU by 24% and 16% respectively.

Students graduating from ECU typically carry significantly less debt.





## Expanding Cost-Free Academic Resources

ECU supports open educational resources (OER) and encourages faculty to integrate free course materials into instruction. These OER initiatives significantly reduce textbook costs for students across disciplines. In this academic year alone, ECU is estimated to have saved students \$140,000 by adopting OERs. In addition, the university has expanded online learning options, allowing students to save on housing and commuting costs while balancing work and school.

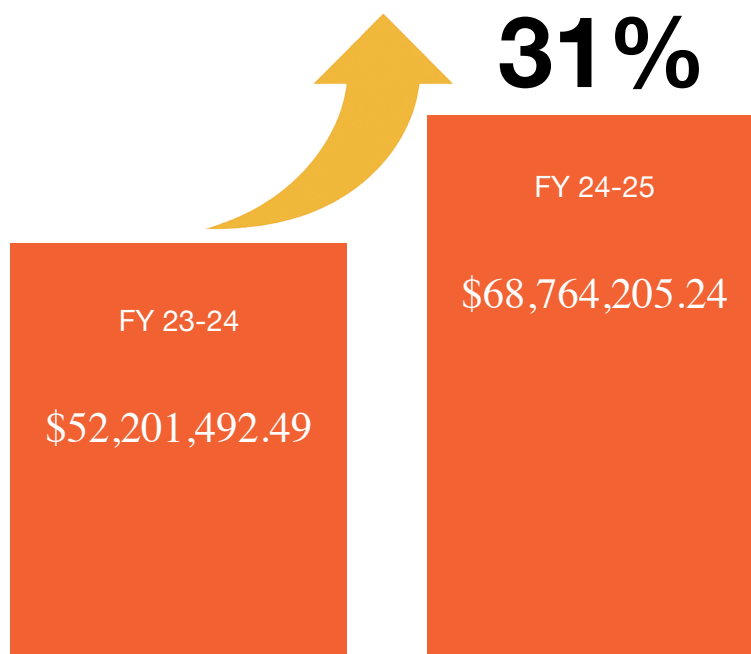
## 2. Increasing Access to Scholarships and Financial Aid

Over the past year, merit-based scholarships offered through the ECU Foundation have increased by 45%, rewarding academic achievement and helping more students afford college. At the same time, ECU remains firmly committed to providing robust need-based financial aid.

Furthermore, ECU is preparing to launch the Blackbaud Award Management system in Fall 2026. This system will better match students with scholarships and aid based on their unique profiles, streamlining the process and improving funding opportunities.

Beginning Summer and Fall 2025, ECU will expand its scholarship program to include all undergraduate, degree-seeking Oklahoma students—including those returning after taking a year off. This builds on the success of a 2024 pilot program and underscores our mission to remove financial barriers, support degree completion, and promote economic mobility for Oklahomans.

These initiatives clearly demonstrate ECU's continued commitment to making higher education more accessible and affordable.

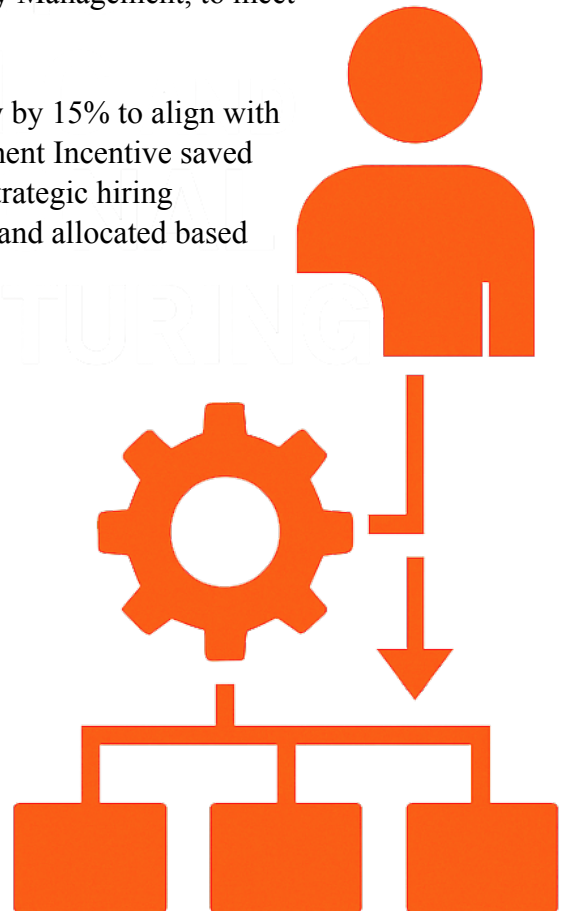




### 3. Strategic Academic and Operational Restructuring

ECU is proactively reallocating resources to prioritize student success and financial sustainability. Measures include:

- Closing underperforming programs (e.g., Sociology, Cartography, Musical Theatre) to redirect resources to high-demand fields. From 2020 to 2025 ECU has deleted 23 low performing programs from degree offerings.
- Developing industry partnerships that provide paid internships, scholarships, and job placement opportunities.
- Cutting operational costs, such as the consolidation of executive positions (e.g., the Vice President of Student Affairs and the Vice President of Institutional Advancement), and reinvesting those funds into student services.
- Launching new revenue-generating programs, such as the Doctorate in Rural Education, MBA, and Bachelor's in Information Technology Management, to meet regional workforce needs.
- From 2020–2025, ECU reduced full-time faculty by 15% to align with instructional needs. In 2023, a Voluntary Retirement Incentive saved ~\$1.1 million as 10 faculty members opted in. Strategic hiring practices ensure open faculty lines are reviewed and allocated based on institutional priorities.



## Strategic Partnerships to Reduce Student Costs

Strategic partnerships play a crucial role in reducing student costs and enhancing educational opportunities across Oklahoma. Collaborations like this allow institutions to pool their resources, streamline processes, and establish cost-effective programs.

ECU has fostered articulation agreements with multiple institutions across the state to allow students broader access to affordable education, fostering greater academic success and minimizing the financial barriers often faced by students pursuing higher education.





Additionally, ECU has strengthened partnerships with Pontotoc Technology Center by reducing time-to-degree pathways for students enrolled in Information Technology, Biotechnology and Nursing.

## EAST CENTRAL UNIVERSITY

## PONTOTOC TECHNOLOGY CENTER



<https://okhighered.org/econ-dev/rbpea/ecu/>



## **Conclusion: A Sustainable, Student-First Model**

East Central University is committed to building a future where affordability and academic excellence go hand-in-hand. Through strategic investments, efficient operations, and a strong focus on student success, ECU is creating a higher education model that delivers real value—for students, families, and communities. Our affordability plan is not just about lowering costs; it's about investing wisely to support long-term success.

However, sustaining this student-first model requires ongoing support. A recent market survey revealed that many ECU salaries fall below the 25th percentile, contributing to high turnover rates that affect the stability and quality of our programs. Additionally, the university faces significant deferred maintenance challenges, including aging student housing, HVAC systems, roofs, boilers, chillers, and parking infrastructure.

We remain fully committed to affordability, but it's important to recognize that without continued state appropriations, meeting these pressing needs will be increasingly difficult. Strategic funding is essential to maintain a strong, competitive university that can serve future generations without compromise.

