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OU Online Spring Newsletter, 2026

Meet Liz Karr, OU's new Vice Provost for Online Education

I'm honored to step into the role of Vice Provost for Online Education at OU. As a first-generation college graduate, I began my academic journey at a two-year community college before transferring to a regional four-year institution. Along the way, I commuted long distances to complete my bachelor's degree and again during my Ph.D., at a time when online options were limited.



That experience continues to inform how I think about access, flexibility, and the support students need to succeed. Over the past several years, my work has centered on graduate education, where I've had the opportunity to lead initiatives spanning admissions, policy, student success, and cross-campus collaboration.

particularly as OU has expanded access for students across the state and beyond.

What excites me most is the opportunity to continue that work in a broader, more integrated way. This role represents an important next step for OU Online as we expand our online undergraduate programs and continue to grow our online graduate programs.

OU has built a strong foundation for online education, and we will continue building upon it as a core part of how we deliver on our academic mission, in close partnership with our colleges and faculty. Our goal is to provide high-quality, accessible programs that meet both student needs and workforce demand. I consider it a privilege to help expand opportunities for more Oklahomans and learners beyond to earn a degree from the University of Oklahoma.

I'm looking forward to working with the university community to shape what comes next.

Graduate Outcomes Driving Continuous Improvement at OU Online

At the University of Oklahoma, OU Online is committed to not only supporting students through graduation, but ensuring long-term career success. Results from the 2026 Graduate Outcomes Survey highlight the impact of that commitment—and how student feedback continues to shape the future of our programs.

Among 776 respondents, **87% of graduates are employed or continuing their education**, with **82% working in roles aligned with their degree**. Additionally, **67% report salary growth**, and nearly **one-third are earning \$100,000 or more**, demonstrating strong career advancement and economic mobility.

Just as important as these outcomes is how we use this data. Graduate feedback provides critical insight into what is working well and where we can continue to improve. From program design and curriculum updates to student support services and career resources, these findings directly inform decisions across OU Online.

Students also consistently highlight the flexibility and quality of their experience, reinforcing the value of accessible, high-impact education.

programs remain relevant, responsive, and aligned with the evolving needs of today's workforce—benefiting both current students and future learners.

Student Spotlight

Meet Kathleen Roberts



Kathleen Roberts is a student in the online Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) program within the Jeannine Rainbolt College of Education's Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies in the higher education cohort. She lives in Virginia and works as the Title IX Coordinator at Longwood University.

Kathleen has been an avid fan of OU softball for almost 20 years, so when she had the chance to join the inaugural cohort for this program, she didn't have to think twice.

educational milestone at an in-person program, so the online program has made a way to achieve this educational goal. One thing she enjoys most about this program is the cohort design; she and her fellow students support each other, and she could not do it without them! If she could give future students any advice, it would be to connect with your peers and faculty. It can be difficult to feel part of the institution as an online student, so making connections is a great way to build community and a sense of belonging.

After graduating, Kathleen hopes to continue working in student affairs roles and take on more leadership positions, maybe someday making her way to Norman, Oklahoma.

Faculty Feature



Q&A with Dr. Ryan Bisel, Director of the M.A. in Organizational Leadership

Can you tell us a little about yourself and your background? What drew you to Organizational Leadership?

I'm a husband and the proud dad of two remarkable teenagers. For nearly 20 years, I've worked as a scholar and consultant in organizational communication, and for the past 18 years I've happily called myself a Sooner.

Leadership runs deep in my story: My mother was a successful entrepreneur, and my formative years were shaped by watching her build a company—one that was

how I see organizations. In my consulting work, I've had the privilege of partnering with a wide range of businesses and nonprofits, experiences that continually reaffirm a simple truth for me: strong, ethical leadership and clear communication make all the difference.

How would you describe the Master of Arts in Organizational Leadership to someone who isn't familiar with it? Who is it designed for?

The MAOL program is designed to help working adults break through career plateaus and prepare for what comes next. The curriculum is carefully crafted around the four core competency areas of modern leadership: (a) managing tasks, (b) building relationships, (c) encouraging change, and (d) representing the organization to external stakeholders. As graduate students strengthen both technical expertise and people-centered skills, new professional opportunities naturally emerge. The program is ideal for mid-career professionals seeking to step into senior leadership or executive roles, as well as for those who have taken time away from the workforce and are ready to re-energize and update their leadership skill sets.

What makes OU's program unique compared to similar programs at other institutions?

The graduate program is one of only a few in the United States that was developed by leading organizational communication scholars. By taking a holistic approach to leadership development, the curriculum is designed to expand students' range of leadership communication skills and behaviors, which will differentiate them in the modern workplace. Graduates receive practical and behavior-based training, with a keen focus on leveraging ethical influence to develop employees, enhance team performance, and shape a positive organizational culture.

What's something exciting coming up for the program — any new courses, initiatives, or developments on the horizon?

We've been working hard to refresh courses as well as develop new courses. Here's a quick list of some courses that will be available as soon as Fall 2026:

Building Positive Workplace Relationships

Leadership Communication

Project Management

Meet the Team Behind Your OU Online Experience!

Ever wonder who's working behind the scenes to support your journey? Get to know the dedicated professionals from our Operations, Marketing and Academic Innovation teams making your OU Online experience possible!

Dr. Damis Melton, Instructional Designer, OU Education Services

I came into Instructional Design through a nontraditional path, beginning my career in accounting within a training, consultancy, and research firm before transitioning into training coordination and facilitation roles. I was formally introduced to the field at Oral Roberts University, where I worked with a small, collaborative team led by Dr. Jay Gary and Olgy Gary, alongside instructional technologist Walter Ensign.



Their mentorship helped me connect theory to practice and see how intentional design shapes the learner experience. What drew me to the field is its blend of strategy, creativity, and impact—designing learning that improves access and supports diverse learners.

On a day-to-day basis, I partner with faculty and program teams to design structured, engaging online courses aligned to meaningful outcomes. I collaborate

research. At its core, instructional design is about creating clarity and reducing friction: bringing together people, processes, and tools to ensure online students have a seamless, accessible, and high-quality learning experience.

What I find most rewarding is improving access at scale through creative problem-solving. For example, I partnered with faculty and OU Libraries to replace high-cost textbooks with unlimited-access eBooks for an online EdD program, eliminating costs, ensuring day-one access, and saving about \$10,000 per cohort while creating a scalable model.

Great online courses are intentional, accessible, and aligned to workforce needs. I design for clear outcomes, real-world application, and reduced barriers, so learners build practical skills and can confidently transfer their knowledge into professional contexts.



Are You Graduating? Secure Your Spot at the OU Online Graduation Reception

Join us at the OU Online Graduation Reception from 2 to 4 p.m. Friday, May 15, at the Sam Noble Museum of Natural History for an afternoon of celebration and connection. Boomer Sooner — we can't wait to see you! RSVP [Here](#)

Industry Pathways Expands Access to Online Degrees, Career Advancement

OU's Industry Pathways initiative is continuing to grow, creating new opportunities for employees across Oklahoma and beyond to advance their education and careers. With collaborations now in place with the Oklahoma Museums Association, Chickasaw Nation, and Paycom—and more on the horizon—this program is strengthening connections between OU and leading organizations statewide.

Through these relationships, employees can benefit from reduced tuition for OU Online programs, making it more affordable to earn a degree. Participants also benefit from enhanced visibility and engagement.

Together, we are providing a valuable pathway to reduced education costs, career growth, and expanded professional networks—supporting both individual success and the continued development of Oklahoma's workforce.

Your Voice Matters—SERU Survey Still Open!

The Student Experience at Research University (SERU) survey is still open, and we want to hear from you! This is your chance to share honest feedback about your experience as an OU Online student — what's working, what could be better, and everything in between.

Your responses directly shape the decisions we make. We are committed to using your feedback to make meaningful, data-informed improvements that enhance the online learning experience for you and future students.

It only takes about 15 minutes — please take a moment to [complete the survey today](#). Your experience matters to us!

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