



NSU HOME

GETTING STARTED

ADMISSIONS

CAMPUS LIFE

ACADEMICS

OUTREACH

NEWS

Campus News

Learning

Arts & Culture

Athletics

Outreach

Alumni News

CALENDAR

[Tweet](#)



Planning nearly complete for second regional summit at NSU

Northeastern State University will host a second regional summit, "Regionalism: A United Voice for a Shared Vision," on Oct. 26-27 to continue the conversation started during the first summit in November 2009.

The 2009 summit sought to gather leaders, discuss issues, identify assets, define economic growth and outline the difficulties faced in the rural areas and small communities of northeast Oklahoma.

Rachel Farinelli, director of Continuing Education, said this year's summit will focus on completing and adopting a regional strategic plan, which will identify specific actions that leaders have identified as useful in the region.

"This summit will also give community leaders some ideas to take back to their own communities in order for them to start the important work of community-level strategic planning and development," said Farinelli.

Anyone interested in regional development can participate in the summit. Topics include education, access to healthcare, infrastructure, communication, marketing, well-being, self-sufficiency, sustainability, quality of life, natural and cultural resources, business growth and expansion, entrepreneurship, workforce development, leadership development, government, socioeconomic issues and service organizations.

"Basically, anyone concerned with the well-being of the people of northeastern Oklahoma should be involved in the work of the region," said Farinelli.

There will be several workshops at the summit. Farinelli said all topics focus on finalizing the goals of the regional strategic plan. There will be opportunities for individual input to the regional plan, attendees can join regional action teams and a workshop on community planning will stress the importance of local strategy and development.

"An auction reception will give us a fun opportunity to highlight and learn about businesses and resources in our region," said Farinelli. "The legislative breakfast and town hall meetings will give us an opportunity to speak to our legislators about issues in our region, and how they plan to respond."

Farinelli said Ryan McMullen, USDA rural development director, and Vince Orza, entrepreneur and dean of the College of Business at Oklahoma City University, will keynote the event. Steve Kime, director of the Oklahoma Community Institute, will give a presentation on community planning.

"We also have an impressive list of facilitators for our goal workshops," said Farinelli. "After the summit, some post-conference activities are also being planned around communications and technology, green initiatives and regional leadership."

The writing team will compile the final draft based on the workgroup and focus group discussions hosted throughout the region.

Confirmation of speakers and facilitators is being conducted, legislators are being invited for the town hall discussions and the NSU logistics team is working to ensure that all on-site preparations are made for a second successful year.

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[Go back to News Central](#)

