

ANNUAL REPORT

of the

Student Advisory Board

to the

Oklahoma State Regents
for Higher Education

May 2012

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Purpose. The purpose of the Student Advisory Board is to communicate to the State Regents the views and interests of all Oklahoma college and university students on issues that relate to the constitutional and statutory responsibilities of the State Regents. In representing students, the Student Advisory Board shall combine the opinions of students with good, sound research to develop the best proposals and recommendations for The Oklahoma State System of Higher Education.

Creation. The creation of this board is consistent with provisions of House Bill 1801 of the 1988 session of the Oklahoma Legislature. Seven members are elected annually by delegates to the Oklahoma Student Government Association. Members represent public tier and independent colleges, and they serve a one-year term (May through April).

MEMBERS

Steve Sichterman, Chair, University of Oklahoma

Thomas Schneider, Vice Chair, Oklahoma State University

Jaeton Cary, Rose State College

Sarah Cook, Oklahoma City University

Lynnette Gomez, Seminole State College

John Saluke, Southwestern Oklahoma State University

Molly Tracy, University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma (resigned, February, 2012)

Student Advisory Board

Recommendations and Counsel to the State Regents

Improved Teaching Methods for Faculty

Recommendation

To ensure the optimal opportunity for learning by students the Student Advisory Board encourages the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education to support an emphasis on improvement in faculty teaching methods with the academic leadership in each institution in The Oklahoma State System of Higher Education.

Background / Analysis

Certain instructional methods are more effective than others in imparting knowledge and skills. Faculty with different experiences and longevity in service may continue to use instructional methods first or best learned, regardless of the effectiveness of or results for newer methods. Improvement in faculty instructional methods should include, but not be limited to:

- Assurance that the course evaluation by the students was administered appropriately by the course instructor
- Assurance that the institutional administration is transmitting the results of the course evaluation to the faculty member and is following through with the faculty member on the feedback, and making use of the results in tenure review and annual evaluations
- Support for training in instructional technology and methods
- Assurance that the institution has a student complaint process with adequate procedures to make students aware of this prerogative.

Approval: Cary, Cook, Gomez, Saluke, Sichterman

Absent: Schneider

Academic Advising

Recommendation

The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education should encourage all institutions to provide a strong academic advising program to help guide students towards a successful career path. Institutions should be encouraged to evaluate the interest of their students to ensure good placement within an appropriate major.

Background / Analysis

Academic advising is a crucial part of a student's college career. Incoming freshmen should be aware of what their chosen career path has in store, both in the classroom and after graduation. For one reason or another, between 50 - 80% of college students change their majors. Over half of those that change do so after the second semester of their freshman year. Furthermore, the average student changes their major three times over their college career.

The ratio of students to counselors on the national level is about 450:1. Therefore, burden of attention cannot solely fall upon preparation within the high school system. Higher education institutions must be prepared to guide students according to their interests. Many online programs, quizzes, and surveys have been developed to aid in this process. Sometimes all it takes is an advisor to stop and connect with a student on a more personal level.

Accurately advising students benefits the student and the institution. A shorter college career typically leads to a lower financial burden upon the student. Less financial burden on the student leads to less financial aid they must ask from the state and financial institutions. Students also become frustrated when college credits do not transfer when changing majors. This requires more funding to retake material already learned.

Shorter college degrees that appear practical and attainable strongly influence the retention of the institution. A caring attitude of college personnel also builds a strong foundation of amity with alumni. This greatly influences the amount of money the institutions request from state funding.

Approval: Cary, Cook, Gomez, Saluke, Sichterman

Absent: Schneider

Chief Information Officer / OneNet

Recommendation

The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education should do everything possible to remain exempt from the authority of the State Chief Information Officer (CIO) in order to protect institutions of higher education from costly changes and to be able to retain the authority on all matters of information technology. Establishing a CIO within the State Regents is the most likely measure to ensure this exemption.

Background / Analysis

In 2011, HB1304 exempted the State Regents for Higher Education, OneNet and all higher education institutions from the authority of the State Chief Information Officer (CIO). This has allowed many institutions to remain members of the National Lambda Rail and the OneNet network. Cost savings of \$40 million has been achieved by the State Regents in information technology expenses that would likely not have been possible under the State CIO.

We encourage the State Regents to continue the Higher Education CIO Initiative proposed by Governor Fallin in January, 2012, establishing a Higher Education CIO under the State Regents by July 1, 2012.

Approval: Cary, Cook, Gomez, Saluke, Sichterman

Absent: Schneider

Common Core State Standards Initiative

Recommendation

The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education should actively support the Common Core State Standards Initiative (Initiative). Moreover, the State Regents should assist and promote the implementation of the Common Core State Standards into our state's common education system.

Background / Analysis

The National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and the Council of Chief State School Officers collaborated to create the Common Core State Standards Initiative in order to "provide a clear and consistent framework to prepare our children for college and the work force". Among several reasons to support these standards is that the Common Core State Standards will better equip Oklahoma children for higher education and ultimately graduation. With declining retention rates, solid instruction in common education could positively affect students' skills and ability enough to slow down and possibly reverse our decline.

Another important reason to support the Initiative is development of "appropriate benchmarks for all students, regardless of where they live". While this ultimately closes the gap between state systems, it also seems to imply a secondary effect, one that should highly resonate in Oklahoma. The educational advantage between urban, rural, and suburban schools has been discussed to a great extent. The common denominator has been money; however, the Initiative places the power of education into the standards and practices rather than resources.

Finally, this initiative helps prepare today's students to compete in a global society based upon an expanding knowledge-based, information economy. While the demand for physical labor may exist, students must have a wider breadth of knowledge in multiple disciplines now more than ever before. Career-ready curriculum standards are now the same as college-ready curriculum standards because of advanced technology and the proliferation of research and development. A recent high school graduate entering the work force needs more skills and knowledge than ten or twenty years ago. Therefore, it becomes paramount in our educational goals to instruct students using the best standards and practices.

Approval: Cary, Cook, Gomez, Saluke, Sichterman

Absent: Schneider

Concealed Weapons on Campus

Recommendation

The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education should actively oppose the carrying of handguns or similar weapons on college campuses, whether concealed or not, with the exception of campus police and security officers.

Background / Analysis

State statutes specifically recognize the need to restrict the carrying of handguns in a number of public places, including the State Capitol building, as the potential risks for unintentional misuse of weapons does not outweigh the benefits. The introduction of handguns and similar weapons on college campuses continues to be a risk within the legislature, year after year, and will continue to be a risk into the future. It is imperative that the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education continue to actively oppose any measures granting such privileges.

Approval: Cook, Gomez, Saluke, Sichterman

Nay: Cary

Absent: Schneider

Review of Tenure

Recommendation

For the purpose of making higher education the best it can be in Oklahoma, the Student Advisory Board would like to recommend attention be given to the review of tenured professors. As Oklahoma looks to continue its pursuit of excellence in higher education, we must be sure that those entrusted with the responsibility of educating Oklahoma's best and brightest, are the best and brightest.

Background / Analysis

Few positions are as influential to our future as the professors in our colleges and universities. These are the individuals that have the eyes and ears of the next generation for typically four years. As Oklahoma's economy expands and companies come to be part of the exciting growth, let us be sure Oklahoma professors are preparing students with the tools they need to part of this growth.

Strong tenure reviews can also be effective in encouraging professors to be at the top of their occupation. The reviews provide incentive for the professors in our state to continually pursue educational excellence. These reviews will help insure that future generations are provided with instructors who are at the top of their field.

It is an exciting time to be in Oklahoma. There are many opportunities for well-educated individuals to succeed. As Oklahoma sets its goals to grow graduation rates and increase the number of Oklahomans in college, the Student Advisory Board believes that having the absolute best professors leading in the classroom is essential to accomplishing that mission.

Approval: Cary, Cook, Gomez, Saluke, Sichterman

Absent: Schneider

Support for Veteran Affairs and Benefits

Recommendation

The 2011-2012 Student Advisory Board would like to voice its support for continued commitment to veteran affairs. These individuals deserve our assistance because of the sacrifices they have made on behalf of our country. Most veterans exhibit talents that are coveted in the workplace, such as dedication, passion, and responsibility. For these reasons, the Student Advisory Board believes that every possible step should be taken in order to insure veterans receive the services they need to complete their education.

Background / Analysis

Veterans have many intangibles to offer potential employers. However, in today's society, higher education is essential to being successful. Many veterans want to pursue a degree but they need advisement in order to know how to proceed.

While special services are needed to get veterans into school, special services are also needed to help veterans work through obstacles to stay in school and complete their education. Such special services include, but are not limited to:

- Counseling services
- Workshops
- Career planning
- Financial aid services.

It is important for Oklahoma to show its support for veterans and their pursuit of higher education.

Approval: Cary, Cook, Gomez, Saluke, Sichterman

Absent: Schneider

2011-2012 Student Advisory Board Activities

Monthly Meetings. Beginning in May, 2011, members of the Board met monthly, with the exception of June, July, and November, to receive orientation, discuss issues, campus visits, and work plans, and prepare and vote on recommendations.

State Regents Tuition Hearing. Chair Steve Sichterman attended and participated in the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education Tuition Hearing in Oklahoma City on April 19, 2012.

Higher Education Day at the State Capitol. Three members of the Board traveled to the State Capitol on February 21, 2012, to work with the state higher education community in representing The Oklahoma State System of Higher Education's concerns to state legislators and Governor Fallin.

Student Leadership Retreat. Six members of the Board worked in conjunction with the State Regents Council on Student Affairs and the Oklahoma Student Government Association to host and attend the Eleventh Annual Oklahoma Student Leadership Retreat that took place October 6 - 7, 2011 in Midwest City. As Chair of the Board, Steve Sichterman served on the Planning Committee for the 2012 Student Leadership Retreat.

Oklahoma Student Government Association Conferences. Members of the Board attended the annual OSGA Fall Congress at the State Capitol in Oklahoma City, and Spring Congress at Oklahoma City University.

Campus Visits. In addition to representing the students at the institutions in their tier, members of the Student Advisory Board networked with student leaders from other campuses, and visited the following campuses to discuss student concerns on-site:

Langston University
Murray State College
Northeastern State University
Oklahoma City Community College
Southwestern Oklahoma State University, Sayre
Western Oklahoma State College