

ANNUAL REPORT

of the

Student Advisory Board

to the

Oklahoma State Regents
for Higher Education

May 2016

ANNUAL REPORT

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

Matt Chuning, Chair, Oklahoma State University

Alexandra Byron, Vice Chair, University of Oklahoma

Haley Griggs, Northeastern State University

Taylor Gregory, Southeastern Oklahoma State

Anna Rouw, University of Tulsa (resigned)

Sarah Stewart, Rose State College

Vacant, Two-Year Institution

Student Advisory Board

Recommendations and Counsel to the State Regents

RESOLUTION

SUPPORT FOR THE OKLAHOMA'S PROMISE STATUTORY DEDICATED FUNDING SOURCE

WHEREAS, education and workforce analysts predict that 63% of the 2 million jobs in Oklahoma by 2020 will require at least some college. While the state's current educational output levels will be unable to meet this projected demand, Oklahoma's Complete College America initiative defines a goal of increasing the number of degrees and certificates earned in Oklahoma by an average of 1,700 per year, from 30,500 annually in 2011 to 50,900 annually by 2023, a 67% increase, in order to meet the projected need for additional college-educated workers to keep Oklahoma competitive in a global economy; and

WHEREAS, when compared with their high school peers, Oklahoma's Promise students have higher high school grade point averages and higher college-going rates. When compared with their college peers, Oklahoma's Promise students have lower college remediation rates, higher freshmen to sophomore persistence rates in college, a ten percent higher college degree completion rate, and higher rates of college graduates staying and having jobs in Oklahoma; and

WHEREAS, the true impact of higher education includes not only its investment in individuals with the ability to earn a higher wage and effect employability even in difficult economic times, but also includes the societal benefits of better health with less burden on health services, better wealth requiring fewer support programs, and active participation in their communities through volunteerism and action in the democratic process; and

WHEREAS, Oklahoma's Promise is Oklahoma's largest state student financial aid program, and as the state allocation for Oklahoma's Promise constitutes its single funding source, the dedicated funding is a significant financial component for student aid in Oklahoma; and

WHEREAS, Oklahoma's Promise provides a crucial incentive for Oklahoma high school students with financial need, who meet high academic and conduct standards, to attain post-secondary education; and

WHEREAS, only 53% of Oklahoma's 2013 graduates left college with student debt compared to 69% nationally, ranking Oklahoma 5th among all states for college seniors graduating with the lowest debt. The impact of lower student debt on

young households translates to higher purchasing power, positively impacting the local economy, and a higher family net worth, positively impacting the housing market; and

WHEREAS, the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education currently project that 18,000 students will qualify to receive Oklahoma's Promise awards in the 2016-2017 academic year; and

WHEREAS, the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education have requested, and the State Board of Equalization has approved, funding of \$67,800,000 for Fiscal Year 2017; and

WHEREAS, without the necessary financial support for Oklahoma's Promise, the mission of the state higher education system as articulated through the Complete College America initiative will be jeopardized, imperiling the state's potential for economic progress.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Student Advisory Board resolves that in order to ensure that Oklahoma is equipped to supply the necessary educated workforce for economic progress, the critical statutory mechanism of state dedicated funding for the Oklahoma's Promise student financial aid program should be preserved by the state legislative and executive branches, and the funding be maintained at the level determined by the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education to meet its intended purpose.

Approved unanimously this 31st day of January, 2016.

2015-2016 Student Advisory Board

Matt Chuning, Chair, Oklahoma State University

Alexandra Byron, Vice Chair, University of Oklahoma

Taylor Gregory, Member, Southeastern Oklahoma State University

Haley Griggs, Member, Northeastern State University-Broken Arrow

Sarah Stewart, Member, Rose State College

Anna Rouw, Member, University of Tulsa

Academic Advisement

Recommendation

The Student Advisory Board believes that strong comprehensive academic advisement is the key to a student's success in college and after graduation. The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education should:

- 1.) Encourage institutions to use general professional advising for their students until they declare their degree program or move into their major-specific college.
- 2.) Encourage institutions to implement degree-checks at all universities during the advisement session two semesters before graduation. This degree-check would be a verification method by which advisors confirm with the degree granting entity (in the college or university) the remaining courses students would need to graduate.
- 3.) Require universities "grandfather" in any changes to a degree program. Once a student enters a degree program at their degree-granting institution, they must fulfill the requirements that were required at the time they entered the degree program.
- 4.) Encourage university advisement to consult regularly with the career services unit of the institution about which courses and hard-skills are most sought after by employers so advisers can better advise students beyond the degree requirements.
- 5.) Encourage the creation of student-response advisor reviews to aid in yearly performance reviews with advisors.

Background / Analysis

The Student Advisory Board believes that general professional advising and major specific advising provides the most comprehensive experience for students in preparing them for graduation and ensuring there are no courses missing or incomplete at the expected final term of their degree.

In implementing degree checks, the Student Advisory Board feels that these degree-checks will reduce the likelihood of "surprises" at the end of a student's terminal year and implementing these checks two semesters prior to graduation usually ensures a student will have enough time to take the correct courses necessary to graduate on time.

Grandfathering in changes to degrees is a strong way to ensure students are aware of the financial implications and time commitments they will be making at the start of their degree and ensuring that the student is not treated unfairly and is fully aware of the expectations they must meet in order to obtain the degree they set-out to complete.

With respect to career services and major-specific professional adviser meetings, the

Student Advisory Board found that this would enhance the capability of academic advisers' ability to guide students towards a career path they're interested in, rather than just guiding them towards completing the degree they're interested in obtaining. For example, though an economics degree can require a light course-load of math, an advisor can recommend to a student that they also obtain a math minor if considering graduate school or a career in financial engineering. Though not required for the degree the student is seeking to obtain, is greatly desired and required for the ultimate career this student is seeking to obtain. More coordination between career services and advising would provide a holistic approach to improving job-market readiness and career placement for Oklahoma graduates.

Finally, the Student Advisory Board found that student response and student input about the quality of their academic advising and advisers can improve the quality of advising that the university or college administers. By sending out a short email poll or by having the student write a quick rating and response to how they felt the advising went/how it could have gone better, could improve performance reviews of advisers and identify areas of weakness that a college's advising program has. One example would be to have students return to the main lobby area and encourage them to fill out an anonymous two-question survey on an iPad – the first question asking them to choose from a range of faces (happy faces to sad faces) about how the advising went, an optional question of why if the student chose anything below a neutral face and a second question asking how they could improve the advising experience.

Approval

Unanimous

Block Rate Tuition

Recommendation

The Student Advisory Board recommends that the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education encourage block rate tuition adoption at all state institutions.

Background / Analysis

Many institutions in Oklahoma have already adopted a block tuition model and early results indicate that under this system students take more hours per semester. This in turn leads to quicker time to degree and by extension a lighter debt burden. Higher retention rates are also a benefit provided by the block rate tuition model.

Approval

Unanimous

Campus Safety

Recommendation

The Student Advisory Board believes that consistent campus safety plans are important to ensuring a student's well-being in the higher institution community. The Student Advisory Board recommends that the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education research and develop a process to create campus safety information distribution guidelines concerning content of warnings, inclement weather safety instructions, and other localized emergency information to be distributed to students. Further, the Student Advisory Board recommends that when schools implement information distribution systems, they be created as opt-out rather than opt-in systems.

Background / Analysis

Across the universities and colleges in Oklahoma, the Student Advisory Board has found varied types of campus safety plans. The most pressing issue is not that the plans and protocols for each different emergency event are not available, but that students are not aware of what these protocols and procedures are, or for what emergency event they can expect to be notified. The board agrees that meetings should take place among campus safety coordinators each year to create and update a standard protocol of how information is distributed to students and make them aware of how they will be communicated with at the beginning for the year. Some examples could include, at the beginning of the year, a text message is sent out to every student as a 'test' but also letting them know that the college or university will use this system to notify them of impending weather threats, active shooter situations, and certain criminal threats taking place within x miles of campus, etc. An additional example could include a policy like the following: during tornado season or the morning that inclement weather is likely to take place, the system will send out a campus map or a link to a campus map denoting all tornado-safe locations on campus. Creating guidelines by which universities notify students via text/email will eliminate inconsistency and make students feel more secure in what information they can expect to receive from their university.

Approval

Unanimous

Campus WiFi

Recommendation

The Student Advisory Board recommends that all colleges and universities in Oklahoma provide their students with access to Wireless Internet or WIFI on all areas of campuses, prioritizing areas of high student traffic such as dormitories, libraries, and classrooms. The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education should encourage all institutions to provide stable, secure, and uninterrupted network infrastructure to meet the growing demands in technology so that their students and faculty are able to use this service wherever and whenever needed.

Background / Analysis

The Student Advisory Board agrees that all Oklahoma colleges and universities should implement upgrades to their wireless networks on all areas of their campuses. As technology continues to play a key role in the world of Higher Education, institutions should furnish students with the resources they need to perform their educational requirements. With numerous institutions offering courses online or courses that are both in class and online, the average student needs the accessibility to resources such as WiFi to complete their scheduled class assignments. Due to the lack of wireless network areas on campuses students are forced to postpone their studies, travel to a different location, or unable to complete assignments because of this matter. Having access to this type of resource anywhere at anytime makes a monumental difference in a student's education journey so that they can one day accomplish their goal in reaching their degree.

Approval

Unanimous

Higher Education Funding

Recommendation

The Student Advisory Board recommends that the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education continue working with the state legislature and the executive to take steps necessary to fund The Oklahoma State System of Higher Education at a level consistent with the previous year initial level of \$963,400,000.

Background / Analysis

The Student Advisory Board firmly believes that Higher Education is of great value to the State of Oklahoma and as such, the State should continue to invest in Higher Education. A 2015 Economic Impact Report conducted by the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education concluded that Higher Education in Oklahoma advances economic opportunities, safeguards our resources for future generations, and improves our state's overall quality of life by devoting our intellectual enterprise to advance the common good for Oklahoma's families.

Approval

Unanimous

Oklahoma's Promise

Recommendation

The Student Advisory Board recommends that the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education work with the State Legislature to fund Oklahoma's Promise at the level of \$67.8 million requested for Fiscal Year 2017 by the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education. The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education currently project that 18,000 students will qualify to receive Oklahoma's Promise awards in the 2016-2017 academic year.

Background / Analysis

The Student Advisory Board recognizes the importance of keeping funding at requested levels to ensure the integrity of the program in its mission to create an educated workforce for Oklahoma. Oklahoma's Promise is Oklahoma's largest state student financial aid program, and the state allocation for Oklahoma's Promise constitutes its single funding source. Oklahoma's Promise provides a crucial incentive for Oklahoma high school students with financial need, who meet high academic and conduct standards, to attain post-secondary education.

Approval

Unanimous

Oklahoma's Promise

Recommendation

The Student Advisory Board recommends that the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education work with the state legislature to consider the most economically vulnerable students when proposing changes to Oklahoma's Promise. The Student Advisory Board supports an increase in the income eligibility requirement of Oklahoma's Promise to reflect inflation since the policy was adopted.

Background / Analysis

Oklahoma continues to be a leader in college affordability throughout the nation, but recent restrictions to Oklahoma's Promise have targeted the most economically vulnerable students. In addition to attending college full time, many students work 20 to 30 hours a week in an effort to pay their living expenses. Requiring Oklahoma's Promise students to take on a larger academic load, while not providing more scholarship support, seems counterintuitive when the students are required to pay for books and all additional living expenses. Institutions should be striving to increase access to higher education by protecting Oklahoma's Promise and doing everything we can to help Oklahoma's most at-risk students. It is vital that we keep increases to tuition as low as possible to ensure access to the benefits of higher education to the individual as well as to the long term economic health of Oklahoma. Substantial increases in tuition and fees challenge the Complete College America initiative and our ability to produce the highest quality workforce possible. The Student Advisory Board believes that protecting the high quality higher education available in Oklahoma is vital for the success of students in Oklahoma, but we encourage the State Regents to keep in mind the most economically vulnerable students when acting on the tuition proposals.

Approval

Unanimous

Online Course Offerings

Recommendation

The Student Advisory Board recommends that the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education encourage all institutions to continue to increase the number of online course offerings available while still maintaining an adequate level of quality and rigor.

Background / Analysis

The Student Advisory Board believes that online course offerings can be used to supplement time spent in the classroom or in some cases replace it entirely. The Student Advisory Board also believes that although initially more expensive than traditional courses, with continued adoption and economies of scale, online course offerings can provide a more affordable option for education. Online courses may also open new opportunities for students to take courses from other Oklahoma Schools not currently offered by their institution.

Approval

Unanimous

Transfer Credits

Recommendation

The Student Advisory Board recommends that the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education encourage all institutions to support the Oklahoma Course Equivalency Project by continuing to add courses to the program.

Background / Analysis

The Student Advisory Board believes that a greater offering of transferable credits between institutions will allow students more flexibility in how they pursue their education. The Student Advisory Board further believes that greater participation in the Course Equivalency Project will contribute to economic development by reducing time to degree and financial burden to those who it affects.

Approval

Unanimous

Voter Participation

Recommendation

The Student Advisory Board recommends that all Oklahoma Institutions provide resources to facilitate student participation in the election process. The Student Advisory Board further recommends that institutions incorporate a civic participation component in one or more of their required general education classes or orientation.

Background / Analysis

With this being an election year, many citizens bring up the issue of college students not voting in elections of any sort. We believe that this is caused by the lack of information provided for students and would like to see resources provided during their education experience. By giving students the resources necessary to find when and where they can vote, we will provide students who have changed residence an opportunity to access needed information on the voting process.

Approval

Unanimous

Weapons on Campus

Recommendation

The Student Advisory Board recommends that the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education work with the state legislature and the executive to maintain the current policy concerning weapons on campus stated in Section 1277 of Title 21 of the Oklahoma Statutes.

Background / Analysis

The Student Advisory Board believes the current law provides sufficient flexibility to allow individual institutions to make decisions regarding the safety of weapons on its campus.

Approval

Unanimous

2015-2016 Student Advisory Board Activities

Monthly Meetings. Beginning in May, 2015, members of the Board met monthly, with the exception of June and July, to receive orientation, discuss issues, make campus visits and work plans, and prepare and vote on recommendations.

Student Leadership Retreat. Four members worked in conjunction with the State Regents Council on Student Affairs and the Oklahoma Student Government Association to host and participate in the Fifteenth Annual Oklahoma Student Leadership Retreat that took place September 24-25, 2015 in Norman.

Oklahoma Student Government Association Conferences. Student Advisory Board member Sarah Stewart participated in the annual Oklahoma Student Government Association Spring Congress at the University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma in Chickasha.

Higher Education Day at the State Capitol. Several members traveled to the State Capitol on February 16, 2016, 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.

3rd Annual Oklahoma Quality Summit. Student Advisory Board Member Haley Griggs provided information from the student perspective on a panel dealing with online learning and teaching issues in this state academic event at Northeastern State University – Broken Arrow on April 8, 2016.

Oklahoma's Promise Day at the State Capitol. Student Advisory Board member Taylor Gregory met at the State Capitol on April 19, 2016 with other students, faculty, and supporters of Oklahoma's public colleges and universities to show appreciation for the Governor and Legislature's ongoing support of the Oklahoma's Promise scholarship program and to encourage legislators to continue to protect the program's funding source.

State Regents Tuition Hearing. Student Advisory Board Chair Matt Chuning and member Taylor Gregory addressed comments on student concerns to the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education at the Tuition Hearing in Oklahoma City on April 21, 2016.

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 at the events listed above and individually visited with student leaders from the listed institutions:

Langston University
Oklahoma Baptist University
Oral Roberts University
Rogers State University