

# ANNUAL REPORT

*of the*

Student Advisory Board

*to the*

Oklahoma State Regents  
for Higher Education

May 2017

## 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**

Tyrance Billingsley, Chair, Tulsa Community College

Caleb Power, Vice Chair, University of Central Oklahoma

Kimberley Bishop, University of Oklahoma

Emilee Fields, Rose State College

Dillon Johnson, Oklahoma State University

Michael Nunez, University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma

Betsy Waller, Oral Roberts University

## ***Student Advisory Board***

### ***Recommendations and Counsel to the State Regents***

#### **Academic Advisement**

##### **Recommendation**

The Student Advisory Board recommends that the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education continue to encourage best practices for academic advisors in all colleges and universities in Oklahoma. The Student Advisory Board believes the best way to implement best practices is for the National Academic Advising Association (in conjunction with the Oklahoma Academic Advising Association) to implement a set of general standards for colleges and universities across Oklahoma to which all academic advisors will be held accountable. Institutions should perform regular degree checks to ensure that students are on-track and taking the necessary courses required to graduate. Recognizing the importance of student feedback, the Student Advisory Board recommends one element of these standards is for institutions to implement a post-advisement survey for students to complete for universities to learn more about weak spots in their academic advisement.

##### **Background / Analysis**

The Student Advisory Board agrees that all Oklahoma colleges and universities should work to provide excellent academic advisement to its students. Advising methods may vary from institution to institution, but each advisor should have a solid working knowledge of not only the courses in their own academic discipline, but general education courses as well in order to properly advise students. If a student is ill-advised, it can be incredibly easy for him or her to get off track from his or her degree plan or for the student to take unnecessary classes, which could result in delayed graduation. If a set of general standards for colleges and universities existed for institutions to be held accountable, students across Oklahoma would benefit from the improvement in the quality of academic advising they receive. Performing regular degree checks with each advisor and student would ensure that there is an open line of communication from advisor to student and that the student is on track to graduate. Implementing a post-advisement survey for students would give open and honest feedback and allow for institutions to better understand the effectiveness of their advisement programs and fix any existing problems.

**Approval:** Bishop, Johnson, Nunez, Power, Waller

**Absent:** Billingsley, Fields

## **Concurrent Enrollment**

### **Recommendation**

The Student Advisory Board recommends that the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education maintain their commitment to fully fund the Oklahoma concurrent enrollment program at the FY 2018 requested budget level of \$6,400,000. Fully funding this program for the first time since its inception would alleviate the current burden of funding concurrent students placed on colleges and universities (predominately community colleges). By fully funding concurrent enrollment, the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education can ensure the longevity and sustainability of a great tool for Oklahoma students.

### **Background / Analysis**

The Student Advisory Board recognizes the positive impact the concurrent enrollment program has on students in Oklahoma. By allowing high-achieving high school juniors and seniors to earn college credits while still in school, this program reduces the costs of attending college for students, increases college graduation rates, shortens time-to-degree for students, and improves college-going, retention, and completion rates. The number of students participating in the concurrent enrollment program is growing every year, with nearly 12,000 students enrolled in over 100,000 hours during the 2015-2016 academic year. This is a 158% increase from the year the program was started in 2005. Statistics show students who have taken part in the program have a higher graduation rate than their counterparts who do not participate in the concurrent program. This separation is clear at the community college, regional university, and research university levels. Furthermore, 97% of concurrently enrolled students pass or complete the classes they enroll in, proving the value of this investment.

**Approval:** Bishop, Johnson, Nunez, Power, Waller

**Absent:** Billingsley, Fields

## **Firearms on Campus**

### **Recommendation**

The Student Advisory Board recommends that the current state policy in place, in regard to firearms on campus, should not be modified in any way.

### **Background / Analysis**

Currently, firearms are not permitted on campus, unless the president of that university or college allows for an exception. The presidents of our universities in Oklahoma have submitted their recommendation for the law to remain as is. While we appreciate the legislators for having campus safety in mind, we recommend that these legislators should investigate procedures from campuses that exhibit low crime rates. We recommend that said legislators then write legislation concerning other methods of safety on our college and university campuses. The Student Advisory Board feels that the current state law in place is adequate. Therefore, we do not believe that Oklahoma should modify the firearm state law.

**Approval:** Bishop, Johnson, Nunez, Power, Waller

**Absent:** Billingsley, Fields

## **Mental Health Resources**

### **Recommendation**

The Student Advisory Board recommends that all colleges and universities in Oklahoma provide their students with access to mental health services. The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education should encourage all institutions to have mental health services that can adequately address the needs of students or to have resources to direct students to in the area.

### **Background / Analysis**

The Student Advisory Board agrees that mental health services should be available to every student at an Oklahoma higher education institution, which should require them as students with mental health disabilities make up the fastest growing student population. Every one in four persons between the ages of 18 and 24 have a mental illness. Without proper mental healthcare, students are unable to focus primarily on their studies, leaving them more likely to receive lower grades, to drop out of college entirely, or to be unemployed after graduation.

**Approval:** Bishop, Johnson, Nunez, Power, Waller

**Absent:** Billingsley, Fields

## **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 \$74.3 million requested for Fiscal Year 2018 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 2017-2018 academic year. The Student Advisory Board supports the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education request to the state legislature to raise the maximum income threshold for eligibility in order to restore the proportion of families eligible to participate in the program.

### **Background / Analysis**

The Student Advisory Board recognizes the importance of keeping funding and participation 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:** Bishop, Johnson, Nunez, Power, Waller

**Absent:** Billingsley, Fields

## **Online Textbooks**

### **Recommendation**

The Student Advisory Board recommends that the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education encourage and promote the use of Open Stax textbooks and other open educational resources by professors.

### **Background / Analysis**

Several undergraduate programs contain curriculum textbooks that are well above a reasonable student budget. Many majors, such as economics and chemistry, require hundreds of dollars' worth of textbooks per class. Open Stax is a company funded by the Gates family that contains a number of free, peer-reviewed online resources compiled for such majors. The switch to free resources may improve a student's success in college, alleviating the stress of textbook affordability. Over three thousand institutions, both undergraduate and below, have adopted the use of Open Stax and other educational resources. Encouraging Oklahoma institutions to adopt it in the long run may assist the students paying as much as \$317 for a single course's textbooks. Only exceedingly expensive majors have textbooks available at Open Stax, which will not target campus book retailers to a great extent.

**Approval:** Bishop, Johnson, Nunez, Power, Waller

**Absent:** Billingsley, Fields



## **Physical Disability Resources**

### **Recommendation**

The Student Advisory Board recommends that all colleges and universities ensure that existing and future buildings are compliant with ADA standards. Information regarding accessibility for physical disabilities shall be distributed and publicized to all current and potential students. Special regard should be taken to include students with disabilities in all emergency procedures on all campuses. The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education should also encourage all institutions to ensure all of their websites are accessible for students of all potential disabilities.

### **Background / Analysis**

While all institutions that receive federal funding are required to comply with ADA standards, there are buildings at institutions across the state that may be too old or simply may not meet those standards. Students at various institutions across the state have cited worries about the accessibility of some parts of their campuses. If a school were not only to be sure that they are fully accessible to all physical disabilities, but also to inform potential students of these measures, physically disabled students may feel more comfortable selecting that school. Moreover, with the increase in dependency on online platforms as well as online courses, institutions in Oklahoma need to ensure that these are also accessible to disabled students so they are not at a necessary disadvantage.

**Approval:** Bishop, Johnson, Nunez, Power, Waller

**Absent:** Billingsley, Fields

## **Private Institution Transparency**

### **Recommendation**

The Student Advisory Board recommends that all private colleges and universities in Oklahoma maintain transparency with their students and the public. The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education should encourage all private institutions to maintain financial and administrative transparency in order to maintain accountability for private institutions, despite the differing rules and regulations governing private colleges and universities.

### **Background / Analysis**

The Student Advisory Board agrees that all private Oklahoma colleges and universities should maintain transparency with its students, alumni, and the public. Though many rules and regulations are different for private universities, the Student Advisory Board believes transparency should be maintained financially and administratively. Private institutions should make all financial documentations, such as Form 990s, easily accessible to students and faculty. Additionally, the Student Advisory Board recommends that the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education should, when the opportunity presents itself, encourage financial and administrative transparency for private institutions in order to help students and faculty engage more with the inner workings of their university.

**Approval:** Bishop, Nunez, Power, Waller

**Nay:** Johnson

**Absent:** Billingsley, Fields

## **Sexual Assault**

### **Recommendation**

The Student Advisory Board recommends that the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education implement policies requiring that colleges and universities incorporate mandatory training concerning sexual assault prevention, intervention, and awareness. We recommend that these training sessions should happen at our state institutions' various freshman orientations, as well as, year-round refresher courses. These training courses should not only be taken by students, but faculty and administration as well. We recommend that the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education encourage the development of institutional departments that assist those who have directly, or indirectly, been affected by a sexual assault. We believe that the training pertaining to the prevention of sexual assault should start before an individual starts college. We urge the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education to consider opening a discussion with the Oklahoma State Department of Education to start the training concerning sexual assaults at an earlier age. Should the opportunity present itself, the SAB recommends that the State Regents encourage private institutions to follow the policies concerning the mentioned training.

### **Background / Analysis**

The Student Advisory Board recognizes that the implementation of existing policies and education concerning sexual assault can sometimes be inadequate. We believe that the training pertaining to the prevention of sexual assault should start before an individual starts college. We urge the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education to consider opening a discussion with the Oklahoma State Department of Education to start the training concerning sexual assaults at an earlier age. We acknowledge that students who have been affected by sexual assault can be hesitant to come forward due to a multitude of reasons. We believe that students of Oklahoma institutions, public or private, should be able to come forward without fear of being scrutinized by the administration of that institution. Should the opportunity present itself, the SAB recommends that the State Regents encourage private institutions to follow the policies concerning the mentioned training. Furthermore, the Student Advisory Board feels that any educational training offered should focus on being proactive rather than reactive. In order to minimize the number of cases pertaining to sexual assault, both on and off campus, we urge the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education to introduce an educational curriculum that emphasizes the prevention, intervention, and awareness of sexual assault.

**Approval:** Bishop, Johnson, Nunez, Power, Waller

**Absent:** Billingsley, Fields

## **Student Health Care**

### **Recommendation**

The Student Advisory Board recommends that all colleges and universities in Oklahoma continue seeking to provide access to affordable, timely, and comprehensive healthcare options for their students. The Student Advisory Board recommends that the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education encourage all institutions to regularly reconsider the existing healthcare options for students and work to provide the most well-rounded health care options they can for their students.

### **Background / Analysis**

The Student Advisory Board agrees that all Oklahoma colleges and universities should work to provide access to adequate and affordable healthcare options for all of its students. Though many students maintain insurance via their parents' insurance plans, some do not. Most universities do provide health care plan options for its students, but they may not always be very good plans or very affordable. The Student Advisory Board recommends that all colleges and universities should continue working to decrease the costs of these plans and increase their comprehensiveness. This will lighten the burden of students who do not have access to health insurance and make their academic experience easier.

**Approval:** Bishop, Johnson, Nunez, Power, Waller

**Absent:** Billingsley, Fields

## ***2016-2017 Student Advisory Board Activities***

**Monthly Meetings.** Beginning in May, 2016, members of the Board met monthly, with the exception of June, July, and November-December to receive orientation, discuss issues, make campus visits and work plans, and prepare and vote on recommendations.

**Student Leadership Retreat.** Three members worked in conjunction with the State Regents Council on Student Affairs and the Oklahoma Student Government Association to host and participate in the Sixteenth Annual Oklahoma Student Leadership Retreat that took place September 30, 2016 at Rose State College.

**Oklahoma Student Government Association Conferences.** Student Advisory Board members Tyrance Billingsley, Emilee Fields, Michael Nunez, and Caleb Power participated in the annual Oklahoma Student Government Association Fall Congress at the State Capitol. Tyrance Billingsley, Kimberley Bishop, and Caleb Power participated in the Spring Congress, which was hosted at Rogers State University in Claremore.

**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.

**Oklahoma's Promise Day at the State Capitol.** Student Advisory Board member Emilee Fields traveled to the State Capitol on April 18, 2017 with 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, to encourage legislators to continue to protect the program's funding source, and to support legislation increasing the threshold for eligibility.

**State Regents Tuition Hearing.** Student Advisory Board Member Emilee Fields vocalized student concerns along with other students at the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education Tuition Hearing in Oklahoma City on April 20, 2017.

**Campus Visits.** In addition to representing the students at their home institutions, members of the Student Advisory Board networked with student leaders from other campuses at the events listed above and visited with student leaders from the listed institutions below:

Cameron University  
Oklahoma Baptist University  
Oklahoma Christian University  
University of Tulsa  
University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center