

**OKLAHOMA STATE REGENTS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION**

830 East Main Street in Ada, Oklahoma

**MINUTES OF THE  
COMMITTEE-OF-THE-WHOLE**

Wednesday, January 31, 2024

1. **ANNOUNCEMENT FILING OF MEETING NOTICE AND POSTING OF THE AGENDA IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE OPEN MEETING ACT.** The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education held a regular meeting at 10:30 a.m. on Wednesday, January 31, 2024, at the Chickasaw Business and Conference Center located at 830 East Main Street in Ada, Oklahoma. Notice of the meeting had been filed with the Secretary of State on Wednesday, September 12, 2023 and amended on January 17, 2024. A copy of the agenda for the meeting had been posted in accordance with the Open Meeting Act.
2. **CALL TO ORDER.** Chair Jack Sherry called the meeting to order and presided. Present for the meeting were State Regents Jack Sherry, Phillip Mitchell “Mitch” Adwon, Ann Holloway, Dennis Casey, Courtney Warmington, Dustin J. Hilliary, Jeffrey W. Hickman and Steven W. Taylor, and Michael C. Turpen.
3. **PRESIDENT’S WELCOME.** East Central University President Wendell Godwin welcomed the Regents to the ECU campus and introduced a student speaker. Saul Padilla, a student at ECU, provided an account of his experience while attending ECU and the importance of having such an opportunity. A week before Mr. Padilla graduated high school, he was recruited by President Godwin, although at the time he was Dean of the School of Business, to come and study business at ECU. He remembers him being supportive and encouraging. Through his involvement at ECU, Mr. Padilla has traveled the country and even the world representing ECU. By the mentorship of the current Dean of the School of Business, Michael Scott, Mr. Padilla has discovered an appreciation of macroeconomics and earned an internship at the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City in Missouri. He will be the first student from ECU to intern there. He credits the man he has become to ECU, the faculty, and President Godwin.
4. **STATE SYSTEMS INSTITUTIONS.**
  - a. **East Central University.** President Wendell Godwin provided an update on institutional activities at ECU aligned with Blueprint 2030 recommendations. ECU has three programs currently that are on the list of programs that align with workforce demands. The Nursing, Computer Science, and Mathematics departments are all housed in the Science Hall building and will be a stop on the campus tour the Regents take. President Godwin expressed his sincere gratitude to the Regents for being here and allowing him to show them the facilities that have been the center of infrastructure discussions. ECU has a long legacy in education due to being a teacher’s university for 115 years. . President Godwin reported that he is pursuing funding for a new STEM/Nursing facility and aims to increase the nursing graduate output by nearly 400 percent. Currently, graduates from the BSN program are earn between \$30 and \$36 an hour and 84 percent of all nursing graduates remain in Oklahoma. ECU received \$7.3 million in ARPA funding and the Chickasaw Nation are contributing \$5 million towards building the new nursing facility. The budget is around \$27 million and he reported that they have close to half of the funds so far. President Godwin reviewed progress made toward improving student retention and graduation through implementation of evidence-informed student support practices. ECU

offers TRIO grants and a PACE (Pedagogy, Advising, & Curriculum Excellence) program that helps with better quality advising and tutoring. ECU recently realigned its General Education program and made it more student friendly. SIP (Strengthening Institutional Programs) is a new \$2 million grant ECU received to improve programs and mentor students. Approximately 82 percent of students who were enrolled in ECU for the Fall 2023 semester re-enrolled for the Spring 2024 semester. ECU does not offer concurrent enrollment for a few reasons. Murray State College does not charge students who enroll concurrently and ECU would need to charge \$400 a class for students to enroll concurrently. ECU is working to develop a Concurrent Academy Pilot Program for high school juniors and seniors to come to campus to take core classes such as Composition I, History, or Government. Over the last year, President Godwin reported that ECU offered scholarships to students who stopped attending with the success of getting some of those students back in the classroom. President Godwin introduced to Regents the idea of an associate's degree completion program. ECU does not currently offer any associate degrees. Over the past 10 years, over 2,000 students have dropped out from ECU. Even though they did not complete their bachelor's degree, they could have had enough hours completed to be awarded an associate degree. If ECU receives a function exception to offer associate's degrees, those 2,000 students could have a degree they already earned. Regent Taylor asked for clarification if this would be offered to past students only or future students, too. President Godwin assured him it would just be for the past students. Regarding challenges ECU faces, there are currently 40 open positions on campus that stem from compensation.. Infrastructure is the biggest challenge for ECU and Regents will get a closer look at it on the campus tour. Regent Warmington asked President Godwin how he was handling the fees regarding the Concurrent Academy Pilot Program. He informed her that they will not be waiving fees, but they do offer scholarships to eligible students. Regent Warmington also wanted to know what the plan was for the students who previously dropped out and want to re-enroll but have previous unpaid debt. President Godwin wants to sit down with each student and see if there are opportunities to waive part of the debt. Regent Casey asked if the nurses that graduate and stay in Oklahoma are working in rural or urban areas. President Godwin informed him that they go all across the state.

- b. **University of Oklahoma.** In his update, University of Oklahoma President Joe Harroz explained that this is the third year in a row that OU has had record enrollment in the freshman class. For the Fall 2023 semester, freshman enrollment increased by 11 percent, or 5,200 first-time freshman students. Of those students, 26 percent are first generation college students. Applications for the Fall 2024 semester are trending up by double digit growth from last year. President Harroz reported that four years ago, OU restructured the OU Health system and it has starting flourishing over the last six months. When it does well, more money will pour into the OU Health Sciences Center to be used towards educating the healthcare workforce of Oklahoma and doing the research that saves lives. The Stephenson Cancer Center has not only been made into a National Cancer Institute-Designated Cancer Center in Norman, but OU expects to have one in Tulsa soon. The OU retention rate is of the highest out of the public institutions in Oklahoma at a rate of 89 percent, which was up 1 percent from last year. OU has a 6-year graduation rate of 76 percent, which is the highest in Oklahoma. The 4-year graduation rate also hit a record high of 57.5 percent. The biggest contributing factor in those retention rates is ensuring that college is affordable for everyone. Need-based financial aid has increased over the last five years by 48 percent. The average cost for an Oklahoma resident to attend OU is less expensive on average than it was six years ago. That is the result of using tuition increases

strategically. The Lead On campaign has a goal of \$2 billion by 2027 and OU is close to \$1 billion as of right now.

5. **BLUEPRINT 2030.**

- a. **Universal FAFSA.** Vice Chancellor for Administration Kylie Smith and Associate Vice Chancellor for Communications Angela Caddell provided an update on FAFSA. Beginning with the 2024-25 school year, it is now a graduation requirement for students from a public high school to complete and submit a FAFSA. There are opt-out provisions. The Universal FAFSA Working Group is comprised of members of the State Department of Education, Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, and CareerTech. The State Department of Education has drafted administrative rules for FAFSA as a high school graduation requirement. Some of the rules in place require the superintendents to designate a school employee to collect information regarding student compliance and that opt-out forms must be completed prior to the student's final semester of high school. OSRHE worked to update the OK FAFSA Data Portal to align with the new FAFSA, updated the FAFSA publications and materials, provided trainings to stakeholders and workshops for students and families, developed inventory of FAFSA resources available across higher ed and CareerTech, and implemented a paid marketing campaign to promote FAFSA completion. Authorized high school personnel are able to track whether a student has submitted a FAFSA and check the status through the FAFSA Data Portal.
- b. **Statewide Nursing Pathways Advisory Group.** Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs Dr. Stephanie Beauchamp updated Regents on the Statewide Nursing Pathways Advisory Group. The goals are to develop, promote, and advertise well-defined career pathways for students in critical workforce areas. A few issues have been identified with regard to clinical hours and requirements, faculty shortages, and admission and transfer challenges. To improve the issues revolving around clinical hours and requirements, the subcommittees are working to determine feasibility of a statewide clinical portal, revise clinical requirements for consistency, and review expanding clinical site requirements. Recruiting faculty and finding ways to increase retention rates among faculty are important. The subcommittees are working to create a Course Equivalency Group, review and update current MOUs between higher education institutions and CareerTech, increase the use of Credit for Prior Learning, and eliminate admission barriers.

6. **BUDGET REPORT AND REVENUE UPDATE.** Vice Chancellor for Budget and Finance Mark Tygret gave the Regents a budget update. He reported that the agency budget is in sound position and on target going into the third quarter. In regards to state revenue, December year-over-year was down almost 5 percent from gross production and sales tax collections year-to-date are effectively flat from FY2023. Estimated payments on income taxes has improved slightly. A revenue certification in December 2023 looked very good, the least of the areas being recurring revenue, approximately \$400 million additional to the legislature from their outlay last year. The cash reserve has over \$2 billion waiting for disposition or saving it for an inevitable downturn.

7. **LEGISLATIVE UPDATE.** Vice Chancellor for Government Relations Dr. Jarrett Jobe gave the Regents a legislative update. OSRHE presented the budget to both the House and Senate committees in the last 30 days. The legislative tour schedule concluded in January 2024. The next event is Higher Education Day at the State Capitol on February 8, 2024. Governor Stitt has confirmed attendance along with the Speaker of the House and other members of the House and Senate. A special session is still occurring and the House took a vote that morning to pass the quarter tax cut, but there is no expectation that the Senate will vote to approve it before the regular

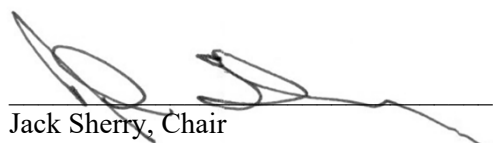
session convenes. The Speaker of the House filed regular legislation reflecting the same tax cuts for the regular legislative session. From now until Senate leadership gets the numbers that Vice Chancellor Tygret mentioned, they will be cautious on their side to pursue any legislation. OSRHE sent the Regents the first cut of legislation to review and highlighted a few. There is DEI legislation and over 30 gun-related bills. Dr. Jobe presented the OSRHE legislative agenda consisting of the Oklahoma Promise's bill and changes to the EPSCoR statute. He then reviewed bills regarding scholarships and concurrent reimbursement. The Senate Education Committee held a press conference that morning to discuss education priorities, primarily focused on common education. Senator Pugh filed bills on risk management, property insurance, and freezing tuition. Chairman Mark McBride and Senator Pugh have both filed a deferred maintenance bill. Other priority topics are initial injection capital that could help serve the most important needs of the state system and a long-term funding process to which money could be added. Regent Hilliary asked what the dollar amount was on Chairman McBride's bill and that was \$200 million annualized for five years. In regards to the concurrent reimbursement bill, Regent Hilliary asked if Chairman Moore had intentions of polling the Regents, too, and seeking their opinions on the reimbursement rate. Dr. Jobe responded that Chairman Moore has indicated that he would like feedback from the Regents. Regent Warmington asked for more information about concurrent enrollment rates in other states. Regarding the \$10 million request for adult education, Regent Warmington asked if legislators have started asking questions on what that plan looks like. Dr. Jobe reported that questions have come up in the budgetary hearings. Regent Warmington emphasized the importance of having a clear strategy for the bulk of that money. Regent Hickman brought up the distinction between the value of concurrent classes between the different universities. If the value is comparable, then he agrees that the price should be the same.

8. **PROPOSED EXECUTIVE SESSION.** Matt Stangl, General Counsel, indicated that an executive session was not needed at this time.

Possible discussion and vote to enter into executive session pursuant to 25 O.S. § 307(B)(4) for confidential communications between the board and its attorney(s) concerning: (1) Black Emergency Response Team, et al. v. Drummond, et al., Case No. 5:21-cv-01022-G in the United States District Court for the Western District of Oklahoma; (2) Wisdom Ministries, Inc. v. Garrett, et al., Case No. 23-5098, United States Court of Appeals for the Tenth Circuit (appealed from 4:22-cv-00477-CVE-CDL in the United States District Court for the Northern District of Oklahoma); and (3) EEOC Charge # 564-2023-01525, if the board, with the advice of its attorney, determines that disclosure will seriously impair the ability of the board to process the claim or conduct a pending investigation, litigation, or proceeding in the public interest.

9. **"BEST OF HIGHER EDUCATION."** Regents received the update on institutional activities via e-mail.
10. **CALENDAR OF EVENTS.** The calendar of events was distributed in written form to the Regents.
11. **ADJOURN.** With no other items to discuss, the meeting was adjourned and the Regents toured the ECU campus.

ATTEST:

  
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Jack Sherry, Chair

  
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Steven W. Taylor, Secretary