

Meeting of the
Oklahoma Free Speech Committee

MINUTES

Tuesday, February 13, 2024, 12:00 p.m.

Notice. The meeting notice was posted with the Secretary of State on Tuesday, December 5, 2023 at 3:17 p.m. The meeting agenda was posted on the State Regents' website on Monday, February 12, 2024 at 10:13 a.m.

1. **Call to order.** Meeting called to order at 12:04 p.m. The following members were in attendance: Andy Lester (Chair), Rep. Chad Caldwell, Valerie Couch, Dr. Raúl Font, Dr. Rick Hall, Hayley Jones, and Regent Jeff Hickman. Senator Kay Floyd and Mariana Pitts were unable to attend.
2. **Minutes of Previous Meeting.** Judge Couch moved to approve the minutes from the previous meeting. Dr. Hall seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.
3. **Comments from the Chair.** Chairman Lester spoke about the serious conversation the nation has embarked on regarding free speech on college campuses. Academic freedom and political demonstrations have been at the forefront of the conversation during the events of the Israeli-Hamas war. Oklahoma took two important steps around free speech, forming this Committee and adopting the Chicago Principles. The Committee has accomplished a great deal in one year, there is an established complaint form on the Regents' website, institutional policy reviews are underway, and a free speech training is planned.
4. **Task Force Reports.**
 - a. Institutional Policies Task Force Report (Valerie Couch). Judge Couch gave an update on the future policy review meetings.
 - The Task Force has entered a phase of their work that they hope embraces every member of the Committee. They have begun policy reviews, and invite Committee members to join on the two-person review teams. Reviewing all the institutions will likely take at least two years to complete. The Task Force has completed the review meeting for UCO, and the broad span of administrators present from UCO was very helpful to hear from. The review team is preparing a summary report, and once completed, the report will be shared with the Committee. The report will become a public record eventually under the Oklahoma Open Records Act. In the future, it might be easier in the future to compare a set of policies to an ideal set of policies. The Committee is advisory in nature, and cannot mandate any changes. It was suggested that the Task Force report to the Board of Regents periodically, to update them on any trends. The Training Task Force will also work closely with the Policies Task Force.
 - b. Complaints Task Force Report (Rick Hall). Dr. Hall gave a brief update on the Complaints Task Force.

- The Complaints Task Force has not met since the last Committee meeting and has received no complaints since publishing the complaints form. Dr. Hall is looking forward to the Committee's work.
- c. Training Task Force Report (Chairman Lester). Chairman Lester summarized the work the Training task force has been doing.
- The Task Force has confirmed speakers and a confirmed schedule. The event currently has over 300 attendees RSVP'd. Chairman Lester will go over a brief introduction, then Professor Thai will deliver the keynote address, then two higher education lawyers will present an interactive panel. The list of individuals required to attend is a broad group, so the training will be recorded and made available to the institutions. Each institution will need to report to the State Regents that they are compliant with the provisions of the statute. The training will be around two hours, and should relay the basics of free speech to the attendees. It was asked if there will be a FAQ on the Regents' website, this could help educate the incoming hires to these institutions. Chairman Lester liked this idea for the future.
- 5. Staff Report.** Mr. Turner stated that the State Regents' staff are primarily working on policy reviews and scheduling for the training.
- 6. Other Business or Discussion.** Chairman Lester stressed that the Committee is bipartisan, and everyone is concerned and supportive of free speech. That is one of the many strengths of the Committee. Regent Hickman echoed the bipartisanship of the Committee, and praised the caliber of people selected to be part of the Committee. He thanked the Committee members for their time commitment.
- 7. Meeting Adjourned:** The meeting adjourned at 12:42 p.m.