

Meeting of the  
**Oklahoma Free Speech Committee**

MINUTES

Tuesday, June 11, 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, June 10, 2024 at 10:56 a.m.

1. **Call to order.** Regular Meeting called to order at 12:05 p.m. The following members were in attendance: Andy Lester (Chair), Rep. Caldwell, Valerie Couch, Dr. Raúl Font, Dr. Rick Hall, Mariana Pitts, Senator Floyd, and Regent Hickman. Hayley Jones was unable to attend.
2. **Minutes of Previous Meeting.** Dr. Hall moved to approve the February meeting minutes. Representative Caldwell seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.
3. **Comments from the Chair.** Chairman Lester spoke about the free speech disruptions around the country. In the last week, there have been threats to individuals including students and faculty, along with protests and counter protests around a regent's house, and the vandalization of a regent's place of business. It has been just over a year since the formation of the Committee and the Committee is already about a year ahead of the predicted schedule. Each task force has done incredible work. Higher education is one of the most important things society does, and doing higher education the right way is vital. State Regents policy 2.28 has positioned Oklahoma as a nationwide leader in expressive freedom. He thanked the Committee for their hard work.
4. **Task Force Reports.**
  - a. Institutional Policies Task Force Report (Valerie Couch). Judge Couch gave an update on the future policy review meetings.
    - Judge Couch summarized the status of the policy reviews. The final draft of the University of Central Oklahoma's recommendations report is ready for the next steps. Northern Oklahoma College and Murray State College's reports are still in the drafting phase. The Committee has postponed the meeting with Oklahoma State University. Cameron University's review will be in person on their campus this month. The task force plans to schedule more reviews this summer. The recent Free Speech Training prompted an institution to ask for an ad hoc review by the task force, which is out of the usual schedule, but in line with the resources the Committee hopes to provide. Many institutions are working on revising their policies currently, and the task force may receive similar requests. The review team usually meets with the administrators for about two hours to further understand their policies and what challenges they face on campus. After the visit, the review team then drafts the report. The process has evolved as the teams

complete more reviews. Judge Couch moved for the Committee to authorize the Institutional Policies Task Force to distribute both a draft and final copy of the report to UCO. Dr. Font seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. Judge Couch and Chairman Lester strongly encouraged the Committee members to volunteer for review teams.

b. Complaints Task Force Report (Rick Hall). Dr. Hall gave a brief update on the work of the Complaints Task Force.

- The Complaints Task Force has had no complaints recently. The Task Force met to talk about the Training and about the different reactions to free speech around the country. It seems like Oklahoma has been quiet on this front. The Committee discussed how active they should be in raising issues. The Committee has a very specific mandate from the legislature, there is a lot of work that members may personally like to see done, but the statutes that govern the Committee may not encompass that work. One of the things Chairman Lester appreciates is that the Committee is bipartisan. The task forces might evolve as these issues arise. The Training might address the pressure points where the institutions find tension between free speech and legislative direction. The Complaints Task Force can also serve as a safety valve if necessary. This work will evolve over time as culture and situations change, that is one of the strengths of the Committee.

c. Training Task Force Report (Mariana Pitts). Ms. Pitts summarized the attendee feedback from the recent Free Speech Training.

- The Task Force had their first ever Training in person at UCO, with about 300 people attending. Professor Thai gave the keynote remarks, followed by Brandee Hancock and Mackenzie Wilfong. The training was also recorded for anyone who could not attend. After the training, the task force sent out a survey, and most responses were positive. The main feedback from attendees was to have more audience participation and practical elements, so Professor Thai agreed to have a follow up Zoom meeting to answer questions. In the future, the training will use a more formal registration process, and may offer more advanced sessions throughout the year. The institutions will need to report to the Regents that everyone required from their institution attended the training. Currently, the official recorded version is still in the editing process. The Committee discussed tracking the number of views the link gets, and taking different learning styles into consideration at the next training. Ms. Pitts thanked everyone who helped with the training.

**5. Staff Report.** Mr. Turner reminded the Committee that the OSRHE have a Communications Department, and all media requests should go through them.

**6. Other Business or Discussion.** Judge Couch asked the Committee to discuss the idea of the ad hoc review requests. What would the comfort level of everyone be with the task force taking on these ad hoc reviews? It was mentioned that perhaps they could schedule the institution requesting for their policy review meeting sooner. There have been suggestions as to what the Committee can do better, and the institutions are very interested in this work. So far, most reactions to the Committee have been positive.

**7. Meeting Adjourned:** The meeting adjourned at 12:58 p.m.