

Meeting of the
Oklahoma Free Speech Committee
MINUTES

Tuesday, December 10, 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, December 9, 2024 at 10:07 a.m.

- 1. Call to order.** Regular Meeting called to order at 12:02 p.m. The following members were in attendance: Andy Lester (Chair), Representative Caldwell, Dr. Raúl Font, Mariana Pitts, Senator Floyd, Regent Levit, Judge Valerie Couch, Dr. Rick Hall, and Hayley Jones.
- 2. Minutes of Previous Meeting.** Dr. Font raised concerns that the meeting minutes did not comprehensively cover the last meeting. Chairman Lester postponed the approval of the minutes until after the task force reports to discuss.
- 3. Comments from the Chair.** Chairman Lester outlined the principles that guide the Committee. In light of current events, free speech has been at the center of controversies across the nation, and there is much to be learned. He is pleased with the work of the Committee to ensure Oklahoma is both protecting free speech and encouraging civility.
- 4. Task Force Reports.**
 - a. Institutional Policies Task Force Report (Judge Valerie Couch). Judge Couch gave an update on the work of the task force.
 - Judge Couch reminded the Committee of the makeup of the task force, and their process. They have completed reports for the University of Central Oklahoma, Northern Oklahoma College, Murray State College, and Cameron University. They have pending reports for Northeastern State University, Oklahoma Panhandle State University, Oklahoma State University, and Rose State College. Next week, the review team will travel to visit Rogers State University; being in-person on campus allows the review team to get a better sense of the campus culture.
 - Judge Couch presented the Langston University report to the Committee. A citation error was spotted on page three, and Judge Couch recommended amending the citation to correct it. The Committee discussed whether the review team thought that the university was dealing with the concerns about off-campus speech the report mentioned. Judge Couch moved to approve the Langston University report as amended. Dr. Hall seconded the motion. Voting for the motion were Chairman Lester, Representative Caldwell, Dr. Font, Senator Floyd, Judge Couch, Dr. Hall, Ms. Jones, and Ms. Pitts. Regent Levit abstained from voting. The motion passed. Chairman Lester thanked Judge Couch for her work.
 - b. Complaints Task Force Report (Dr. Rick Hall). Dr. Hall gave an update on the task force.

- There have been no new complaints submitted on the online form. All the preparation the task force completed will make things easier for both the students and the Committee.

- c. Training Task Force Report (Mariana Pitts). Ms. Pitts gave a brief update on the training task force.

- The task force has not needed to meet since the completion of the training in April. At the end of the year, the institutions will need to confirm to the State Regents that all required administrators completed the training. Chairman Lester also mentioned to please let him know if anyone wants to change task forces.

5. Staff Report. Mr. Turner followed up on Regent Levit's request to schedule the meetings on the same day as the Regents' meeting dates. Unfortunately, OSRHE is unable to schedule both in one day. Mr. Turner presented the 2025 meeting dates: February 11, June 10, September 9, and December 9, 2025, all at 12:00pm. Representative Caldwell then moved to approve the 2025 meeting dates. Ms. Pitts seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

6. Other Business or Discussion. Chairman Lester went back to item two of the agenda, to approve the previous meeting minutes. Dr. Font prefaced that his background is in leadership and democratic practices, he does not want the institutions to think the Committee is subjective. The word "scholarly" to him means there is some form of reference, not just an arbitrary opinion. Dr. Font proposed to amend the September meeting minutes to state, "Dr. Font reminded the Committee of the importance of drafting the reports in a scholarly manner." The Committee discussed that they did not decide whether the reports should be scholarly in nature. Dr. Font moved to approve the minutes as amended and Representative Caldwell seconded. Voting for the motion were Chairman Lester, Representative Caldwell, Dr. Font, Senator Floyd, Dr. Hall, Regent Levit, and Ms. Pitts. Judge Couch and Ms. Jones abstained from voting. The motion passed.

Regent Levit shared that he listened to a podcast about free speech and civility with the Chancellor at Vanderbilt. It is important to teach students and the wider community to responsibly exercise free speech. The institutional policies task force has noticed some institutions are teaching students how to respond when confronted with protected, but offensive speech. There were concerns about teenagers on college campuses hearing vile and uncomfortable speech with no teaching on how to handle it. Dr. Font suggested hearing from a panel of teenagers to get their thoughts on free speech. The Committee also discussed staggering the member's terms.

7. Meeting Adjourned: The meeting adjourned at 12:57 p.m.