

Meeting of the
Oklahoma Free Speech Committee

MINUTES

Tuesday, February 10, 2026, 12:00 p.m.

Notice. The meeting notice was posted with the Secretary of State on Sunday, December 14, 2025, at 11:14 p.m. The meeting agenda was posted on the State Regents' website on Monday, February 9, 2026, at 9 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), Representative Caldwell, Michael McNutt, Hayley Jones, and Dr. Rick Hall. Senator Floyd, Judge Valerie Couch, Mariana Pitts and Regent Levit were unable to attend.
2. **Minutes of Previous Meeting.** Mr. McNutt moved to approve the December meeting minutes. Dr. Hall seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.
3. **Comments from the Chair.** Chairman Lester posed the question of what an institution would do if a member of the community invited an antisemitic critic of Israel wartime policy to speak on campus. This was a question posed to him by a leader of an institution during the International Conference on Academic Freedom, Expression Rights, and Institutional Responsibilities attended by him and colleague, Mariana Pitts, in Israel. During this conference, they were able to speak about what the Oklahoma Free Speech Committee is doing in the state of Oklahoma and the Committee itself being one of the factors that makes Oklahoma unique. No other state comes close to the work done by this committee, except for the state of Iowa. He further elaborates on the paper they were able to present during this conference touching on key points on how to protect free speech on campuses. The committee serves as a safety valve created by the Oklahoma Legislature and implemented by the State Regents. He closes his remarks by reiterating that colleges should go further by including courses on civil discourse in their core curriculum.
4. **Task Force Reports.**
 - a. Institutional Policies Task Force Report (Representative Caldwell). Representative Caldwell presented the report in Judge Couch's absence, updating the committee on the work the task force has completed.

Judge Couches remarks

The Institutional Policy Review Task Force is continuing to work through a plan to present between 2 to 4 reports for the Committee's consideration at every meeting.

Today the task force presented two Reports for consideration

- 1) Report and Recommendation for the University of Oklahoma
- 2) Report and Recommendation for East Central University

Rep. Chad Caldwell and Judge Valerie Couch served as the Review Team for OU while Rep. Chad Caldwell and Haley Jones served as the Review Team for ECU. Both institutions were provided with courtesy copies of the Reports the week prior to the meeting, and we have not received any responses for consideration.

Two policy reviews are pending:

- 1) Connors State College, scheduled for February 18, 2026, with Andy Lester and Michael McNutt serving as the review team.
- 2) Carl Albert State College, scheduled for March 3, 2026, with Rick Hall and Valerie Couch serving as the review team.

By the June meeting, with consideration of reports for Connors State College and Carl Albert State College, the task force will have completed policy reviews for half of the institutions on the task force's list.

Rep. Caldwell elaborates on the Report for OU, stating recommendations were made before the incident that occurred on the Norman campus last fall. A bill has been presented that will require every college university to formalize a policy similar to Rose State College's stating that a student's grade would be based on academic criteria and that a student's beliefs, personal opinions and conduct outside of the classroom would not impact their grade. That bill is currently working its way through the legislative session.

Dr. Hall moved to approve the OU Report and Recommendation. Haley Jones seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Haley Jones moved to approve the Report and Recommendation for East Central University. Dr. Hall seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Rep. Caldwell gives credit to the reports that Judge Couch drafts for the Committee, as colleges do take these suggestions into consideration.

b. Complaints Task Force Report (Dr. Rick Hall). Dr. Hall gave an update on the task force.

There has been a lot of activity for the task force. Most recently, the complaints task force has received two (2) complaints since the last Committee meeting, with there being five (5) in total.

Two (2) of the five (5) complaints are addressed in the UCO Summary & Analysis. The Committee can expect a summary & analysis for one (1) of the five (5) complaints at the next meeting.

The task force is still reviewing the details of the two (2) latest complaints. All inquiries related to complaints not covered during the meeting should be directed to Chris Turner.

Dr. Hall presented the UCO Summary & Analysis involving the UCO Vista newspaper. He said that the report contains relevant facts and analysis of the free speech issues at play.

The Committee discussed its own advisory nature, uniqueness and limits. The Committee also discussed efforts taken to continue publishing the Vista and what sort of hypothetical reasons for discontinuing publishing might yield a First Amendment violation. Details related to the complaint were discussed along with the importance of the newspaper to students from a journalism perspective.

Rep. Caldwell moved to approve the UCO Summary & Analysis. Mr. McNutt seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously

- c. Training Task Force Report (Andy Lester). Chairman Lester presented the report in Marianna Pitts's absence, updating the committee on the work the task force has completed.

The task force hopes to move forward with a recording and updated panel discussion this Spring. The plan is for the panel to cover free speech issues that have arisen, especially since the last 2024 recording. The task force would move forward with planning an in-person training event this Fall.

Free Speech experts would be contacted to lead a series of interactive sessions, case studies, or mock scenarios.

Due to the challenges encountered last time with the recording in an auditorium setting, the Fall training would most likely not be recorded.

- 5. **Staff Report.** Mr. Turner did not have any items to be discussed. Expressed thanks for the patience of the committee during his time out of the office and announced he is back to fulltime.
- 6. **Other Business or Discussion.** Chairman Lester will have staff circulate the paper written for the conference he attended in Israel.
- 7. **Meeting Adjourned:** The meeting adjourned at 12:52pm.