

Meeting of the
Oklahoma Free Speech Committee

MINUTES

Tuesday, February 11, 2025, 12:00 p.m.

Notice. The meeting notice was posted with the Secretary of State on Tuesday, December 10, 2024 at 4:12 p.m. The meeting agenda was posted on the State Regents' website on Monday, February 10, 2025 at 11:19 a.m.

- 1. Call to order.** Regular Meeting called to order at 12:04 p.m. The following members were in attendance: Andy Lester (Chair), Representative Caldwell, Michael McNutt, Mariana Pitts, Senator Floyd, Judge Valerie Couch, and Dr. Rick Hall. Hayley Jones and Regent Levit were unable to attend.
- 2. Minutes of Previous Meeting.** Judge Couch moved to approve the December meeting minutes. Dr. Hall seconded the motion. Voting for the motion were Chairman Lester, Representative Caldwell, Ms. Pitts, Judge Couch, Senator Floyd, and Dr. Hall. Mr. McNutt abstained. The motion passed.
- 3. Comments from Chancellor.** Chancellor Burrage thanked the Committee members for their commitment to free speech. He has spent most of his career on college campuses and handled First Amendment issues. It can be easy to respect First Amendment rights when you agree with the speaker, but free speech complaints can quickly become complicated.
- 4. Comments from the Chair.** Chairman Lester welcomed Mr. McNutt, the newest member of the Committee. He is excited to work with Mr. McNutt and thinks he will be a great addition to the Committee. The Committee has produced a two-hour training, an easy-to-use complaint form, and a process of reviewing institution's policies and training. In implementing HB3543, the State Regents adopted policy 2.28 to implement the Chicago Principles, which are celebrating their 10th anniversary. Higher education campuses see lots of free speech, even if that free speech can be offensive. With only a few minor exceptions, Oklahoma campuses have avoided these controversies. The work of the Committee remains important to ensure Oklahoma campuses continue to avoid these controversies. With technology, the notion of teaching how to have these types of civil disagreements is more important. Civility can never overtake free speech, but it should be emphasized that people can disagree and still maintain respect for one another.

5. Task Force Reports.

- a. Institutional Policies Task Force Report (Judge Valerie Couch). Judge Couch gave an update on the recent work of the task force.

- Judge Couch presented the amended review plan for Committee review. The original procedure was approved in August of 2023, but that review plan no longer aligns with the team's experience. The first change is to remove the requirement that the review team includes a member of the Policies Task Force. This change gives the task force more flexibility. The second change is to allow the review team to use their discretion on whether to consult with an individual or group that has expertise in free speech. Outside help can be useful to spot issues but is no longer necessary.

- The Committee discussed following up after the institutions receive the reports. The task force does not follow up, but they do invite a response and hope to be an ongoing resource for the institutions. The Committee discussed creating a best practices document, combining the knowledge the Committee has gained after reviewing every school. If the Committee reviews the institutions a second time, a great starting point will be to see what recommendations the institutions have put in place. The Committee's work is advisory only, and the meetings have been very collaborative so far, especially with the smaller schools. Chairman Lester praised Judge Couch for all her work. The Committee discussed sending a survey seeking feedback. Dr. Hall moved to approve the amended review plan and Ms. Pitts seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

- Judge Couch presented the Northeastern State University report to the Committee. A draft copy has already been provided to NSU, but the Committee has not received any feedback yet. Representative Caldwell moved to approve the Report and Recommendations for Northeastern State University. Dr. Hall seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

- Judge Couch presented the Oklahoma State University report to the Committee. A draft copy has already been provided to OSU, but the Committee has not received any feedback yet. Judge Couch moved to approve the Report and Recommendations for Oklahoma State University. Ms. Pitts seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

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

- There have been no new complaints.

- c. Training Task Force Report (Mariana Pitts). Ms. Pitts gave a brief update on the training task force.
 - The task force has received all the verification letters for compliance with the training statute.
6. **Staff Report.** Mr. Turner reported that State Regents staff received all the training verification letters for the institutions.
7. **Other Business or Discussion.** Mr. McNutt thought about the super bowl halftime performance and the protest that occurred. Free speech is important to have a chance for everyone to express their views. It's important that universities take stock of these opportunities and for students to be exposed to as many different viewpoints as possible. But there is also a moral obligation for the protestor to present their views in a responsible and mature way. It is important to be ahead and not reactionary on our college campuses. Chairman Lester expressed appreciation that the committee is bipartisan and comes from diverse backgrounds.
8. **Meeting Adjourned:** The meeting adjourned at 12:57 p.m.