

Meeting of the
Oklahoma Free Speech Committee

MINUTES

Tuesday, June 10, 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, June 9, 2025, at 10:07 a.m.

1. **Call to order.** Regular Meeting called to order at 12:17 p.m. The following members were in attendance: Andy Lester (Chair), Representative Caldwell, Michael McNutt, Senator Floyd, Judge Valerie Couch, Hayley Jones, Regent Ken Levit, and Dr. Rick Hall. Mariana Pitts was unable to attend.
2. **Minutes of Previous Meeting.** Mr. McNutt moved to approve the June meeting minutes. Judge Couch seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.
3. **Comments from the Chair.** Chairman Lester complimented the work of the Committee, which has developed a great routine in its work. He and Ms. Pitts will be attending a freedom of expression conference and have written a paper about Oklahoma's unique approach to free speech that they will present. Iowa's Free Speech Committee is similar, but Oklahoma is truly unique in both the legislation and work of the Committee.
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 thanked everyone who has been involved, and thanked OSRHE staff. The Task Force has found a good pace, each meeting submitting between two and four reports. In total, the Task Force has now completed ten reviews. Today the Task Force has brought three reports to consider for approval. Judge Couch presented the Oklahoma Panhandle State University Report and Recommendations to the Committee. The virtual meeting with OPSU went well, their team was very impressive. Chairman Lester commented on OPSU's beautiful campus and urged members to visit if they have a chance. A draft copy has already been provided to OPSU, but the Committee has not received any feedback yet. Judge Couch moved to approve the Report and Recommendations for Oklahoma Panhandle State University and Mr. McNutt seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

- Judge Couch presented the Rogers State University Report and Recommendations to the Committee. Chairman Lester appreciated the chance to meet in-person with the Rogers State team, and they had an excellent discussion. The Committee appreciated the standardized format of the reports. Different schools have different issues, but having a standardized format allows the Task Force to be internally consistent. Ms. Jones moved to approve the Report and Recommendations for Rogers State University, and Dr. Hall seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

- Judge Couch presented the Rose State College Report and Recommendations to the Committee. This meeting also went well. RSC's grading policy was commendable, and it is regularly recommended to other schools. RSC is doing a lot of good things on campus. Ms. Jones really enjoyed being a part of the review team. The Committee noted the use of the phrase "in good taste" in RSC's Student Handbook and discussed how often similar policies arise. Promoting civility is acceptable, but mandating civility is potentially problematic. Civility in freedom of expression cannot be grounds for discipline, but merely aspirational. The goal should be for the campus community to disagree respectfully, but the First Amendment protects disrespectful and abhorrent speech as well. Chairman Lester mentioned that he and Ms. Pitts included civility in their conference paper. He sees this as the next step of the Committee, teaching how to communicate effectively and civilly. Mr. McNutt moved to approve the Report and Recommendations for Rose State College and Representative Caldwell seconded. 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 complaint forms submitted.

- c. Training Task Force Report (Andy Lester). Chairman Lester gave a brief update on the training task force.

- The Committee is 10 months away from the 2-year anniversary of the first training session, so work will begin shortly on the next one.

6. Staff Report. Mr. Turner reported that staff is working on a stagger of terms.

7. Other Business or Discussion. The Committee discussed Senate Bills 942 and 991, including the definition of "antisemitism." The Committee spoke about how abhorrent speech can still be protected speech and that issues related to the bill may come before the Committee in the future.

8. Meeting Adjourned: The meeting adjourned at 12:56pm.