

STATE REGENTS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION
Research Park, Oklahoma City

**PUBLIC HEARING
on Tuition and Fees**

Friday, May 28, 2021

Rose State College, Student Union 2nd Floor Ballroom, 1920 Hudiburg Drive in Midwest City
and via Zoom Videoconference

Regent Ann Holloway: I call the meeting to order. Everyone please have a seat. Chancellor, has this meeting been filed and posted as required?

Chancellor Glen D. Johnson: Yes, it has, Madam Chair.

Regent Ann Holloway: I would like to call this public hearing to order. We do not even have to do a roll call vote at this time. Before we start the public hearing portion of the meeting, let's review the tuition and fee items that will be the focus of the testimony. The information has been posted on the State Regents' website. Chancellor, would you like to comment on these issues?

Chancellor Glen D. Johnson: I will, Madam Chair and Regents. Thank you and good morning, good morning to those that are joining us remotely for our State Regents' meeting. I think I want to provide a bit of background information as we have our hearing that we schedule every year on tuition and fees for the public to comment on what is a very important matter for students, and for parents, and for administrators and faculty in the higher education community. We thought it might be good, as we start, to look at a snapshot of what the history has been with regard to tuition and fees in Oklahoma higher education over the last ten to twelve years.

If you look at that first slide that we have, you can see that unlike the national trend, we all know that in many states there have been double digit tuition increases and fee increases in many states. When we say double digit, California as an example, had back to back years of twenty-six and twenty-seven percent increases, and so if you, Janet, let's go ahead and put that first slide up if you can, there we go. You look at our trend in Oklahoma higher education over the last twelve years, you can see that we have had an average annual increase of 4.4 percent, below five percent. And over the last twelve years, as you can see the trend going to sixteen and seventeen, when it was 8.4 percent, that did coincide with one of the larger cuts that not only higher education but state government experienced during the downturn. Last year, it's worth noting that the average tuition and mandatory fee increase was 1.3 percent. We had fourteen of our institutions that asked for no increase in tuition and fees last year, so, I would offer this particular bit of information today as a testament to the fact that our process works, where we have limits set by the legislature, we have input from both students and faculty in the process, the institutional president makes the recommendation on tuition to his or her Board of Regents, that recommendation then comes to the State Regents, we have this hearing today, and then of course at our meeting in June we will spend the entire Wednesday of our meeting, the, I believe the twenty-third of June, going over this issue in addition to the budget request for the institutions. So, we have a very comprehensive effort in Oklahoma higher education to review tuition and fees. I think the end

result shows that we have been prudent in our responsibility, and again we have kept tuition and fees below five percent, which is remarkable, not only in this region but across the country.

Going to the next slide, it's always good to have external validation. We looked at the most recent *U.S. News and World Report* on this, ranking out of the fifty states, Oklahoma higher education has the eleventh lowest for tuition and fees and also the eleventh lowest for student loan debt at graduation. Both good places to be. And I think along those lines, we also should note that we have a different story on student debt in Oklahoma higher education, in comparison to the rest of the country. According to the most recent data from our project on student debt from November of 2020, 53 percent of our students leave our colleges and universities as they graduate without any student loan debt, zero loan debt. Again, this ranks us eleventh in the nation, and our, those that do carry loan debt is much lower from a percentage standpoint, than the national average. So, we today take this hearing on tuition and fees very seriously.

As a Regent body we devote whatever time is necessary to hear from those not only in the higher education community, but from the public in terms of their views on tuition and fees. And with that, Madam Chair and Regents, I will turn it back to you. I think, before we do that, I believe that we do have some additional information that Sheri Mauck will provide before we actually get into our hearing. So, at this point, would recognize our Interim Vice Chancellor for Budget Sheri Mauck. Good morning, Sheri.

Sheri Mauck: Good morning. Good morning, Regents. In order to fill both the statutory and policy requirements, the State Regents are authorized...

Chancellor Glen D. Johnson: Sheri, you might speak up just a bit.

Sheri Mauck: The State Regents are authorized to establish resident and non-resident tuition and mandatory fees within limits prescribed by the legislature. Each year, our staff compiles data of tuition and mandatory fee rates charged at peer institutions within each respective tier. The FY22 legislative peer limits for tuition and mandatory fees for undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs were posted at the April 15th State Regents' meeting and are currently posted on our website. The peer limits are defined by each respective tier: research, regionals, including two unique categories for the urban four-year institution UCO and the four-year liberal arts university USAO, and the two-year community college tier. Professional programs also have unique peer limits that are defined by specific programs offered. The FY22 peer limits for undergraduate resident students represent increases from FY21 peer limits of 5.3 percent for the research tier, 2.7 percent for the regional tier, and a decrease of 1.9 percent for the two-year community college tier. Oklahoma institutions will submit their requests for FY22 tuition and mandatory fees for approval in the June meeting. Those rates may not exceed the average of the respective tiers as shown in the tables that were included in the posting in April and is included on our website.

The second item that you will be addressing today was also posted on April 15th and is available on the website. And it is a list of institutional requests for changes to academic service fees for FY22. These academic service fees are required in addition to tuition and mandatory fees for students enrolled in certain courses of instruction, such as laboratory courses, specific service fees for testing or assessment fee, as examples. There are eighteen institutions that have requested a total of 223 changes to academic service fees, and this represents a decrease of 156 requests or 70 percent from last year's requests. And this concludes my remarks, and Chancellor and Madam Chair, I return the podium to you.

Regent Ann Holloway: Thank you so much, Sheri. We do have several speakers who have asked to provide public testimony on these topics. We thank you for your interest and appreciate your willingness to engage in these public policy decisions. So, Chancellor, would you explain the ground rules?

Chancellor Glen D. Johnson: I will, Madam Chair and Regents. Let me briefly review our procedures for the hearing this morning. Each speaker will have three minutes to make comments. I'll ask our Vice Chancellor for Administration Kylie Smith to let us know when that time concludes. Each speaker is certainly allowed their full allotment of time. We ask that the speakers state their name, institution or the organization that they represent, if any. This is a public hearing on the topic of tuition and fees and we ask that our speakers do confine their comments to that topic. If any of our speakers have written materials or comments, they can submit those by way of email to Kylie Smith. We're here for the purpose today of listening to whatever our presenters provide to us. The State Regents may have questions at the end of the presentations of our speakers. I'm going to read the names of the individuals who have asked for an opportunity to comment on tuition and fees this morning. If there is anyone else in the audience or on Zoom who wants to be added to the list, is there anyone, if so, would again ask that you notify Kylie Smith over to my left at the desk. If you are participating remotely, you can click the "raise your hand" function in the webinar so that we may acknowledge you or you can let us know in the chat box that you would like to be added to the list of speakers.

So, let's kick it off. Our first speaker is Dr. Amanda Smith, the Chair of the Faculty Advisory Council. She represents Southwestern Oklahoma State University where she is an Associate Professor of Language and Literature. So, let's begin this morning by welcoming Dr. Smith. Good morning, Dr. Smith.

Kylie Smith: Is Dr. Smith in the room? We also do not see Dr. Smith on the webinar. Dr. Smith, if you are on the webinar, if you could chat with me and let me know what name you are logged in under, that would be great. Chancellor, we might go to our next while we wait.

Chancellor Glen D. Johnson: We will go to our next speaker who signed up to speak this morning. That speaker is Jakob Harmon, the Oklahoma Student Government Association President. He is a student at the University of Central Oklahoma. So, welcome, Jakob Harmon. Jakob are you participating?

Jakob Harmon: Okay. Yes.

Chancellor Glen D. Johnson: Good morning, Jakob.

Jakob Harmon: Good morning, as Chancellor Johnson said, my name is Jakob Harmon. I am the student state president for the Oklahoma Student Government Association and I am currently a student at UCO. This is my fourth year being a student in Oklahoma. And my first two years of college I was at Rose State College, where I was provided the opportunity to get a full-ride scholarship and not be in any debt there. Since then, I have transferred to the University of Central Oklahoma. And as the student president, I have had the opportunity to meet and talk with other state student presidents from across the United States and kind of talk to them about what they are dealing with with their tuition raises and fee raises at the state level. And what I can tell you is that Oklahoma is by far one of the better suited states for our students because our increases have not gone up near as much as other states have, specifically Ohio, which is where I was born and raised. I have talked to them a lot because I wanted to see how things were going. But yes, Oklahoma has been able to keep costs down pretty well. I know that there have been

some increases and some budget cuts in the higher education area, but even through all of that, we have been able to maintain decent tuition and fees for all of our students. As Chancellor Johnson said, we are the eleventh lowest in tuition costs and leaving college without debt. So, by far, pretty good standards and standards that I would like to keep. So, as far as that goes, I think that tuition and debt should stay as low as we can make it. And with that, I yield back.

Chancellor Glen D. Johnson: Thank you, Jakob. Do any of our Regents have any questions of Jakob this morning? Again, Jakob, we thank you for your comments. At this point, we'd ask if there are others who would like to speak on the topic of tuition and fees. Again, if you're participating remotely, click the "raise your hand" function in the webinar or type your name into the chat box. Do we have others who are in our meeting here at Rose State College or participating remotely today who would like to speak on the topic of tuition and fees?

Kylie Smith: I do not see anyone, Chancellor and Madam Chair.

Chancellor Glen D. Johnson: Okay. If we do not have any others wishing to speak, Chair Holloway, we will turn it back over to you for final comments and then after those final comments, adjournment of our public hearing on tuition and fees.

Regent Ann Holloway: Exactly. Again, the State Regents want to thank all of the individuals who have testified before us today, mainly Jakob. All written and oral commentary received today as well as commentary received via mail and electronic mail in the State Regents' office will be assembled and provided to all State Regents. If there are not other comments, then we are adjourned and the meeting...

Chancellor Glen D. Johnson: Regent Holloway, I guess...

Kylie Smith: I've got someone who would like to make comments.

Regent Ann Holloway: Okay great.

Kylie Smith: I apologize.

Regent Holloway: That's alright. And who is it?

Chancellor Glen D. Johnson: Do you have the name, Kylie?

Kylie Smith: Dr. Rachel Bates. I'm promoting her to be a panelist.

Chancellor Glen D. Johnson: Dr. Rachel Bates will be recognized for comments, three minutes on the topic of tuition and fees. Dr. Bates, good morning.

Dr. Rachel Bates: Good morning, Chancellor. Good morning, Regents. I do apologize. We had our Faculty Chair ready to speak but perhaps are having some technical issues on her end. So, I am prepared to read the remarks that she provided to me. So, I am going to just basically read those remarks for the record. Thank you for inviting me and allowing me this time to speak on behalf of the Faculty Advisory Council. My role here today, as I see it, is really to report to you the thoughts expressed by the council. During our May meeting, we had a chance to discuss tuition and fees, and I can tell you that faculty fully recognize the costs associated with higher education and appreciate efforts to keep the state system affordable for all Oklahoma families, despite decades of substantial budget challenges. I read with great interest Chancellor Johnson's

recent *Degrees of Progress* article in which he described higher education as an “investment in the future” and noted Oklahoma’s relatively low increases to tuition and fees compared with other states—our average of only 1.3 percent increases with 50 percent of our graduates still leaving college without student loan debt is both a point of pride and one of our best enticements for increasing enrollment, a topic on all of our minds as we deal with the aftermath of the pandemic. To that end, the Faculty Advisory Council recognizes the critical importance of keeping tuition costs as low as possible and recommends the lowest possible increase to tuition and fees. We see immense value in sustaining this financial incentive for students to pursue their college education in Oklahoma and hope to explore further incentives to encourage graduates to remain within the state, fulfilling critical occupations such as teachers and medical practitioners. I yield back the time, Chancellor.

Chancellor Glen D. Johnson: Okay, thank you very much, Dr. Bates. And again, those remarks were offered on behalf of Dr. Amanda Smith who is the Chair of the Faculty Advisory Council in Higher Education. So, Dr. Bates thank you for reading those comments into the record. And those comments will be part of our record. With that, I will turn it back over to Chair Holloway.

Regent Ann Holloway: If there are no other comments, then we are adjourned.

Regent Jeff Hickman: Madam Chair, there is a message showing up in that chat box. I don’t know, it shows up red, is there someone else wanting to speak? Or is that...

Kylie Smith: I believe that is the message that I sent to everyone letting them know if Dr. Smith was on, to please let me know what she was logged in under.

Regent Holloway: If there are no other comments, we are adjourned from this meeting and our State Regents’ meeting will begin promptly at 9:30.