

OKLAHOMA STATE REGENTS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION
655 Research Parkway, Suite 200, Oklahoma City, OK

PUBLIC HEARING
on Tuition and Fees

Thursday, April 21, 2023
Rogers State University – Dr. Carolyn Taylor Center
1701 W. Will Rogers Blvd.
Claremore, Oklahoma
and via Zoom

Regent Mike Turpen: Okay, ladies and gentlemen, I'll call the meeting to order. We're in the land of Larry Rice and the home of Will Rogers. And Will Rogers once said that humor is a passport to the heart. Larry, do you feel me? Humor is a passport to the heart. Will Rogers said that. We're going to hear more from Larry Rice later, right?

President Larry Rice: That is correct.

Regent Mike Turpen: Okay, but thanks for having us.

President Larry Rice: Thirty minutes.

Regent Mike Turpen: Thirty minutes, okay. And we want to hear every word of it. Okay. Chancellor, has this meeting been filed and posted as required?

Chancellor Allison D. Garrett: Yes, it has.

Regent Mike Turpen: Okay, let's get going. You ready? I'd like to call this public hearing to order. Before we start this public hearing, 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 and is also available on the registration table at the door. Is it really? Where is the registration table? Trust, but verify. Trust everyone, but always cut the deck. Okay, seriously. I'd like to invite the Budget and Finance guru. Get the ball rolling. Thank you, Mark.

Mark Tygret: Thank you, Chair Turpen. Thank you, Regents. Good morning, good to see you again in a different county. In order to fulfill both statutory and policy requirements, the State Regents are authorized to establish resident and non-resident tuition and mandatory fees within limits prescribed by the Legislature. Each year, staff compiles data related to the tuition and mandatory fee rates charged at peer institutions within each respective tier. The FY, this is my prop, the FY24 legislative peer limits for tuition and mandatory fees for undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs were posted at the March 23rd, thank you, 2023 State Regents meeting and are currently available on our website. The peer limits are defined by each respective tier: research, regionals, including two unique categories for the urban four-year regional institution, UCO, and the four-year liberal arts university, USAO, and the two-year community colleges. Professional programs also have unique peer limits defined by specific programs offered. The FY24 peer limits for undergraduate resident students represent an increase from FY23 peer limits

of 2.4 percent in the research tier, 3.8 percent in the regional tier, and a decrease of 1.9 percent for our two-year community college tier. Oklahoma institutions will submit requests regarding FY24 tuition and mandatory fees for approval in June. Rates may not exceed the average of their respective peers as shown on the table included in your packets and posted on our website.

Also posted in the March 23, 2023, meeting and available on the website is a list of institutional requests for changes to academic service fees for FY24. These academic service fees are required in addition to tuition and mandatory fees for students enrolled in certain courses of instruction, including laboratory courses, or specific service fees which could include testing or assessment fees. Fifteen institutions have requested a total of 278 changes to academic service fees representing a decrease of 1224 requests or 81.5 percent under the FY23 requests. Included in the requests are 113 eliminations and 88 new academic service fees. Madam Chancellor and Regents, these are my comments and the overview for the hearing.

Regent Mike Turpen: Any questions? Any comments? Pretty straight forward. Thank you. We have a couple of speakers, if not more. I have their names right here. Just want everyone to know each speaker will have three minutes to make comments, speakers will speak from the podium or via Zoom. This is a public hearing on the topic of tuition and fees. If speakers have written comments or materials, you can submit them to Kylie Smith and Janet Jackson. The Regents may ask a question on clarification, but we're here to discuss and not argue. We're here to listen, learn and lead. I just made that up. Listen, learn, and lead, but that's the way I see this function as going. I'm going to read the name of the individuals here. Dr. Katheryn Shannon, Faculty Advisory Council, Southeastern Oklahoma State University. Victoria Middleton, SGA President, Rogers State University. May be others but those are the ones we have right now. If you don't mind, let's begin the presentation and if we have any questions we might raise our hands and ask them of the speakers, but in the meantime let's get started. Somebody, help me. Dr Katheryn Shannon, I see that she is available by Zoom. Is that true?

Dr. Katheryn Shannon: Yes

Regent Mike Turpen: There she is.

Dr. Katheryn Shannon: Yes

Regent Mike Turpen: Katheryn, Dr. Katheryn Shannon, thank you for being with us. Do you see us, we see you?

Dr Katheryn Shannon: Yes, thank you. Thank you for allowing me to speak on behalf of the Faculty Advisory Council today. I'm a current member of the Council and a faculty member at Southeastern Oklahoma State University where I serve as Faculty Senate Chair. On behalf of the FAC, I have prepared a statement regarding tuition fees for postsecondary education in Oklahoma. So the Council agrees that Oklahoma students should have access to high quality, affordable, postsecondary education programs to prepare them for the 21st century. This preparation elevates their value within the Oklahoma workforce and beyond. However, tension exists. Efforts to keep tuition low as state allocations also decrease challenge the ability of public institutions of higher education to provide competitive wages and adequate resources for our students, staff, and faculty. Considering current inflation rates, this tension threatens to stretch into a widening chasm as revenue and allocation values diminish at an alarming rate. In the past, FAC representatives have recommended that tuition and fees remain low to support access to higher education. Today, I offer a concern. Are we approaching a tipping point? If we continue to hold tuition and fees low and continue to see decreased support from the state, how will we

maintain high quality postsecondary options for Oklahomans? How will we attract higher and retain faculty, staff, and administration to serve our postsecondary students? I ask that the board considers our current context seriously as you deliberate. Thank you for your time.

Regent Mike Turpen: Very well said. Very well spoken. Any questions? Comments? Thank you. We'll move ahead. Very grateful for your participation. It's not easy to break the silence of a room with the sound of your voice, but you just did that. Thank you. Victoria Middleton? Is she with us? Thank you. Please. Yeah, at the podium. Thanks for being with us.

Victoria Middleton: Thank you. Alright, you ready for me? Good? Okay.

Regent Mike Turpen: Please proceed.

Victoria Middleton: Thank you all for allowing me time to speak today. My name is Victoria Middleton. I'm a senior doubling in Political Science and American History. I do serve as the current Student Body President, I am a Residence Assistant on campus. I'm involved in multiple student orgs, but most importantly today with what we're talking about, I am a student that's going to be graduating with over \$20,000 of student debt. So it wasn't long ago that many people in this room were at the Capitol advocating for higher education and during lunch I found myself talking about this topic with one of our state legislators. As we're comparing our kind of own college experiences, we found out that I am paying 10 times more than what he did receiving a bachelor's degree in the state of Oklahoma. I do think it is a little bit absurd that somebody one generation ahead of me paid significantly less for the same type of degree in the same state. However, this is, of course, due largely in part to the state not properly allocating funds to higher ed. Now, I don't necessarily think anybody in this room is advocating for the state to spend less on higher education; however, I do think it would be important for all of us to take a step back and think what more could we be doing to ensure they are not spending less and that it only increases from this moment forward. I hope in five years if you have the same kind of meeting and there's a student that comes up to speak just like me, that they're not telling you that they are now going to have even more debt than I did leaving a university like Rogers State in Oklahoma. Not only is tuition increase hurting students, but I think that ability in the conversation you have to have with yourself, "Am I going to be seeking a degree or not, is this going to impact our state's workforce greatly?" So, you know, taking in consideration, I think a lot of universities are having to take that active step of how can we do our duty of providing quality education, but we also have to keep the lights on. So I just ask going forward we kind of keep that in mind, not only the tough choices that our university administrations are having to make, but the kind of financial situations that it's putting not only our current students but our future students in, as well. Thank you so much for your time.

Regent Mike Turpen: Woah, woah, wait.

Victoria Middleton: Comments, questions, concerns? Yes?

Regent Mike Turpen: Not so fast. So how did you get here? How did you get to this university? Where did you grow up? Where did you go to high school?

Victoria Middleton: So, I graduated from Chouteau High School, so I'm just thirty minutes down the road. Me and President Rice are cut from the same cloth, we are both Chouteau. Yep. So that's where I went to high school. I originally was thinking about UCO, but kind of looking at costs, RSU was definitely more in my budget. I do come from a single mother household and

my sister was also attending university at the time so we kind of had to put both of those budgets into perspective of what we could afford.

Regent Mike Turpen: It's kind of personal, I know, but how have you handled your finances, how have you avoided student debt, so to speak, if you have been able to?

Victoria Middleton: I haven't been able to not have student debt. I've had—

Regent Mike Turpen: She said that? Thank you.

Victoria Middleton: Yeah, I've had to take on student debt every single year.

Regent Mike Turpen: Oklahoma's Promise? Was that a possibility, or not?

Victoria Middleton: No. My mom is a middle school principal at Chouteau, so—

Regent Mike Turpen: Okay.

Victoria Middleton: Since, you know, income is public there. She did make a little bit more than what was allowed for Oklahoma's Promise so I wasn't eligible.

Regent Mike Turpen: Okay, I understand. I graduated with student debt and it took me a little bit to pay it off, or a while. I waited tables at Steak and Ale for about five years and I was Santa Claus at Sears for two years. It was a seasonal job, you know?

Victoria Middleton: I get it, yeah.

Regent Mike Turpen: But I paid off my student debt and I was glad to pay it off and get a degree, so that's where you're going to be.

Victoria Middleton: Yeah, hopefully. I have been working two jobs the entire time I have been attending Rogers State, as well.

Regent Mike Turpen: Once again, I'm getting a little bit personal, but if you don't mind what are those jobs? I like to hear about part-time jobs.

Victoria Middleton: Yeah, of course. I am a Resident Assistant on campus, so that job does take some of the financial burden off because it pays for my housing and my meal plan. Then I also work at Olive Garden. I am a bartender there.

Regent Mike Turpen: Okay. Thanks for sharing all that. That really humanizes you and your life story.

Victoria Middleton: Of course, thank you.

Regent Jeff Hickman: Well, and I'm curious. This question may be for President Rice. Specifically, at Rogers State, or maybe our staff has this, what percentage of the cost is paid by the student versus state aid versus... We had that breakdown and each institution is a little bit different?

President Larry Rice: Fifty-one percent is paid by students here. Tuition.

Regent Jeff Hickman: So, with, and either one of you can answer this, but if you want to take it, you're the student body president and you're a Political Science major. What are your future plans, I'll ask that first before I ask the question. What do you want to do?

Victoria Middleton: So, I do want to work in the government sector, however I can. I am looking at working for one of our US senators right now, but through RSU and the time I've been able to work with our state government my ultimate goal was to just keep Oklahomans engaged with their local governments.

Regent Jeff Hickman: So, state aid has been increasing the last few years. Our appropriation has gone up, but inflation, obviously in this country, has been increasing dramatically and eating up a lot of those increases so it's kind of been offset. What would be your recommendation to this board in order to keep the resources that you're talking about that are important? Even if state aid goes up and eats that up, is there a tuition level that you go you probably need to consider raising it a little bit but not a lot? Or do you think it shouldn't be increased at all? Give us a little bit more of your thoughts based on your personal experience of what, you're a student here next year, what are your thoughts on what we should do?

Victoria Middleton: Right, so we have... Thank you for that question. We have had to have that conversation, especially in my area with student government and the university of the, like, why do you guys, I'm pointing at President Rice, why do you guys need to raise tuition? Like what does that mean for us? What is your justification behind it? So, we've kind of have been able to have those tough conversations and then I've had to talk with my student peers about it. But ultimately, as far as the board goes and the state goes, I know that you guys are in a tough battle with the state. Like can we please fund higher ed a little more. But I think there needs to be significant changes. I think it's, like I said during my three minutes, that it is absurd that somebody one generation ahead of me paid ten times less than I did for a bachelor's degree. I think we need to make the state, like, significantly fund higher ed. Especially with the numbers of how educated our workforce is, or isn't. We don't have a very highly educated workforce and that is causing major problems in this state. I think just pushing that and showing that whenever we do invest in students, we do get that investment back is very important.

Regent Jeff Hickman: So, higher ed has definitely not benefitted at near the rate that common ed has. The common ed funding has hit record levels in Oklahoma, contrary to kind of what you read online in public opinion. They have not faced the cuts that higher ed has and have had some very dramatic increases and there's a whole lot of conversations at the Capitol right now about just common ed before they even start talking about anyone else. So, if we are not as successful as what common ed is every year of getting more and more and more of the state budget, would you suggest that we look at increasing tuition some to add to their inflation reduction - the costs the universities are facing? Or would you suggest we need to keep tuition flat and the universities need to find some things to spend less on and make cuts in their budget? What do you think is more important right now in this situation? Is it to keep tuition flat and the university make reductions if we can't get more state aid, like common ed can? Or do you think it's more important to raise tuition a little bit to offset those costs and not make the cuts around campus? Or is it a little of both?

Victoria Middleton: That's an excellent question. And I think that's the toughest question of the day. I think it's important that universities do take a close look at their budget. Say you're spending \$1 million on lawn care a year. Maybe we might look at changing that up. I'm never for advocating or cutting any type of budget that has to do with arts, academics, student

organizations, and things that are critical to the student experience and learning experience. But I definitely think there is room to cut parts of budgets, move parts of budgets. And like those tough conversations we have, I do at this point understand for some universities increasing some tuition in some areas. I know RSU is looking at locked tuition, which having that kind of explained to me, I am for something like that. That makes sense looking forward. Offsetting costs they have cut just to kind of fix the budget, but that is the tough question.

Regent Jeff Hickman: Mr. Chairman, I would make a motion rather than her working for the US senator that she runs for office.

Regent Mike Turpen: I would like to ask President Rice to comment on your work with Victoria on campus.

President Larry Rice: She's a very engaged student. You can tell very bright and articulate. When we went up on Higher Ed Day, she was very engaged. It was like old home week. Let me add to it, she is awesome and I think she is reflective of our student body. She's not a full-ride, we have some full-rides, she's not a full-ride. She's worked, she's lived in the dorms, even though she's from Chouteau, you know, a great metropolis. But I think she exemplifies what we do for the 18-year olds. The other half is the more than 25-year olds. She's 50% of our population. The other half is non-traditional. Let me just comment a little bit. We're going to ask this body for the third, \$5 increase. Three years ago, we made a deal with the OU Regents and you all that we would do away with the \$80 online fee. We just couldn't figure out how to make that work during the pandemic. And so, that was a huge hit of over \$1 million, so we agreed that we would do \$5 a year and I think most of you agreed with that. The OU board did. So, we got two more years of that but we're very sympathetic. I also hate to say that we got an income to budget review and we cut \$1 million out of our budget and we this year, every full-time employee we've taken furloughs to avoid cost increases. We understand you cannot spend more than you take in. That's pretty simple. So, we've done a right sizing of our income to our budget and all the faculty and staff have taken a hit and the students have supported us in that. She's been a great leader, back to her, but she's been doing great in her student government. It just does my heart, it's hard to recruit out of Chouteau. Thankfully, the king and queen both this year are from Chouteau, Oklahoma, which is the first time in history. Keep in mind, we're only 22 years old and I think many of us would argue we never get equal funding through the formula and Chancellor Garrett is working on that, but that's a little bit of our problem is we're so young, you know. All the others, directionally challenged, regents that's a bad joke. Not a northeast, southeast.

Regent Mike Turpen: Directionally challenged.

President Larry Rice: They've been around for over 100 years. We've been around 22 years.

Regent Mike Turpen: Okay, Okay.

President Larry Rice: Thank you, I'll shut up. I'm talking too much.

Regent Mike Turpen: Did you graduate from Chouteau High School?

President Larry Rice: Yes, sir, in Mazie. In Mazie.

Regent Mike Turpen: How many in your graduating class?

President Rice: Chouteau was 28. Mazie was 4. I was in the top four at Mazie as there was just four in my graduating class. But 28 in Chouteau.

Regent Mike Turpen: How many in your graduating class at Chouteau?

Victoria Middleton: 54.

Regent Mike Turpen: 28 to 54? It's a growing metropolis.

Victoria Middleton: It's growing. Yup, it's growing.

President Larry Rice: And Google is starting to build out, the Mid-America Industrial Park, as Regent Parker knows is half Pryor, half Chouteau. They've actually started a Chouteau school district, so that will be a game changer.

Victoria Middleton: Finally, yeah, finally.

President Larry Rice: The Pryor Public Schools received no state aid. We're excited for Chouteau to be at that point.

Regent Mike Turpen: We already have Google on our computers in our schools in western Oklahoma, Mr. President.

President Larry Rice: Yes, sir

Regent Mike Turpen: I can just type it right in.

President Larry Rice: It's supported from Pryor, sir.

Regent Jeff Hickman: We're talking about fees, Mr. Chairman, and the President mentioned the online fee and I just want to remind this board and give credit where credit is due. Chancellor, I think this was before your time, but President Rice, when COVID happened and everything moved online, President Rice was the first person to say it's not proper for us to be charging online fees for these classes when there is no other option. It sent some shock waves and some other institutions thought it was going to make them look bad because he was doing that. It was the right thing to do and I just want to publicly say you were ahead of your time and it was the proper thing to do for students like Victoria and others. As hard as that was or whatever pushback you got, this board was very supportive of that decision and we're grateful for your leadership.

Regent Mike Turpen: Justice Steven Taylor.

Regent Steven Taylor: First of all, I would say to you very articulate.

Victoria Middleton: Thank you.

Regent Steven Taylor: Well spoken, comfortable on your feet

Victoria Middleton: Thank you.

Regent Steven Taylor: That is a great value, a great value. You need to think about law school.

Victoria Middleton: I will. The thought has been had.

Regent Steven Taylor: Something to think about. Regent Warmington would agree with me on that, I'm sure.

Regent Mike Turpen: Also, a lawyer.

Regent Steven Taylor: Regent Warmington and I were sitting here while you were talking and we said to each other that the comments that you made about your mother, your mother's salary, and that she is a single mother. That strikes the point we might want to think about. That is looking at Oklahoma's Promise, the criteria for Oklahoma's Promise and perhaps plug in the situation where there's one parent who makes just over the threshold of income and has two kids in college. Maybe plug that in as a point factor. A single parent family just over the threshold with two kids in college. So, you've made that point well, too. You've got a great future.

Regent Mike Turpen: Yeah.

Victoria Middleton: Thank you.

President Larry Rice: Thank you.

Regent Mike Turpen: You guys, to me, she represents, I'm serious, everything we're here for. So, let's give her a standing ovation.

Victoria Middleton: Oh, my goodness. Thank you.

Regent Steven Taylor: Thank you.

Victoria Middleton: Thank you.

Regent Steven Taylor: President Rice told me that she is just a typical average student.

Regent Mike Turpen: Yeah, yeah.

President Larry Rice: It happens all the time, your Honor.

Victoria Middleton: This is how we all are at Rogers State.

President Larry Rice: We didn't have time to do 50 more so we just did one.

Regent Mike Turpen: Yeah, yeah. Those are our only speakers and presenters so I'm going to now declare this particular meeting adjourned.