

STATE REGENTS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION
Research Park, Oklahoma City

**PUBLIC HEARING
on Tuition and Fees**

Thursday, April 28, 2022
Oklahoma State University, 4th Flood Student Union Council Room, Stillwater, Oklahoma and
via Zoom Videoconference

Regent Jeffrey Hickman: I call this hearing on tuition and fees to order. Chancellor, has this meeting been filed and posted as required?

Chancellor Allison D. Garrett: Yes, it has.

Regent Jeffrey Hickman: Kylie, for this hearing is there a reason to call roll?

Kylie Smith: No, a quorum is not needed.

Regent Jeffrey Hickman: Okay, alright, but we do have the entire board present. Before we start this public hearing, let's review the tuition and fee items that will be the focus of testimony. The information has been posted on the State Regents' website and is also available on the registration table outside the door of the meeting room. And I would like to ask Vice Chancellor for Budget and Finance Sheri Mauck to explain the items to be addressed today. Sheri?

Sheri Mauck: Good morning, Mr. Chair. Good morning, Regents. In order to fill both the 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 of tuition and mandatory fee rates charged at peer institutions within each respective tier. The 2023 legislative peer limits for tuition and mandatory fees for undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs were posted at the March 24th meeting and are currently posted on the 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 FY23 peer limits for undergraduate resident students represent increases from FY22 peer limits of 2.2 percent for the research tier, 2.9 percent for the regional tier, and 6.9 percent for the two-year community college tier. Oklahoma institutions will submit their requests for FY23 tuition and mandatory fees for approval in June. Those rates may not exceed the average of the respective tiers as shown on the table included in your packets and posted on our website.

The second item also posted on March 24th and available on our website is the list of academic requests for changes to academic service fees for FY23. 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 for example, or specific fees such as testing and assessment fees. Eighteen institutions have requested a total of 1502 changes to academic service fees. We have two of our institutions, the University of Oklahoma and Murray State College, actually deleting

1254 individual course fees to streamline their tuition structure. This is the overview of our peer limits and fee listings for today's hearing.

Regent Jeffrey Hickman: Thank you, Sheri. Any questions for Sheri before we move on? Seeing none, we have four speakers, I believe at this point, who have asked to provide public testimony on these topics, and we thank each of you for your interest and appreciate your willingness to engage in these public policy discussions. Let me just quickly go over the ground rules for the public hearing. Each speaking will have three minutes to make comments. There will be a timer on screen so we know when that time has expired. Each speaker is allowed only their time allotment. Speakers will speak from the podium or via Zoom. I think all of our speakers will be via Zoom. No one is present here. We ask that each speaker state their name and institution or organization that they represent, if any. This is a public hearing on the topic of tuition and fees. We ask that all speakers confine their comments to that topic. If speakers have written comments or materials, they can be submitted at the end of their comments or at the end of the meeting to Kylie Smith or Janet Jackson.

The State Regents are here for the purpose of listening to the public. We may have a question or two for speakers if clarification is needed regarding your comments, but we are not here to debate anything you bring up. We will have time between today and our June meeting for further discussion. So, Regents, just a reminder that we are here today to listen to those who are presenting to us. I'm going to read the names of individuals who have asked for an opportunity to comment on tuition and fees topic. It is Mr. Wesley Reddish, professor of science at Murray State College, Christian Coleman, UCO Student Advisory Board Chair, Jakob Harmon, UCO and outgoing OSGA president, and Tyler Owens, UCO incoming OSGA president.

Is there anyone else in the audience who wishes to be added to the list at this time and any others that we have received? If there is anyone watching remotely, please use the raise hand or chat function on Zoom if you would like to provide comments. Kylie is monitoring that. We will enable the audio when it is time for you to provide comments. Any questions from Regents before we begin?

Let's begin our public hearing. Our first speaker again is faculty member from Murray State College, Mr. Wesley Reddish, assistant professor of science. Professor Reddish, you are recognized for three minutes.

Wesley Reddish: Good morning, my name is Wesley Reddish. I am a member of the Faculty Advisory Council and a faculty member at Murray State College. We, the faculty members of Oklahoma's higher education institutions, recognize the monetary necessities to provide our paychecks and the tools we need to produce the quality education our students seek. Likewise, we see our students struggle every day with the costs associated with higher education, which only begin with tuition and fees. Housing costs, textbooks, meal plans or groceries, and gasoline all continue to rise. In a recent poll, one district found that half of their students consider cost a barrier to higher education.

Regent Jeffrey Hickman: Professor, I think we've lost connection at least with your audio. We still see you on the screen, but...

Wesley Reddish: I can hear you all.

Regent Jeffrey Hickman: Hold on just a second, professor. I'm sorry. Alright, professor, can you hear us now okay?

Wesley Reddish: I can, yes.

Regent Jeffrey Hickman: Okay. We can hear you much, much better now. Sorry, we had a little technical issue here. Would you mind just starting back at the top and we will give you your full three minutes, if you don't mind?

Wesley Reddish: Yes, sir. That's fine.

Regent Jeffrey Hickman: Okay, alright. Like instant replay. You're recognized.

Wesley Reddish: Good morning, my name is Wesley Reddish. I am a member of the Faculty Advisory Council and a faculty member at Murray State College. We, the faculty members of Oklahoma's higher education institutions, recognize the monetary necessities to provide our paychecks and the tools we need to produce the quality education our students seek. Likewise, we see our students struggle every day with the costs associated with higher education, which only begin with tuition and fees. Housing costs, textbooks, meal plans or groceries, and gasoline all continue to rise. In a recent poll, one district found that half of their students consider cost a barrier to higher education. Half of the students graduating from OU, OSU, and UCO have some credits transferred in from a community college. Why? To save money.

In the 2018-2028 Oklahoma critical occupations list, forty-one of those Oklahoma jobs require a bachelor's degree. Another eight require degrees or certification beyond a bachelor's. An additional seventeen of those jobs require an associate's degree. The top ten jobs all require a minimum of a four-year degree. Oklahoma needs its young people earning degrees beyond high school in order to fulfill its stated goals for the future. For further context, I would remind you that while Oklahoma has increased the percentage of its adult population that has earned a post-secondary degree, we are falling further behind the national average. Only one neighboring state has a lower percentage of degree holding adults and only six states in the nation have a lower percentage of degree holding adults. We need to continue, or even deepen our efforts, to bring more Oklahomans in to higher education.

The funds to an education, excuse me, the funds to accommodate our higher education mission come from tuition and fees, state legislature allocations, and private endowments and other donations. In the past, state legislative cuts have induced raises in tuition and fees. Please consider the impact that tuition increases have on our students. Tuition increases will inherently fall most heavily on students from lower income backgrounds and it may also increase the divide between urban Oklahomans and rural Oklahomans, due to the income disparities between the two. I think we can all agree that the state is better off when every Oklahoman has reasonable access to higher education. Tuition and fees are a vital factor in the number of Oklahomans that can attain that higher education degree. Please bear this in mind during your deliberations. Thank you.

Regent Jeffrey Hickman: Thank you very much, Mr. Reddish. We appreciate your comments and your time this morning. Thank you. Our next speaker is UCO Student Advisory Board Chairman Christian Coleman. Christian, are you with us? I don't see anyone else...oh okay, he's in a different room.

Christian Coleman: Sorry.

Regent Jeffrey Hickman: Okay, Christian are you in the room here now? Can you hear us?

Christian Coleman: Yes.

Regent Jeffrey Hickman: Okay, if you are ready we will recognize you for three minutes and we greatly appreciate your willingness to offer comments on tuition and fees this morning.

Christian Coleman: Thank you and I am ready.

Regent Jeffrey Hickman: You're recognized.

Christian Coleman: Good morning, my name is Christian Coleman. I serve as the chairman for the Student Advisory Committee to you all. I have the opportunity to speak and hear testimonies from students across the state, some who have graduated, some who are currently in school, and then those who are preparing to make their way to school here to our Oklahoma institutions. One thing that I will say is that across the board there has been a shift in the feel of support from the state as well as local entities to help students achieve a higher educational status here in Oklahoma. One thing that we do know is that when students who are coming here and learning feel supported and engaged by our system, that they are more apt to come back and to support and to help grow our state. In order for our state to move forward across all industries, we have to have the workforce to support that. And I think by directly supporting and stimulating the minds of those who come here for education, is the first step to doing that. Tuition, fees, supporting our faculty, supporting our staff, supporting infrastructure, these are things that allow our institutions to not only do what they say they want to do, but to go above and beyond to make the best impact on our students and the best impact on our state.

I urge you all to provide the most assistance and support for Oklahoma students. The traditional students who are coming out of high school, the non-traditional students who are maybe coming back to school from working with the family, or those who have come back from service, the teachers who want to advance themselves as, in their degree, as well as other technological and medical careers. I have had the position on the board for this past year, and to say that students have come to me mentioning their heartaches, their struggles, that they missed finishing their degree by \$2,000, could change the total life trajectory of their earnings by a million, these things are things that impact our state not only in our educational system, but when you start to look at the construction and development of our economy. So, that is my testimony from my experiences and my life and me speaking with people here in Oklahoma and here in the Oklahoma higher education system. I urge that you all provide the most support and assistance to our students and faculty and staff. Thank you.

Regent Jeffrey Hickman: Thank you very much, Christian. We appreciate your comments this morning. Alright, our next speaker is the outgoing OSGA president at UCO, Jakob Harmon. Can we get Jakob over to our presentation side?

Kylie Smith: Jakob, I think you need to accept the promotion to panelist.

Regent Jeffrey Hickman: Jakob, if you could accept the promotion to panelist, which... Jakob, did you get an option to move over to panelist? There we go, I see Jakob's name now.

Jakob Harmon: Alright, can you hear me?

Regent Jeffrey Hickman: I can hear you loud and clear. Thank you very much for joining us this morning.

Jakob Harmon: Absolutely.

Regent Jeffrey Hickman: You are recognized for three minutes and congratulations on your service as OSGA president. You have the box.

Jakob Harmon: Thank you very much. As has been stated, my name is Jakob Harmon, I am the outgoing OSGA student president. I have served in this position for the past two years and my President-elect Tyler Owens is also here. I just want to thank you all for being here today. As has been stated before, tuition costs will more than likely be going up. Even though they are all less than the national inflation rate of eight percent, I believe that students all recognize, and we as educators recognize that as costs go up, more students are recognizing these as barriers to obtaining their degree. As Christian stated, this can result in a loss of up to a million dollars in their career for their future, so that is very important to a lot of students. A lot of students are looking to other states and other colleges as a way to cut their financial expenditures and that creates jobs but not for Oklahoma. It creates jobs for other states and less jobs for our workforce here in Oklahoma. The more financial stress that we put on these students, the more likely they are to stop in their pursuit of their degree and that creates less of the needed workforce that Oklahoma so desperately needs, what with a lot of markets looking to pursue locations in Oklahoma to start their businesses and we have workers leaving the state, that is just not good for our economy or good for our students that need the financial support that they are not getting. With that, I yield back.

Regent Jeffrey Hickman: Any questions from Regents? We appreciate you being a part of our hearing today. Thank you. Alright, our final presenter that we had signed up when we began and prompted to join is Tyler Owens, who, as Jakob just mentioned, is the incoming OSGA president at UCO, and so we will get Tyler moved over to the presenter side. He's there. Tyler, can you hear us?

Tyler Owens: Yes, I can.

Regent Jeffrey Hickman: Okay. You are recognized for three minutes and we thank you for participating in our hearing today.

Tyler Owens: Alright, thank you so much. So as Jakob said, my name is Tyler Owens. I have served on the Board of Directors for the Oklahoma Student Government Association for the past two years in the position of South Regional Director and Vice President, and I will be the State President this upcoming year. And this past year, one of the most unique opportunities that I had was to chair our OSGA congresses, which we hold one in the fall and one in the spring, where students have the opportunity to address concerns that they see on their campuses and work with students across the state to address these issues, to write legislation, and to pass those through our congress, and as usual, a handful of these this year did pertain to tuition and fees. So, a few of those I'm just going to relay what those students' concerns were and what their uh, what the congress had passed regarding those issues. So, we had three pieces of legislation that were passed regarding tuition. We had FC21-011 that called on the Regents to stop raising tuition and fees until the end of the 2022-2023 school year and some of the reasoning behind that legislation was the fact that currently between six universities in Oklahoma, it averages over six, or \$8000 a year just to attend two semesters of college and that requires over 1000 hours of work just to pay for that one year. And with inflation and cost of everything rising and without students seeing an increase in pay across the workforce, especially as students, it is a struggle to maintain those higher tuition fees and to make those payments whenever we are constantly having to pay more

for everything across the board and it has driven many more students to have to utilize their food banks on campuses and things like that because that extra twenty, fifty dollars a week that would go to groceries is now having to go to an increase in tuition, and it is financially burdening many of our students when all we're really seeing during COVID has been an in... a decrease in services at campuses due to COVID.

We had two other resolutions that were regarding federal work-study positions. One was urging institutions to pay international students who hold work-study positions at least \$10 an hour because we all know their only ability to make money on campus and while they are in the United States is on campus, and whenever they are getting paid minimum wage and have to pay more money for groceries and things like that on a daily basis, they're struggling to pay for anything as well as the fact that they have to pay out-of-state tuition and those fees are just continuously rising. And then we had another one that students were urging federal work-study positions to be paid a minimum of \$15 an hour. As we all know, \$7.50 is just not enough to meet general living expenses. So, these were just some issues that students across Oklahoma brought to us through congress that I feel is my duty to reiterate those concerns and those potential solutions that students feel would help them really go from point A to point B and make ends meet and with all the inflation that we're having. Thank you for letting me speak and I yield back. I believe you're all muted. I couldn't hear anything.

Regent Jeffrey Hickman: Can you hear us?

Tyler Owens: Yes, I can now.

Regent Jeffrey Hickman: Alright. Thank you very much. Good use of your time and we greatly appreciate your input and sharing those thoughts. Thank you for participating in the hearing today. Alright. Kylie, has anyone else asked to...

Kylie Smith: No, no one else has asked to...

Regent Jeffrey Hickman: Anyone else in the room ask to present before we... If not, thank you to all of the individuals who offered their comments today. All written and oral commentary received today as well as commentary received in the State Regents' office via mail or email will be assembled and provided to the State Regents. I will remind you that our State Regents' meeting is scheduled for 10 a.m. later this morning in this room. If there are no further comments, we are adjourned.