Special Meeting of the
Oklahoma Free Speech Committee
MINUTES
Tuesday, June 13, 2023, 12:00 p.m.

Notice. The meeting notice was posted with the Secretary of State on Tuesday, December 6, 2022 at 11:43 a.m. The meeting agenda was posted on the State Regents' website on Monday, June 12, 2023 at 11:20 a.m.

1. **Call to order.** Regular Meeting called to order at 12:07 p.m. The following members were in attendance: Andy Lester (Chair), Rep. Caldwell, Valerie Couch, Mariana Pitts, Regent Hickman, Senator Floyd, and Tesia Zientek.

2. **Minutes of Previous Meeting.** Judge Couch moved to approve the February meeting minutes. Ms. Pitts seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

3. **Comments from the Chair.** Chairman Lester spoke of the recent free speech violation at Stanford Law School with the protest of Judge Duncan. It is tempting to add this incident to a growing list of college free speech debacles, however, shortly afterwards Dean Martinez of Stanford Law handled the issue, taking a strong stance in support of free speech at Stanford. Chairman Lester emphasized that each college or university has a responsibility to promote and protect free speech when threatened. The political tide seems to be turning in favor of free speech, especially in light of Stanford's reaction. Chairman Lester is encouraged about the future of free speech.

4. **Task Force Reports.**
    a. Institutional Policies Task Force Report (Valerie Couch). The task force met twice since the last full meeting and grappled with how to handle the work in front of them. The task force realized that its work would not be as simple as ensuring that the institutions adopt the State Regent's policy.
        -   Discussion. The task force asked the Legal Department at OSRHE to contact the Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression (FIRE) and Heterodox Academy regarding potential resources. On June 6th, the task force met with a representative of FIRE who offered resources. Providing an accurate, helpful, and thorough review of all institutional policies will take considerable time. The task force is trying to find balance between making necessary recommendations and respecting the autonomy of each campus.

    b. Complaints Task Force Report (Tesia Zientek). Ms. Zientek described that the task force has met twice, and has created a draft complaint form, which was distributed to the committee to review.
        -   Discussion. An exhaustion requirement for complainants to first seek remedy at their respective institution might be considered. A complainant advisory process is also being researched and considered, along with a confidentiality disclosure. Ms. Zientek moved to approve the complaints form as recommended. Representative Caldwell

seconded the motion. Ms. Zientek withdrew and then reintroduced her motion to include approving the complaints form with a disclaimer addressing confidentiality. No second was made, and no vote was taken. Ms. Zientek withdrew the motion. The Committee requested the task force continue work on the complaints form and to bring it before the Committee again at a special meeting in August.

c. <u>Training Task Force Report (Mariana Pitts)</u>. Ms. Pitts discussed the structure of the trainings, which would be approximately three hours and broken up into three parts.

- Discussion. The first session of the training would be an explanation of why free speech is important, the second being a lecture by a local expert, and the third being a moderated panel discussion on how to handle free speech issues on Oklahoma campuses. An independent organization such as FIRE or Heterodox Academy might present at the training. After finalizing a plan at the next meeting in September, the task force would like to finalize a date, time, and logistics.

5. **Other Business or Discussion.** Regent Hickman thanked the committee for its time working on these important issues. Judge Couch thanked the staff at OSRHE for their work. Chairman Lester emphasized that free speech should not be a partisan issue.

6. **Meeting Adjourned:** 1:58 p.m.