

# ANNUAL REPORT

*of the*

Student Advisory Board

*to the*

Oklahoma State Regents  
for Higher Education

May 2019

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*Purpose.* The purpose of the Student Advisory Board is to communicate to the State Regents the views and interests of all Oklahoma college and university students on issues that relate to the constitutional and statutory responsibilities of the State Regents. In representing students, the Student Advisory Board shall combine the opinions of students with good, sound research to develop the best proposals and recommendations for The Oklahoma State System of Higher Education.

*Creation.* The creation of this board is consistent with provisions of House Bill 1801 of the 1988 session of the Oklahoma Legislature. Seven members are elected annually by delegates to the Oklahoma Student Government Association. Members represent public tier and independent colleges, and they serve a one-year term (May through April).

### **MEMBERS**

Jake Mazeitis, Chair, University of Oklahoma

Ashlee Lester, Oklahoma State University

Traeton Dansby, Vice Chair, Northeastern State University

Alyson Rose Hill, University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma

Nicholas Glasgow, Northern Oklahoma College

Jakob Harmon, Rose State College

Bobby "Trae" Trousdale, Oklahoma City University

## ***Student Advisory Board***

### ***Recommendations and Counsel to the State Regents***

#### **Oklahoma's Promise Eligibility**

##### **Recommendation**

The Student Advisory Board recommends that the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education work with the state legislature to consider the most economically vulnerable students when proposing changes to Oklahoma's Promise. The Student Advisory Board supports an increase in the income eligibility requirement of Oklahoma's Promise to reflect inflation since the policy was adopted.

##### **Background / Analysis**

Oklahoma continues to be a leader in college affordability throughout the nation, but recent restrictions to Oklahoma's Promise have targeted the most economically vulnerable students. In the 2018 graduating class completing the program's high school requirements increased to 73.6%, the highest level in the history of the program. In addition to attending college full time, many students work 20 to 30 hours a week in an effort to pay their living expenses. Requiring Oklahoma's Promise students to take on a larger academic load, while not providing more scholarship support, seems counterintuitive when the students are required to pay for books and all additional living expenses. Institutions should be striving to increase access to higher education by protecting Oklahoma's Promise and doing everything we can to help Oklahoma's most at-risk students. It is vital that we keep increases to tuition as low as possible to ensure access to the benefits of higher education to the individual as well as to the long term economic health of Oklahoma. The Student Advisory Board believes that protecting the high quality higher education available in Oklahoma is vital for the success of students in Oklahoma, but we encourage the State Regents to keep in mind the most economically vulnerable students when acting on the tuition proposals.

**Approve:** Dansby, Glasgow, Hill, Lester, and Trousdale

**Absent:** Harmon and Mazeitis

## **Oklahoma's Promise Funding**

### **Recommendation**

The Student Advisory Board recommends that the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education work with the State Legislature to fund Oklahoma's Promise at the level of \$77.3 million requested for Fiscal Year 2020 by the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education. The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education currently project that 17,100 students will qualify to receive Oklahoma's Promise awards in the 2019-2020 academic year.

### **Background / Analysis**

The Student Advisory Board recognizes the importance of keeping funding and participation at requested levels to ensure the integrity of the program in its mission to create an educated workforce for Oklahoma. Oklahoma's Promise is Oklahoma's largest state student financial aid program, and the state allocation for Oklahoma's Promise constitutes its single funding source. Oklahoma's Promise provides a crucial incentive for Oklahoma high school students with financial need, who meet high academic and conduct standards, to attain post-secondary education.

**Approve:** Dansby, Glasgow, Hill, Lester, and Trousdale

**Absent:** Harmon and Mazeitis

## **Staff Advisory Board**

### **Recommendation**

The Oklahoma State Regents of Higher Education should create a Staff Advisory Board that adequately represents the diversity of staff positions below the director's level across all regionally accredited institutions of higher education in Oklahoma to advise them on policies, procedures, and the general decisions made by the State Regents. The structure of the Staff Advisory Board should be representative of the diversity of all institutions. The Board should meet every two months to learn more about the unique issues facing higher education staff in the state and ultimately prepare and present recommendations to the State Regents at their May meeting. The Board shall be comprised of seven members, with each institution in the State System of Higher Education receiving an opportunity to place a member on the Board over a number of years as follows: a member position each reserved for University of Oklahoma and Oklahoma State University representation; two member positions reserved for public four-year institution representation; two member positions reserved for public two-year institution representation; and, one member position reserved for private institution representation. Members should be appointed by the Chair of the Staff Senate (or similar position) of the campus or, if no such position exists, by the institution's president. At least three members of the Board must not directly supervise any full-time employee.

### **Background / Analysis**

The Oklahoma State Regents of Higher Education have long benefitted from a robust advisory structure that highlights the unique challenges faced by students, faculty, and staff in a number of specific roles (Student Affairs, Business, IT, etc.). However, there is no advisory body that currently serves the State Regents in terms of advising on issues affecting all staff members. Rose and Stiefer conclude that advisory boards in higher education "bring unique knowledge, skills, and experience" and "with successful implementation, there could be increased enrollments, revenue, and contract funding" (2013). Odgers Berndtson, one of the leading international executive search firms, note that "An advisory board adds value by exposing the management and main board to new thinking, thereby broadening horizons, improving understanding of a company's markets, risks and future drivers of growth, challenging assumptions and guarding against groupthink." As Oklahoma's higher education community continues to work through a time of budgetary constraints, it is vital that it has the advice and knowledge of committed staff to advise on how decisions made at the state level impact the day-to-day work of staff.

**Approve:** Glasgow, Harmon, Hill, Lester, and Trousdale

**Nay:** Dansby

**Absent:** Mazeitis

### **Source**

[https://www.odgersberndtson.com/media/2267/the\\_role\\_of\\_advisory\\_boards\\_-\\_who\\_what\\_why\\_how.pdf](https://www.odgersberndtson.com/media/2267/the_role_of_advisory_boards_-_who_what_why_how.pdf)

## **State Chief Diversity Officer**

### **Recommendation**

The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education should establish a Chief Diversity Officer that is charged with ensuring equitable representation and disbursement of programs, resources, and services provided by the State Regents. The State Regents should also communicate to the governor the value and necessity of having a person of color or an individual from a diverse background being appointed to its board and encourage the appointing governor to seek the input of the Oklahoma State Legislature's Black Caucus.

### **Background / Analysis**

Oklahoma is home to a wide array of diverse institutions and student backgrounds, including Langston University, a historically black college. These types of universities and colleges, face issues and problems unlike any other institution and are not accurately represented by the current backgrounds of the State Regents. Also, Oklahoma's Promise affects students of color and students from diverse backgrounds in one of the most deeply personal and intimate ways. The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education oversees this program and acts as the coordinating board for ALL public institutions in the State of Oklahoma and must have stable, meaningful representation and administration if minority and adverse students are to pursue any form of post-secondary education.

**Approve:** Dansby, Glasgow, Hill, Lester, and Trousdale

**Absent:** Harmon and Mazeitis

## **Telehealth for Students**

### **Recommendation**

The State Regents of Higher Education ought to coordinate the state-wide procurement of telehealth services for campuses which do not already provide healthcare access for their students. These campuses can then purchase telehealth services at a reduced rate.

### **Background / Analysis**

Telehealth can be implemented in both the physical and mental health categories. The Student Advisory Board appreciates the health of students across Oklahoma and that many of these students may not have the time or the resources for healthcare outside of their institution. Telehealth is an up and coming industry that not only makes healthcare more accessible for students, but it is generally more cost effective than traditional, physical healthcare appointments. Telehealth also helps to remove the stigma that surrounds seeking help for mental health related issues. Telehealth would help to keep students in classes and provide them potentially life-saving services while taking away the physical, financial, and mental barriers that normally accompany seeking healthcare.

It is estimated by the American College Health Association that 31 percent of college students report having felt depressed, and over 50 percent reporting overwhelming anxiety. Physical and mental health issues are a detriment to the education and success of college students. It is estimated by the American College Health Association that more than half of all college students in the United States are sick at least once in the academic year, and that 22 percent of these students become ill enough to drop or withdraw from a course; not including mental health related illnesses. Moreover, students who do not have consistent access to healthcare services may be forced to withdraw from courses or from college in its entirety. Many telehealth services exist that accommodate for business' and institutions abundance of students, such as: CareClix, ConsultADoctor, and Teladoc, to name a few. The provider may be selected by individual universities to fit their needs. The cost of a visit varies, depending on the plan design and the individual institution.

**Approve:** Dansby, Glasgow, Hill, Lester, and Trousdale

**Absent:** Harmon and Mazeitis

### **Sources**

Chadron State College. College Student Mental Health Statistics - Behavior Intervention Team - Chadron State College, [www.csc.edu/bit/resources/statistics/](http://www.csc.edu/bit/resources/statistics/).

"Mobile Healthcare Goes to College." MHealthIntelligence, MHealthIntelligence, 2 Dec. 2015, [mhealthintelligence.com/news/mhealth-is-finding-its-niche-on-college-campuses](http://mhealthintelligence.com/news/mhealth-is-finding-its-niche-on-college-campuses).

## **Transfer of Credits**

### **Recommendation**

In order to help students across the state of Oklahoma save time, energy, effort, and money, the Student Advisory Board (or another student board created explicitly for this purpose) should participate, along with faculty members, in the regular determination of transfer equivalencies towards degree requirements in order to ensure that student perspectives are accounted for, especially when those students intend to transfer credits among institutions of higher education in the state of Oklahoma.

### **Background / Analysis**

Thousands of Oklahomans decide to attend institutions of higher education every year. Many of them will decide to not attend a four-year institution right away; instead, they will opt to attend a two-year institution or join the military prior to obtaining a Bachelor's degree. Indeed, according to the Community College Research Center at Columbia University, 34% of students at a major research university attended and graduated from a two-year institution. Despite the high number of students who choose to transfer their credits between institutions, these students regularly experience difficulty in finding course equivalencies, even among institutions here in the state.

As students are preparing to enroll at their next college, they are often hit with the news that a class they previously took will not correctly transfer to their next institution. According to a General Accounting Office Report, the average number of credits lost during a college transfer is equivalent to about four courses, which is almost one semester of full-time enrollment. This report also states that 1 in 4 transfer students will not receive earned credit at the institution that they transfer to. This has a number of effects on students, especially in terms of their finances. According to the U.S. Department of Education, on average, a transfer student loses 13 credits already earned and paid for. This means on average, a transfer student has to repay to take 13 credit hours. Involving students in the process of determining transfer equivalencies is one way to solve this problem.

**Approve:** Dansby, Glasgow, Harmon, Hill, Lester, and Trousdale

**Absent:** Mazeitis



## **Transgender Inclusivity**

### **Recommendation**

The Student Advisory Board recommends that the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education encourage colleges and universities to adopt policies which treat transgender students with respect and inclusivity and allow them to pursue an education with the same rights and privileges of their cisgender peers. Specifically: allowing trans students to utilize changing facilities and bathrooms which correspond to their gender identity; allowing trans students access to housing which corresponds to their gender identity; allowing trans students access to join Greek organizations which correspond to their gender identity; and, limiting bureaucracy to allow trans students to update their school records to accurately reflect their chosen name.

### **Background / Analysis**

All students deserve to receive an education free of harassment, discrimination, and violence. In addition to the typical daily stress of a college student, transgender and gender non-conforming students face an added unique set of obstacles which they must also overcome to achieve an education. Often times, these obstacles are insurmountable and result in up to one-third of all trans students seriously considering dropping out of college, as revealed by the survey 2010 State of Higher Education for LGBT People. By eliminating many of the barriers these students face, these obstacles will dwindle in size and create an environment where all students, regardless of gender identity, are able to succeed.

**Approve:** Dansby, Glasgow, Hill, Lester, and Trousdale

**Absent:** Harmon and Mazeitis

## **Tuition Costs**

### **Recommendation**

The Student Advisory Board urges the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education to put in place measures to cease the climbing rates at which college tuition is rising.

### **Background / Analysis**

Knowing that the employment market more and more requires higher education, greater amounts of students are going to get a degree. Yearly debt for individual college students has risen to an average of \$28,650. Total student loan debt has nearly quadrupled since 2003 (National Bureau of Economic Research). Student loan debt surpasses the amount of credit card debt in the United States. This is due to the demand of students having to buy specific books and supplies. Colleges, universities, and their suppliers know that they can justify raising prices so that students can have these supplies due to such a high demand. With rising prices in tuition, more and more students are leaving colleges and universities in debt, getting jobs with which it is near impossible to pay off the debt in less than ten years. Yes, students get financial aid, but there comes a time where colleges, universities, and the government run out of funds. The rising prices cause many students to stop their education before they have completed it, thus depleting the amount of sustainable work that is able to feed into the employment market.

With lowered tuition prices, more students would not have the pressure of debt to hold them back from completing their degree, allowing sustenance in the job market and lowering the amount of debt that students have after they leave college.

**Approve:** Dansby, Glasgow, Harmon, Hill, Lester, and Trousdale

**Absent:** Mazeitis

### **Sources**

<https://www.nber.org/papers/w20849.pdf>

<https://www.cornerstone.edu/blogs/lifelong-learning-matters/post/why-is-college-tuition-rising-so-much-and-what-you-can-do>

## **Weapons on Campus**

### **Recommendation**

The Student Advisory Board supports the current statutory provisions banning firearms and certain weapons on college campuses, including the exception afforded the college or university's president to exercise discretion in allowing certain persons to carry a weapon.

**Approve:** Dansby, Glasgow, Harmon, Hill, Lester, and Trousdale

**Absent:** Mazeitis

## **2018-2019 Student Advisory Board Activities**

**Monthly Meetings.** Beginning in May, 2018, members of the Student Advisory Board met monthly, with the exception of June and July, to receive orientation, discuss issues, make campus visits and work plans, and prepare and vote on recommendations.

**Student Leadership Retreat.** Four members, Traeton Dansby, Nicholas Glasgow, Jakob Harmon, and Bobby “Trae” Trousdale, participated in the Eighteenth Annual Oklahoma Student Leadership Retreat that took place September 28, 2018 at Southwestern Oklahoma State University.

**Oklahoma Student Government Association Events.** Traeton Dansby and Jakob Harmon participated in the Oklahoma Student Government Association’s (OSGA) Presidential Retreat in Oklahoma City. Five members – Traeton Dansby, Nicholas Glasgow, Jakob Harmon, Alyson Hill, and Jake Mazeitis - chaired committees and participated in the annual OSGA Fall Congress, hosted by Tulsa Community College at its Metro Campus. Five members - Traeton Dansby, Nicholas Glasgow, Jakob Harmon, Alyson Hill, and Bobby “Trae” Trousdale - chaired committees and participated in the annual OSGA Spring Congress at the State Capitol.

**Higher Education Day at the State Capitol.** Several members traveled to the State Capitol on February 12, 2019, to work with the state higher education community in representing The Oklahoma State System of Higher Education’s concerns to state legislators and Governor Stitt.

**State Regents Tuition Hearing.** Student Advisory Board Member Nicholas Glasgow vocalized student concerns at the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education Tuition Hearing in Oklahoma City on April 25, 2019.

**Campus Visits.** In addition to representing the students in their home institutions, members of the Student Advisory Board networked with student leaders from other campuses at the events listed above and visited with student leaders from the following institutions:

Bacone College  
Connors State College  
Langston University  
Oklahoma Christian University  
Oklahoma City Community College  
Oklahoma State University – Oklahoma City  
Rogers State University  
Tulsa Community College  
University of Central Oklahoma