

UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND ARTS OF OKLAHOMA
1727 W. Alabama Avenue, Chickasha, OK 73018
MINUTES FOR THE BOARD OF REGENTS REGULAR MEETING
February 13, 2025

The Board of Regents for the University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma met Thursday, February 13, 2025 in the Student Center's Regents Room of the USAO Campus.

1. **Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order by Chair Kelly Wilkerson at 1:00 PM.
2. **Open Meeting Law:** President Hale announced the filing of the meeting notice and posting of agenda was done in accordance with the Open Meeting Act.
3. **Roll Call** was taken. Regents in attendance were Kelly Wilkerson, Suzanne Reynolds, Amanda Conley, Diane Ming, Cale Walker and Chris Mosley. Regent JJ Francais was absent.
4. **The pledge of allegiance** was recited by those in attendance.
5. **Introductions:** Chair Wilkerson introduced Sohail Punjwani, Assistant Attorney General from the Oklahoma Office of the Attorney General and counsel for the Board of Regents of USAO.
6. **Presentations:** None
7. **Minutes of the December 12, 2024 Meeting:** The minutes of the Dec. 12, 2024 meeting were presented with no corrections or additions. Regent Walker made a motion to accept the minutes. Regent Mosley seconded the motion, and the motion carried with unanimous approval.
8. **Communications to the Board:** None
9. **Personnel Actions:**
 - a. **Appointments, Changes in Status, Resignations & Retirees:** The Human Resources report was presented to the board for new appointments, changes in status, resignations and retirees. Regent Mosley made a motion to accept the report as printed. Regent Walker seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Appointments: Erin Glass, effective December 9, 2024; Human Resources Specialist
Change in Status: None
Resignations: Jim Davis, effective December 31, 2024; Carpenter
Retirees: None
 - b. **Reemployment of the President for FY 25-26:** Regent Ming, chair of the Academic and Administrative Affairs Committee, reported from the committee meeting earlier in the day for recommendation of the Reemployment of President Hale for the next fiscal year 2025-26. Regent Ming made the motion; Regent Walker seconded the motion and the motion carried by unanimous vote.
 - c. **Reemployment of the Administrators for FY 25-26:** Regent Ming again reported from the Academic and Administrative Affairs Committee meeting. On behalf of the committee, Regent Ming made the motion to accept the Reemployment of the Administrators for fiscal year 2025-26 as presented, noting the retirement of VP JP Audas effective June 30, 2025. Regent Walker made the second, and the vote was unanimous to accept the

motion.

Title	Administrator
Vice President for Business and Finance	Nick Hathaway
Vice President for Enrollment Management and Student Life	Sheppard McConnell
Vice President for External Affairs and Executive Director of USAO Foundation	JP Audas*
Chief of Staff and Director of Governmental Relations, Grants and Contracts	Cathy Perri
Vice President of Academic Affairs	David Evans
Executive Director of the Division of Professional Studies	Tony Hutchison
Director of Athletics	Mike Ross
Chief Human Resources Officer	Angela Harris
Director of Information Technology Services	Adeel Siddiqui

*VP Audas is retiring effective June 30, 2025.

- 10. Monthly Financial Statements:** David Smith, Controller, presented financial statements to the Board of Regents. No action was necessary.
- 11. Remarks from Sohail Punjwani, Assistant Attorney General representing USAO Board of Regents**

Chair Wilkerson recognized Assistant Attorney General Sohail Punjwani, counsel of the Board of Regents for USAO, for remarks before the next item of business. AAG Punjwani reported having received documents immediately before the Regents' meeting which requires a review from counsel before any vote can take place on Item 12: Selection of Construction Manager for Willard Hall Renovation. Regent Reynolds made a motion to table Item 12 on the agenda; Regent Ming seconded the motion. Those voting yes to table the motion were Regents Conley, Ming, Mosley, Reynolds and Wilkerson. Regent Walker voted no. The motion carried.
- 12. Selection of Construction Manager for Willard Hall Renovation:** Tabled on the advice of AAG Punjwani.
- 13. Submittal of the Willard Hall Project to State Master Lease Program:** VP Hathaway presented the proposed State Master Lease Program for the Willard Hall project. It was noted that the Board is not voting on a construction vendor, simply voting only on funding for the project. Regent Reynolds made a motion to accept the submittal of the Willard Hall project to the State Master Lease Program. Regent Ming seconded the motion, and the motion carried by unanimous vote.

Willard Hall Project to State Master Lease Program

Background/Rationale:

The Willard Hall project is a critical initiative aimed at revitalizing on-campus housing to support USAO's growing student population. This project aligns with the State Regents' preference for projects that enhance student safety and well-being.

Justification:

1. **Student Safety and Security:** The renovation of Willard Hall is vital to providing a safe and secure on-campus learning environment for our students.
2. **Increased Enrollment:** USAO is experiencing significant growth, recently celebrating a total student population of over 1,000 for the first time in many years. This milestone and university goals set for future growth underscore the urgent need to expand our on-campus housing options.

Total Project Budget: \$7,000,000

- OSRHE Allocation: \$3,500,000
- Private Gifts: \$1,500,000
- Master Lease Program: \$2,000,000 (financed through Housing revenues)

14. Curriculum Changes for the School of Interdisciplinary Studies and Humanities: VP

David Evans presented the changes to curriculum.

- a. Addition: Philosophy and Religious Studies (PRLG) (Minor)
- b. Deletion: PRLG 1233: Sign, Symbol and Myth

Regent Ming, made the recommendation and motion on behalf of the Academic and Administrative Affairs Committee, to approve adding a: "Philosophy and Religious Studies (Minor) and deleting b: "PRLG: 1233: Sign, Symbol and Myth". Regent Conley seconded the motion, and the motion carried by unanimous vote. Appendix B, pp. 11-18

15. **Proposed 2025-26 Housing Rate Adjustment:** Vice-President Sheppard McConnell presented the proposed increases in housing rates for 2025-26 fiscal year. Regent Reynolds, chair of the Housing and Physical Plant Committee, recommended approval for the rate increases for housing. She made the motion to approve the proposal, and Regent Mosley seconded the motion. The motion passed with a unanimous vote.

Housing Rate Adjustment for 2025-2026

Rationale:

1. **Cost of Maintenance and Renovation:** Over time, the cost of maintaining and renovating residential buildings has increased due to inflation and the need for infrastructure upgrades to ensure the safety and comfort of our students. These maintenance expenses are essential to provide a conducive living environment conducive to academic success.
2. **Enhanced Amenities and Services:** To remain competitive and attract prospective students, it is essential to continually enhance the amenities and services offered within our campus housing facilities. This may include upgrades such as improved internet connectivity, modernized common areas, enhanced security measures, and expanded recreational facilities.
3. **Operating Expenses:** The operational costs associated with managing campus housing, including utilities, staffing, and administrative overheads, have risen over the years. Adjusting housing rates will help offset these expenses and ensure the continued smooth operation of our residential program.
4. **Investment in Student Experience:** By adjusting housing rates, we can allocate additional resources towards initiatives aimed at enriching the overall student experience.

This could involve funding for community-building events, educational programs, and support services that promote personal growth and well-being among our resident students.

Proposal Details:

1. **Rate Adjustment:** We propose a modest increase in campus housing rates, taking into account the aforementioned factors and the need to maintain affordability for our students. Below is our proposed rate change for the 2025-26 academic year. To take effect In August 2025.

	Current Rates	Proposed Rate	Difference
Lawson 2-Bed	\$3,700.00	\$3,885.00	\$185.00
Lawson 4-Bed	\$3,100.00	\$3,255.00	\$155.00
Lawson Twinned	\$2,100.00	\$2,205.00	\$105.00
Lawson Middle	\$2,650.00	\$2,783.00	\$133.00
Robertson - Double	\$2,100.00	\$2,205.00	\$105.00
Robertson - Triple	\$1,500.00	\$1,575.00	\$75.00
Sparks Single	\$3,150.00	\$3,308.00	\$158.00
Sparks Double	\$2,100.00	\$2,205.00	\$105.00
Willard Single	\$3,550.00	\$3,728.00	\$178.00
Willard Double	\$2,500.00	\$2,625.00	\$125.00

2. **Transparent Communication:** We are committed to transparent communication throughout this process. We will engage with students, parents, faculty, and staff to explain the rationale behind the proposed rate adjustment and solicit feedback to ensure that the needs and concerns of all stakeholders are considered.
3. **Financial Aid and Support:** Recognizing that some students may face financial challenges, we will continue to provide robust financial aid and support services to ensure that housing remains accessible to all students, regardless of their economic background. This may include increased funding for need-based scholarships and emergency assistance programs.
4. **Long-Term Planning:** This proposal is part of our long-term strategy to sustainably manage campus housing operations and invest in the ongoing improvement of residential facilities. We will regularly review housing rates and adjust them as needed to align with changing economic conditions and student needs.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, adjusting campus housing rates is essential to ensure the continued quality, safety, and affordability of residential life at the University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma. By carefully considering the factors outlined above and implementing the proposed changes in a transparent and equitable manner, we can uphold our commitment to providing an exceptional living experience that supports the academic success and personal development of our students.

- 16. Authorization to Negotiate a Contract for USAO Real Estate Development:** VP Hathaway presented a proposal for authorization to negotiate a contract for future USAO real estate developments. From the Finance and Audit Committee, Regent Walker made a motion in favor of adopting the authorization. Regents Reynolds seconded the motion and the motion carried by unanimous vote.

Authorization to Negotiate a Contract for USAO Real Estate Development

Background/Rationale:

This initiative aims to construct new housing facilities for faculty, staff, coaches, and potentially students, enhancing the university community and supporting its mission.

Project Overview

The proposed real estate development initiative encompasses the following key elements:

1. **Property Leasing:** USAO will lease identified dilapidated residential properties to Fleske Commercial Group for a nominal fee.
2. **Development Responsibilities:** Fleske Commercial Group will be tasked with planning, financing, and constructing new housing units that meet the needs of university personnel and contribute positively to the campus environment.
3. **University Oversight:** USAO will maintain significant influence over the development process, including:
 - Approval of architectural designs to ensure alignment with university standards
 - Engagement of university and local community stakeholders in discussions about project impacts and benefits
4. **Long-term Leasing Strategy:** Upon completion, USAO plans to enter into a long-term lease agreement with Fleske Commercial Group. The University will pay lease costs with revenue generated by property rents.

This initiative addresses the growing demand for quality housing near campus due to increasing enrollment and faculty recruitment efforts. It also allows USAO to strategically utilize existing real estate assets, optimizing resources and ensuring that land adjacent to campus effectively contributes to the university's mission.

17. President's Report

Kelli Monroe, Director of Student Success, and Chair of the Retention Committee, delivered highlights from the ongoing Committee meetings:

- Faculty Professional Development Series
- Holistic Financial Support Program for At-Risk Students
- Enhanced Non-Attendance Review Process
- Attainment of a Full-Time Licensed Counselor
- Proactive Scholarship Retention Support
- Revamping Remediation & Developmental Courses

USAO headcount for Spring 2025 is the highest since 2011 at 927. FTE is up with 821 students. President Hale commended the entire committee for their commitment to excellence in working towards retention of students.

Tony Hutchison, Executive Director of the Division of Professional Studies, spoke next and gave highlights from his office:

- Partnerships
- Internships
- USAO Online
- TANF Grant
- South Central Oklahoma Workforce Board

President Hale then spoke of the Strategic Plan 2025 and progress so far.

Timeline for Strategic Plan:

June 2024	Administrative and Academic Leadership Retreat
July 2024	Steering Committee Formation and Initial Data Collection
Aug – Oct 2024	Stakeholder Engagement (interviews with internal and external constituent groups) Continued Data Collection Collate and summarize data from stakeholder engagement sessions
Nov - Dec 2024	Identification of goals, objectives, and strategies for implementation.
January 2025	Presentation of strategic plan framework to faculty, staff, and students
February 2025	Faculty, staff, and student working groups review plan and offer feedback, including implementation timeframes and assessment metrics
Nov - Dec 2024	Identification of goals, objectives, and strategies for implementation.
January 2025	Presentation of strategic plan framework to faculty, staff, and students
February 2025	Faculty, staff, and student working groups review plan and offer feedback, including implementation timeframes and assessment metrics
March 2025	Feedback is collated, and a new draft of the strategic plan is presented to campus constituencies for final review before presentation to USAO Board of Regents.
April 2025	Review by USAO Board of Regents
May 2025	Regents feedback is collated, and a final draft of the strategic plan is shared with all USAO constituencies.
June 2025	USAO Regents approve Strategic Plan
July 2025	Strategic Plan is implemented

Strategic Plan Goals:

- Goal 1: Commitment to Faculty
- Goal 2: Provide Outstanding Service to Students
- Goal 3: Broaden Our Impact Through Increased Enrollment
- Goal 4: Expand Our Reach Through Institutional Partnerships

- Goal 5: Grow Resources Available for Academic Excellence Through Increased Private Gifts
- Goal 6: Provide the Highest Quality Physical Environment for Learning
- Goal 7: Engage USAO as a Strong and Positive Community Partner
- Goal 8: Support and Advance Outstanding Drover Athletics
- Goal 9: Build a Brand Identity to Shape and Strengthen Marketing and Communications Strategies
- Goal 10: Foster a Culture of Innovation and Continuous Improvement

- 18. Remarks from Representatives to the Board:** Reports were submitted in advance from the Faculty Association, Student Association and Alumni Relations.
- 19. The Next Regular Meeting of the USAO Board of Regents** is Thursday, April 10, 2025, 1:00 p.m., USAO, Student Center, Regents Room, 1727 W. Alabama Ave., Chickasha, Oklahoma 73018.
- 20. Consideration and possible action on new items of business** not known about or which could not have been reasonably foreseen prior to the time of the posting of the agenda: None
- 21. Adjournment:** Having no other business, Regent Reynolds made a motion to adjourn, and Regent Mosley seconded the motion. The motion carried by unanimous vote and the meeting adjourned at 1:57 p.m.