

INSTRUCTION COUNCIL

MINUTES

Thursday, February 5, 2026
126 ITLE or Zoom

<https://okstate-edu.zoom.us/j/93408932681?pwd=k7XfZJyUQZIDaBosY89x45j3PHDFfs.1>

Meeting ID: 934 0893 2681

Passcode: 097849

9:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.

In attendance: Shannon Baker, Laurie Beets, Chad Blew, Larry Burns, Aaron Christensen, Cynda Clary, Chris Francisco (Chair), Craig Freeman, Richard Frohock, Ty Hawkins, Kelva Hunger, Diane Jones, James Knecht, Matt Lovern, Marlys Mason, Christine Ormsbee, Rita Peaster, Darius Prier, Carisa Ramming, Jennifer Rudd, Candace Thrasher, Ronna Vanderslice, Ashley Varnell.

Meeting was called to order at 9:02am.

1. Retention Report – Shannon Baker and Larry Burns

Baker presented on student retention, drawing primarily on analysis of the Fall 2024 cohort with observations about the Fall 2025 cohort included. The report was developed collaboratively, with substantial data review over the summer and early fall once census data became available. While a broader narrative analysis exists, the presentation focused on key findings and trends.

OSU continues to rank toward the lower end of the Big 12 in first-year retention. This pattern is consistent with prior years, including the Fall 2023 cohort, which—despite being a high-performing year—still placed the institution third from the bottom within the conference. Burns is working to obtain data from peer land-grant institutions.

While retention rates lag peer institutions, the University's six-year graduation rate remains competitive, even relative to higher-ranked institutions. The data indicate that the most significant attrition occurs during the first two academic years, with comparatively stable persistence thereafter.

A review of second-, third-, and fourth-year retention revealed that gains observed in Fall 2023 were largely lost by the second year, with retention declining to 75.8%, only slightly above prior cohorts. This underscores the importance of examining not only first-year retention but also the sustainability of interventions into subsequent years.

The Fall 2024 cohort included a higher proportion and number of alternate admits (7.2%), with a retention rate of 62.4%. This segment contributed to downward pressure on overall retention. Concurrent enrollment participation correlated positively with retention, suggesting that expansion of concurrent enrollment—paired with structured advising—may strengthen student preparedness and persistence.

High school GPA analysis revealed that lower high school GPAs were associated with decreased retention, indicating that academic preparedness remains a significant predictor of persistence. However, upcoming shifts to weighted GPA calculations will complicate longitudinal comparisons. Early data from Fall 2025

suggest that traditional GPA thresholds (e.g., 3.7 as a marker of readiness) may no longer reliably predict student success, reinforcing the need for recalibrated academic support strategies.

Although the Fall 2024 cohort included a smaller percentage of first-generation students, their retention declined, highlighting the need for more targeted programming. While first-generation students were more likely to engage with support tools such as Cowboy Charlie, this engagement alone did not significantly improve retention outcomes.

The cohort also included a higher proportion of non-resident students (39%). Historically, non-resident students have retained at higher rates; however, in Fall 2024, their retention (81.8%) was only marginally above that of residents. Notably, 20.55% of non-resident students were Pell-eligible, and this subgroup retained at only 70.2%, marking a significant decline from previous years. Resident Pell students performed slightly better than in earlier cohorts, while non-Pell retention remained relatively stable.

A marked decline occurred in the disbursement of late summer retention grants (39% reduction in funding), despite an increase in Pell-eligible students—particularly among non-residents. Only 8% of the Fall 2024 cohort received late awards, compared to 9% previously, and the average award amount decreased. This reduction correlated with lower retention, particularly in summer re-enrollment. Although the Fall 2023 cohort benefited from over \$1 million more in retention grants and posted strong first-year retention, many students did not persist into the third year, raising concerns about the long-term efficacy of grant strategies focused solely on short-term retention. It was noted that retention grants for freshmen have been reinstated for the Fall 2025 cycle following prior expansion to continuing students.

New students admitted within seven days of the semester start consistently exhibited poor retention (rates in the 50% range). Many of these students required complex schedule construction due to limited course availability and accumulated concurrent credits that did not align with degree requirements. A recommendation was made to discontinue routine admission of new students within the final week before classes, reserving exceptions for special populations (e.g., student athletes, international students).

Multiple retention interventions were reviewed:

- Six-Week Grades: Most students who received six-week grades ended the semester with the same grade; more experienced declines than improvements. This suggests the need for more directive follow-up actions rather than generalized advising referrals.
- Academic Alerts: Prior research indicates that academic alerts correlate with improved course performance. It was observed that graduate instructors are less likely to utilize academic alerts compared to full-time faculty, representing an opportunity for improved training and compliance.
- Cowboy Charlie: Approximately 4,000 automated resource connections were generated, with approximately 900 students flagged for follow-up. Outreach addressed academic, financial, and mental health concerns, including coordination with Financial Planning Counselors.
 - Persistence Check (November): Of 141 students indicating potential non-return, targeted outreach resulted in 71 students enrolling for spring. While some would likely have returned regardless, the effort demonstrated the value of proactive intervention.
- Othot: Utilization increased significantly (from 500 to 3,000 note submissions), indicating stronger adoption across campus.
- High-Touch/Low-Touch (UNIV 1111 Sections): Students with lower GPAs (below 3.25) were placed in advisor-led sections. Ongoing GPA recalibration and advising reorganization necessitate reassessment of this model.
- Tutoring: Tutoring demonstrated measurable benefits. Students with six-week grades of A–C who attended tutoring were more likely to finish with a C or better, and among D/F students, non-tutored students failed at nearly twice the rate of tutored students. Tutored students were also more likely to withdraw appropriately from courses, suggesting stronger self-efficacy.

- **Course Withdrawal Strategy:** In response to trends showing increased course failures and decreased withdrawals among non-returning students, advisors adopted a more assertive approach in Fall 2025 to encourage strategic withdrawals. In UNIV 1111, the rate of F grades decreased, withdrawals increased, and overall DFW rates rose slightly—reflecting proactive intervention rather than passive failure.

Key recommendations include:

- Establish an annual, comprehensive retention review process extending beyond the first year.
- Discontinue standard admission of new students within seven days of semester start, except for designated special cases.
- Continue coordinated first six-week interventions across units.
- Refocus retention grant strategies toward long-term graduation outcomes rather than one-year retention metrics.
- Provide consistent support financially across four years.
- Expand concurrent enrollment within a structured advising framework.
- Develop a campus-wide retention committee focused on high-impact practices and differentiated care.
- Strengthen academic alert utilization, particularly among graduate instructors.
- Enhance specificity in intervention messaging (e.g., direct tutoring enrollment rather than general advising referrals).

Discussion addressed alignment between admissions practices and retention goals. Admissions metrics emphasize enrollment growth, while academic units are measured on retention and graduation outcomes, creating structural tension. Analysis indicated that if the Fall 2024 cohort had mirrored prior academic profiles, retention would have reached approximately 82.8%. Ongoing discussions are evaluating marginal revenue versus marginal cost in recruitment strategy, including scholarship allocation and non-resident yield management.

Mason inquired if there is any data with regard to certain classes or sizes of classes that are impacting retention, and Francisco answered that there is no data to answer this question at this time. Efforts were discussed to discourage first-year students from taking online classes.

The report will be distributed to Instruction Council. The session concluded with acknowledgment of the collaborative effort and appreciation for the comprehensive analysis.

2. HLC Debrief – Chris Francisco

Francisco expressed appreciation to participants who attended HLC Mock Visit sessions and open forums, with specific recognition of strong engagement during the General Education session.

Francisco acknowledged the considerable work by key contributors, particularly in strengthening the Assurance Argument and Federal Compliance components.

A central theme raised by the peer reviewers was difficulty identifying the institution's goals for retention and persistence. In response, leadership clarified that the strategic plan was deliberately written to emphasize the six-year graduation rate as the primary outcome metric. Retention and persistence are monitored as contributing indicators but were not positioned as institutional end-goals due to their sensitivity to multiple external and internal variables. The institution's proposed framing to HLC is that graduation is the ultimate measure of student success, and intermediate measures (retention/persistence) are tracked to support that objective. It was noted that the peer reviewers were

comfortable with this approach, and that HLC is generally flexible so long as the institution sets goals consistent with expectations for higher education and demonstrates alignment and follow-through. Reviewers also observed that, while colleges and units may set local retention or persistence targets—particularly in response to emerging trends—there is not currently a long-term, institution-wide retention goal articulated at the same level as graduation goals.

Francisco discussed the deliberately critical posture adopted by peer reviewers at the request of leadership, intended to surface issues now rather than during the April visit. Although some feedback felt overly stringent, the approach was viewed as appropriate and beneficial. The peer reviewers' role was framed as intentionally "picky," and Francisco expressed gratitude for the thoroughness, even when it was frustrating in the moment. Follow-up conversations with the reviewers continued after the sessions, with additional feedback still being provided.

The HLC report drafting timeline and review process were outlined as follows:

- A next draft is targeted for Friday, February 20.
- Once the February 20 draft is complete, it will be circulated internally rather than posted publicly, due to confidential content and other constraints.
- Members were asked to review sections relevant to their areas (e.g., Student Success and curricular topics).
- Feedback is requested over the following two-week period, including suggestions for additional evidence, programs, or documentation that may strengthen claims.
- The final editing process will occur before spring break, with Francisco serving as final editor.
- A formal sign-off deadline was referenced as occurring in early-to-mid March.

A major area of need identified for the April HLC visit is substantially higher attendance at open forums. A comparison was shared from a peer Big 12 institution that achieved approximately 300 attendees per forum. Senior leadership participation in practice sessions was stronger due to the direct relevance and perceived stakes.

Francisco discussed the scheduling constraints of HLC visits, noting that the open forum schedule is typically not confirmed until approximately one week prior. However, it was anticipated that at least two to three forums will occur on April 20, and one to two could occur on April 21. Francisco committed to distributing schedule information as soon as it becomes available and to reinforcing messaging broadly through campus channels, including coordination with Faculty Council.

Francisco concluded with renewed appreciation for participants' involvement and acknowledgement that the peer reviewers, while critical in their initial comments, later indicated that the institution is generally performing well and that their intent was to help identify and strengthen weaker areas. Ongoing reviewer feedback and follow-up work were noted as continuing and valuable.

3. Curriculum

Course Action Summaries:

College of Veterinary Medicine

The proposed changes address grading structure inconsistencies within the college's curriculum. Rudd explained that the current grading framework includes a combination of letter grades and pass/fail designations that does not function effectively across programs. This would ensure that the pre-clinical programs would align with the clinical programs with regards to grading, changing the grading system from pass/fail to letter grade form.

Mason moved to approve, and Clary seconded. Instruction Council members approved the College of Veterinary Medicine course action summary.

Program Modifications:

College of Arts and Sciences

Doctor of Philosophy in Chemistry (046)

Course requirement change

- Increase guided electives from 20 to 21 credit hours
- Decrease dissertation research hours from 54 to 23 credit hours
- Total credit hours will decrease from 90 to 60 credit hours
- Reason for requested action: To simplify the process for students to develop their plan of study and encourage students to complete the PHD candidacy in a timely manner.

Freeman moved to approve, and Mason seconded. Instruction Council members approved the College of Arts and Sciences program modification.

Francisco began discussion of the first proposed sub-120 hour bachelor's degree from the College of Education and Human Sciences with additional proposals forthcoming.

It was noted that the University of Oklahoma recently advanced six sub-120 degree programs through its Board of Regents and issued a press release announcing their approval, despite the absence of a finalized state-level framework. Concerns were expressed about moving forward in the absence of clear state guidance and about creating precedent without confirmed compliance requirements.

In contrast, the current institutional plan is to:

1. Advance sub-120 proposals through internal review and approval processes.
2. Hold final OSU/A&M Board of Regents approval until the State Regents establish and approve the governing structure.
3. Ensure all proposals are compliant with the finalized state framework before submission to the OSU/A&M Board of Regents.

Francisco indicated that requesting OSU/A&M Board of Regents approval without clarity on state requirements would place the Board in an inappropriate position, potentially asking them to approve programs that may not align with eventual state standards. The approach articulated reflects a deliberate effort to maintain procedural compliance and governance integrity. It was also noted that programs advanced by peer institutions do not yet have State Regents approval, and prior guidance has indicated that such approvals are required before public announcement or implementation.

The discussion included broader context regarding sub-120 degree structures at the state level. It was emphasized that there is currently no finalized, approved structural framework from the State Regents governing sub-120 bachelor's degrees. As such:

- No formal structure has yet been posted for Council on Instruction consideration.
- Even if posted promptly, approval would need to proceed through Council on Instruction, Council of Presidents, and then the State Regents agenda process.
- Based on procedural timelines, it is unlikely that a finalized state structure would be approved before April.

College of Education and Human Sciences

Bachelor of Applied Science in Child, Family, and Community Services (New)

New program request

- Request for a sub 120-hour degree
- Total credit hours: 90
- Delivery modality: Traditional
- Reason for requested action: Enhance student demand by offering a streamlined and affordable pathway to degree completion and accelerated entry into the workforce, as well as increased accessibility for first-generation students, working students, transfer students, and students seeking pre-professional preparation for graduate study.

Prier explained that this proposal represents a restructuring of a prior program that had experienced significant enrollment decline, particularly among adult learners. The department viewed the sub-120 initiative as an opportunity to redesign and reposition the program to better serve targeted populations, including adult learners, transfer students, first-generation students, and working students.

The proposal is aligned with projected workforce demand in Oklahoma. Prier emphasized that this redesign is not intended to compete with or diminish an existing 120-hour program but rather to replace a struggling program with a more responsive and accessible pathway.

Prier raised a concern regarding language in the proposal stating that “the curriculum provides strong preparation for graduate and professional education in social work, counseling, public health and related fields.” The concern centered on guaranteeing preparation for specific graduate fields, particularly external programs with varying admissions standards. A friendly amendment was proposed to strike this sentence from the proposal narrative. The amendment does not affect the degree structure itself. With no objections, the sentence was removed by consensus.

A second issue was raised concerning GPA requirements for declaring the major. Francisco stated that the Provost opposes GPA-based barriers for *degree declaration* (distinct from GPA requirements for degree completion), except in licensure-driven programs (e.g., nursing). The rationale is that declaration GPA thresholds may leave students “undeclared” without a clear academic home, which can negatively impact advising and persistence. A friendly amendment was proposed to strike the GPA-based declaration requirements from the proposal. The program may retain GPA requirements for earning the degree, but not for declaring the major. No objections were raised. The declaration GPA requirements were removed by consensus.

Members discussed ongoing state-level conversations regarding sub-120 degree structures, including general education requirements and residency hours. Recent proposals related to 30-hour Gen Ed frameworks were voted down due to conflicts with existing 37-hour Gen Ed structures. Further discussions are expected at upcoming Council on Instruction meetings.

Additional discussion addressed:

- Whether sub-120 degrees are intended primarily as completion programs (e.g., two-plus-one models), workforce-focused credentials, or early-entry bachelor’s pathways.
- The potential pairing of sub-120 degrees with associate degrees.

- The importance of thoughtful course sequencing, particularly in technical or STEM fields where prerequisite chains (e.g., calculus sequences) constrain compression.
- Advising implications, including whether cohort models or fall-entry sequencing may be necessary for three-year completion plans.
- The importance of clearly defining target populations to avoid unintended cannibalization of 120-hour programs.

It was emphasized that while sub-120 degrees must maintain academic integrity and value, they may serve distinct purposes—such as workforce alignment, adult completion pathways, or enhanced technical preparation—rather than replicating the breadth of traditional four-year programs. Members also discussed the importance of clearly articulating that the sub-120 hour degree is not of “lesser value,” but rather of *different value*—designed for a distinct population and career trajectory. Care should be taken in program language to avoid framing the degree as a reduced or inferior version of a traditional 120-hour pathway. Broader structural questions regarding sub-120 programs will continue to be discussed at institutional and state levels as frameworks are finalized.

Doctor of Philosophy in Counseling Psychology (552)

Course requirement change

- Remove EPSY 5320
- Add FDEP 6123 and SPSY 5320
- Total credit hours will not change
- Reason for requested action: Replacing temporary course numbers with approved course numbers.

Doctor of Philosophy in Educational Psychology (070)

Course requirement change

- Option in Educational Psychology
 - Remove EPSY 5320
 - Add EPSY 6001
 - Require EPSY 6153
 - Increase Domain II guided electives from 9 to 15 credit hours
 - Decrease Domain III from 12 to 9 credit hours
 - Total credit hours will decrease from 69 to 68 credit hours
 - Reason for requested action: To better prepare students as they enter the job market.

Master of Science in Family and Community Services (304)

Course requirement change

- Remove HDFS 5543 and HDFS 5923
- Total credit hours will decrease from 36 to 30 credit hours
- Reason for requested action: To align the degree program with the IDEA consortium partners.

Doctor of Philosophy in School Psychology (535)

Degree requirement change

- Remove GRE requirement for admission
- Adding an option to the degree sheet for students entering the program with a Master’s degree

- Reason for requested action: To remove barriers for admission and provide a pathway for students who have already earned a Master's degree.

Course requirement change:

- Remove REMS 6013, REMS 6663, EPSY 6153, SPSY 6143, EPSY 5463, EDHS 5910, and EDHS 5910
- Add SPSY 6153, SCFD 6983, FDEP 5493, SPSY 5110, and SPSY 6310
- Remove PSYC 6563 as an alternative to FDEP 5183
- Add HDFS 5293 as an alternative to EPSY 5103
- Add 6 credit hours of specialized coursework preapproved by the advisory committee
- Remove select 3 hours of guided coursework from Direct Service/Psychotherapy
- Total credit hours will decrease from 128 to 126 credit hours
- Reason for requested action: Updating the curriculum to provide more relevant coursework to students.

Clary moved to approve, and Freeman seconded. Instruction Council members approved the College of Education and Human Sciences new program requests and program modifications as amended for the removal of specific graduate field preparation language (“the curriculum provides strong preparation for graduate and professional education in social work, counseling, public health and related fields”) and declaration GPA requirements for the new program request Bachelor of Applied Science in Child, Family, and Community Services (New).

Spears School of Business

Doctor of Philosophy in Business Administration (036)

Degree requirement change

- Option in Finance
 - Require 3 letters of recommendation
 - Reason for requested action: Updating admission requirements based on feedback from the Graduate College.

Course requirement change

- Option in Finance
 - Reorganize courses into different categories
 - Remove FIN 5773
 - Total credit hours will decrease from 69 to 60 credit hours
 - Reason for requested action: To improve the student experience.
- Option in Marketing
 - Remove MKTG 6413, MKTG 6913, and MSIS 6343
 - Add MGMT 6353, MGMT 6383, and MGMT 6553
 - Decrease electives from 27 to 21 credit hours
 - Total credit hours will not change
 - Reason for requested action: Updating curriculum to remove obsolete courses and better prepare students for employment opportunities.

Bachelor of Applied Science in Business Essentials and Applications (New)

New program request

- Request for a sub 120-hour degree

- Total credit hours: 90
- Delivery modality: Traditional and Electronic
- Reason for requested action: This program will engage adult learners wanting to complete a bachelor's degree through flexible, accelerated, and targeted pathways.

Mason discussed the new sub-120 hour program request for a Bachelor of Applied Science in Business Essentials and Applications (New). The proposed structure emphasizes foundational “language of business” coursework; applied skills in spreadsheets and data analysis; elective flexibility allowing specialization (students may pursue additional credentials such as certificates in Finance or Salesforce, or electives can be structured to allow skill enhancement aligned with workforce needs). The program is conceptually similar to a general business degree but is positioned as a streamlined, workforce-oriented credential rather than a traditional 120-hour program. The primary target population includes non-degree completers seeking to finish a credential; individuals who previously started a degree but did not complete; working professionals seeking business literacy and applied skills; and online students. The program will be delivered online and may incorporate cohort-based models depending on demand. Importantly, if students choose to continue beyond the sub-120 credential, the structure allows transition into a traditional 120-hour business degree pathway. The proposal was characterized as workforce-responsive and flexible, aimed at individuals seeking career advancement through applied business education.

Hawkins moved to approve, and Frohock seconded. Instruction Council members approved the Spears School of Business program modifications and new program request.

4. Other

Francisco concluded the meeting with expressions of appreciation for members’ efforts in managing a compressed timeline for curricular review and program development. It was acknowledged that several units are continuing internal discussions and may bring forward additional proposals at a later date. The accelerated timeframe was recognized as challenging, particularly given the need to navigate faculty governance processes and address questions at the departmental level. Francisco emphasized the importance of allowing sufficient time for faculty consultation to ensure comfort with proposed curricular changes prior to formal submission. Taking additional time to resolve concerns and build consensus was encouraged, with the understanding that this approach strengthens long-term implementation and institutional alignment. Members were thanked for their patience, engagement, and thoughtful discussion throughout the meeting.

Meeting was adjourned at 10:25am.

Minutes were recorded by Ashley Varnell.