

INSTRUCTION COUNCIL

MINUTES

Thursday, September 18, 2025
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, Larry Burns, Aaron Christensen, Cynda Clary, Chris Francisco (Chair), Craig Freeman, Richard Frohock, Jami Fullerton, Ty Hawkins, Kelva Hunger, Diane Jones, James Knecht, Brent Marsh, Marlys Mason, Kirsten Olds, Rita Peaster, Carisa Ramming, Jennifer Rudd, Adrienne Sanogo, Rebecca Sheehan, Candace Thrasher, Ronna Vanderslice, and Ashley Varnell.

Meeting was called to order at 9:02am.

1. Welcome to Dr. Brent Marsh, Vice President for Student Affairs

Francisco welcomed Dr. Brent Marsh to the Instruction Council meeting, and Dr. Marsh introduced himself to the group, including details that he has had a career in higher education and student affairs and is glad to be back in Oklahoma and part of the land grant mission. Francisco mentioned that Instruction Council works closely with Student Affairs and appreciates having the relationship with Student Affairs. Instruction Council members and attendees introduced themselves to Dr. Marsh.

2. Doel Reed Center classes – Dr. Kirsten Olds

Olds provided an overview of the Doel Reed Center, which serves as the University's center in Taos, New Mexico. The site supports for-credit courses, leisure learning opportunities, competitive scholarship preparation, special sessions, and faculty residencies. Olds announced a call for for-credit course proposals for Summer 2026. These will be two-week courses offered in May, June, and July, and proposals are welcome from all disciplines, as the Center aims to broaden offerings beyond its traditional focus on arts and English. The submission process requires faculty to provide a course proposal along with a PDF form signed by the unit head and associate dean. Proposals are due October 15. The opportunity is also open to emeritus faculty. Olds shared student feedback indicating that participation in these courses is often a transformative experience, fostering independence, confidence, broadened perspectives, and deeper engagement in their fields of study. Faculty have also expressed that teaching at the Center provides renewed energy and inspiration for their work upon returning to campus. In terms of compensation, Olds noted that the model has been slightly adjusted and is now offered as a flat rate rather than a percentage; further details are available in the proposal form. Clary expressed appreciation for the added approval and signature requirements, noting that they encourage greater transparency and conversation within units. Olds added that the process is

expected to become more streamlined in the future. Sheehan remarked on her own positive experience teaching at the Center several years ago and encouraged colleagues to consider participating.

3. College curricular reports for A&M Regents – Chris Francisco

Francisco let the group know that while the original deadline was September 15 to submit the college curricular reports, they are granted flexibility to submit their reports through September 19, and the plan is for Provost Mendez to begin reviewing these reports the following week. These one-to-two-page reports may be submitted in any format, including a Slate form that Burns created and Francisco will distribute, a Word document, or text within an email. For the content of the report, please note the following parameters:

- For new certificates or programs, a brief explanation should be included outlining the rationale, such as workforce demand, feedback from industry partners, or findings from APRs.
- For modifications to existing programs, only highlights should be noted rather than every individual change.
- These explanations should remain high-level and focused on purpose and impact, demonstrating responsiveness to workforce needs or APR findings, without going into unnecessary detail.

Francisco acknowledged that this is the first year the Board will receive curricular reports in this format and that we will know if changes need to be made for next year. This process is an opportunity to showcase the University's thoughtful approach to curriculum development, emphasizing that curricular changes are made with intention rather than forwarded arbitrarily.

Francisco also expressed appreciation to Burns and his team for preparing the Slate form.

4. Curriculum

Course Action Summaries:

College of Engineering, Architecture and Technology (see attached)

Ramming discussed that the proposed change involves removing Calculus II from the Material Science Labs that are aligned with the Material Science course, which does not require it.

Sanogo moved to approve, and Sheehan seconded. Instruction Council members approved the College of Engineering, Architecture and Technology course action summary.

Program Modifications:

N/A

5. Other

Common Exam Schedule

Francisco addressed an issue with a common exam that had been inadvertently scheduled at the same time as a home football game on Friday (September 19th). The University received several complaints. Thanks to coordination between the Registrar's Office, Hawkins, and the relevant academic unit, a solution was quickly reached. One exam in Physics 1114 was moved from Friday to Monday of the following week, and another affected exam during walkaround was also adjusted. Francisco expressed appreciation for the collaborative effort in resolving the matter and clarified that the scheduling conflict had been unintentional but addressed swiftly once identified.

Francisco also acknowledged that conflicts with football games may arise periodically because exam schedules are determined before the full athletic calendar is finalized. Thursday and Friday evening games in particular are often set later by the Big 12 Conference. Athletics Administration, specifically Chad Weiberg and Reid Sigmon, were commended for proactively notifying the office when possible scheduling conflicts emerge and for advocating to the Conference about which dates would be less disruptive. Historically, Friday evenings have been preferred over Thursdays because of fewer evening classes and exams, and earlier dates in the semester are favored over later ones to reduce overlap with major exam periods. Overall, the University is generally in a strong position with scheduling, though this incident highlighted areas for continued vigilance.

The group also discussed student communications. Tailored emails about common exams have been sent by academic advisors, and it was suggested that an additional update could be distributed to ensure students are well-informed. While many students may already have received updates, there was recognition that direct communication through advisors could reinforce the message.

Broader concerns about scheduling practices were raised. Francisco noted that stacking multiple exams on the same evening creates conflicts with evening classes and logistical challenges, while Friday exams remain unpopular. There was also concern about potential overlaps, such as chemistry and physics exams scheduled simultaneously, which would necessitate numerous make-up exams. While common exams have benefits—including promoting uniformity, reducing classroom disruptions, and offering students additional exam time—the group agreed there is a need to balance these advantages against potential conflicts and less desirable exam times. Members were encouraged to consider possible alternative approaches for the future to minimize such issues.

Meeting with Joel Kendall – Vice Chancellor to State Regents

Provost Mendez and Francisco met with Joel Kendall, the new Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs at the State Regents. Dr. Kendall, who began his role on July 1, is also an OSU graduate and demonstrated a strong understanding of the Institution. The meeting was described as productive, with Dr. Kendall providing helpful insights and responding to questions. Key topics included the following:

- **Repeat Policy**, which allows students four attempts at a course with the highest grade counting. Faculty Council had previously raised concerns that the policy was overly generous, and Francisco conveyed those concerns. Dr. Kendall acknowledged the issue but explained that, given the large variety of concerns, the current policy was one of the few feasible options. He suggested collecting one to two years of data before reconsidering any changes in order to evaluate potential impacts such as seat availability and student outcomes. Francisco agreed this was a prudent approach, appreciated the State Regents devising a system that we could program in our system, and emphasized that concerns from Faculty Council had been communicated and would continue to be as we get more data.
- The conversation also addressed **broader changes at the State Regents level**. Higher education is experiencing increasing scrutiny around programs and efficiencies, and the Regents are seeking to demonstrate to legislators and other stakeholders that universities are responsibly stewarding resources. As part of this effort, Regents are requiring additional information for new program proposals, with a particular focus on workforce needs. Dr. Kendall indicated that his office is prepared to assist institutions by providing Lightcast data and other workforce/job data to support proposals. He also encouraged institutions to discuss requests with his office when necessary and confirmed that Regents staff often supplement proposals with workforce data if they already have

it. If questions arise, staff intend to notify institutions early, giving them the opportunity to provide clarifications before proposals reach committee review. Francisco noted this as evidence of partnership rather than hostility, emphasizing that Regents staff are working collaboratively to advance sound proposals while maintaining accountability. Francisco reported no concerns following the meeting. The overall impression was that the State Regents are committed to partnering with institutions, supporting the development of programs that meet genuine workforce needs, and ensuring responsible program growth in higher education across Oklahoma.

- Burns provided an update on the Lightcast negotiations; the University is in the final stages of securing licenses for the OSU A&M System. Each college will receive one Lightcast analyst license to support academic program data analysis. In addition, the system will purchase 100 licenses to be distributed across colleges, which will be available to career services staff, central staff, and others. These resources will also include access to Lightcast Alumni Pathways data, which has been under discussion for several years. Funding has now been identified, and the purchase will be finalized within the next few weeks. The IRA office will manage the licenses for the system. Colleges will be asked to nominate individuals for training in the use of Lightcast data for both academic program analysis and alumni outcomes, and training will be completed through Data Wranglers. Vanderslice and Francisco both noted that Bart Collins is highly skilled with Lightcast data and will be available as a resource for colleagues. His expertise in data analysis and computer tools was highlighted as a valuable asset.
- Francisco also discussed updates from the conversation with Dr. Kendall regarding **terminology in the State Regents' policies**. Concerns were raised about the accessibility and consistency of definitions, which were previously scattered throughout the Academic Affairs Policy and sometimes inconsistent. To resolve this, the Regents consolidated the definitions into a single section to ensure consistency, though this temporarily made them harder to locate. These finalized definitions will soon be posted online, helping ensure institutional practices align with State Regents' standards.
- The meeting included a discussion on the emerging concept of **sub-120 hour bachelor's degrees**, a trend gaining traction nationally. In many states, these are referred to as 90-hour bachelor's degrees, though in Oklahoma they will be classified as sub-120 hour programs. While not finalized, the State Regents are actively working this fall to determine how such degrees will be structured. Early indications suggest that these programs will still require the full 40 hours of general education coursework, which differs from other states that often reduce general education requirements to make room for the shorter degree. Institutions will also be required to demonstrate both the appropriate level of rigor and a clear workforce need before programs can be approved. It was emphasized that OSU does not anticipate creating many of these degrees, as there is no desire to undercut the traditional 120-hour bachelor's structure. Limited use might be considered in technical or polytechnic fields or at institutions such as OSU-IT and OSU-OKC, which already operate with a statewide technical mission. Regional institutions, however, are expected to pursue these more aggressively as a competitive strategy. Peer institutions such as Kansas State have piloted a few programs, and states like Utah and Ohio are making stronger pushes, with Ohio even requiring every institution to offer one. Questions were raised about how such programs would impact general education requirements, especially since approximately 85–87% of Gen Ed courses are taught through the College of Arts

and Sciences. While no changes to the definitions or learning outcomes of Gen Ed are currently anticipated, there may be opportunities to revisit what courses are most appropriate for students in these programs. Francisco mentioned that the impact of these updates should be assessed after the first year before considering adjustments.

Concerns were also raised about the implications of reduced-credit bachelor's degrees on graduate study eligibility. For example, some professional and graduate schools do not recognize three-year degrees from other countries, and similar issues could arise with sub-120 hour programs. Dr. Kendall indicated that the State Regents plan to establish clear guidelines this fall to ensure that students are fully informed of potential limitations when pursuing such degrees. Overall, while sub-120 hour bachelor's degrees may emerge in targeted areas and may help to reduce the cost burden on students, they are unlikely to replace traditional four-year programs. The University will continue to monitor state-level discussions, evaluate workforce-driven opportunities, and remain attentive to potential effects on students and academic standards.

- The meeting also addressed challenges with **K–12 and higher education data alignment**. It was noted that K–12 systems do not integrate well with higher education systems, which creates significant difficulties when responding to State Regents' requests. For example, institutions are often asked to provide data on how students who took specific high school math courses—such as the college and career ready math class—perform in university-level math courses. Currently, institutions lack the ability to track these students reliably, despite longstanding interest in evaluating the effectiveness of such coursework. This limitation has been raised consistently for years in State Regents' reporting, but there has never been a way to get the data from K-12 and match it with higher education data.

Dr. Kendall shared that efforts are underway to collaborate with the State Department of Education to improve data-sharing and enable longitudinal tracking of students across K–12 and higher education. This would support more informed analysis of student preparation and outcomes, particularly in evaluating readiness for courses.

The group also discussed the complications of course naming and numbering. High school courses often lack standardized numbering systems, making transcript analysis inconsistent and difficult. While there are possibilities for using transcript-reading software—or even AI tools—to analyze this information, the variation in naming conventions continues to be a barrier. The issue is compounded at the higher education level, where identical courses are sometimes given different names, or courses with the same name may differ substantially in content. A prior effort by the State Regents to standardize naming in mathematics resulted in confusion for both students and faculty. Students often misinterpret equivalencies, and even faculty struggle to clarify distinctions across institutions.

Sanogo provided an update on the progress of the Digital Accessibility Working Group, specifically focusing on visual accessibility initiatives. She reported that a survey had been distributed to Provost Office staff, which included questions regarding data, minutes, records, storage, and related topics. The completed survey has been submitted.

Sanogo also shared insights from a recent meeting with CEHS deans across the nation, where programs and practices for ensuring accessibility were discussed. She highlighted that, in some institutions, courses cannot move forward for approval on Canvas unless they meet accessibility standards.

Sanogo encouraged the group to begin considering accessibility in their own areas. Once resources are finalized and made available, she will assist in distributing them to the group.
Francisco thanked Sanogo for her service and contributions to the working group.

Meeting was adjourned at 9:48am.

Minutes were recorded by Ashley Varnell.