

INSTRUCTION COUNCIL

MINUTES

Thursday, May 21, 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: Laurie Beets, Cynda Clary, Chris Francisco (chair), Craig Freeman, Richard Frohock, Ty Hawkins, Kelva Hunger, James Knecht, Marissa McIntyre, Linda Millis, Christine Ormsbee, Rita Peaster, Darius Prier, Carisa Ramming, Jennifer Rudd, Rebecca Sheehan, Candace Thrasher, Ronna Vanderslice, Ashley Varnell.

Meeting was called to order at 9:02am

1. Update on Financial Aid Implications for Late Enrollment Appeals – Rita Peaster and Linda Millis

Millis and Peaster provided an update regarding financial aid implications for late enrollment appeals. They explained that students who add courses or increase credit hours after the university's established enrollment deadline—specifically after the partial add/drop period—may not receive additional financial aid eligibility as a result of those changes, which could produce a hardship. Federal regulations require institutions to establish a census date for determining aid eligibility, and the university uses the partial add/drop deadline for that purpose. While the university could continuously recalculate aid throughout the semester, doing so would create additional complications and could negatively affect more students than it would help. As a result, students who add classes late should not assume their aid package will increase and are encouraged to consult Financial Aid directly before making decisions based on anticipated aid adjustments. The late enrollment petition form has also been updated with clearer language to help communicate this policy to students.

The discussion also clarified several common misunderstandings about financial aid and course withdrawals. Millis confirmed that if a student drops below full-time status after the partial add/drop deadline, their financial aid is generally not reduced, provided the student had actively participated in the course before withdrawing. This applies regardless of whether a student drops from 12 to 9 hours or from a higher load such as 15 or 18 hours down to 9. Financial aid is only recalculated in cases of complete withdrawal from the university, at which point federal regulations require a return-of-funds calculation based on the student's last date of enrollment. The group also discussed block tuition, noting that students already enrolled between 12 and 18 credit hours would not experience tuition changes when adding a late course within that range. Questions were raised regarding second eight-week courses, and Millis clarified that the main semester partial add/drop deadline still governs financial aid eligibility for all coursework, including second eight-week classes. Finally, members discussed scenarios involving students who enroll later in the term; in such cases, financial aid eligibility is based on the student's initial enrollment date, and any additional courses added afterward may not count toward aid eligibility.

2. Length of evening common exams—Chris Francisco

The group discussed a proposal regarding the possibility of allowing longer evening common exams for certain courses, particularly in STEM disciplines. The issue originated from a faculty member who had previously provided extended evening exam times outside current policy guidelines and argued that additional time better supports student success. The discussion was framed as exploratory only, with no action item under consideration at this meeting. Members reviewed how each of their colleges handle common evening exams, noting that some maintain strict one-hour limits while others allow exceptions on a case-by-case basis depending on classroom availability and instructional need. Concerns were raised about operational implications, including scheduling constraints, limited classroom space, staffing burdens on instructors and teaching assistants, and the impact on accommodated testing. Several members emphasized that extending standard exam times would also extend accommodations for students receiving additional time, potentially resulting in very long testing periods that create logistical and equity challenges.

During discussion, members offered a range of pedagogical perspectives. Some argued that instructors should design exams that can reasonably be completed within the allotted one-hour period, while others noted that certain disciplines and problem-solving assessments may legitimately require more time for students to demonstrate mastery without excessive stress. Members shared personal experiences with both timed and extended-length exams, noting that additional time can reduce student anxiety and improve the testing environment, especially in large, content-heavy courses. Others suggested that more frequent, shorter assessments might better measure student learning while reducing pressure associated with high-stakes exams. Considerable attention was also given to the logistical complexity of coordinating common evening exams across multiple departments while avoiding conflicts between courses students commonly take together. The group acknowledged that expanding exam lengths could require stricter limits on which courses are permitted to hold common evening exams because of increasing constraints on available times and classroom space. The conversation concluded with a request that members discuss the issue with department heads and leadership teams to gauge interest and gather additional feedback before any further consideration.

3. Revisit the Faculty Council recommendation on syllabi for courses without a regularly-scheduled meeting time – Chris Francisco (tabled on 5/7/26)

Members continued discussion of the Faculty Council recommendation concerning courses without regularly scheduled meeting times, including independent studies, thesis hours, dissertation hours, and similar variable-credit courses. The primary issue under consideration was whether the recommendation's language stating that such courses "should" incorporate a syllabus or written contract between the instructor and student should instead be strengthened to "must." Feedback gathered from several colleges generally supported the recommendation itself and favored changing the wording from "should" to "must." However, one college representative reported unexpectedly strong resistance from department heads, who expressed concern about adding new administrative requirements and creating additional oversight responsibilities for department leadership. Some faculty leaders also felt it was important to respect the Faculty Council's original wording because the proposal had already undergone extensive faculty review and deliberation.

Several members spoke in favor of requiring written agreements for courses without regular meeting times, emphasizing the importance of clear communication and documentation for both faculty and students. Sheehan noted that misunderstandings frequently arise regarding expectations for independent studies, thesis hours, and dissertation work, often leading to disputes or confusion about grading and satisfactory progress. Members stressed that written expectations need not be burdensome and could take the form of a simple syllabus, contract, or even documented email exchange. Discussion also highlighted the significant power imbalance that can exist between graduate students and faculty advisors, with several members arguing that written agreements provide important protection and clarity for students navigating those relationships. Additional examples were shared involving honors thesis and research hours where conflicting evaluations or unclear expectations created difficulties that better documentation might have prevented.

After discussion concluded, the council moved to formally adopt the Faculty Council recommendation while changing the language from “should” to “must.” **A motion was made by Freeman and seconded by Hawkins to approve the revision to Policy 2-0207, Section 1.05, requiring that courses without regularly scheduled meetings must incorporate a syllabus or planning contract between the instructor of record and the student.** Following brief additional discussion, the motion passed with one opposing vote. The proposal will next move forward to the Council of Deans, along with a summary of the discussions that occurred in Graduate Council, Faculty Council, and Instruction Council. Members also discussed the remaining approval pathway, including possible review by executive leadership and whether the policy revision would require Board of Regents approval before inclusion in the academic catalog.

4. Curriculum

Course Action Summaries:

Ferguson College of Agriculture

The council reviewed a course action summary from Ferguson College of Agriculture involving the consolidation of two forestry measurement courses into a single course. Clary explained that the proposal combined Forest Measurements I and Forest Measurements II, previously offered as separate three-credit-hour courses, into a new five-credit-hour course. The change was driven both by accreditation requirements within the forestry program and by practical enrollment considerations associated with managing a relatively small program. Combining the courses was intended to improve curricular efficiency, better support student progression, and address challenges related to enrollment sequencing and course scheduling. Clary noted that a related portion of the proposal had already been reviewed previously and that this item represented the remaining component needed to complete the transition.

Hawkins moved to approve, and Sheehan seconded. Instruction Council members approved the Ferguson College of Agriculture course action summary.

Program Modifications:

College of Education and Human Sciences

Bachelor of Applied Science in Community Psychology and Wellness (New)

New program request

- Request for a sub 120-hour degree
- Delivery method: Electronic
- Total credit hours: 90
- Reason for requested action: By equipping students with key workforce-ready skills and behavioral health training, graduates will be prepared to effectively address and respond to pressing health issues across the Oklahoma landscape, and especially in rural and remote areas.

The council engaged in an extended discussion regarding a proposed new sub-120 hour degree program emerging from the School of Community Health Sciences, Counseling, and Counseling Psychology within the College of Education and Human Sciences. The proposal had undergone several revisions following discussions between Education and Human Sciences and Arts and Sciences, particularly the Department of Psychology. Prier explained that the program originated from collaborations with tribal communities and was initially proposed as “Indigenous Community Psychology and Wellness.” The program was designed to address workforce needs related to behavioral health, substance abuse, school support, disability services, and community wellness, especially in underserved populations. Following feedback from university leadership encouraging broader marketability and workforce alignment, the proposal evolved into a more broadly focused program with multiple applied tracks. The latest proposed title under discussion was “Community Counseling Psychology and Wellness.”

Much of the discussion centered not on the curriculum itself, which participants generally agreed was academically sound, but on whether the word “psychology” should appear in the undergraduate degree title. Representatives from Arts and Sciences expressed concern that including “psychology” in the name could create confusion with existing undergraduate psychology degrees offered through the Department of Psychology and could imply alignment with disciplinary expectations associated with the American Psychological Association’s guidelines for psychology programs. CAS representatives argued that community psychology and counseling psychology are traditionally viewed as graduate-level specializations built upon foundational undergraduate psychology coursework and research methods training. They emphasized concerns about differentiation, student and public understanding of the degree, and consistency with existing psychology program structures.

In response, Education and Human Sciences representatives strongly defended the appropriateness of including psychology terminology in the title. Prier argued that community psychology is a recognized subfield within psychology and that the proposed curriculum intentionally reflects interdisciplinary and community-based approaches grounded in local needs and workforce development rather than traditional research-focused psychology pathways. He emphasized that sub-120 degrees are intended to serve nontraditional adult learners and workforce advancement rather than traditional undergraduate preparation for graduate research programs. Several members noted that the School of Community Health Sciences, Counseling, and Counseling Psychology already includes “psychology” in its official title and that the proposed program aligns with the school’s existing disciplinary frameworks. Discussion also touched on broader philosophical disagreements about disciplinary ownership, applied versus foundational training, and the role of community-centered and Indigenous knowledge systems within psychology-related education.

Additional comments from members highlighted the importance of considering the intended audience for the sub-120 hour degree programs, noting that these degrees are designed primarily for adult learners already working in relevant fields rather than recent high school graduates. Some members expressed concern that the degree title could still be confusing to external audiences, while others argued that extensive marketing and program explanation would be necessary regardless of the final name. The discussion eventually shifted toward possible compromise solutions, including modifying the curriculum to require additional psychology coursework from Arts and Sciences while retaining some form of psychology terminology in the title. A tentative path forward emerged around continuing collaborative discussions between the colleges to determine whether revisions to the curriculum structure and naming conventions could resolve the impasse. No final action was taken during this meeting, and the proposal was tabled for further discussion and refinement.

5. Other

NCSARA Reporting

An announcement was made by Ormsbee regarding the annual NCSARA reporting requirements for out-of-state student placements. Members were reminded that the reporting template had been distributed earlier that morning and that completed information should be returned by June 9 to allow sufficient time for aggregation and submission. The report must include any undergraduate student participating in practica, internships, or similar experiential learning activities outside Oklahoma, regardless of whether the student is enrolled online or in person. Units were asked to provide placement information by subject area, CIP code, number of students, and state location. Additional clarification and assistance were offered for anyone with questions about completing the template or reporting requirements.

Meeting was adjourned at 10:29am.

Minutes were recorded by Ashley Varnell.