

SENATE FLOOR VERSION
February 25, 2025
AS AMENDED

SENATE BILL NO. 244 By: Pugh

By: Pugh

[higher education - school - advisory board - vice president - vacancy - search - director - tenure - funds - report - severability - codification - effective date -

emergency]

BE IT ENACTED BY THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF OKLAHOMA:

SECTION 1. NEW LAW A new section of law to be codified

in the Oklahoma Statutes as Section 3319 of Title 70, unless there is created a duplication in numbering, reads as follows:

A. There is hereby established the School of American Civic

Thought and Leadership at the University of Oklahoma. The purpose of the school shall be to:

1. Educate students in the principles, ideals, and institutions of the American political order including the character traits and habits necessary to sustain that order;

2. Educate students in the philosophical foundations of responsible leadership and informed citizenship;

3. Promote and provide programming related to civic education, engagement, and discourse;

1 4. Enhance education in the fields of political thought and
2 science, American history and government, free market economics, and
3 other related fields as appropriate, with a focus on the foundations
4 of Western and American civilization including its great books, the
5 rights and responsibilities of American citizenship, fundamental
6 democratic principles and mores, and the ways in which those
7 principles and mores are expressed in and through mediating
8 institutions at the federal, state, and local levels;

9 5. Provide viewpoint and ideologically diverse resources to
10 students, faculty, state government agencies and actors, educators,
11 and the general public regarding civic affairs; and

12 6. Assist in ensuring that the University of Oklahoma serve as
13 a robust marketplace of ideas for all students and faculty.

14 B. To carry out the purposes set forth in subsection A of this
15 section, the school is authorized to:

16 1. Enroll students;

17 2. Hire tenure-track and non-tenured faculty and supporting
18 staff;

19 3. Develop and offer in-person courses and online instruction
20 in new graduate and undergraduate major and minor programs;

21 4. Develop an undergraduate American institutions and civic
22 knowledge course in anticipation of a future mandate requiring all
23 University of Oklahoma students to complete such a course to
24 graduate;

5. Offer general education and honors courses including courses intended for incoming freshman students;
6. Offer concurrent enrollment;
7. Provide and facilitate internships and other relevant experiences for students and the general public;
8. Hold events; and
9. Take other actions as appropriate subject to the supervision of the school's director and the general supervision of the President of the University of Oklahoma.

C. Upon its establishment, the school may be physically housed on the University of Oklahoma's Norman campus.

D. The school shall operate as an academic unit within the University of Oklahoma.

E. The school and its director shall be advised by an advisory board on matters related to the school including, but not limited to, staffing, curriculum, policy, and programming in accordance with the policies and procedures of the University of Oklahoma.

1. The advisory board shall be comprised of nine (9) members to be appointed as follows:

- a. three members, one of whom shall be an active or retired academic or administrative employee of an institution of higher education accredited by an accrediting agency that is recognized by the Secretary

of Education of the United States Department of
Education, appointed by the Governor,

- b. three members, one of whom shall be an active or retired academic or administrative employee of an institution of higher education accredited by an accrediting agency that is recognized by the Secretary of Education of the United States Department of Education, appointed by the President Pro Tempore of the Senate, and
 - c. three members, one of whom shall be an active or retired academic or administrative employee of an institution of higher education accredited by an accrediting agency that is recognized by the Secretary of Education of the United States Department of Education, appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

2. Initial appointments shall be made by December 31, 2025.

The terms of office of initial members shall be:

- a. one member appointed pursuant to subparagraphs a, b, and c of paragraph 1 of this subsection shall serve an initial term of two (2) years,
 - b. one member appointed pursuant to subparagraphs a, b, and c of paragraph 1 of this subsection shall serve an initial term of four (4) years, and

c. one member appointed pursuant to subparagraphs a, b, and c of paragraph 1 of this subsection shall serve an initial term of six (6) years.

3. Initial appointments made pursuant to this subsection shall expire on May 31 of the final year of the term of office. Terms of office for subsequent appointments shall be six (6) years. Members shall serve until their successors are duly appointed. Members shall serve at the pleasure of the appointing authority. Vacancies shall be filled by the appointing authority.

4. a. The President of the University of Oklahoma shall appoint a Vice President of Civic Thought and Leadership by December 31, 2025, who shall serve at the pleasure of the president. The vice president shall serve as chair of the advisory board created pursuant to this subsection, convene an initial meeting of the advisory board, receive appointment notifications, and serve as an ex officio member of the advisory board.

b. If a vacancy in the position of Vice President of Civic Thought and Leadership occurs, it shall be filled by the President of the University of Oklahoma. During the term of the vacancy, the advisory board may elect from its membership an interim chair to serve until the vacancy is filled.

1 F. By March 31, 2026, the advisory board created pursuant to
2 subsection E of this section, or a committee appointed by the board,
3 shall conduct a national search and transmit to the President of the
4 University of Oklahoma a list of finalists for the position of
5 director of the school. The President of the University of Oklahoma
6 shall provide all necessary administrative support for the search.
7 The President of the University of Oklahoma shall appoint the
8 director from the list of finalists provided by the advisory board.
9 If the position of director becomes vacant, the provisions of this
10 subsection shall govern appointment of a new director. During the
11 term of the vacancy, the President of the University of Oklahoma may
12 designate a member of the school's faculty to serve as interim
13 director until the vacancy is filled. The President of the
14 University of Oklahoma may remove the director of the school in
15 accordance with policies and procedures of the University of
16 Oklahoma. The director shall:

17 1. Report to the Vice President of Civic Thought and
18 Leadership;

19 2. Except for his or her own appointment, make all faculty and
20 staff hiring decisions for the school;

21 3. Operate the school in accordance with policies and
22 procedures of the University of Oklahoma; and

23 4. By March 1, 2027, and by each March 1 thereafter, develop
24 and provide an annual strategic plan for the school to the President

1 of the University of Oklahoma, the Vice President of Civic Thought
2 and Leadership, and the advisory board.

3 G. Faculty of the school may be awarded tenure subject to the
4 tenure policies of the University of Oklahoma as adopted by the
5 Board of Regents of the University of Oklahoma and shall not be
6 required to gain joint appointment in another division of the
7 University of Oklahoma. If a faculty member is awarded tenure and
8 the school later dissolves, the faculty member shall be relocated
9 within another academic unit of the University of Oklahoma.

10 H. The Board of Regents of the University of Oklahoma may use
11 funds allocated to it by the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher
12 Education and charitable donations to fund the school. Funds
13 allocated pursuant to this subsection shall not supplant any
14 existing state funding or charitable donations to the University of
15 Oklahoma. Allocated and donated funds shall only be used for the
16 direct operation of the school.

17 I. By September 1, 2027, and by each September 1 thereafter,
18 the President of the University of Oklahoma, in consultation with
19 the director of the school, the school's advisory board, and the
20 Vice President of Civic Thought and Leadership, shall electronically
21 submit a report to the Governor, the President Pro Tempore of the
22 Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the chairs
23 of the Senate Appropriations Committee and the House of
24 Representatives Appropriations and Budget Committee. The initial

1 report shall contain all relevant data from the founding of the
2 school through September 1, 2027, including the following:

3 1. The total amount of funding received by the school in the
4 previous fiscal year;

5 2. A description of the current faculty positions and the names
6 and qualifications of the faculty members holding such positions;

7 3. The names and titles of the members of the advisory board
8 created pursuant to subsection E of this section;

9 4. The number of students enrolled in the school's graduate and
10 undergraduate degree programs and in concurrent enrollment;

11 5. A description of the courses and degrees offered by the
12 school;

13 6. A description of significant community events, initiatives,
14 and publications provided by the school during the previous fiscal
15 year;

16 7. A description of programs at the University of Oklahoma
17 supported by the school; and

18 8. A copy of the school's most recently approved strategic
19 plan.

20 J. The provisions of this section are severable and if any part
21 or provision shall be held void, the decision of the court so
22 holding shall not affect or impair any of the remaining parts or
23 provisions of this section.

24 SECTION 2. This act shall become effective July 1, 2025.

1 SECTION 3. It being immediately necessary for the preservation
2 of the public peace, health, or safety, an emergency is hereby
3 declared to exist, by reason whereof this act shall take effect and
4 be in full force from and after its passage and approval.

5 COMMITTEE REPORT BY: COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
February 25, 2025 - DO PASS AS AMENDED

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