

STATE OF OKLAHOMA

1st Session of the 60th Legislature (2025)

SENATE BILL 244

By: Pugh

AS INTRODUCED

An Act relating to higher education; establishing the School of American Civic Thought and Leadership at the University of Oklahoma; providing purpose; authorizing the school to perform certain duties; providing for location of the school; directing the school to operate as certain academic unit; creating an advisory board; providing for appointment of members, terms of office, expiration of initial appointments, and filling of vacancies; providing for appointment of a Vice President of Civic Thought and Leadership by certain date; providing duties of vice president; authorizing the vice president to perform certain duties; providing for filling of vacancy; directing the advisory board or its appointed committee to conduct certain search by certain date; directing the President of the University of Oklahoma to appoint certain director from certain list; providing for filling of vacancy; establishing duties of the director; allowing award of tenure to certain faculty; authorizing use of certain funds for school; requiring submission of certain annual report by certain date; providing contents of report; providing for severability; providing for codification; providing an effective date; and declaring an 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:

1 A. There is hereby established the School of American Civic
2 Thought and Leadership at the University of Oklahoma. The purpose
3 of the school shall be to:

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

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

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

11 4. Enhance education in the fields of political thought and
12 science, American history and government, free market economics, and
13 other related fields as appropriate, with a focus on the foundations
14 of Western and American civilization including its great books, the
15 rights and responsibilities of American citizenship, fundamental
16 democratic principles and mores, and the ways in which those
17 principles and mores are expressed in and through mediating
18 institutions at the federal, state, and local levels;

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

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

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

3 1. Enroll students;

4 2. Hire tenure-track and non-tenured faculty and supporting
5 staff;

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

8 4. Develop an undergraduate American institutions and civic
9 knowledge course in anticipation of a future mandate requiring all
10 University of Oklahoma students to complete such a course to
11 graduate;

12 5. Offer general education and honors courses including courses
13 intended for incoming freshman students;

14 6. Offer concurrent enrollment;

15 7. Provide and facilitate internships and other relevant
16 experiences for students and the general public;

17 8. Hold events; and

18 9. Take other actions as appropriate subject to the supervision
19 of the school's director and the general supervision of the
20 President of the University of Oklahoma.

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

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

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

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

7 a. three members, one of whom shall be an active or
8 retired academic or administrative employee of an
9 institution of higher education accredited by an
10 accrediting agency that is recognized by the Secretary
11 of Education of the United States Department of
12 Education, appointed by the Governor,

13 b. three members, one of whom shall be an active or
14 retired academic or administrative employee of an
15 institution of higher education accredited by an
16 accrediting agency that is recognized by the Secretary
17 of Education of the United States Department of
18 Education, appointed by the President Pro Tempore of
19 the Senate, and

20 c. three members, one of whom shall be an active or
21 retired academic or administrative employee of an
22 institution of higher education accredited by an
23 accrediting agency that is recognized by the Secretary
24 of Education of the United States Department of

1 Education, appointed by the Speaker of the House of
2 Representatives.

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

4 The terms of office of initial members shall be:

- 5 a. one member appointed pursuant to subparagraphs a, b,
6 and c of paragraph 1 of this subsection shall serve an
7 initial term of two (2) years,
8 b. one member appointed pursuant to subparagraphs a, b,
9 and c of paragraph 1 of this subsection shall serve an
10 initial term of four (4) years, and
11 c. one member appointed pursuant to subparagraphs a, b,
12 and c of paragraph 1 of this subsection shall serve an
13 initial term of six (6) years.

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

- 20 4. a. The President of the University of Oklahoma shall
21 appoint a Vice President of Civic Thought and
22 Leadership by December 31, 2025, who shall serve at
23 the pleasure of the president. The vice president
24 shall serve as chair of the advisory board created

1 pursuant to this subsection, convene an initial
2 meeting of the advisory board, receive appointment
3 notifications, and serve as an ex officio member of
4 the advisory board.

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

11 F. By March 31, 2026, the advisory board created pursuant to
12 subsection E of this section, or a committee appointed by the board,
13 shall conduct a national search and transmit to the President of the
14 University of Oklahoma a list of finalists for the position of
15 director of the school. The President of the University of Oklahoma
16 shall provide all necessary administrative support for the search.
17 The President of the University of Oklahoma shall appoint the
18 director from the list of finalists provided by the advisory board.
19 If the position of director becomes vacant, the provisions of this
20 subsection shall govern appointment of a new director. During the
21 term of the vacancy, the President of the University of Oklahoma may
22 designate a member of the school's faculty to serve as interim
23 director until the vacancy is filled. The President of the
24 University of Oklahoma may remove the director of the school in

1 accordance with policies and procedures of the University of
2 Oklahoma. The director shall:

3 1. Report to the Vice President of Civic Thought and
4 Leadership;

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

7 3. Operate the school in accordance with policies and
8 procedures of the University of Oklahoma; and

9 4. By March 1, 2027, and by each March 1 thereafter, develop
10 and provide an annual strategic plan for the school to the President
11 of the University of Oklahoma, the Vice President of Civic Thought
12 and Leadership, and the advisory board.

13 G. Faculty of the school may be awarded tenure subject to the
14 tenure policies of the University of Oklahoma as adopted by the
15 Board of Regents of the University of Oklahoma and shall not be
16 required to gain joint appointment in another division of the
17 University of Oklahoma. If a faculty member is awarded tenure and
18 the school later dissolves, the faculty member shall be relocated
19 within another academic unit of the University of Oklahoma.

20 H. The Board of Regents of the University of Oklahoma may use
21 funds allocated to it by the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher
22 Education and charitable donations to fund the school. Funds
23 allocated pursuant to this subsection shall not supplant any
24 existing state funding or charitable donations to the University of

1 Oklahoma. Allocated and donated funds shall only be used for the
2 direct operation of the school.

3 I. By September 1, 2027, and by each September 1 thereafter,
4 the President of the University of Oklahoma, in consultation with
5 the director of the school, the school's advisory board, and the
6 Vice President of Civic Thought and Leadership, shall electronically
7 submit a report to the Governor, the President Pro Tempore of the
8 Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the chairs
9 of the Senate Appropriations Committee and the House of
10 Representatives Appropriations and Budget Committee. The initial
11 report shall contain all relevant data from the founding of the
12 school through September 1, 2027, including the following:

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

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

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

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

21 5. A description of the courses and degrees offered by the
22 school;

1 6. A description of significant community events, initiatives,
2 and publications provided by the school during the previous fiscal
3 year;

4 7. A description of programs at the University of Oklahoma
5 supported by the school; and

6 8. A copy of the school's most recently approved strategic
7 plan.

8 J. The provisions of this section are severable and if any part
9 or provision shall be held void, the decision of the court so
10 holding shall not affect or impair any of the remaining parts or
11 provisions of this section.

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

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

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