

1 STATE OF OKLAHOMA

2 2nd Session of the 59th Legislature (2024)

3 HOUSE BILL 3966

By: Echols

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6 AS INTRODUCED

7 An Act relating to higher education; establishing the
8 School of American Civic Thought and Leadership at
9 the University of Oklahoma; providing purpose;
10 providing authorized actions; permitting School to be
11 housed on the University of Oklahoma's Norman Campus;
12 directing that School shall operate as an academic
13 unit; creating advisory board; providing membership
14 of board; directing for initial members to be
15 appointed by certain date; providing for expiration
16 of terms; directing for certain appointees to have
17 certain background; providing procedure for
18 expiration of terms; clarifying that members serve at
19 pleasure of appointing authority; directing the
20 president appoint a vice president of civic thought
21 and leadership; directing for board to find director;
22 permitting the use of certain funds; directing for
23 certain annual report; providing for severability;
24 providing for codification; and providing an
-- effective date.

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

21 SECTION 1. NEW LAW A new section of law to be codified
22 in the Oklahoma Statutes as Section 3320 of Title 70, unless there
23 is created a duplication in numbering, reads as follows:
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A. There is hereby established the School of American Civic Thought and Leadership (School) at the University of Oklahoma.

1. It is the purpose of the School to:

- a. educate students in the principles, ideals, and institutions of the American political order, including the character traits and durable habits necessary to sustain that order,
- b. educate students in the philosophical foundations of responsible leadership and informed citizenship,
- c. promote and provide programming related to civic education, engagement, and discourse,
- d. enhance education in the fields of political thought and science, American history and government, free market economics, and other related fields as appropriate, with a focus on the foundations of Western and American civilization, including its great books, the rights and responsibilities of American citizenship, fundamental democratic principles and mores, and the ways in which those principles and mores are expressed in and through mediating institutions at the federal, state, and local levels,
- e. provide viewpoint and ideologically diverse resources to students, faculty, state government agencies and

1 actors, educators, and the general public regarding
2 civic affairs, and

- 3 f. assist in ensuring that the University of Oklahoma
4 serves as a robust marketplace of ideas for all
5 students and faculty.

6 2. In order to carry out the purposes set forth in paragraph 1
7 of subsection A of this section, the School is authorized to:

- 8 a. enroll students,
9 b. hire tenure-track and nontenured faculty and
10 supporting staff,
11 c. develop and offer in-person courses and online
12 instruction in new graduate and undergraduate major
13 and minor programs,
14 d. develop an undergraduate American institutions and
15 civic knowledge course in anticipation of a future
16 mandate requiring all University of Oklahoma students
17 to complete such a course to graduate,
18 e. offer general education and honors courses, including
19 courses in the University of Oklahoma's Gateway to
20 College Learning program,
21 f. offer concurrent enrollment,
22 g. provide and facilitate internships and other relevant
23 experiences for students and the general public,
24 h. hold events, and
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1 i. take other actions as appropriate, subject to the
2 supervision of the School's director, to be selected
3 as provided in this section, and the general
4 supervision of the president of the University of
5 Oklahoma (president).

6 3. Upon its establishment, the School may be physically housed
7 on the University of Oklahoma's Norman Campus.

8 4. The School shall operate as an academic unit within the
9 University of Oklahoma.

10 B. The School and its director, who shall be appointed as
11 provided below, shall be advised by an advisory board (board) on
12 matters related to the School, including, but not limited to,
13 staffing, curriculum, policy, and programming, in accordance with
14 the policies and procedures of the University of Oklahoma.

15 1. The board shall be composed of ten (10) members, appointed
16 as follows:

17 a. the Governor shall appoint one member,

18 b. the Speaker of the Oklahoma House of Representatives
19 shall appoint one member,

20 c. the President Pro Tempore of the Oklahoma State Senate
21 shall appoint one member, and

22 d. the remaining members shall be the University of
23 Oklahoma Board of Regents.

1 2. Members of the initial board must be appointed by December
2 31, 2024.

3 3. All terms of the members appointed pursuant to subparagraphs
4 a, b, and c of paragraph 1 of this subsection shall expire May 31 of
5 the sixth year after appointment.

6 4. The members appointed pursuant to subparagraphs a, b, and c
7 of paragraph 1 of this subsection shall be, or have been, academic
8 or administrative personnel at an American institution of higher
9 education, such that, unless there is a temporary vacancy, the board
10 should have no less than three appointees who are, or have been,
11 academic or administrative personnel at an American institution of
12 higher education.

13 5. After the initial appointments expire, subsequent
14 appointments shall be six (6) years. Board members may continue to
15 serve on the board after their term expires, but only until a new
16 member is appointed to replace the sitting board member. Board
17 members may be reappointed. All appointments, including to fill
18 vacancies for unexpired terms, shall be filled in the same manner as
19 the original appointment such that the appropriate appointing
20 authority – the Governor, the Speaker, or the Pro Tempore – shall
21 retain control over their respective board member's seat.

22 6. Board members shall serve at the pleasure of the appointing
23 authority.
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1 7. The president shall appoint a vice president of civic
2 thought and leadership (vice president) by December 31, 2024. The
3 vice president shall serve at the pleasure of the president. The
4 vice president shall also chair the board, convene its first
5 meeting, receive appointment notifications, and serve as an ex
6 officio board member. If the vice president resigns, the president
7 shall name a replacement. During the period beginning when the
8 position of vice president becomes vacant and when a new vice
9 president is named, the board may elect from among its members
10 someone to serve as interim chair, who shall be relieved of duty
11 upon the president's naming a new vice president.

12 C. By March 31, 2025, the board, or a committee of the board
13 selected by the board, shall conduct a national search and transmit
14 to the president a list of finalists for the position of director.
15 The president shall provide all necessary administrative support for
16 the search. The president shall appoint the director from the list
17 of finalists provided by the board. If the position of director
18 becomes vacant, then the same process must be followed to appoint a
19 new director. During the period beginning when the position of
20 director becomes vacant and when a new director is appointed, the
21 president may designate a member of the School's faculty to serve as
22 acting director until the director position is filled. The
23 president may remove the director in accordance with the policies
24 and procedures of the University of Oklahoma.

1 1. The director shall report to the vice president.

2 2. Except for their own appointment, the director shall make
3 all faculty and staff hiring decisions. The director shall operate
4 the School in accordance with the policies and procedures of the
5 University of Oklahoma.

6 3. Faculty of the School may be awarded tenure subject to the
7 tenure policies of the University of Oklahoma as adopted by the
8 University's board of regents, and shall not be required to gain
9 joint appointment in another division of the University of Oklahoma.
10 If a faculty member is awarded tenure and the School later
11 dissolves, the faculty member shall be relocated within another
12 academic unit of the University of Oklahoma.

13 4. By March 1, 2026, and by each March 1 thereafter, the
14 director shall develop and provide an annual strategic plan for the
15 School to the president, the vice president, and the board.

16 D. The University of Oklahoma Board of Regents may use funds
17 allocated to it by the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education
18 and charitable donations to fund the School of American Civic
19 Thought and Leadership. Funds allocated to the School shall not
20 supplant any existing state funding or charitable donations to the
21 University of Oklahoma. All allocated funds and charitable
22 donations to the School may only be used for the direct operation of
23 the School.

1 E. By September 1, 2026, and by each September 1 thereafter,
2 the president shall, in consultation with the director of the
3 School, its board, and the vice president, submit an annual report
4 to the Governor, the Speaker, the Pro Tempore, and the chairs of the
5 legislative appropriations, budget, and finance committees with
6 jurisdiction over budget allocations. The initial annual report
7 shall include all relevant data from the founding of the institute
8 through September 1, 2026. The report must include:

9 1. The total amount of funding received by the School in the
10 previous year;

11 2. A description of current faculty positions and the names and
12 qualifications of the faculty members currently holding such
13 positions;

14 3. The names and titles of the members of the board;

15 4. The total graduate and undergraduate enrollment of the
16 School, and concurrent enrollment, if any;

17 5. A description of the courses and degrees offered by the
18 School;

19 6. A description of significant community events, initiatives,
20 and publications provided by the School during the previous year;

21 7. A description of programs at the University of Oklahoma
22 supported by the School; and

23 8. A copy of the School's most recently issued strategic plan.
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SECTION 2. This act shall become effective November 1, 2024.

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