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FROM THE EDITOR



REGHAN KYLE/OU DAILY

OU Daily is an independent, student-led news organization serving the OU community and the city of Norman. Its newsroom is in Copeland Hall Room 160.

Excited to expand our community coverage

Welcome home to Norman.

Since coming to OU for my freshman year in 2021, I've enjoyed August and the return to all the parts of Norman I love. I'm sure most students look forward to the first football game of the year, and others are excited to return to the classroom. For me, the highlight is definitely walking through the doors of OU Daily again.

This year, I have the honor and privilege to serve as the next editor-in-chief of OU Daily. This newsroom and the people who work in it mean so much to me. Three years ago, I walked into the newsroom as a terrified freshman, but I soon found a home at the Daily. Since then, I've likely been found in my favorite chair, working on a write-up of the latest Norman City Council meeting.

OU Daily is an independent, student-led news organization that prides itself on serving students while also engaging and informing Norman residents. On our website and in print, you'll find stories about OU's student body and campus, the city of Norman, local politics, sports and culture. It's such a joy to watch my colleagues grow here, and I hope that you will find that same feeling somewhere on campus.

We're a newsroom of about 75 students, working together to utilize our talents as writers, editors, photographers, videographers and more. Down a short hallway from our newsroom, you'll find our incredibly talented and dedicated advertising and marketing team. Together, the students at OU Daily are committed to serving this community.

The student journalists at OU Daily publish on our website daily and work to create themed guides you'll find on racks around campus monthly. Expect to see issues

centering on Sooners football, campus issues, the best of Norman's businesses and this year's presidential election.

This year, the Daily will look to expand our coverage of the city of Norman by offering the community to submit obituaries to run on our site, free of charge. I hope this will become a place where families can honor their loved ones. Along with community submission, OU Daily will continue its work of writing obituaries, which you'll be able to find on our site.

Thank you for picking up our Back to School Guide and following up online at oudaily.com. Sign up for our newsletters, and follow us on social media to stay up-to-date with our work. You can find us on Facebook, X, Instagram, Threads and TikTok.

I wish you all an amazing school year and hope you'll visit our site often. The Daily is dedicated to serving students and Normanites alike, and I am so honored to lead the staff here at OU Daily. I'm looking forward to what this year will bring.

With thanks,
Peggy Dodd



Peggy Dodd
Editor-in-chief
peggy.f.lail-1@ou.edu

OU DAILY

MISSION

Since 1916, OU Daily has covered Norman and OU in depth, served as a public forum for community discussion and provided students on our staff real-world media experiences.

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OPINIONS & SUBMISSIONS

Letters or guest columns may be submitted to dailyeditor@ou.edu. They will be edited for accuracy, space and style and run at the discretion of the editor-in-chief. Students must list their major and classification; community members must list their title.

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OU Daily does not want old news coverage of short-term interest online to unduly inhibit the ability of people — especially those who are not public figures — to craft their futures. Subjects of prior coverage can appeal for stories to be reexamined at oudaily.com/cleanslate.

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COVER PHOTO BY ADEN CHOATE

SUMMER NEWS YOU MISSED

14 stories to catch up on from the break

BY TAYLOR JONES • TAYLOR.P.JONES-1@OU.EDU

May 16: OU announces John Antonio as new dean of Mewbourne College of Earth and Energy

John Antonio was appointed as dean of the college and Lester A. Day Family Chair, beginning on July 1. He previously served as interim dean of the college after Mike Stice stepped down from the position in November 2022.

May 16: OU names Anna Carpenter as new College of Law dean

Anna Carpenter, a law professor and special adviser to the president at the University of Utah, began her position on July 15. She was elected following former law dean Katheleen Guzman's October announcement she would step down.

June 1: Oklahoma House passes 2025 fiscal year budget, allocating 2% increase into higher education

The Oklahoma House of Representatives passed the 2025 fiscal year budget, allocating roughly \$444 million less toward higher education than the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education initially requested from the state.

June 10: OU College of Arts and Sciences dean to step down, accept Stony Brook University position

David Wrobel, dean of the OU Dodge Family College of Arts and Sciences, stepped down on July 31 to become dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at Stony Brook University in New York, leaving four interim or acting deans out of 16 at OU.

June 12: Norman City Council approves special election, rejects survey for entertainment district

The Norman City Council approved a special election for residents to vote on the tax increment financing districts, or TIFs, for the proposed Rock Creek Entertainment District Project Plan, which would divide the Norman entertainment district into two TIFs. The district would host concerts and events as well as OU basketball games and women's gymnastics meets. It would also include a hotel, family and residential areas, retail spaces and offices.

June 13: Norman Planning Commission approved entertainment district plan for council consideration

The Norman Planning Commission approved



Oklahoma Memorial Stadium highlights OU's transition into the Southeastern Conference.

ADEN CHOATE/OU DAILY

the development plans of the proposed Rock Creek Entertainment District Project Plan, sending the project to the Norman City Council. The earliest date the council could vote on the proposed entertainment district was July 23.

June 14: OU announces Price College dean to step down, accept role at Penn State

Corey Phelps, dean of the OU Price College of Business, stepped down on July 12 to become dean of the Smeal College of Business at Penn State University, leaving five interim or acting deans out of 16 at OU.

June 17: OU Norman campus to cancel class, operations for first football game

OU announced its Norman campus will suspend academic and campus operations on Aug. 30 for the first football game of the season. Kickoff is scheduled for 6 p.m. at the Oklahoma Memorial Stadium.

June 18: Republican Tom Cole, Democrat Mary Brannon win U.S. Representative District 4 primaries

According to unofficial results from the Oklahoma State Election Board, with 86.70% of precincts reporting, of the 54,343 total Republican votes cast, 35,287 voters, or 64.93%, favored Cole. Of the 12,358 total Democratic votes cast, 7,470 voters, or 60.45%, favored Brannon. The candidates will face each other in the Nov. 5 general election.

June 18: Lisa Standridge, Robert Keyes advance to Republican runoff for State Senate District 15 seat

According to unofficial results from the Oklahoma State Election Board, with 91.43% of precincts reporting, of 7,717 total votes, 2,680 voters, or 34.73%, favored Standridge and 2,056 voters, or 26.64%, favored Keyes. The candidates will face each other in the Aug. 27 Republican runoff.

June 27: OU works to improve residential halls, features of Norman campus during summer construction

OU worked on several campus improvement projects such as repairs to sidewalks, streets and parking lots over the summer to better accommodate upcoming and returning students, faculty and staff for the fall semester.

June 28: OU announces new interim deans for College of Professional and Continuing Studies, Honors College

Mark Morvant will serve as interim dean of the College of Professional and Continuing Studies as the college continues to search for a permanent dean after Gregg Garn, former interim dean, returned to his role as full-time vice president for online learning at OU. In the Honors College, Michael Markham will serve as interim dean due to current interim dean Kelvin White going on sabbatical for the fall semester.

July 1: OU marks transition to SEC with day-long festivities

OU became an official member of the Southeastern Conference this summer. The University of Oklahoma and OU Athletics hosted a series of events the day of the transition in Norman, Oklahoma City and Tulsa.

July 11: Judge grants temporary restraining order during hearing for lawsuit seeking to cancel special UNP arena TIF election

A Cleveland County District judge granted a temporary restraining order in a hearing for a lawsuit filed by two former Norman mayors seeking to cancel the August special election on the proposed Norman entertainment district project plan.



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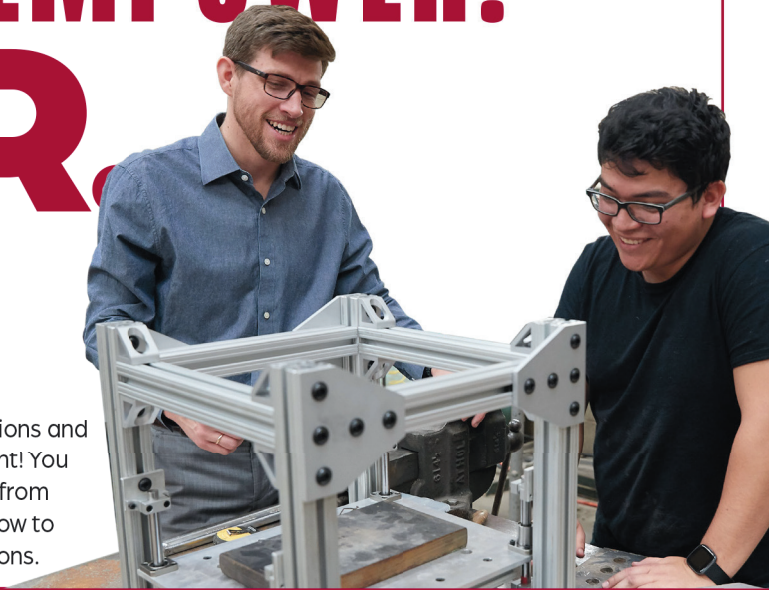
New Engineers Welcome

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the RED CUP Q&A

separating alcohol fact from fiction

Q Is there anything to do on the weekend besides drink?

A You can find plenty of sporting, cultural and artistic events to attend. This is a great way for new students to make like-minded friends.



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Routine Events

Art Walk: a free art event in the heart of downtown. Occurs every second Friday of the month at 6 P.M. on Main Street.

Norman Farm Market: hosts vendors selling locally sourced food and artisan goods. Every Saturday from 8 a.m. - 1 p.m. at The Well.

Restaurants

Victoria's: historic Norman pasta shop.

Tarahumara's: authentic recipes from Chihuahua, Mexico.

Neighborhood Jam: bustling brunch staple.

Tatsumaki Ramen: Japanese bistro with stunning atmosphere.

Kebabish Bites: Pakistani cuisine based on family recipes.

Cafes & Coffeeshops

Gray Owl Coffee: worker's co-op with artisan coffee and study space.

The Earth Cafe: hidden gem serving sustainable and plant-based food.

Second Wind: a volunteer-led cafe with poetry and music nights.

Games, Arts & Crafts

Firehouse Arts Center: art exhibits and classes for adults.

Fred Jones Art Museum: dazzling collections of fine art on campus.

Heyday: laser tag, arcades, bowling, mini-golf and more.

Parks & Rec

Get Air: trampoline park.

Stratus Climbing: rock-climbing gym.

Sutton Wilderness Park: 1.4-mile nature trail.

Lake Thunderbird: fishing, boating, picnics, swimming, hiking, biking and more.

Scissortail Park: concerts, festivals, trails and more.

Myriad Botanical Gardens: flower displays.

Student Orgs & Campus Events

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AUGUST 18

GRUPO FRONTERA

AUGUST 22

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HAARPER, SHAKEWELL & EKKSTACY

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ADEN CHOATE/OU DAILY

Norman City Council has considered a proposed University North Park entertainment district including an arena for OU sports throughout the summer.

GROWING PAINS IN NORMAN

Proposed developments include entertainment district and OU arena

BY ANA BARBOZA • @ABARBOZA@OU.EDU

In September, Norman and OU leaders proposed the University North Park arena and entertainment district project, a \$1 billion project that would bring new housing, retail and an arena.

Now, almost a year after its initial proposal, the Rock Creek Entertainment District Project Plan is left in the hands of the Norman City Council, which will consider whether to approve or reject a tax increment financing district, or TIF, to provide the necessary funding for the proposed project.

The earliest possible day the city council could make a decision was July 23. However, as the details of the project crawl through the city government, many say a delay is inevitable.

The Rock Creek Entertainment District Project Plan would divide the district into two TIFs. A TIF is used to support redevelopment, infrastructure and community-improvement projects to stimulate private investment within a certain area in need of economic revitalization.

The proposed entertainment district would host concerts and events as well as OU basketball games and women's gymnastic meets. It would also include a hotel, family and residential areas, retail spaces and offices.

It's 'in a holding pattern'

Since September, the project has been debated amongst community members and brought to city council's attention numerous times. Now, with two new councilmembers elected in the spring elections, doubts still persist.

Norman Mayor Larry Heikkila has been involved with the planning and review of the project, indicated by his presence

in the June 5 Coalition of Leaders and his position in the statutory review committee.

"(I'm) very confident in being able to get this not only passed but generally accepted," Heikkila said during the Coalition of Leaders. "There's always going to be naysayers. There's always going to be some kind of resistance to this amount of money because we're doing something that's new to Norman but not new in Oklahoma."

During the elections, the topic of the proposed entertainment district was prominent with candidates Ward 6 Councilmember Joshua Hinkle and Ward 8 Councilmember Scott Dixon stood in favor of the arena.

Ward 4 Councilmember Helen Grant wrote to OU Daily that she has been in contact with several Ward 4 residents, including former and current professors; small and property business owners; service and retail workers; and more who have said they want to pull the plug on the project.

"Their reasons may vary, for example, Downtown and Campus Corner property and business owners worry about cannibalization, lost revenues and rents, while retired professors and some of the other categories listed worry about impacts to the general fund and using this money on an arena and parking garage when there are other projects they would prioritize publicly funding over this one," Grant wrote.

As it is written, Grant believes the project is a bad deal for the city, and she will not support it.

"I do not feel confident about the information received thus far. I have kept pushing for affordable housing, workforce housing, home ownership opportunities, living wage jobs, a

transportation plan and more, and none of that has come to fruition. No where are any of those and other details written down, much less agreed upon," Grant wrote.

On June 12, in a meeting full of residents and city leaders, Norman's city council discussed and approved a non legally-binding special election, giving residents the opportunity to voice their opinions on the proposed district.

The request for an Aug. 27 special election, made by former Ward 2 and Ward 6 Councilmembers Lauren Schueler and Elizabeth Foreman alongside Ward 5 Councilmember Michael Nash, passed 6-3, with Heikkila, Ward 1 Councilmember Austin Ball and then Ward 8 Councilmember Matthew Peacock voting against it.

On July 10, OU Daily received documents confirming two former Norman mayors Dick Reynolds and Bill Nations filed a lawsuit against the special elections stating that the Norman City Charter requires all special elections be called by ordinances, yet the Norman City Council called the special election by resolution. The next day, a judge granted a temporary restraining order to the election.

On July 12, Ward 5 Councilmember Michael Nash wrote in a post on Facebook that it was unfortunate the election would be put on hold, but it would give residents more time to get the details so they can cast informed votes.

"Until (that) is resolved, the TIF will not progress to Council," Nash wrote in the post. "Depending on the extent of modifications that may be made, it may have to go backward in the process to go back before committees. Ultimately, the project is in a holding pattern until these negotiations are

complete.”

After a special city council meeting on July 16, Ward 7 Councilmember Stephen Tyler Holman wrote in a text message to OU Daily that he cannot comment on the pending legal matter, but city legal staff should have an update within the next couple days to share publicly. Holman also wrote he does not see an election happening any time soon on this issue as it stands currently.

“We still don’t know what the final proposal is or will be, so we really don’t know what the public would be voting on exactly as far as financing,” Holman wrote. “I still believe the only real way to decide this very contentious and controversial proposal is to let the voters decide once and for all. I will continue supporting any effort that makes that possible.”

During a July 16 TIF Development Oversight Committee meeting, City Finance Director Anthony Francisco said there were several sticking points he found that raised questions about the project.

His first point was that an obligation is needed to do a specific and defined project, for instance, knowing how much retail space is in a given area and who exactly is leading that project. Secondly, the project needs a specific assigned developer to whom the finances from the TIF go, and lastly, there needs to be a way to make sure what the developer promises to do within the TIF gets done.

Scott Martin, president and CEO of Norman Chamber of Commerce, said during a June 5 meeting between OU and city leaders that the city competes daily with other communities in the state and highlighted that the new jobs and housing opportunities would be significant for the city.

When asked how the city as a whole would be affected by business and community engagement being moved to the University North Park area, Martin told OU Daily that while some businesses may leave their current locations in Norman to be in the new district, he thinks others would fill their old spots.

Dan Schemm, Visit Norman executive director, said during the June 5 meeting that other communities are growing and that the project is an opportunity for the city to invest in itself. He also said the project would attract new visitors to the community.

“We’re the third largest city in the state, and it’s time we start acting like it,” Schemm said in the meeting.

The amount of money the city would fund and the possible negative impact has brought mixed opinions for many residents, with many calling for the city council to reject it.

However, many Norman and OU leaders have shown support towards the project, especially after OU joined the Southeastern Conference on July 1.

OU Athletics Director Joe Castiglione said in the Coalition of Leaders meeting that retailers, hoteliers, medical industries, restaurants and other businesses have reached out to be a part of the district.

“The new entertainment zone will do wonders for the City of Norman and Cleveland County,” Castiglione said in a statement that cited the plan for retail, housing and job growth. “This project will also bring in new events to Norman and will serve as a beacon of possibilities for our city and community.”

Counting costs

When first proposed, leaders announced 80% of the project would be funded by OU and private donors while 20%

would be funded by the city.

During the June 5 meeting, Castiglione said the university would put in \$25 million up front and \$75 million over a 25-year period. He also said the venue could start hosting OU teams in 2027 or 2028.

Danny Lovell, the CEO of Rainier Companies—a real estate firm and development partner on the project—said during the meeting the arena’s total cost would be \$330 million, with \$230 million proposed to come from public funding and \$100 million from OU. The estimated amount the city would pay for the broader entertainment district is \$600 million. However, Lovell said \$540 million is probably what would be needed from the city.

Following the meeting, Lovell told OU Daily that 80%, or \$800 million, of the total \$1 billion project is what the investment company is helping fund. However, Lovell said who those investors will be won’t be clear until after the project is potentially approved by the city council.

“Firms have a long history of putting these deals together, so we’re confident that we will find those investors, but we don’t have a project or a plan to go raise that capital,” Lovell said.

During the June 15 Planning Commission meeting, Cathy O’Connor, president of the Coalign Group, which was hired by the city to evaluate revenue, said the estimated project costs are:

- Multi-family unit: \$291 million
- Single-family units: \$68 million
- Offices spaces: \$172 million
- Retail: \$137.7 million
- Hotel: \$50 million
- Parking garage: \$27.5 million
- Weather museum: \$81 million
- Festival plaza: \$3.8 million
- Service parking: \$17 million
- Arena: \$230 million
- Total: \$1.1 billion

OU Economics Professor Cynthia Rogers, who has been vocal in many city council meetings on the subject, wrote to OU Daily that these were upfront costs and that the claims about the \$1 billion dollar project are very confusing and “somewhat deceptive.”

“It is inappropriate to mix upfront costs with potential future values based on 100% completion of the project. Counting COSTS of construction as a benefit is a bit of a magic trick as well,” Rogers wrote.

The proposed plan would create two TIF districts, one TIF would be for sales or use tax, expected to be activated on May 1, 2025. The other would be an ad valorem increment district activated on Dec. 31, 2026, to capture the property tax that would begin when the first-year properties in the project area are developed.

Francisco wrote in an email to OU Daily regarding understanding how TIF districts work:

“A common misunderstanding is that there is some sort of special tax that is levied or applied in TIF Districts; there isn’t. It is just that the taxes that are collected at the same rate as taxes are collected outside of the TIF District are deposited, or accounted for, in the TIF Fund instead of the ‘regular’ funds.”

In the final TIF review committee meeting on May 23,

former City Attorney Kathryn Walker said that under the financing plan, the developer is receiving what’s called an assistance in development financing, meaning that the city is not pledging any revenue in advance but rather pledging revenue as it comes in.

Neither the city nor the Norman Tax Increment Finance Authority intend to authorize or issue any public debt to finance any of the costs of the project.

Walker said the budget amount represents what is necessary to finance the \$230 million for the performance venue and infrastructure costs. Under the proposal, \$600 million is the maximum amount of the project cost, and Walker said it won’t exceed that amount.

The issue many residents have with the project is that the city would be financing most of the arena. During the Coalition of Leaders meeting on June 5, OU President Joseph Harroz Jr. said the arena would be used 76% of the time for non-OU events.

Rogers wrote that the OU Foundation, which currently owns the over 100 acres of land where the proposed district would be, or the OU athletics department should finance it instead of the city.

While some people claim that the arena would “pay for itself” as it would attract new activity, logic may suggest the contrary.

“Moving where OU plays some sports does not create new activity. Any ‘new’ things could already be held at Lloyd Noble (concerts, etc.) Why doesn’t OU use Lloyd Noble for concerts and family shows, etc.?” Rogers wrote. “The yet to be developed land in the proposed TIF district will develop naturally without a new arena.”

The proposed entertainment district could also create an easy way on and off the highway where I-35 and Rock Creek Road intersect, a new shuttle system from the main campus to the district and new housing and job opportunities, as announced during the May 23 statutory review committee.

Grant wrote the city council has hired consulting firm HVS to perform a study on both TIF districts and its impact on the city’s general fund. She wrote she wanted to wait for the firm’s findings to give an informed opinion about the project.

During the June 5 meeting, Harroz said he was very confident about the project and the positive impact it would have on both the university and the city.

“This has been taking place now for a year and a half, all together, not divided, but unified around a common goal, and that is improving the lives of the people of this city and by extension, the state as a whole,” said Harroz, who in an exclusive interview with the OU Daily in April threatened to work with other cities on such a project if Norman doesn’t approve it.

Rogers wrote that, in the best case, the project would not break the city budget, and the principal will get paid off quickly, lowering its total cost. However, in the worst case scenario, she wrote the project never gets completed, and the city would have to pay for a partially built asset.

Rogers wrote she hopes the public gets to decide whether the city should invest in the project.

“Do I think this will get approved? (I don’t know). I hope not for the sake of Norman’s future. We could build something unique and special instead of another arena with a bar/restaurant strip next to it,” Rogers wrote.



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OU REGENTS APPROVE TUITION, HOUSING INCREASE

OU's tuition rises, while OSU maintains flat rate

BY ANA BARBOZA & SHELBY EMERY •
ABARBOZA@OU.EDU & SHELBY.E.EMERY-1@OU.EDU

ARDMORE — The OU Board of Regents approved tuition and fee increases; changes to the student alcohol policy; and changes to room rates and arrangements at Cross Village during its meeting June 21.

The board approved a 3% increase in tuition and mandatory fees for both undergraduate and graduate students on the Norman campus and College of Law.

The annual flat rate tuition and mandatory fees for students carrying 12 or more credit hours is \$4,943.25 for an undergraduate state resident and \$13,733.25 for an out-of-state nonresident. Last year, the rates were \$4,797.45 for an undergraduate state resident and \$13,332.45 for an out-of-state nonresident.

For graduate students, the tuition charged by credit hour is \$382.25 for a resident and \$698 for an out-of-state nonresident. For law students, the total tuition charged by credit hour is \$583.50 for state residents and \$1,059 for out-of-state nonresidents, compared to last year's \$566.50 for state residents and \$1,028 for out-of-state nonresidents.

Over the past five years, tuition and fees have risen by 5.8% for undergraduate residents and 8.8% for out-of-state nonresidents.

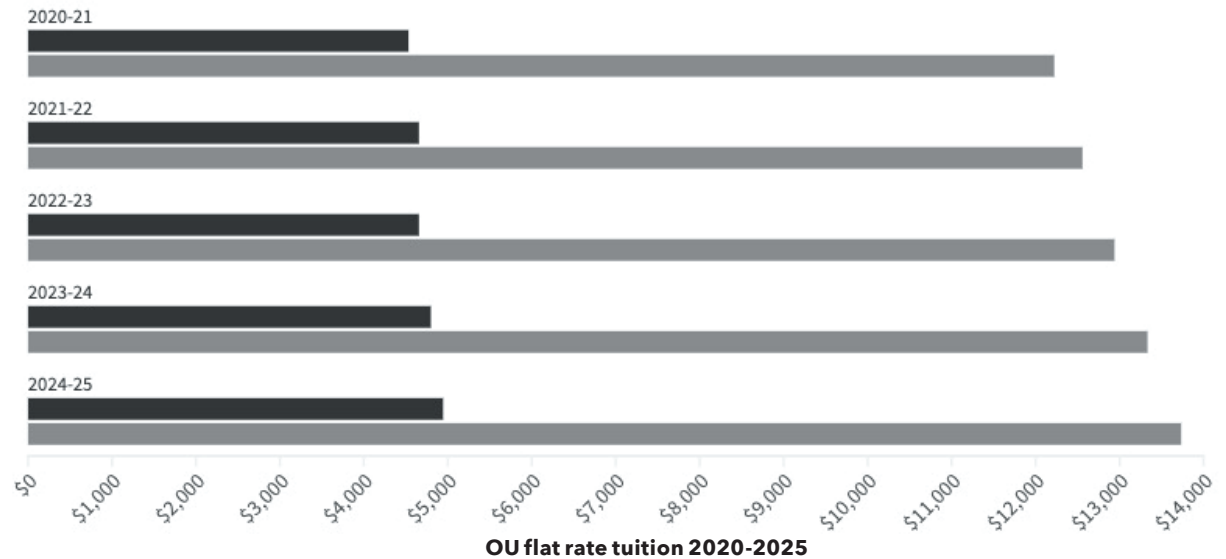
Tuition waivers, scholarships and grants have increased significantly to enhance affordability, lowering the actual costs for students. According to the meeting's agenda, resident freshmen have seen a 28% reduction in their net tuition and fees, saving them \$1,516 annually, while nonresident freshmen have benefited from a 4% reduction, saving \$627 annually.

OU President Joseph Harroz Jr. said the goal is to be a top tier research college, and while tuition is increasing, need-based aid has also grown. Through these efforts, OU is helping students with financial needs.

"We can not lose focus on the mandate to make sure that we are absolutely available to every Oklahoma resident that has the talent and ability to do so. ... That's a promise. That's our commitment," Harroz said.

Other items that would see an increase include housing rates by 3-6% and meal plan rates by 8%. The proposed 2025 fiscal year budget would total \$84 million in housing and

■ resident undergraduate ■ nonresident undergraduate



food service revenues, an \$8 million increase from last year's budget.

The increases come after the Oklahoma State University Board of Regents approved holding flat the costs of tuition and mandatory fees for the third consecutive year.

Harroz told OU Daily the university would receive \$160 million from the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education to fund two buildings at OU, an engineering laboratory and a web laboratory, which is used for analyzing and testing drugs, chemicals and other types of biological matter.

These labs will be located on the Norman campus and are meant for undergraduate students enrolled in biology, chemistry and similar lab sciences.

The board also approved a new Cross Village residence hall room type.

Due to the high demand to live in Cross Village, OU Housing will replace the full-size beds in some of the two-bed and one-bath rooms with two extra large twin beds in each room, creating a four-bed and one-bath room. Storage will also be added to each space.

Including the new room arrangement, Cross Village will have a total bed count of 1,429. The room costs \$4,400 for each semester.

The board approved revisions of the university's prevention of alcohol abuse and drug use policy.

According to the agenda, the Norman campus Student Alcohol Policy review committee began evaluating specific components of the policy with applicable offices to oversee the OU community and compare it to other SEC institutions.

Among the changes on the Policy and Procedure Manual is removing mention of the "Norman campus" to generalize all students and organizations, on and off-campus, who are enrolled and/or pre-enrolled for subsequent semesters at OU.

The revised policy cut details on the three strike policy implemented at OU as well as other alcohol-related sanctions. References to alcohol at fraternities, sororities and residence halls were also cut.

The board approved contracts for several new deans, including Anna Carpenter as dean of the College of Law, Andrea

Miller as dean of Gaylord College, and John Antonio as dean of Mewbourne College of Earth and Energy.

Carpenter received a \$400,000 contract for 12 months while Miller has a \$300,000 contract for 12 months. They were both set to start their respective positions on July 15.

Antonio will see an approximate \$15,000 increase in salary, totaling \$332,750 for 12 months after being promoted from interim to permanent dean of the college. He was set to start his position on July 1.

Dean of the Graduate College Randall Hewes saw an additional \$70,941 to his salary for serving as the interim dean of the Dodge Family College of Arts and Sciences. He was set to start his position on Aug. 1.

On June 14, OU announced Price College of Business Dean Corey Phelps would be stepping down from his position and that Laku Chidambaram would serve as interim dean of Price College beginning July 13.

Harroz told OU Daily that search committees for new deans have completed a faculty process and that the university will start setting search committees for these colleges in August, as faculty members come back from the summer break.

Regent Anita Holloway made a motion to amend the administrative and professional personnel item to reflect amendments presented to the members in the board's private session. This includes Harroz's and Senior Vice President and Provost André-Denis Wright's salaries.

According to the agenda, Wright will see a \$47,897 increase to his salary, totaling \$526,873 for 12 months.

While the agenda states Harroz's salary was up for consideration, Holloway said he was provided a bonus lump sum payment of \$150,000 in recognition of his achievements.

The board approved the renaming of the Honors College to remove the names of Joe C. and Carole Kerr McClendon from the title.

The name of the college will revert to OU Honors College.



RAY BAHNER, ADEN CHOATE/OU DAILY

Influential OU leaders David Surratt, Joseph Harroz Jr., André-Denis Wright and Quy Nguyen.

GET TO KNOW KEY CAMPUS LEADERS

Learn about 7 leaders who work behind the scenes for OU students

BY SHELBY EMERY • SHELBY.E.EMERY-1@OU.EDU



JOSEPH HARROZ JR.:
OU President

In 2020 Harroz was named OU's 15th president after serving 27 years in various leadership roles, including nine years as the College of Law dean. Throughout Harroz's tenure, he has overseen the creation and implementation of the Strategic Plan, which aims to position OU as a top-tier public research university, make college attainable and ensure student belonging and success. This summer Harroz led OU on its journey from the Big 12 to the Southeastern Conference.



DAVID SURRATT:
Vice President of Student Affairs and Dean of Students

Surratt took his position in 2019. His responsibilities as dean of students include heading several programs that focus on access to education, leadership abilities, advocacy and student well-being. Surratt has long been involved in diversity efforts and promoting civic engagement among the student body. He also helped draft part of the Strategic Plan, aiming to create a sense of belonging at OU by listening to student concerns.



ERIN SIMPSON:
Assistant Vice President of Student Affairs and Assistant Dean of Students

Simpson served as director of the Gender and Equality Center for about six years. Following the closure of the GEC in April 2024, Simpson became assistant vice president of Student Affairs. While at OU, Simpson has been actively involved with OU Advocates, a free and confidential support service for OU community members who experience sexual violence or harassment.



ANDRÉ-DENIS WRIGHT:
Senior Vice President and Provost

Wright became OU's first Black senior vice president and provost in 2021 after a national search. When he accepted the position, Wright told OU Daily he aims to be a source of inspiration, encouragement and unity to all members of the OU family, focusing on intentional support and development efforts. Wright manages academic initiatives at the Norman campus and oversees policies; faculty recruitment and development; institutional budgeting; and enrollment management.



QUY NGUYEN:
Director of Student Life and Assistant Dean of Students

Nguyen received both his bachelor's and master's degrees at OU, joining Student Life in 2008. Within Student Life, he has served as the adviser for the Campus Activities Council and OU Cousins, a program aimed at connecting international students to the community. Nguyen also oversees orientations, campus programs and multicultural organizations and services.



BELINDA HIGGS HYPPOLITE:
Vice President for Access and Opportunity

Higgs Hyppolite began her role as vice president for Access and Opportunity in May 2024. She was previously vice president of the Office for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. In her previous position, Higgs Hyppolite guided the launch of the OU TRIO Center, home to programs aimed at helping low-income, first-generation students secure a path through their education.



ANN SCHAFER:
Director of the Office of Advocacy and Education

Schafer served as a resident director where she co-supervised resident advisers and assisted with programs focused on self-identity, diversity and community service. She also served as Cate Center coordinator, assistant director of Housing, associate director of the Office of Outreach and Education and associate director of the Gender and Equality Center. Following the closure of the GEC in May 2024, Schafer took her position at the Office of Advocacy and Education.



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Gov. Kevin Stitt signed the executive order to review DEI in Oklahoma higher education.

REGHAN KYLE/OU DAILY

CHANGES IN RESOURCES

OU's response to Gov. Kevin Stitts executive order regarding diversity, equity and inclusion

BY TAYLOR JONES • TAYLOR.P.JONES-1@OU.EDU

OU has made several changes to student resources and programs in the wake of Gov. Kevin Stitt's executive order.

The impact of this recent state policy was distressing, according to Wesley Russell, vice president of the OU LGBTQ+ Student Association, yet many opportunities remain for students to connect in the new academic year.

For Russell and many other student groups and leaders on campus, the new year provides a new opportunity to welcome and form a community for new and returning students.

"I think my primary goal is, obviously, to keep supporting queer students on campus, but then also to hopefully leave, because I'm a rising senior, something behind for incoming students and students who will be there after I leave," Russell said.

The LGBTQ+ Student Association is a new student-led organization under Student Life that combines the former departmental student group under OU's Gender + Equality Center called the LGBTQ+ Program Advisory Board and

the LGBTQ+ Student Alliance, a student-led group for 2SLGBTQ+ students. The LGBTQ+ Student Alliance once collaborated with the GEC but was not a departmental student group.

Russell said the organization might further change its name to the "Queer Student Association," so it's easier for students to say.

In the past, Russell said the LGBTQ+ Student Alliance was not very active, so his goal is to make the new LGBTQ+ Student Association a resource for community and involvement that students can look forward to.

Now that they are completely student-led, Russell said the organization is taking on more responsibilities of planning programs, hosting events and supporting students on campus.

"We're wanting to kind of turn (programming) into more of (a) hangouts kind of thing. ... Kind of what a lot of other multicultural orgs do of having study nights and having dinner together, or like snacks. Stuff like that. Not necessarily

these huge scale programs, but more smaller ones so that people can make close connections and (find) support."

Russell's plan as part of the LGBTQ+ Student Association executive team is to facilitate some smaller events so that participating students can connect and find support.

On Dec. 13, Gov. Kevin Stitt signed an executive order calling for a formal review of diversity, equity and inclusion in Oklahoma higher education. The executive order required state agencies and universities to review the necessity and efficiency of DEI positions, departments, activities, procedures and programs. This resulted in many changes to programs at OU.

In December, Oklahoma State University President Kayse Shrum released a statement to OSU students, faculty and staff, reading:

"Yesterday, Oklahoma Gov. Kevin Stitt issued an executive order regarding diversity, equity and inclusion programs in state government and higher education," Shrum wrote. "While we will ensure we meet our legal obligations, an initial review indicates that no significant changes to our processes or practices are needed."

In February, OSU's Office of Institutional Diversity was reformed into the Division of Access and Community Impact. According to Jason Kirksey, vice president for the OSU Division of Access and Community Impact, the name change was not related to Gov. Stitt's decision and was instead the result of expanding services to a broader group of students, faculty and staff.

To comply with the order's May 31 deadline, OU changed the name and function of its Division of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion office to the Division of Access and Opportunity, closed the Gender + Equality Center, created the new Office of Advocacy and Education and made several leadership changes within the Division of Student Affairs.

Because of the recent restructuring of the Student Life department, Russell said at the end of June it was unclear who would advise his organization or if multiple advisers could help his organization reach its goals.

Quan Phan, the current faculty and staff adviser for the LGBTQ+ Program Advisory Board and LGBTQ+ Student Alliance, wrote in an email to OU Daily that when Registered Student Organization registration occurs in fall, the LGBTQ+ Program Advisory Board and LGBTQ+ Student Alliance will merge and become the Queer Student Association. Phan will continue his advising role for the group while also supporting other registered student organizations through Student Life Community Engagement.

Quy Nguyen, director of Student Life, wrote in an email to OU Daily that any Student Life staff members can help student organizations and associations meet their goals because of Student Life's community advising model. However, Nguyen wrote it was important to note that Student Life advisers are not intended to replace registered student organization advisers but to offer additional support.

Advisers in Student Life may also have stronger skill sets that may aid them in advising certain aspects of a student organization, such as programming, budgeting and marketing, Nguyen wrote.

With the change to being under Student Life, Russell said he is excited about the opportunities the association now has for collaboration with other Student Life groups.

There are a multitude of student-led groups under Student Life, including fraternities and sororities; religious groups; and multicultural groups, such as the American Indian Student Association, the Asian American Student Association, the Black Student Association and the Hispanic American Student Association.

"We've talked about that possibility (of collaboration) a lot, and it's just a matter of figuring out who would want to collaborate with us, what kind of things we would want to do (and) where the overlap is of interest," Russell said.

Nguyen wrote his department is preparing for student's return or arrival to campus with Camp Crimson and other events at the beginning of the school year as students look to connect.

"We have been working closely with Camp Crimson to host multiple events to showcase all the ways students can get involved and to find community and to enhance their orientation and familiarity with OU," Nguyen wrote. "We are working with the Campus Activities Council's Howdy Week to provide engagement opportunities with various groups and offices at OU."

Nguyen wrote Student Life supports registered student organizations at OU by answering questions about how to make their groups successful at OU, such as publicizing events, reserving campus spaces, learning how to lead meetings and how to navigate campus policies.

"We work with any student group that would like support and guidance and work with their campus advisers to help them feel confident about their organization and knowing that they have the tools to be successful at OU," Nguyen wrote.

Student Life also partners with offices across campus, especially those within the Division of Student Affairs.

"When you walk into Student Life, we want it to feel like a place where anyone can come and to find opportunities to connect and to grow themselves," Nguyen wrote. "We hope that when students and community members come into the space, (they) can feel it as soon as they step into our office and that they know that no matter where they come, this is a place that they can be part of."

Director of the Office of Advocacy and Education Ann Schafer wrote to OU Daily that the new office will focus on sexual violence prevention and response; alcohol and other drug education; Food Pantry operations and services; and general wellness education.

"As we are building this office, my hope in the next year is to bring even more awareness to both OU Advocates and the OU Food Pantry as vital services to OU," Schafer wrote.

OU Advocates is a 24/7, free and confidential helpline for anyone in the OU community who experiences sexual assault, dating/domestic violence, stalking and/or sexual harassment.

"When you walk into Student Life, we want it to feel like a place where anyone can come and to find opportunities to connect and to grow themselves."

QUYN NGUYEN,
DIRECTOR OF STUDENT LIFE

For OU Advocates and the Food Pantry, Schafer wrote the office wants to provide as much awareness through outreach events so students, faculty and staff know how to



Drag Queen Patty Bourey during Crimson and Queens.

JENNA BURRESS/OU DAILY

access and partner with these resources.

Formerly the GEC associate director of outreach and education, Schafer wrote her former role mainly focused on educational sessions and facilitating training and workshops.

In her new role, she wrote she oversees the Education & Outreach coordinators responsible for the Peer Educator staff, as well as the creation and development of content. As director of the new office, she now oversees additional staff and services as well, including OU Advocates and the OU Food Pantry.

"This role, along with the amazing staff of the Office of Advocacy & Education, allows me to oversee more of the big picture ideas of the office and help direct the team to continue to provide the best to our students," Schafer wrote.

The Office of Advocacy and Education also provides engaging education for students, specifically gender-based violence prevention training through The Consent Conversation and Alcohol & Other Drug education, which are both facilitated during Camp Crimson.

According to Schafer, The Consent Conversation is a mandatory workshop for all incoming first-year students to ensure students understand the importance of consensual interactions.

Alcohol and Other Drugs is part of the OU's Comprehensive Alcohol & Other Drug Program, which includes mandatory education based on the current Student Alcohol Policy for all incoming first-year students on safe practices, harm reduction strategies and dangers associated with alcohol and drug abuse.

Schafer said the office also plans to offer education on healthy relationships, healthy habits and general wellness.

"You will see the Office of Advocacy & Education promote consent through social media and poster campaigns, talk about the support of survivors through events like Take Back the Night, and many different drives and donation opportunities through the Food Pantry," Schafer wrote. "We hope that students find some way to get involved in our events and outreach."

The upcoming year is a new opportunity to provide events and educational sessions to the campus community, Schafer wrote. The main focus remains supporting, developing and empowering the OU community through awareness, learning, care and connection.

While uncertainty about programs may still exist for students following Oklahoma's policy changes, Russell feels with the new year comes new opportunities for students to connect and make a difference at OU.

"This past spring, when everything was happening, there was just a lot of unknown. There was a lot of stress and nervousness," Russell said. "I hope that summer has given students time to process the changes, but also to let the excitement come back with like, 'OK, so what are the changes going to look like? What are the upsides of these changes?'"

"I'm really hopeful to try and help that kind of blossom of the excitement, the resilience in the queer community, because I know that the queer community is so resilient. I just want to see that continue to grow and flourish."

SGA PRESIDENT WELCOMES NEW STUDENTS

How to make the most of campus-life, all that OU has to offer



Caden Glasscock

SGA President
sgapres@ou.edu

Sooner Nation,
Welcome to the University of Oklahoma! OU has so much in store for all students this academic year, and we are extremely excited to start it with you. You are arriving at a unique time for the university. Sports teams have moved to the Southeastern Conference while the Weitzenhoffer College of Fine Arts is celebrating 100 years of accomplishments. More student housing is currently under construction,

and the Max Westheimer Airport just received more funding and a new fleet to expand opportunities for aviation students. That's only the beginning of what's happening on campus. The most important thing is the arrival of you and the rest of the Class of 2028.

Like many of you, I was anxious about leaving the comfort and familiarity of my life at home. I was unsure of what to expect when I moved into Walker Center. There were not a lot of people I knew during this time, and that made me feel unsure of what the next four years would look like. Now, as I enter my fourth and final year as an undergrad, I can confidently say that choosing to attend OU was the best decision for me. I was meant to study and grow here, and so are you.

There is one piece of advice I wish I could have told myself back in August 2021. If caught earlier, it might have made my journey even more enjoyable. It might make yours better than you are imagining. I would tell my high school self to embrace discomfort.

This campus holds an unimaginable amount of opportunities, new faces and experiences. I encourage you to exit your comfort zone by joining organizations, meeting people of diverse backgrounds and approaching life in different ways. As the flagship university of the state, OU is the proud alma mater of many Okies, but with students from across the country and globe, the University of

Oklahoma is a place for everyone to thrive.

Four years sounds like a lifetime at first. I'm sure it felt like that for some of you in high school. I was wrong in applying this same logic to OU. While you're making new friends, going for late-night drives, studying for midterms, eating at the Caf and walking along the South Oval, take a minute every once in a while to look around at the campus and the people that have—for just a minute—surrounded the formative years of your lives.

We recognize you chose OU for a reason. That is why the Student Government Association is here to support you, every step of the way. With us, you will always have a friend and advocate on your side. Please reach out to me anytime so OU SGA can help ensure you find your way on campus. I hope you all have a great year, and try not to skip class.

Boomer Sooner!

Caden Glasscock, SGA President

KNOW YOUR STUDENT GOVERNMENT

The Student Government Association serves and advocates for the student body. Additionally, it is responsible for allocating over \$600,000 of the student activity fee each year to registered student organizations.

Executive Branch: This is SGA's version of the White House.

Executive cabinet:

- President – Caden Glasscock
- Vice president – Cyrus Mortazavi
- Chief of staff – Ellie Wolthuis
- Various other cabinet officials

Undergraduate Student Congress: This is SGA's version of the House of the legislative branch.

Committees:

- Congressional administration
- External affairs
- Human diversity
- Campus outreach safety and concerns
- Sustainability
- University policy
- Ways and means

Offices: 1st floor of Student Leadership Center in the Conoco Wing of Oklahoma Memorial Union.

Meetings: 7 p.m. Tuesdays in Dale Hall 103.

Online: ou.edu/sga/undergraduate-student-congress

Graduate Student Senate: This is SGA's version of the Senate of the legislative branch.

Committees:

- Academic affairs
- Development and philanthropy
- External affairs
- Internal affairs
- International student affairs
- Public relations
- Sustainability
- Ways and means

Offices: 1st floor of Student Leadership Center in the Conoco Wing of Oklahoma Memorial Union.

Meetings: 7 p.m. Thursdays on Zoom.

Online: ou.edu/sga/graduate-student-senate

General counsel: This office serves students in ways such as representing those charged with academic misconduct or student code violations, as well as students who wish to appeal a grade; reviewing registered student organizations policy agreements and ensuring the SGA constitution and enactments of the legislative branch are followed.

Online: ou.edu/sga/general-counsel

Superior Court: This is SGA's version of the Supreme Court. It handles all cases arising under the SGA constitution and acts of the legislative branch.

Online: ou.edu/sga/superior-court

Campus Activities Council: This is the programming branch of SGA. It is responsible for programming inclusive, campus-wide events that serve all students, build

community and develop leaders.

Standing CAC events:

- Howdy Week
- College Bowl
- Concert Series
- Film Series
- Speakers Bureau
- Fall Family Weekend
- Homecoming Reunion Week
- University Sing
- High School Leadership Conference
- OU Dance Marathon
- Scandals
- Spring Family Weekend

Online: ou.edu/sga/cac

Elections: Many SGA positions are elected regularly by a vote of the student body.

Fall elections:

- SGA president and vice president, as voted on by all students on the Norman campus.
- Undergraduate Student Congress representatives, as voted on by students within specific academic districts.

Spring elections:

- Campus Activities Council chair, as voted on by all students on the Norman campus.
- Undergraduate Student Congress representatives, as voted on by students within specific academic districts.
- Student Bar Association president, as voted on by law students.

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