

**KANSAS BOARD OF REGENTS
ACADEMIC AFFAIRS STANDING COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
January 27, 2026**

Regent Alysia Johnston called the January 27, 2026, Board Academic Affairs Standing Committee meeting to order at 10:30 a.m. The meeting was held via Zoom.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Regent Alysia Johnston, Chair
 Regent Pamela Ammar
 Regent Diana Mendoza

Approval of Minutes

Regent Ammar moved to approve the minutes from the January 14, 2026, meeting. Regent Mendoza seconded the motion, and it carried unanimously.

Consent

Request to Approve BS in Financial Forensics and Fraud Investigation

Dr. Jill Arensdorf, Provost at Fort Hays State University, shared that this proposal passed unanimously through COCAO and COPS. It is an interdisciplinary program between the Accounting program, housed in the Department of Economics, Finance, and Accounting within the Robbins College of Business and Entrepreneurship and the Criminal Justice program, housed in the School of Criminal Justice, Leadership, and Sociology within the College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences. She introduced Jessica Heronemus-Claiborn, professor of accounting at FHSU, who highlighted a high level of student interest in the program.

Regent Ammar asked if the program will strengthen the existing departments. Provost Arensdorf responded that it will strengthen the home departments through the interdisciplinary work and shared courses between the students of these departments.

Dr. David Macey, Dean of the College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences, emphasized the collaboration and networking opportunities this program will offer, particularly for students who wish to remain in rural Western Kansas.

Regent Ammar asked if there was a demonstrated need for this program in smaller rural communities. Dr. Macey responded that law enforcement partners in Northern and Western Kansas have expressed a need for this program.

Regent Ammar asked if collaboration between the other universities which offer similar coursework had been discussed in the SCOCAO/COCAO meetings. Provost Arensdorf responded that there was no discussion on the topic of collaboration in the meetings, but FHSU is open to working with their colleagues across the state. Barbara Bichelmeyer, Provost at the University of Kansas, noted that KU offers graduate coursework in this subject area and that the faculty is appreciative of FHSU working to offer this undergraduate program.

Discussion

Act on Apply Free Days AY 2027

At the November BAASC meeting, the Committee was provided with a detailed report and data on the Kansas Free Application Days initiative, including program background, KHEDS AY Collection data which included the percent of multiple applications submitted by applicants, application and enrollment outcomes, estimated dollars saved by students and families, and research on student and counselor perspectives. At that time, CAOs were encouraged to provide feedback through Academic Affairs staff or Apply Free Days Committee representatives prior to advancing future proposed campaign dates. Mistie Knox, Consultant for Academic Affairs, provided an abbreviated report to this previous presentation along with updated information on existing need-based application fee waivers and additional fee waiver opportunities offered by our universities. Her report concluded with a recommendation that October 5–9, 2026, be designated as Kansas Apply Free Days for Academic Year 2027, with updated data to be shared with BAASC in November 2026. At that time, BAASC will make a recommendation to the Board regarding whether Kansas Apply Free Days should transition from a pilot initiative to an annual, Board-approved initiative.

Regent Ammar asked for clarification on the definition of first-year applicants and whether that includes students transferring from another institution. Barbara Bichelmeyer, Provost at the University of Kansas, responded that application fees are automatically waived for transfer students.

Regent Mendoza moved to place this proposal to the Board Discussion agenda. Regent Ammar seconded the motion, and it carried unanimously.

Request to Approve Proposed Amendments to Spoken English Language Policy

Director for Academic Affairs Sam Christy-Dangermond shared that the scoring range for the TOEFL iBT exam was changed from 1-30 to 1-6. KU's Associate Vice President for International Affairs Dr. Roberta Pokphanh, and Applied English Center Director Pam Pearson, researched the new exam and recommend a new score of 4.5, which was found to be roughly equivalent to a score of 23 on the old exam. The amendments to the policy will prevent students who took the exam prior to January 21 from having to take the new version of the exam. The Council of Chief Academic Officers approved these amendments at the January 14 meeting. Board staff concurs with COCAO and recommends approval of these amendments.

Regent Mendoza asked for clarification on the language remediation conditions mentioned in the policy. Dr. Pokphanh responded that graduate teaching assistants who do not meet the qualifications may take courses through the Applied English Center until they are able to pass an institutional speak test.

Regent Ammar moved to approve the proposed amendments to the spoken English language policy. Regent Mendoza seconded the motion, and it carried unanimously.

Other Matters

Reduced-Credit Baccalaureate Degree Update

Vice President for Academic Affairs Rusty Monhollon shared that the working group has made progress on the policy framework. Vice President Monhollon has taken the recommendations from the working group and is making revisions. Dr. Jennifer Bonds-Raacke will continue this work when she assumes the role of Vice President for Academic Affairs.

Academic Affairs Updates

Dr. Jennifer Bonds-Raacke thanked Vice President Monhollon on behalf of KBOR staff and the Chief Academic Officers for his service to higher education in recognition of his retirement. Committee members echoed these remarks on behalf of the Regents.

Adjournment

Regent Johnston adjourned the meeting at 11:27 a.m.