

KANSAS BOARD OF REGENTS
Council of Chief Academic Officers
MINUTES
September 17, 2025

The September 17, 2025, meeting of the Council of Chief Academic Officers was called to order by Chair Brent Thomas at 9:22 a.m. The meeting was held in the Curtis State Office Building, 1000 S.W. Jackson, Suite 530, Topeka. *Proper notice was given according to law.*

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Jesse Mendez, KSU	Barbara Bichelmeyer, KU	John Fritch, Washburn
Brent Thomas, ESU	Robert Klein, KUMC	Monica Lounsbery, WSU
Jill Arensdorf, FHSU	Susan Bon, PSU	Rusty Monhollon, KBOR (<i>ex officio</i>)

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Susan Bon moved that the minutes of the June 11, 2025, meeting be approved. Following the second of Jill Arensdorf, the motion carried.

Council of Faculty Senate Presidents Update

Dr. Rochelle Rowley, Emporia State University faculty senate president and Council of Faculty Senate Presidents (CoFSP) Chair, shared that the Council has provided feedback to Dr. Monhollon on the workload policy. Dr. Norman Philipp, previous CoFSP Chair, is analyzing data regarding the faculty tuition proposal to be presented in November. The Council will be meeting with key individuals from International Baccalaureate (IB) to begin evaluation of the program.

First Readings

BS in Cybersecurity

Dr. Will Phillips, Assistant Professor for Business Administration at ESU, noted the high demand for trained professionals in the field of Cybersecurity, highlighting that there are currently 5,000 unfilled positions in the state, with a projected growth of 32% from now until 2032. ESU's curriculum aligns with CompTIA and other industry-level certifications, including hands-on labs. ESU currently offers cybersecurity concentrations at the graduate and undergraduate levels and is confident that they have created an environment for this program to thrive.

Tommy Gober, Program Director for Cybersecurity at ESU, added that this program is built around industry needs set forth at the local, state, and federal levels. Graduates will earn industry certifications which are on a constant renewal cycle, ensuring that the content in the program is not stagnant. Leticia Rust, Senior Director-CyROC, e-Ventures, and Internships at ESU added that the research and outreach portion of the program will provide advanced and updated certifications to already trained professionals. Industry partners will provide feedback on curriculum, business tours, internships, and hands-on education.

Barbara Bichelmeyer, KU, Monica Lounsbery, WSU, and Jesse Mendez, KSU, expressed interest in connecting with ESU regarding this program to discuss partnership opportunities.

BA in Religious Education & Community Engagement

Jill Arensdorf noted that the proposal was created with the intent to meet student demand, regional partner needs, and that this area was noted as an area of growth in the 2023 RPK report.

Dr. Rob Byer, Assistant Professor for Philosophy at FHSU, added that the RPK report demonstrated a need for a program focused on religion and religious traditions apart from a traditional religious studies degree. This program will focus on grant writing, marketing, and the structure of non-profits. FHSU has obtained letters of support from local pastors and other departments.

BA/BGS in Intelligence & National Security Studies

Barbara Bichelmeyer shared that a minor in Intelligence & National Security Studies began in the year 2020. KU is seeking to expand the program to provide a skilled workforce for intelligence agencies and to build on research capabilities. She introduced Dr. Mike Wuthrich, Associate Professor for Political Science at KU. Dr. Wuthrich added that the minor program has 132 active students enrolled. A grant received from the Department of Defense (now the Department of War) allows for internships at national and state intelligence agencies. Courses in this program are already being taught at KU, making this a low-cost addition to the department.

Monica Lounsbery expressed interest in partnering to strengthen programs at both KU and WSU.

BS in Diversified Agriculture

Jesse Mendez introduced Dr. Jonathan Ulmer, Interim Associate Dean of Academic Affairs for the College of Agriculture at KSU. Dr. Ulmer noted that students have expressed need for a non-specialized agriculture program. This program includes courses in business management, project management, and occupational safety, with an increase in online course options.

Jill Arensdorf shared that a letter was sent to Jesse Mendez on behalf of FHSU with questions and concerns regarding the naming of the program.

BAS in Uncrewed Aircraft Systems (Reduced-Credit Baccalaureate degree)

Jesse Mendez introduced Dr. Alysia Starkey, Dean for the KSU Salina campus. Dr. Starkey shared that this proposal was a result of discussions with industry partners. KSU has discussed learning outcomes with industry partners while ensuring the degree preserves the general education requirements of a bachelor's degree. This degree will also need to be approved by HLC, as well as KBOR. This degree includes 34 hours of general education, 50 hours of UAS fundamentals, and technical certificates in areas such as commercial pilot, data analytics, technology, commercialization, and agriculture. She added that KSU has been working with Cloud County Community College and WSU Tech regarding reverse transferability and the possibility of joint teaching. KSU Salina has the statutory authority to offer both associate and bachelor's degrees and therefore feels that they are the appropriate institution to offer this reduced-credit BAS degree.

Monica Lounsbery noted that WSU is collaborating with WSU Tech to strengthen pipeline enrollment with their two-year program and expressed the need to discuss ways to support this new program. Dr. Starkey responded that industry partners have provided positive feedback that each program focuses on developing technology in different areas, reducing competition between institutions.

Other Matters

Request to merge the Institute of Interdisciplinary Studies into the School of Library & Information Management and Library Archives

Brent Thomas shared that the merger will comply with recent laws and budget provisos, improve efficiencies, and create opportunity to create new curriculum and concentrations. Jill Arensdorf moved to approve this request. Following the second of Monica Lounsbery, the motion carried.

Susan Bon moved to approve the following items (B through E) in bulk:

- Request to change name of Department of Grain Science & Industry to Department of Grain and Food Science
- Request to change name of BS in Agricultural Technology Management to BS in Engineering Technology Management
- Request to change name of BS in Hospitality Management to BS in Event & Hospitality Management
- Request to change name of MS in Nutrition, Dietetics, & Sensory Sciences to MS in Food, Nutrition, & Health

Following the second of Monica Lounsbery, there was a discussion regarding the reasoning for the name change from Agriculture to Engineering Technology Management. Barbara Bichelmeyer expressed the need to ensure the new program was under the correct CIP code. Dr. Bichelmeyer asked if there were any changes in the curriculum with the addition of the word “event” to the new name, BA in Event & Hospitality Management. Jesse Mendez responded that the addition does reflect minor updates to curriculum.

Monica Lounsbery moved again to approve the bulleted items above. Following the second of Barbara Bichelmeyer, the motion carried unanimously.

Creating a Center for Business and Talent Development (Informational Item – No Approval Required)

Susan Bon shared that the PSU College of Business is moving downtown and this center will allow faculty and students to have the opportunity to engage with downtown and area businesses.

Discuss Opportunities (new degree programs, partnerships, strategic initiatives, etc.) that Universities are considering or planning to pursue in the future

Susan Bon shared that PSU is working on a para to teacher program to address the teacher shortage. Jesse Mendez shared that KSU is working on a number of additional reduced-credit Baccalaureate degrees. Jill Arensdorf shared that FHSU is working on a proposal for a BS in Financial Forensics and Fraud Investigation, to be presented later this fall.

Announcements

Next COCAO Meeting – November 19, 2025 (Virtual)

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned by Chair Brent Thomas at 9:22 a.m.