

On Monday, December 22, 2025, the University of Oklahoma released a statement indicating that they had concluded their investigation into accusations of religious discrimination made by Samantha Fulnecky against a graduate student instructor. This statement indicates that the University has decided to take the side of Ms. Fulnecky and that “the graduate teaching assistant will no longer have instructional duties at the University.”¹ This decision comes after the conclusion of the semester when most faculty and students are not on campus or paying attention to discrete University statements on social media. It also comes after weeks of the University ignoring the Graduate Student Senate’s calls for greater transparency, an official apology, a statement of how they plan to address online bullying and harassment against the graduate instructor and the rest of the campus community, and new guidelines for how graduate students and faculty members should approach discussions and assignments dealing with sensitive subjects.² ***These actions are reprehensible and irreparably damage both the academic integrity and the reputation of the University. We disagree strongly with this decision and insist the graduate instructor be reinstated to their teaching position.***

In his commencement speech just a few days ago, President Harrooz stated, “I think part of being great is also being able to look in the mirror and be honest about where we stand. You are not just a product of this university; you are its promise. Your greatness is not just important for your self-satisfaction. Because there are so few who ever earn these degrees, your greatness is important for society, and you are a huge part of that.”³ While we still firmly believe that most of OU’s students live up to this greatness, the University administration’s actions, including those by President Harrooz, do not do the same. This decision indicates that the administration has not sufficiently reflected on the harm that these actions will cause the graduate student, the general student body, and the University’s faculty. If we, the students, are the University’s promise, then the University owes us integrity, excellence, self-reflection, and the courage to stand up for its instructors. The administration’s actions have depreciated all of OU’s degrees, directly harming OU’s student body.

We call on President Harrooz and all University administration officials involved in this decision to reinstate the graduate instructor. We also call on the Faculty Senate and University donors to stand with OU’s graduate students in demanding this action. Donors are invited to withhold their donations until such a time that the graduate student is reinstated. We call on the Oklahoma chapter of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) to follow up on

¹ University of Oklahoma (@UofOklahoma). “A statement from the University of Oklahoma.” X, December 22, 2025, 3:02 p.m. <https://x.com/uofoklahoma/status/2003209457195741653?s=42>.

² OU Student Government Association. Graduate Student Senate. *Call to Action Regarding the University’s Responsibilities to Students in Investigations*. Senate Resolution GF25-21. Senate Session GF25, introduced in Senate December 4, 2025. <https://www.ou.edu/content/dam/sga/common/GSS/minutes/2025/9-4-25-GSS-Minutes.pdf>.

³ Joseph Harrooz Jr., Commencement Speech for the Fall 2025 Semester at the University of Oklahoma (Commencement 1). Speech, Norman, OK, December 20, 2025.

their petition^{4,5} to the University and to join us in our demand. We call on all other parties interested in protecting academic freedom at the University of Oklahoma to add their voices to our calls for change. If the administration is unwilling to take a stand to defend their instructors and the University's academic integrity, then they are unfit to lead the University.

As representatives of the Graduate Student Senate at OU, we will be proposing a more formal resolution making these calls when our Spring 2026 session begins. In the meantime, the support of the OU campus community and of everyone who values academic freedom is greatly appreciated.

Summer Edwards

Chair | OU Student Government Association Graduate Student Senate

Dana Mahmoud Elhaj

Vice Chair | Student Government Association Graduate Student Senate

Libby Ryan

Secretary | Student Government Association Graduate Student Senate

Sam Jensen

Ways and Means Chair | Student Government Association Graduate Student Senate

⁴ Whitford, Emma. "Faculty Want Answers on Oklahoma's Suspension Policies." *Inside Higher Ed*, December 18, 2025. <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/faculty-issues/shared-governance/2025/12/18/faculty-want-answers-oklahomas-suspension-policies>.

⁵ University of Oklahoma AAUP. "Defend OU Instructors and Academic Freedom." Electronic petition, <https://actionnetwork.org/forms/defend-ou-instructors>, accessed December 22, 2025.