



The UNIVERSITY of OKLAHOMA.
Office of the Senior Vice President and Provost

June 24, 2026

Dear Colleagues,

After more than a decade of distinguished service to the University of Oklahoma as Associate Provost for Academic Advising, Dr. Kathleen Shea Smith has announced her retirement, effective July 6, 2026. While we will miss her, we are excited for her to begin this next chapter.

Under her leadership, the university strengthened its commitment to student-centered advising practices that support the holistic needs of students while also investing in the growth and development of advising professionals. Dr. Shea Smith expanded the team of advisors, enhanced training and professional development, and created new pathways for leadership and career advancement within the advising profession.

Over a career spanning more than three decades in higher education, Dr. Shea Smith has also been a passionate advocate for student success and a national leader in advancing coaching-inspired approaches to academic advising. Her work helped position OU as a leader in Academic Life Coaching and student-centered advising practices, influencing institutions and professionals across the country.

Dr. Shea Smith plans to continue developing higher education professionals through coaching, consulting, and professional development. She will complete her term as President of the Coaching in Higher Education Consortium and looks forward to spending more time with family on the East Coast.

As we begin our search for Dr. Shea Smith's successor, Dr. Johnnie-Margaret McConnell will step in as Interim Associate Provost for Academic Advising on July 7, 2026. Dr. McConnell began her career at OU in 2000 and has served in a variety of advising and student success leadership roles, including academic advisor in the Dodge Family College of Arts and Sciences, Director of Advising in University College, and Assistant Dean of Students in the College of Professional and Continuing Studies. She currently works on behalf of the Provost's Office as Director of Transfer Student Success, leading efforts to strengthen transfer pathways, reduce credit loss, and improve degree completion for transfer students across Oklahoma.

Beyond her work at OU, Dr. McConnell has contributed to the advancement of academic advising through state, regional, and national leadership. She serves as President of the Oklahoma Academic Advising Association and is an active member of the National Academic Advising Association. Throughout her career, Dr. McConnell has viewed academic advising as a teaching and learning partnership that empowers students to make informed decisions, connect their

educational experiences to their personal and professional goals, and develop confidence in navigating their college journeys inside and outside the classroom.

Please join me in congratulating Dr. Shea Smith on her retirement and welcoming Dr. McConnell into this key interim role.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "André-Denis G. Wright". The signature is stylized with a large initial "A" and "D" and a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

André-Denis G. Wright
Senior Vice President and Provost, Norman Campus