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October 7, 2025

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VIA EMAIL

Re: University of Central Oklahoma First Amendment Violations, The Vista Newspaper

Dear President Lamb, Mr. Parrish, Dean Maier, Professor Breslin, and Professor Williams,

I am a Tulsa-based attorney with The Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press (“Reporters Committee”). I represent Ella Spurlock, Andrew Frazier, Kyler Lanning, Charlie Shackelford, Jessey Kollie and Jake Ramsey, current and former students at the University of Central Oklahoma (“UCO” or “the University”). Each of my clients is a prospective, current, or former editor or reporter for The Vista, the oldest continually published student newspaper in Oklahoma.¹ I write in response to a series of actions the University has taken to hinder The Vista’s editorial independence and cut off the paper’s channels of distribution, including ending all print publication of The Vista for the first time in 122 years. These actions have been taken in clear retaliation for The Vista engaging in the type of rigorous news coverage of university affairs that should be expected of any student newspaper. Compounding matters further, as Vista staffers have tried to speak out against the University’s actions, they have been subjected to further retaliation. This letter sets forth my clients’ concerns regarding the University’s egregiously anti-free speech conduct. My clients demand that the University restore The Vista’s longstanding editorial independence; allow printing and distribution of The Vista in paper form to resume; and cease all retaliation against The Vista and any students or faculty for exercising their First Amendment rights.

¹ <https://ucentralmedia.com/vista/>

Background

Conflicts between the University and The Vista began soon after Mr. Lamb assumed the presidency of the University in July 2023. After first being interviewed by The Vista,² Mr. Lamb's office told the student journalists that, going forward, all questions would need to be provided to the office in advance. Thereafter, University leaders, including Mr. Lamb, repeatedly expressed dissatisfaction with the nature of The Vista's coverage of the University, including, for example, The Vista's coverage of efforts to install Narcan vending machines on campus,³ the University's handling of a student dying by suicide in late 2024,⁴ and the UCO Student Association's failed vote of confidence in Mr. Lamb immediately prior to his official inauguration in April 2024.⁵

In August 2024, Mr. Lamb complained to Mr. Ramsey that the newspaper spends too much time reporting on 'broken eggs' – that is, negative stories – when there is a 'perfectly good omelette.' That statement is consistent with the view Mr. Lamb previously expressed to Mr. Ramsey in an interview that The Vista's primary purpose should be to serve as a promotional arm for the University.

In May 2025, the Student Media Advisory Board ("Board") – which is comprised of UCO faculty and staff who advise student news outlets, including The Vista and UCentral TV – voted to approve a budget for the upcoming academic year, which included funding for the printing and distribution of print copies of The Vista, as had been done for decades. Notwithstanding that vote, administrators informed the Board that the University would no longer provide funding to publish The Vista as a print publication and would instead publish exclusively online as a digital publication hosted on UCO's servers. In July 2025, Dean Elizabeth Maier wrote to Board Chair Joe Hight stating, "printing the paper in its current form will not be permitted," even with the use of privately donated funds. In addition to cutting The Vista off from a key channel of distribution, it limits the newspaper to publication on a platform that is ultimately under the exclusive control of the University.

UCO has disingenuously tried to justify this decision by citing "budgetary" concerns. But this rationale is definitively negated by the facts. Of greatest significance, as noted above, the University refused to allow The Vista to accept offers of private donations to support print distribution without needing to rely on any funding from the

² "Getting a degree, getting a job: Lamb talks UCO hireability," Sam Royka, Editor in Chief, The Vista, September 12, 2024.

³ "'No response is required' to UCOSA legislation, says Lamb," Jake Ramsey, Managing Editor, The Vista, April 23, 2024; When asked to explain what facts The Vista had gotten wrong, Mr. Lamb told Mr. Ramsey that was not one of the pre-approved questions for the interview.

⁴ "An apparent suicide occurred on campus Sunday," Jake Ramsey, Editor in Chief, The Vista, November 19, 2024; "UCO Students hold a vigil for Avi Harjo," Jake Ramsey, Editor in Chief, The Vista, November 26, 2024.

⁵ "UCOSA vote of confidence for Lamb fails days before inauguration," Jake Ramsey, Managing Editor, Titus Leong, Contributing Writer, The Vista, April 30, 2024.

University. Also noteworthy is that Dean Maier expressed to Prof. Hight that The Vista could only use privately donated funds to issue a print publication if it pivoted from news coverage to printing a “promotional magazine” for the University two to three times a year. That is, this Administration will only allow the Vista to print and distribute information on campus if the aim of the publication is “promotion of the department, college, and university, and would be something [UCO] could distribute to prospective students and donors.”⁶

Making matters worse, when students have spoken out in opposition to these actions by the University, they have been subjected to further retaliation, including demotions – or outright loss of positions – on The Vista. Much of this retaliation is traceable to the faculty advisor that the University installed to replace the long-serving staff advisor, who the University dismissed in 2024. In line with the demands of UCO administrators, Prof. Williams informed Dean Maier before this semester that she “accept[s] the decision to go digital” and, in clear disregard of the governance structure for The Vista, stated that “[r]egardless of what the [Student Media Advisory] [B]oard votes, as the advisor, I will move forward with a digital operation starting this fall.”⁷ Since assuming her position as faculty advisor, Prof. Williams and Amber Loomis, another administrator supporting the Vista, have actively discouraged Vista staffers from engaging in reporting or commentary on the The Vista’s print prohibition issues with the University. For example, during an August 2025 meeting of the UCentral TV and Vista prospective staff Ms. Williams stated, “we don’t really think [the print prohibition issues are] worth looking into.” Ms. Loomis further cautioned Mr. Frazier that covering the story “as a student” who did not yet have a “paid staff position” would be “dangerous” for him.

In sum, although the First Amendment prohibits UCO from regulating the form or content of an editorially independent student publication and from retaliating against students for exercising their free speech rights, over the past year, the University has responded to The Vista’s news coverage by:

- (1) prohibiting The Vista from printing and distributing hard copies of its newspaper on campus for the first time in the newspaper’s 122-year history;
- (2) limiting The Vista to publishing content on a UCO website, thereby giving the University ultimate authority over which stories are published (and/or removed);
- (3) altering the budget process to force UCentral TV and The Vista to make budget recommendations together, which is unprecedented in the history of either institution;
- (4) preventing the use of private money from private funders from being used to resume print publication and distribution;

⁶ These statements – and others referenced in this letter – appeared in emails that former Vista Editor-in-Chief Jake Ramsey received in response to requests for public records he submitted through the Oklahoma Records Act. A copy of Dean Maier’s email to Joe Hight on July 22, 2025 is attached as Exhibit A.

⁷ A copy of Ms. William’s email to Dean Maier on July 21, 2025 is attached as Exhibit B.

- (5) refusing to fund either the UCentral TV or The Vista unless and until The Vista agrees to cease print editions of its paper;
- (6) unilaterally removing newspaper racks – The Vista’s property – from campus facilities.

Since the prohibition on printing took effect at the start of the Fall 2025 semester, UCO has taken additional action to punish students who spoke out in opposition of the print prohibition, including:

- (7) removing Mr. Frazier from his promised position as Sports Editor;
- (8) declining to hire prior newspaper staff, like Mr. Kollie and Mx. Shackelford, after they spoke out about in favor of retaining print publication of The Vista;
- (9) refusing to consider Mr. Lanning for a position on The Vista after he attended several public meetings about the printing budget and associated with students who were vocal about continuing to print The Vista;
- (10) removing Ms. Spurlock’s Managing Editor duties and reducing her title to in-name only.

Through these actions, UCO is effectively silencing an important voice in the marketplace of ideas that universities are designed to foster and sustain. More than that, the UCO is violating the First Amendment rights of its students.

The University’s Actions Violate the First Amendment

While The Vista is housed within the UCO Department of Mass Communication, and is supported by funding from the University, it has maintained editorial independence since its inception. As a result, the University – a state entity – is sharply constrained in its ability to limit the speech of The Vista or its student journalists.⁸ Courts have long recognized that a public university cannot control the content of a student newspaper, even when the publication is funded entirely by the school. *See, e.g., Bazaar v. Fortune*, 476 F.2d 570, 574-75 (5th Cir. 1973) (forcefully rejecting notion that “any manner of state regulation is permissible simply because it involves an activity which is part of the university structure and is financed with funds controlled by the administration”).

“Courts have long recognized that student media outlets at public universities, and the student journalists who produce those outlets, are entitled to strong First Amendment protection,” and “the ability of school administrators to interfere with the speech made through such an outlet is generally strictly curtailed.” *Husain v. Springer*, 494 F.3d 108,

⁸ This is true of traditional public forums – like sidewalks – and designated public forums - like The Vista. *See Kincaid v. Gibson*, 236 F.3d 342, 348 (6th Cir. 2001) (“[T]he rights of the state to limit expressive activity [in a public forum] are sharply circumscribed”: the government may enforce content-based restrictions only if they are ‘narrowly drawn to serve a compelling interest, and may enforce content-neutral time, place, and manner regulations only if they are narrowly tailored to serve a significant government interest, and leave open ample alternative channels of communication.’”) (quoting *Perry Educ. Ass’n v. Perry Loc. Educators’ Ass’n*, 460 U.S. 37, 45 (1983)).

121 (2d Cir. 2007). As one court explained, “a school may declare the pages of the student newspaper open for expression and thus disable itself from engaging in viewpoint or content discrimination while the terms on which the forum operates remain unaltered.” *Hosty v. Carter*, 412 F.3d 731, 737 (7th Cir. 2005) Such discrimination is exactly what appears is happening here. Accordingly, as a “public university,” UCO “may not constitutionally take adverse action against a student newspaper, such as withdrawing or reducing the paper’s funding, because it disapproves of the content of the paper.” *Stanley v. Magrath*, 719 F.2d 279, 282 (8th Cir. 1983).⁹

The Vista has long operated as a forum for independent news reporting by UCO students. Although the paper is managed in consultation with faculty in the Department of Mass Communication, the University has never purported to limit what students can say or do when acting as journalists for The Vista. Now, acting out of apparent dissatisfaction with The Vista’s persistence in operating as a source of independent news coverage instead of a promotional arm of the University, UCO is trying to control The Vista’s editorial content and limit its reach. That is forbidden by the First Amendment.

To be sure, the University is not constitutionally required to fund one particular medium of publication – print – forever. If legitimate budgetary considerations required The Vista to become a digital-only newspaper, that would not necessarily violate the First Amendment. But that is self-evidently not what happened here. Rather, UCO’s actions took place after administrators repeatedly expressed dissatisfaction with editorial decisions made by The Vista, particularly when covering events that administrators believed may reflect poorly on UCO and Mr. Lamb’s administration. The decision to cut off print publication did not occur in the face of some kind of budget shortfall. To the contrary, the Student Media Advisory Board had already voted on and approved a budget that fully provided for continued distribution of the print edition of The Vista. And any possible notion that UCO’s decision was animated even slightly by concerns over budget is firmly negated by the fact that UCO refused to allow The Vista to accept *outside* funding to allow continued publication. That is not cost-saving – it’s censorship.

Conditioning access to resources made available to other organizations on the cessation of print publication subjects core expressive activity to an unconstitutional restraint. Although the University was not required to fund a print newspaper in the first place, having done so, it cannot forbid printing in retaliation for – or as a means of controlling – the student journalists’ speech. It is well settled in the law that denying a benefit to those who engage in protected speech “is in effect to *penalize* them for such speech. Its deterrent effect is the same as if the State were to *fine* them for this speech.” *Speiser v. Randall*, 357 U.S. 513, 518 (1958) (emphasis added).

The First Amendment, of course, allows your administration to voice its concerns with The Vista and to propose that the paper should do more to promote the University.

⁹ See also *Joyner v. Whiting*, 477 F.2d 456, 460 (4th Cir.1973) (“It may well be that a college need not establish a campus newspaper, or, if a paper has been established, the college may permanently discontinue publication for reasons wholly unrelated to the First Amendment. But if a college has a student newspaper, its publication cannot be suppressed because college officials dislike its editorial comment.”).

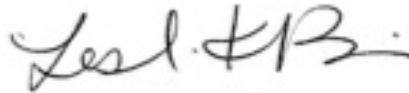
But a forced restriction on printing and retaliation against students who have spoken or written critically of your administration blatantly violates the First Amendment's guarantees of free expression and a free press.

In order to address these constitutional violations, the University must immediately:

- (1) restore editorial independence to the paper;
- (2) allow The Vista to resume printing and distributing its paper;
- (3) return the Vista's racks to campus;
- (4) cease all efforts to retaliate against my clients for exercising their First Amendment rights; and
- (5) discontinue its efforts to censor content the University deems objectionable.

Anything less is an affront to the free speech and free press rights enshrined in our Constitution. Universities occupy a unique position in the free marketplace of ideas and it is UCO's duty and privilege to invest in promoting free speech and opposing censorship. We urge your administration to engage in actions that put you and the University on the right side of history as a champion of free speech and a free press. Please do not hesitate to reach out to us to discuss these matters further.

Regards,



Leslie K. Briggs, OBA 33845

lbriggs@rcfp.org

(918) 255-0060

Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press

P.O Box 471094

Tulsa, OK 74147

EXHIBIT A

EXHIBIT B

EXHIBIT A

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

From: Joe Hight <jhight@uco.edu>

Sent: Tuesday, July 22, 2025 4:44 PM

To: Elizabeth Maier <EMaier@uco.edu>; Mark Scott <MScott@uco.edu>; Mark Hanebutt <MHanebutt@uco.edu>; Erika Williams <ewilliams43@uco.edu>; Sherri Ward <sward20@uco.edu>; Chad Perry <cperry16@uco.edu>; David Nelson <DNelson7@uco.edu>

Cc: Michael Breslin <mbreslin@uco.edu>

Subject: Re: Vista Digital Launch Party

Dear Dean Maier (Elizabeth),

Thank you for the explanation. We will discuss it at the board's Aug. 14 meeting.

I stand by my previous statement that I personally vehemently disagree with this mandate, which is akin to the university banning the print publication. I also maintain the board was making efficient use of the resources given to us by the university. I also do not think this will receive a positive response from a segment of our students, faculty, alumni and community and will generate negative attention. As the endowment funders pointed out, it raises additional questions and concerns about ulterior motives, especially considering the president has ordered the removal of *The Vista* racks from campus locations with the "magazine" being mentioned as part of it. I cannot speak for the rest of the board, however.

I do appreciate your time in writing the reasoning for this decision and, as stated before, respect your authority. But I will not be participating in or want to be part of any party as part of it. Perhaps others will.

Thank you again.

Sincerely, Joe

[REDACTED]

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From: Elizabeth Maier <EMaier@uco.edu>

Sent: Tuesday, July 22, 2025 4:18 PM

To: Joe Hight <jhight@uco.edu>; Mark Scott <MScott@uco.edu>; Mark Hanebutt <MHanebutt@uco.edu>; Erika Williams <ewilliams43@uco.edu>; Sherri Ward <sward20@uco.edu>; Chad Perry <cperry16@uco.edu>; David Nelson <DNelson7@uco.edu>

Cc: Michael Breslin <mbreslin@uco.edu>

Subject: RE: Vista Digital Launch Party

Dear Colleagues,

Thank you for your email, Joe. At our meeting on June 10, 2025, I explained that the State and RUSO Regents have mandated that we make more efficient use of our resources. This mandate has affected most units on campus. In explaining these changes, I touched upon Malcom Gladwell's book and gave several examples of the necessity of change to remain viable (i.e. Kodak, Blockbuster). With this efficiency mandate in mind, I stated the Vista would be produced digitally, rather than in print, starting in Fall 2025 semester. I asked the Advisory Board to meet to determine how to redistribute the funds that were allocated for printing, since that would no longer occur.

At the meeting in June, you asked about printing the Vista using funds from the Foundation. While printing the paper in its current form will not be permitted, we discussed doing something similar to OU and printing more of a magazine-style publication a few times each year using the Foundation funds. If the department chooses this route, we talked about tying such a publication to a specific course, where the instructor would mentor students through the process of production each semester. The aim of the publication would be the promotion of the department, college, and university, and would be something we could distribute to prospective students and donors, something like the *Urban Central* magazine that was published pre-Covid. We still have a couple copies of that magazine and I provide it to prospective students-it's a great way to showcase your department, as well as potentially the college and university.

The bottom line is the Vista will be digital starting in the fall. It will no longer be printed. While this represents a change in direction, I know that with your talented faculty and staff, your department is capable of making this pivot. And to reiterate, I am happy to supply refreshments and other items for a digital Vista launch party.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth

Elizabeth Maier, Ph.D.
Dean, College of Liberal Arts
University of Central Oklahoma
emaier@uco.edu
(405) 974-5504

Pronouns: She/Her

From: Joe Hight <jhight@uco.edu>
Sent: Monday, July 21, 2025 2:19 PM
To: Elizabeth Maier <EMaier@uco.edu>; Mark Scott <MScott@uco.edu>; Mark Hanebutt <MHanebutt@uco.edu>; Erika Williams <ewilliams43@uco.edu>; Sherri Ward <sward20@uco.edu>; Chad Perry <cperry16@uco.edu>; David Nelson <DNelson7@uco.edu>
Cc: Michael Breslin <mbreslin@uco.edu>
Subject: Re: Vista Digital Launch Party

Dear Dean Maier (Elizabeth).

While I respect your authority, I wholeheartedly disagree with your decision for multiple reasons. Among them:

- The Student Media Advisory Board was given a mission to create a budget with \$56,000 provided to it for both *The Vista* and UCentral. We were never told before or during the process to my knowledge that the decision should exclude printing *The Vista*. We worked with the budget in order to do as you asked. Any additional funds to print *The Vista* would have come from the Dennie Hall Endowment Fund. Please see the statement below from the funders.
- We spent weeks studying the issue and met in open session multiple times in order to make a decision that you requested. We were split at first but through collaboration, research and insight provided to us voted unanimously to proceed with print for the upcoming school year. I question why you made this decision after all the information that we considered was provided to you.
- As you were told, the research showed that print was still warranted on campus for the next year, including a more than 30% pickup rate for the print product that exceeds the pickup rate for digital products. Most of the experts we asked also said print was still warranted, including those who work in primarily digital platforms.
- The board needs the upcoming year to create an effective digital strategy for *The Vista* and UCentral. This seems to negate any thought process about the need to do this, instead creating a "party" as if we would ultimately stand behind your decision. I have been involved in many digital strategy efforts and never have witnessed one that was created immediately.

- I was asked at the meeting to approach the funders of the Dennie Hall Endowment Fund. They issued a statement below that I agree with.

As the interim chair of this board, at least for now, I ask to submit in writing why you made this decision, so the board can effectively review and consider your reasoning at its Aug. 14 meeting and inform others who might be interested in the reasoning, too. (You gave us a statement from the regents, but that seemed to be exactly what we did and or doing during this process.)

Thank you.

Sincerely, Joe

P.S. This is a statement from:

- Jim Epperson, a UCO distinguished alum, former president of the UCO foundation, and retired president of AT&T in Oklahoma and Texas.
- Bob Ray, a UCO alum and retired media relations director for the Illinois Education Association.

Here is their statement:

As the main funders of the Dennie Hall Endowment Fund and UCO alumni, we want to express our concern about two areas that were recently brought to our attention:

1. *The Vista* doing away with its print presence.

While we understand the need for a digital strategy and training, we believe *The Vista* will lose its longtime presence as an institution if you do away with the print product starting immediately in the fall semester instead of a strategy that gradually eliminates it over time. We feel this effort is more akin to the university trying to do away with a vital news product and institution on campus, first the print and then by other means.

Recent editions of *The Vista* seem to point this out, including the fact that students and faculty still want the print product and members of the advisory board initially approved continuing with the print product for at least another year. With that stated, why would the university then seek to do away with the print product? This leads us to believe that ulterior motives exist in trying to end *The Vista* and its longstanding tradition of being a watchdog at

the university protected by the First Amendment.

2. The possibility that *The Vista* will be absorbed into the UCentral website network.

While we understand that broadcasting is an important part of the Mass Communication program, *The Vista* is the institution that has been a part of the journalism curriculum since its inception and before. It teaches on-the-job skills and maintains practices beyond what UCentral can provide. We also think that any combination of the websites should be called *The Vista* or at the least *The Vista/UCentral*, so this important institution retains its identity.

The late great Dennie Hall prized *The Vista* as an important part of the journalism program and a vital part of the university. It has survived him and presidents who didn't like its content and wanted to do away with it. Both of us have spent most of our careers in professions other than journalism but point back to *The Vista* as being the foundation that launched us. You can't put a price tag on the community that *The Vista* has built over the years, too. We also heard one donor say she was hesitant to donate to the endowment fund because she wanted something tangible. Now the university wants to do away with the most tangible part of *The Vista*, which the endowment is intended to help? That doesn't make sense.

The intent of the endowment, which continues to grow, was to support *The Vista* and its operations in honor of Dennie Hall. That includes print and online, not one for the other. We ask you to honor that and formulate a strategy to evolve into a digital product instead of removing the print immediately, so students of the future can benefit as we did in the past.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely, Jim Epperson and Bob Ray

From: Elizabeth Maier <EMaier@uco.edu>
Sent: Monday, July 21, 2025 12:30 PM
To: Joe Hight <jhight@uco.edu>; Mark Scott <MScott@uco.edu>; Mark Hanebutt <MHanebutt@uco.edu>; Erika Williams <ewilliams43@uco.edu>; Sherri Ward <sward20@uco.edu>; Chad Perry <cperry16@uco.edu>; David Nelson <DNelson7@uco.edu>
Cc: Michael Breslin <mbreslin@uco.edu>
Subject: RE: Vista Digital Launch Party

Dear Colleagues,

I hope you had a nice weekend. I apologize for my delayed response. There seems to be a misunderstanding. When we met in May, I said the Vista would be digital starting in fall 2025. It was a statement, not a request. That decision is final and not up for debate or negotiation.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth

On Jul 17, 2025, at 10:38 AM, Joe Hight <jhight@uco.edu> wrote:

Dear Dean Maier,

As David indicated, the student media board has not met formally to consider your request. That has been due to vacations, etc., during the summer. I am planning to contact them at the end of the month to schedule that meeting.

I am also planning to send you and them a statement from the “funders” of the Dennis Hall Endowment Fund that was requested during our meeting.

Thank you for your offer. -- Joe

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From: David Nelson <DNelson7@uco.edu>
Sent: Thursday, July 17, 2025 9:53:55 AM
To: Elizabeth Maier <EMaier@uco.edu>; Mark Scott <MScott@uco.edu>; Mark Hanebutt <MHanebutt@uco.edu>; Erika Williams <ewilliams43@uco.edu>; Joe Hight <jhight@uco.edu>; Sherri Ward <sward20@uco.edu>; Chad Perry <cperry16@uco.edu>
Cc: Michael Breslin <mbreslin@uco.edu>

Subject: Re: Vista Digital Launch Party

Hi Dean Maier,

Although we haven't yet met with the group to discuss specific plans for promoting and marketing the digital *Vista* "Launch Party," I wanted to share one promotional activity the UCentral staff organizes each fall during Stampede Week. We set up the UCentral student media tent, which features all three of our platforms—*The Vista*, UCentral News, and UCentral Radio—staffed by student representatives. We distribute promotional materials, including cards with QR codes linking to each medium's digital presence.

That said, aside from our usual fall outreach, there hasn't been any formal discussion yet regarding a dedicated "Launch Party."

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From: Elizabeth Maier <EMaier@uco.edu>
Sent: Wednesday, July 16, 2025 2:29:01 PM
To: Mark Scott <MScott@uco.edu>; Mark Hanebutt <MHanebutt@uco.edu>; David Nelson <DNelson7@uco.edu>; Erika Williams <ewilliams43@uco.edu>; Joe Hight <jhight@uco.edu>; Sherri Ward <sward20@uco.edu>; Chad Perry <cperry16@uco.edu>
Cc: Michael Breslin <mbreslin@uco.edu>
Subject: Vista Digital Launch Party

Dear Colleagues,

Good afternoon, I hope your summer is going well. I wanted to follow up on the conversation we had earlier this summer. How is the planning going for the Vista Going Digital Launch Party? Remember I said I would pay for refreshments for the party. Please let me know how I can assist.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth

Elizabeth Maier, Ph.D.

Dean, College of Liberal Arts

University of Central Oklahoma

emaier@uco.edu

(405) 974-5504

Pronouns: She/Her

EXHIBIT B

Thank you, Erika. You do not need to reply to the larger group email. I completely understand your and your colleagues votes, etc. I appreciate your email and all of this information.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth

From: Erika Williams <ewilliams43@uco.edu>
Sent: Monday, July 21, 2025 3:20 PM
To: Elizabeth Maier <EMaier@uco.edu>
Subject: Re: Vista Digital Launch Party

Hi Dean Maier,

I'm not sure I have any information to offer that would be helpful. Again, myself and others on the committee accept the decision to go digital. Regardless of what the board votes, as the advisor, I will move forward with a digital operation starting this fall.

I am attaching two budgets here that were presented to the board several months ago. At the time, the committee insisted we would be using the allocated budget to print. You can see that if we print, we will be cutting money directly from student pay by limiting their hours, which in turn, limits their ability to report responsibly.

This is the first time that Joe has mentioned guaranteed outside funds to print, so I can't speak on that, but again, outside funds cover the printing alone. They do not cover the hours it takes to lay out the newspaper, deliver it to the stands, etc. which takes away time to create news content.

Additionally, others have also been measuring the pick-up rate, and it was closer to 10-15% for about a month. While the vote may have been unanimous, at the time of voting, it was clear it would be four against three if we voted otherwise. Two other colleagues and I agreed to vote yes in order to avoid any more unpleasantness around the department.

Lastly when Joe says that "most experts" support the decision to print he is referring to four people that he chose to reach out to and ask their opinion. This was by no means a representative survey, and those experts were not informed on our financial situation.

I'm truly sorry for the headache this is causing... If I can provide any other information, please let me know. I can also reply to address the group, if necessary, but I'm trying to avoid as much negativity as possible.

Thank you,

Erika Williams

From: Joe Hight <jhight@uco.edu>
Sent: Monday, July 21, 2025 2:19 PM
To: Elizabeth Maier <EMaier@uco.edu>; Mark Scott <MScott@uco.edu>; Mark Hanebutt