SpencerFane®

Allison Garrett

Of Counsel

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Overview

Allison Garrett plays a critical role in the firm's higher education practice, resolving complex regulatory, administrative, operational, and transactional issues specific to public and private universities. Supported by a decades-long track record of success in legal, educational, and leadership roles, she has held prominent positions in government, at a multinational retail corporation, and at the highest levels of several higher education institutions.

Allison most recently served as chancellor for the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, where she oversaw 25 public colleges and universities. She was responsible for statewide higher education strategic planning, informed higher education policy, directed 20 statewide scholarship programs, set policy, and helped to define programs of study as the chief executive officer of the state's higher education system.

She has served on national higher education boards, including as vice chair of the NCAA and on the Executive Committee of the State Higher Education Executives Organization.

After earning her Juris Doctor and while completing her Master of Laws, Allison worked in private practice before serving as a staff attorney for the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission, acquiring in-depth legal knowledge of the inner workings of federal securities laws and regulations, investigations, and enforcement.

Following this, she worked for Walmart Stores, Inc.'s legal department, serving as general counsel and vice president of the corporate division and later as vice president of benefits compliance and planning. While overseeing national and international legal and benefits issues, Allison also fine-tuned her skills in operations and team oversight, risk management, and all executive legal functions – strengths which are evident throughout her current work in higher education, litigation, and dispute resolution.

Upon shifting to higher education, Allison worked as an associate professor of law at Faulkner University in Alabama before earning the title of senior vice president for academic affairs at Oklahoma Christian University. She then served as executive vice president of Abilene Christian University.

For more than five years, Allison served as the president of Emporia State University (ESU) in Kansas. She directed the University's strategic planning, oversaw all internal operations, and facilitated external relations with the legislature and university donors. Her ESU presidency saw the completion of the University's largest capital campaign, several transformative building projects, new academic program development to align with state and regional industry needs, and record-setting increases in student retention and graduation rates. She also notably served as vice chair of the NCAA Board of Governors, a member of the NCAA Audit Committee, and as chair of the NCAA Division II Presidents' Council.

This critical work culminated in her most recent position as the first woman and ninth overall chancellor of the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education. During her tenure, the state system completed a bold new strategic plan, received investment increases from the state, and increased enrollment. Allison frequently spoke across the state on education issues.

Allison's entire professional career serves as a testament to her ability to cultivate the highest level of authoritative trust and respect as she makes law- and data-informed decisions which benefit the lives of hundreds of thousands of individuals. This currently includes her clients, colleagues, and the people and sectors they directly impact.

Education

- Georgetown University Law Center, 1992 (LLM), *with honors*
- University of Tulsa College of Law, 1987 (J.D.)
- Oklahoma Christian University, 1984 (B.A.), *with honors*

Bar Admissions

- Oklahoma, 1987
- Arkansas, 1994

Distinctions

- *405 Magazine*, Top Attorneys, Education, 2026
- Fulbright Specialist Program Award Recipient, 2025
- Oklahoma National Guard, Oklahoma Thunderbird Medal, 2024
- *The Journal Record*, Oklahoma's Most Admired CEOs, 2024
- Oklahoma Christian University Distinguished Alumna, 2021

Memberships

- NCAA
  - Division II Presidents' Council, Former Chair
  - Board of Governors, Former Vice Chair
  - Audit Committee, Former Member
- State Higher Education Executive Organization, Executive Committee, Former Member
- Leadership Kansas
- National Teachers Hall of Fame, Board of Directors, Former Member
- National Ovarian Cancer Coalition, Board of Directors, Former Member
- National Center for Children's Illustrated Literature, Board of Directors, Former Member
- Oklahoma Educational Television Authority, Board of Directors, Former Member

Presentations and Publications

- "Beyond NIL: New Title IX Considerations in College Athletics," *University Business*, June 2026
- "Olympic Games 2028 Preparation Part I: Never Too Soon to Get Your IP Strategy in Order," *IP Watchdog*, June 2026
- Quoted. "Education Department Provides Breakthrough For New Accreditors," *University Business*, February 2026
- "How to Perform a Quick Checkup on Your Board of Trustees," *University Business*, December 2025
- "Higher Education at a Crossroads: Navigating a Shifting Political, Economic and Social Landscape," American Association of State Colleges and Universities Presidents Conference, November 2025
- "Executive Orders Impacting Higher Education," American Association of State Colleges and Universities' Provost Forum, September 2025
- "Freezing Research: Here Are 4 Ways Schools Feel the Chill," *University Business,* July 2025
- "Snares in the Proposed Endowment Tax," *University Business,* May 2025
- "A Core Trustee Responsibility: Selecting Trustees and Setting Expectations, The Sacred Work of Trusteeship at a Christian College: Lessons from Colleagues," CCCU Trustee Development Curriculum, 2014
- "The Corporation as Sovereign," 60 *Maine Law Review* 129-164, 2008
- "Leveling the Playing Field in the Pharmacy Benefit Management Industry," 42 *Valparaiso University Law Review* 33-80, 2007. Received the 2008 Simonsmeier Award from the American Society for Pharmacy Law for best English language pharmacy publication.
- "A Comparison of United States and United Kingdom: Approaches to Board Structure," 3 *The Corporate Governance Law Review* 93-114, 2007
- "Themes and Variations: The Convergence of Corporate Governance Practices in Major World Markets," 32 *Denver Journal of International Law and Policy* 147-174, 2004
- "Auditor Whistle Blowing: The Financial Fraud Detection and Disclosure Act," 17 *Seton Hall Legislative Journal* 91-136, 1993
- "The Ramshackle Edifice: Limitations Periods for Private Actions Under Rule 10b5," 28 *Duquesne Law Review* 1-40, 1989

Related Experience

- Developed policy and advocated for legislation to assist higher education, such as passage of a state requirement to complete the FAFSA prior to high school graduation.
- Assisted colleges and universities with implementation of new laws and guidance, such as Title IX Dear Colleague letters, employment law changes, and new financial aid regulations.
- Partnered with colleges and universities on various athletics issues and testified regarding sports wagering.
- Led teams implementing open enrollment, COBRA, and HIPAA for one of the world's largest employers.
- Negotiated dozens of bond financing transactions ranging from $250 million to $3.2 billion.
- Led teams of attorneys handling mergers and acquisitions in several countries, including *Euromoney*'s "Deal of the Year" and *Mergers and Acquisition*'s "Cross-Border Deal of the Year."