Dr. Crutcher called the meeting to order at 3:10 p.m. He welcomed everyone and asked for introduction of Advisory Committee members and all staff and visitors in attendance. Dr. Crutcher noted that due to the current number of vacancies on the Advisory Committee, a quorum was not expected at this meeting and no formal action would take place. The primary purpose of the meeting was to exchange information.

Mr. Doug Matheny reported on the progress on new appointments to the Advisory Committee. The Advisory Committee has twenty positions. Four of the members are state agency heads or their designees. The remaining 16 members require formal appointment by the Governor. Eleven of the twenty appointed positions are representatives of various public health organizations. The other five appointed positions are “at large” appointments, with specific criteria required. There
are currently eight vacancies on the committee. Each of the vacancies was discussed. Lists of names have been submitted to the Governor for representation by the American Cancer Society, American Heart Association, American Lung Association, Oklahoma Dental Association, Oklahoma Psychological Association, a behavioral health and youth program member, and a youth member. The list of names for the retail business member will be submitted shortly. Due to delays related to legislative session deadlines, the appointments are not expected to announced by the Governor’s office until sometime after May 1.

It was reported that there was no significant state legislation pending on tobacco issues.

Dr. Crutcher reported that the American Lung Association (ALA) has released their 2002 Annual “report card” on states’ tobacco control policies and that Oklahoma had improved it’s scores in the four categories from straight F’s in 2002 to an overall D average in 2003 and an overall C average in 2004. It was noted that the ALA sets very high standards on their grading scale. Oklahoma now ranks in the top one-third of all states for its tobacco control policies, demonstrating dramatic progress in tobacco control policies that few other states have experienced in such a short period of time. Credit for Oklahoma’s many successes was given to the Board of Health, strategic use of media, and strong, active support by many public health advocates statewide.

Tobacco tax rates in other states were also discussed. The State of Texas is currently considering legislation to raise the price of cigarettes by up to $1.01 per pack.

Dr. Joyce Morris provided a handout and offered an overview of new data from the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, administered annually by the Oklahoma State Department of Health (OSDH) to a random sample of Oklahoma adults. The presentation featured positive trends in adult smoking rates from 2001 to 2004 and compared Oklahoma to other states in the nation. The adult smoking rate in Oklahoma for 2004 was 26.1 percent.

Copies of the Oklahoma State Plan for Tobacco Use Prevention and Cessation, reflecting updates formally recommended by the Advisory Committee at the December 13 meeting was distributed. The recommended changes had been forwarded to state leaders for their review as required by law. No feedback had been received. Final approval of the updates will be considered at the next Advisory Council meeting.

Two Action Team reports were offered. Ms. Linda Eakers reported that the Cessation Team had met and reviewed Helpline data and the number of callers being reported. An order for cessation material and reprinting is in progress. There was discussion of a likely change in the toll-free number to 1-800-QUIT NOW to take part in a national network of state quitlines. A brief action plan is being prepared to present to the Oklahoma Employees’ Benefit Council, urging them to enhance current coverage of nicotine replacement therapy.

Representing the newly-created Disparities Team, Dr. Morris distributed copies of a draft Strategic Plan on tobacco-related disparities. She provided a brief introduction to the Plan, stating that it emphasizes the need for a community-driven approach and a long-term commitment to be effective. Dr. Morris also reported that she is serving as a member of the Data
Committee for the Oklahoma Task Force to Eliminate Health Disparities and that the next meeting of the Task Force will focus on tobacco issues.

Mr. Jonas Mata provided an update on activities of the Oklahoma Tobacco Settlement Endowment Trust. He distributed an updated list of the Communities of Excellence (CX) programs. He stated that many of the CX programs developed from local Turning Point initiatives. Mr. Mata is confident that the coalitions will be successful with developing and then implementing their strategic plans in the coming years. A copy of the annual report for the Tobacco Settlement Endowment Trust was also distributed.

Ms. Joy Leuthard reported the Oklahoma Alliance on Tobacco or Health (OAHT) has developed a formal 2005 policy agenda, with four priority areas:

1. Clean indoor air with focus on municipal ordinances, 24/7 tobacco-free school campus policies, restaurants’ compliance with state laws effective March 1, 2006.
2. Tobacco excise tax increase with focus on monitoring impact and implementation.
3. Tobacco policy education for state legislators, to be addressed after the current legislative session ends.
4. Infrastructure needs of OAHT.

Ms. Leuthard expressed special gratitude to the Oklahoma Institute for Child Advocacy for their support and assistance. She also announced that the OAHT had recently received a “Champions of Health” award from Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Oklahoma.

Ms. Leuthard then offered an update on the Smoke Free Beginnings project administered by the Oklahoma State Medical Association. She noted that the project was in its third year and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation funding would end in December 2005. Joy provided a copy of an article published in the Oklahoma State Medical Association Journal entitled “Smoke-Free Beginnings: Changing Practice Behaviors to Improve the Delivery of Smoking Cessation to Prenatal Patients in Oklahoma.”

Ms. Janet Love provided an update for the OSDH Tobacco Use Prevention Service. Janet announced new staff and vacant positions. Janet reported on staff development activities and changes in program funding sources. She stated that the contract monitoring site visits for the CX program and OSDH contractors are ongoing and should be completed by July 31, 2005. Several training and technical assistance activities were also discussed.

Mr. Matheny reported that the impact of the recent tobacco tax increase is believed to have contributed to the tremendous increase in the number of calls to the Oklahoma Tobacco Helpline. Efforts are being made to allocate additional funding to this effort. Moneys received by OSDH from the tobacco tax will be used for this purpose.

Mr. Dave Wattenbarger gave a brief presentation an internal tobacco industry document that illustrated the intent of tobacco companies to promote smoking prevention messages directed at teens that have been shown to be ineffective. One such message is that smoking is an adult decision and that kids shouldn’t smoke because they’re not old enough.
It was announced that the National Conference on Tobacco or Health will be held in Chicago from May 4-6, 2005.

Dr. Crutcher announced Wellness Week the week of April 4. A “Walk This Weigh” promotion that focuses on exercise and proper nutrition will be held. All O.U. Health Sciences Center employees are being encouraged to join the walk to the State Capitol where Governor Henry will address the group. Dr. Crutcher also announced that the State of the State’s Health Report was released today.

No public comments were offered.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:00 p.m.