

UNL FACULTY SENATE MEETING MINUTES
February 5, 2019
City Campus Union, Colonial Room A & B
Presidents Robert Belli and Sarah Purcell, Presiding

1.0 Call to Order

President-Elect Belli called the meeting to order at 2:33 p.m.

2.0 Announcements

President-Elect Belli stated that he would be conducting the meeting because President Hanrahan was out of town on business.

2.1 State Legislature Update

President-Elect Belli reported that the State Legislature is in the appropriations process and there will be an important meeting for the university on March 4th. He stated that the university's plan is to have one of the four Faculty Senate Presidents speak to the Appropriations Committee, one of the Student Presidents speak, and one Regent to speak.

President-Elect Belli stated that the Governor's proposed budget is in line with President Bounds and the University Chancellors' proposed budget. He stated that through the collective bargaining process at UNK and UNO the faculty at those campuses will receive a 2% increase. He noted that we are waiting to see what the increase will be for UNL.

2.2 Faculty Survey

President-Elect Belli reported that a survey of the faculty is being administered by the Senate Executive Committee. He noted that the Executive Committee is seeking input from the faculty on what they feel are important issues at UNL that the Senate should address. He requested that the Senators ask the faculty in their department to respond to the brief survey.

2.3 Non-tenure Track Faculty Survey and Forum

President-Elect Belli stated that there will be a survey of non-tenure track faculty members seeking their feedback regarding such things as promotion, evaluation, understanding resources, and academic freedom. He pointed out that he will be asking the Executive Committee if a similar survey will be conducted of the tenured and tenured-track faculty members. He reported that the non-tenure track faculty forum will be held in early April and a number of administrators have been asked to participate at the forum.

2.4 Health Insurance Concerns

President-Elect Belli reported that President Hanrahan continues to receive emails regarding problems associated with the management of the university's health insurance by UMR. He noted that mental health coverage seems to be a major problem, but there are also issues with the coverage of medical devices such as insulin pumps. He pointed out that the problems are not just occurring with UNL employees, but with the other campuses as well and the Faculty Senate Presidents from UNK, UNO, and UNMC are collecting feedback about problems.

2.5 Information for Testifying Before the State Legislature

President-Elect Belli stated that faculty members are being asked to inform Assistant to the Chancellor Michelle Waite if they plan to testify before the State Legislature. He noted that employees should clearly state to the Legislature that they are speaking as a citizen and do not represent the university. He stated that the administration understands that anyone has the right to testify to the Legislature, but Assistant to the Chancellor Wait can provide assistance if an employee is interested.

3.0 Chancellor Green

Chancellor Green stated that the next step in the N150 process is the formation of the N150 Strategy Team which he is putting into motion. He noted that he has contacted potential team members to see if they are willing to serve, and the idea is to have 31 members representing faculty, staff, students, and administrators. He noted that a number of faculty from the Senate are being asked to serve and the Team will be co-chaired by four faculty members representing the university's faculty. He also pointed out that he felt strongly that this needed to be a committee led by the faculty. He stated that all of the vice chancellors will also serve on the team and that he will serve as ex-officio member. He reported that the Team will work for the next six months to frame the 2020-2025 strategy and will present a draft of the strategic plan to him by August 15. He stated that the process will vet the draft plan to the full campus in September and October to provide an opportunity to provide feedback. He pointed out that his goal is to have the plan go into effect January 1, 2020.

Chancellor Green reported that several leadership searches are underway. He stated that the on-campus interviews for the Dean of Arts & Sciences were completed in early January and an appointment is pending. He noted that the interviews for the Dean of the College of Education and Human Sciences are now complete. He stated that both of the searches have gone very well and he has been pleased with the quality of the applicant pool. He stated that he hopes the College of Education and Human Sciences search will be completed successfully.

Chancellor Green reported that Interim Vice Chancellor Nunez will provide an overview of the way the university's budget works on a macro level. He pointed out that Interim VC Nunez will provide information on how important the state appropriated funds are, but will also show the relative inflexibility of the funds. He noted that the overview will show what has happened with the budget over the past two years. He noted that sometimes there has been confusion about cash cuts versus permanent cuts and he wanted to make it clear that cash cuts are a one-time cut, but permanent cuts are a permanent reduction to the university's budget. He stated that Interim VC Nunez will highlight the budget cuts that we have experienced for the last 2 ½ years. He pointed out that while the budget cuts were painful, and required a lot of tough discussions, the academic enterprise was largely shielded from these significant reductions. He stated that the rescissions were covered by budget cuts made in IT, Human Resources, Facilities, Business and Finance, Travel and other services.

Interim VC Nunez presented material President Bounds and Vice President Kaourek gave to NU Chancellors, Vice Chancellors, University Relations staff, and University Communicators. He pointed out that several myths exist about the university's budget. The first is that the university has a large budget with a lot of flexibility. He stated that this is not true, and while the university system has a \$2.6 billion budget, most of the funding is restricted. He noted that most university employees are paid through state-aided funds, and while there are funds generated through auxiliary, private and federal funding, most of these funds are restricted. He reported that 93% of the state appropriated funding is for salaries, benefits and utilities costs, leaving just 7% that could be used for other expenses.

Interim VC Nunez noted another myth is that the university is crippling the state budget. He stated that a review of the past 20 years shows that the university's budget has been consistently decreasing to the point that it is now down by 25% which equates to a \$1,000 decline per student in state funds. He pointed out that the university works on a biennium and when we are hit with a mid-rescission it is difficult to handle as the university has budgeted these funds, paid basically half to existing university personnel, and lacks flexibility to locate any real savings. The repayment back to the state is done through cash funds. He noted that the last set of rescissions for the biennium amounted to \$13 million.

Interim VC Nunez pointed out that salary increases are built into the budget and when this was considered during the FY 2017-18 and FY 2018-19 biennium, along with other expense increases,

there was a \$49 million shortfall. He noted that the shortfall could be filled in part by tuition revenue, but this is not a reliable fund because enrollment figures can vary from year to year. He stated that \$22 million was found by the budget reduction taskforces to address the \$49 million shortfall.

Chancellor Green reported that during FY2016-17 the university was hit with a \$13 million rescission in the middle of the fiscal year, and UNL had to cover \$7 ½ million of this amount. He pointed out that in January 2018 there was another rescission of \$11 million, of which UNL had to cover \$5.5 million. He noted that the rescissions were from cash flow funds, but the remaining cuts were permanent budget cuts. He stated that the cost of salary increases is the largest portion of the shortfall. He noted that the Legislature re-opened the budget and made further cuts in 2018, although the university's budget was partially covered by \$7 million in 2019.

Chancellor Green stated that the Board of Regents sets the tuition rates and projected enrollment growth across the university system. He noted that our enrollment was down by 1% this year, and we are now figuring how to handle this in our current budget. Interim VC Nunez stated that the administration will do its best to look at the services provided and the administration, to try to avoid cutting the academic enterprise, but this is getting more difficult to achieve.

Professor Gay, Physics & Astronomy, noted that he was on the Travel BRT and asked if the projected \$382,000 savings from the reduced mileage rate has been achieved. Interim VC Nunez pointed out that the mileage rate applied across the university system. Professor Adenwalla, Physics & Astronomy, asked if this figure was projected or actual savings. Interim VC Nunez stated that this was actual savings built into our budget for FY 2019.

Interim VC Nunez stated that the full university's budget is \$1.3 billion, but only \$243 million is from state appropriations and when tuition is included-UNL's state aided budget is less than \$500 million. He noted that while there may be some increases in our state appropriated budget, the flexibility with it is becoming less and less. He reported that at one point in 2001, three-quarters of our budget was through state appropriations. Today it is now half. He stated that this is a trend that is occurring across the country, but with the increasing costs of the university, we now have to use revenue and other funds to cover our basic costs requiring us to be creative to figure out how to save our resources.

Chancellor Green reported that the university put forward a budget proposal that would provide the university with a 3% increase for the first year of the biennium and 3.7% increase for the second year of the biennium. He noted that these figures are based on the assumption of a 2% salary increase across the university system for faculty and staff. He stated that the Governor agreed with the recommendation to increase costs related to salaries, but he did not support an increase to our operational costs, which has not been requested for several years. He noted that the Governor is recommending a 2.6% increase in the first year of the biennium and a 3.4% in the second year. He pointed out that at an aggregate level, we haven't seen this kind of increase in a long time in our state appropriations. But fund the increase will not fund all of our increased costs.

Chancellor Green noted that in the fall he spoke to the Senate about the revenue projections for the state and on July 1 the state began the fiscal year on a really good note. He reported that revenue projections continued to increase and in October the thinking was that the state would be approximately 6% above the forecasted projections, but instead they were down for October, November and December. He stated that the recent report showed that the state is basically now at zero net gain. He reported that the Forecasting Board is scheduled to meet on February 28 and there is concern of how the report could affect the university since our hearing with the Appropriations Committee is scheduled a week later. He said that the university has received very positive feedback of support from members of the Appropriations Committee. He noted that nine state senators attended his State of the University Address in January, including Senator Stiner, Chair of the Appropriations Committee and Speaker Scheer.

Chancellor Green noted that President-Elect Belli previously stated that the university requests employees contact Assistant to the Chancellor Michelle Waite if testifying before the state legislature, but he wanted to stress that this is only a request and he does not want anyone to get the impression that the university doesn't want anyone to not testify. He pointed out that Ms. Waite can provide assistance, if needed, and notifying her would be a purely proactive measure just to inform the administrators should they be asked any questions while they are at the state house.

Chancellor Green noted that most people probably thought the budget cuts were handled through the hiring freeze and travel savings, but in reality were handled through funds that would have been used to invest in the future of the campus, as the administration did not want to restrict the academic units from being able to meet their mission. He pointed out that the exercise of carefully reviewing the budget is done every year.

Professor Weissling, Special Education and Communication Disorders, asked what the hiring freezes and travel restrictions have done. Chancellor Green stated that the hiring freeze was used to slow down faculty hiring while holding much less hiring in the support services of staff to help with the cash flow problem caused by the rescissions that the university faced.

The question was asked why the health insurance portion of the university's budget increased so much. Interim VC Nunez pointed out that health care costs are handled at the central administration level and health care costs impact the overall NU budget. The increase is a projection based on historic trends. Chancellor Green noted that the health care funds can be heavily influenced by people and the number of claims that are made. He stated that some years we are in the black, other years in the red with these funds. He reported that there were savings on the health care side in 2017 which allowed us to deal with a \$22 million shortfall and helped to reduce the budget reductions by 6%.

Professor Lee, Communication Studies, noted that last fall the state's revenue started decreasing and asked what the causes were for this decline. Chancellor Green stated that there were a number of factors. He noted that some tax incentive programs had an impact and some months it was due to a decline in straight line tax receipts. He pointed out that he does not think we have seen the full impacts yet from the trade tariffs.

Professor Hill, At-Large Center District, asked when mileage will be fully funded again. Chancellor Green pointed out that the policy change on the mileage is permanent. Past President Purcell noted that Senior Associate to the President Kostelnik told the Executive Committee that the issue will be reviewed in two years. Chancellor Green stated that it will be looked at, but he does not know whether it will be reconsidered. He pointed out that fuel and operational costs will need to be reviewed at that time. He stated that he does not anticipate that the University will go back to the federal rate, but the 25 cents per mile rate may be adjusted.

Professor Woodman, School of Biological Sciences, asked what the status is of the staff hiring freeze. Chancellor Green reported that staff positions must still go through the approval process. He noted that there is a President's Council meeting next week and he is expecting that this issue will be considered.

President-Elect Belli asked if anyone from the Faculty Senate has been asked to serve on the N150 strategic planning committee that is being informed. Chancellor Green stated that there will be 31 people in total on the committee which will have four faculty co-chairs and Senators have been asked to be on the committee.

Professor Gailey, English, asked if the request to notify Assistant to the Chancellor Waite if one is testifying before the legislature applies to those bills on the budget or are more general. Chancellor Green stated that they are typically more general, although faculty members can be asked to testify

on a number of issues. He stated that the request is just to help coordinate the university's efforts.

5.0 Committee Reports

5.1 Faculty Rights Subcommittee (Professor Woodman)

Professor Woodman pointed out that although the Senate has a Professional Ethics Statement, and some faculty rights are embedded in the Regents Bylaws, faculty rights were not easy to find. As a result, the Faculty Senate formed a subcommittee to look into faculty rights and to develop a resource document where faculty members could find needed information. He reported that the subcommittee consisted of eight Senators, and the Committee met with Assistant to the Chancellor Tami Strickman who provided helpful information. He reported that the document is available on the Senate website.

Professor Woodman stated that the subcommittee relied on AAUP publications and developed a list of 13 categories that dealt with issues that faculty commonly face such as academic freedom, rights regarding inviting guest speakers, outside work and what our obligations are, annual evaluations, and the ability to file a grievance, to name a few. He noted that many faculty members were not even aware that the Academic Rights & Responsibilities Committee exists.

Professor Woodman pointed out that the nature of the document is not to be a policy, but to provide faculty members with information they may need. He stated that the document can be updated quickly and is strictly for information purposes. He stated that a similar document at the University of Kansas was approved by their Chancellor and this could possibly occur here in the future with our document.

Professor Peterson, Agricultural Economics, noted that the Senate recently considered and approved changes to the Academic Rights & Responsibilities Procedures and suggested that it might be helpful to reference these procedures in the Faculty Rights document.

Professor Dussault, Chemistry, stated that there is some language in the preamble which is confusing. Professor Leiter, Law, agreed and pointed out that no employee of the university loses their rights as a citizen and stating this seems to be redundant. Professor Gailey pointed out that not all employees are actually citizens.

Professor Lindquist, Agronomy & Horticulture, asked if the subcommittee was interested in getting feedback on the document. Professor Woodman stated that feedback could be sent to either him or Professor Leiter. He stated that he would report back to the Senate on the feedback received.

6.0 Louise Pound-George Howard Award Ballot

President-Elect Belli noted that the nominations for the Louise Pound-George Howard Award were brought forward to the Senate from the Honorary Degrees Committee. He noted, that if approved by the Senate, the nominees would be presented with the award at a future Senate meeting and at The Laurels, the faculty recognition ceremony, in September. Ballots were then distributed and the Senate voted.

7.0 Unfinished Business

No unfinished business was discussed.

8.0 New Business

8.1 Ballot for Elections to the Academic Planning Committee, Academic Rights & Responsibilities Committee, and the Academic Rights & Responsibilities Panel

President-Elect Belli stated that the proposed ballot for elections to the committees was coming from the Committee on Committees for Senate approval. He noted that the ballot was being presented for consideration and would be voted on at the March 5 meeting.

9.0 Open Mic

No issues were raised to the Senate.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:44 p.m. The next meeting of the Faculty Senate will be held on Tuesday, March 5, 2019, at 2:30 p.m. in the City Campus Union, Regency Suite. The minutes are respectfully submitted by Karen Griffin, Coordinator, and Lorna Dawes, Secretary.