

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES

Present: Adenwalla, Belli, Buan, Franco Cruz, Hanrahan, Peterson, Vakilzadian, Woodman

Absent: Franco Cruz, Fech, Kolbe, Minter, Purcell

Date: Tuesday, June 18, 2019

Location: 203 Alexander Building

Note: These are not verbatim minutes. They are a summary of the discussions at the Executive Committee meeting as corrected by those participating.

1.0 Call (*Hanrahan*)

Hanrahan called the meeting to order at 2:34 p.m.

2.0 Associate VC Goodburn, Associate VC Walker, and Assistant VC Tuttle

Associate VC Goodburn reported that a year ago former EVC Plowman created a student course evaluations task force committee and charged the committee to consider and potentially recommend a possible new common online student course evaluation survey, along with policy statements to go with it. She noted that after conducting national research the committee has now submitted its recommendations. Included in the recommendations was to keep student responses to course evaluations anonymous and not releasing the evaluations to the instructor until after the final grades for the course have been submitted. Other recommendations include prioritizing the use of peer review and instructor self-evaluation alongside student course surveys for instructor evaluation.

Associate VC Goodburn reported that in February about 120 instructors piloted a mid-term course evaluation to about 5,000 students, both undergraduate and graduate. Associate VC Walker pointed out that the intent of the course survey was for students to evaluate their own experience in a class, but not to evaluate the expertise of the instructor.

Associate VC Goodburn stated that the committee made revisions to some of the questions based on the results of the pilot survey, including expanded categories on the Likert scale for questions and tweaking the language to focus on student experience. She pointed out that there is still the opportunity to make further revisions if needed.

Associate VC Walker distributed information showing the aggregate results of the mid-term pilot which is how the instructors will receive feedback on the evaluations. She noted that the questions that were on the survey were included with the results. Adenwalla pointed out that she is averse to the use of the word “feel” in the questions because it is not a rational or objective word and responses depend highly on an instructor’s personality. She noted that the survey is not a measure of an instructor’s ability. Associate VC Walker stated that the use of the word “feel” makes it clear that the

question is subjective, and that it is about the student's experience, not a judgement of the instructor's ability. Buan stated that she appreciates that the idea is to have course evaluations focus on the student's experience since they are not experts in pedagogy, but she pointed out that there will still be chairs and senior faculty members who will use the evaluations in a punitive way when conducting the annual evaluation of a faculty member. Woodman pointed out that judgements will still be made, regardless of how the questions are worded and there will always be bias. Latta Konecky noted that the use of the word feel reinforces the experience of the student.

Adenwalla asked how students were encouraged to respond to the course evaluations. Associate VC Goodburn noted that 5,435 students received the evaluations and 4,074 of them responded for a response rate of 74.96%. She stated that the course evaluations were mobile accessible and many instructors allowed students to complete the evaluation during class time. She stated that in addition to the data on the responses to each question, instructors will receive the written comments. Hanrahan asked if students can make comments after each question. Associate VC Walker stated that only the questions at the end of the survey allow comments. Hanrahan asked if the responses will be retained by the system. Tuttle stated that he is uncertain about this and would need to follow up on the question. (Please note: the follow-up to this question states that the report of the evaluations does not list the student name or ID or any other specific information, except the IP address which can be removed. However, a "raw data" Excel file gives the data on each individual student's responses in rows and an instructor can look at the columns in the same row to see how that student answered other questions.)

Associate VC Walker reported that the instructors who conducted the pilot study were also surveyed to get their feedback on the evaluation questions that were used. Associate VC Goodburn noted that 120 instructors were involved and 79 of them responded.

Associate VC Walker stated that one of the charges to the committee was to recommend a tool that could be used for the evaluations. She noted that EvaluationKit is an online survey tool that was recommended by the committee, and it has been successfully used previously in the College of Business. She stated the ScanTron forms that are currently being used are labor intensive and the in-house CrsEval system is becoming obsolete. Associate VC Goodburn noted that the delivery platform for course evaluations will be changing. Associate VC Walker stated that the only decision that has been made at this time is to purchase EvaluationKit which can be used through Canvas.

Hanrahan asked whether One IT at the system level will have a say in the use of the EvaluationKit or whether there will be a push for each of the campuses to use the same course evaluation system. He pointed out that UNO uses AEFIS which interfaces with Canvas. Tuttle noted that we have a three-year contract with EvaluationKit, and UNL does not have a connection with UNO's AEFIS. Hanrahan suggested contacting UNK who say they get a 70-80% response rate from online course evaluations, but his personal experience is that online response is low.

Adenwalla noted that the instructors' responses indicated that they were annoyed by the repeated reminders for the evaluation. Woodman pointed out that this timing issue has been fixed. Associate VC Goodburn reported that many of the students felt it was good to do the course evaluation mid-semester because they felt more invested and thought the instructor could make some improvements midway through the course based on the feedback of the students. She pointed out that if student response is increasingly negative there may be need to restructure a course. Adenwalla noted that there are some courses that cannot be easily tailored. Associate VC Walker stated that if students are regularly commenting that something is not working this should initiate a discussion on whether a course, or a requirement, could be done better. She pointed out that this is not a judgement on the instructor, but it is still useful information to have.

Adenwalla noted that in the final recommendations of the subcommittee the committee members came to the conclusion that units should not use isolated course surveys to assess an instructor's teaching, and suggested instead that units should also include peer review and instructor self-reflection. She asked if these would be rolled out together. Associate VC Walker stated that training and guidelines will need to be developed and there will need to be a shift from strictly looking at course evaluations to determine effective teaching. She pointed out that our current way of using course evaluations strictly to determine effective teaching is not working well. Adenwalla noted that peer reviews can be difficult to arrange because the faculty are so time crunched as it is, and it is difficult to criticize a colleague. She stated that faculty would need to learn how to do peer reviews. Associate VC Walker stated that we need to develop a culture around peer review, and the important thing is for us to accept feedback from our colleagues.

Adenwalla pointed out that instructor reflection would be another hoop for faculty members to jump through for promotion and tenure and she asked how faculty members would fold the additional task into their time. Associate VC Goodburn reported that there are many different models of instructor self-reflection. Some might be for an instructor to write a paragraph or two on how they think their course went and what the course evaluations told the instructor, but how the self-reflection is done depends on the unit. Peterson noted that there used to be instructor reflection with the ACE courses, although he does not know if this is still a requirement.

Woodman stated that he has never seen a negative peer review or saw a self-reflection document. He noted that for non-tenure track faculty members the only reward system is with teaching since many of them cannot distinguish themselves with research work. He pointed out that non-tenure track faculty members are often judged at a higher standard for teaching and the current process restricts a non-tenure track faculty member from excelling.

Belli noted that there is not a standardized process for gauging teaching effectiveness. Associate VC Walker stated that she hopes that the new Center for Transformative Teaching will work on developing a standardized process, but it has to be meaningful and effective. Belli suggested that one of the standardized elements is to provide a question on what an instructor can do to make improvements in a course. Associate VC Walker

noted that all of the research recommends that a form, a common protocol that everybody agrees to and uses makes the process more equitable. She agreed that a standardization process can go wrong, but having a common protocol is appropriate and needed. Buan pointed out that the function of peer review is to normalize behavior, but care needs to be exerted to allow for innovation and the best judges of this are the students.

Associate VC Walker reported that the new set of standard questions could be a lot more useful for those instructors who are less personable in their teaching style if we accept that a student needs to feel respected and welcomed in class. Latta Konecky pointed out that an instructor can come up with a way to make the students feel respected by the feedback that is provided on the course evaluations.

Vakilzadian noted that he asks a particular question on his course evaluations because he has found it to be very helpful to him. Associate VC Walker pointed out that colleges, departments, and instructors will have the opportunity to add more questions for their courses. Vakilzadian stated that one standard question should be how the course could be improved.

Hanrahan stated that there seems to be a disconnection between the subcommittee's initial recommendation and the final recommendations in regards to solely using the course evaluations to assess an instructor's teaching. He pointed out that there is no change in the policy about how course evaluations will be used and he predicts that the current practice of strictly using them to evaluate teaching will continue. Associate VC Walker noted that the date on the initial recommendations of the subcommittee was December 2018 and the final recommendations June 2019 after there was further deliberation by the full committee. She stated that the committee felt that the student evaluations have to be part of the summative evaluation of teaching, but the problem is that there are some units that are relying exclusively on the numbers from the course evaluations and this needs to change. She noted that students still need to be able to voice their opinion on a course and faculty members need to be evaluated. Associate VC Goodburn pointed out that two different subcommittees authored the texts. She stated that as we move forward the language between the two documents needs to be married.

Adenwalla asked what mechanisms there are to help faculty members improve their teaching. Associate VC Goodburn stated that one opportunity will be hiring a Director for the Center for Transformative Teaching. She noted that we need to identify best practices for effective teaching at UNL.

3.0 Announcements

3.1 Graduate Student Health Insurance

Hanrahan reported that Varner Hall has found some funds that can be used to pay for the increased cost of the Graduate Student Health Insurance for this year, but it is not a long-term fix. He noted that GSA President Ratcliff is continuing to have discussions with Chancellor Green about the issue.

Belli asked if a committee is going to be formed to address the problem and whether there will be representation of faculty and students on the committee. Hanrahan stated that the Senate Presidents will ask to meet with Interim President Fritz in August to discuss how committees and policy decisions are made that affect faculty, staff, and students and how each group can get proper representation from each group on the committees.

3.2 Associate Vice President & CIO Bret Blackman

Hanrahan reported that Bret Blackman, from UNO, has been named Associate VP and CIO of Information Technologies. He stated that as a result UNL will need to hire a CIO since CIO Askren will be retiring from the university this fall.

3.3 Response from Board of Regents on Presidential Search

Hanrahan stated that he finally received a letter from the Board of Regents responding to the Faculty Senate Presidents' letter of May 21st that had questions regarding the search for a new University President. He noted that he asked Chancellor Green if he had any updates on the search, but no information was available.

3.4 Center for Transformative Teaching Director Search

Woodman stated that there are two final candidates for the director's position and they were recently on campus for interviews. He anticipated that an announcement will be made soon if an offer has been made and accepted.

4.0 Approval of May 21, 2019 Minutes and June 4, 2019 Minutes

Hanrahan asked if there were any discussions or revisions to the May 21, 2019 revised minutes. Hearing none he asked for unanimous approval from the Committee. The minutes were approved. There were two abstentions.

Hanrahan asked if there were any discussions or revisions to the June 4, 2019 revised minutes. Hearing none he asked for unanimous approval from the Committee. The minutes were approved. There was one abstention.

5.0 Unfinished Business

5.1 Non-Tenure Track Board of Regents Bylaw Changes

Agenda item postponed.

6.0 New Business

6.1 Agenda Items for Chancellor Green and Interim EVC Moberly

The Executive Committee identified the following agenda items for the July 2 meeting with Chancellor Green and Interim EVC Moberly.

- Update on Lecturer Salary Situation
- What is the Status of the Proposed BOR Bylaw Changes Regarding Extension Educators?
- Status of Proposed Changes to ARRC Procedures
- Status of the Title IX Demands
- Graduate Student Health Insurance Permanent Fix

- Update on Facilitator for the Retreat
- Update on UMR increasing the compensation to mental health care Providers
- Enrollment Projections

6.2 Service Delivery Initiative Implementation Committee Members Needed

Hanrahan asked for nominations of people to serve on the SDI Committee. Several faculty members were recommended and Hanrahan stated that he would contact them to see if they would be willing to serve.

6.3 Search for UNL CIO

Hanrahan noted that the search for the UNL CIO was recently announced and the announcement stated that it was for internal members only. The Executive Committee asked why the search was being restricted and questioned who would be making the hiring decision. The Committee agreed to raise the questions with the Chancellor at its next meeting.

6.4 Student Title IX Demands to the University

Hanrahan asked the Executive Committee to read the document and be familiarized with it so the Committee can discuss it with the Chancellor.

6.5 RCM Committee Update (Peterson)

Peterson reported that the Committee will be meeting next week and announced that there was an information session coming up on June 25 and another one towards the end of August.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:42 p.m. The next meeting of the Executive Committee will be on Tuesday, July 2, 2019 at 2:30 pm. The meeting will be held in 201 Canfield Administration. The minutes are respectfully submitted by Karen Griffin, Coordinator and Joan Latta Konecky, Secretary.