

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES

Present: Billesbach, Buan, Dam, Dawes, Eklund, Franco Cruz, Gay, Hanrahan, Kolbe, Krehbiel, Minter, Weissling, Woodman

Absent:

Date: Tuesday, November 10, 2020

Location: Zoom meeting

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 (*Buan*)

Buan called the meeting to order at 2:33 p.m.

2.0 Chancellor Green, EVC Spiller, VC Boehm

2.1 What is the plan for managing gatherings on campus (by students and the public) during home athletic events?

Chancellor Green confirmed that no event will be allowed on campus, including tailgating, during athletic events. He stated that the only exception is the Nebraska Alumni Association, which own and manages the Champions Club, will have a small gathering of people and they are required to follow the Lincoln City pandemic guidelines for public safety. He stated that the campus will be policed and if there are any gatherings they will be dispersed.

2.2 Will we expand on-campus testing when we return for Spring Semester? Who will do this testing? Why didn't we do this sooner? Are Extension Educators in County Offices included in these plans?

Chancellor Green reported that expanded on-campus testing for the spring is already being worked on and we are building capacity to expand our testing. He noted that we have been working daily with the Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department (LLCHD) and following their advisement throughout the pandemic. He pointed out that our random mitigation testing indicates a 2.5% positivity rate which was what we expected. He noted that we will be in a very different environment for the spring semester due to the difference in the seasons and people being forced to be indoors.

VC Boehm stated that our number one priority is safety for all of our faculty, staff, and students and Extension has been in constant dialogue with health districts across the state with each one being treated as a unique dynamic. He pointed out that whatever the decisions are regarding testing for the spring semester it will be for the UNL's statewide campus which includes testing capabilities for Extension team members.

Chancellor Green reported that UNL was advised by LLCHD not to do expansive testing in the fall semester but has recommended it for the spring semester when people will be

indoors. He noted that the cost for the increased testing will be significant and the University is working through how to fund it. He stated that if we should receive further stimulus funding it would go to support the testing. Billesbach asked if there will be testing stations on East Campus. Chancellor Green stated that there will be a drive-through testing station on East Campus.

Billesbach asked why, at times, have we followed the advice of LLCHD rather than the advice of UNMC experts in infectious diseases. Chancellor Green pointed out that we have been in concert with UNMC and following their guidance which is the same guidance as the LLCHD for testing.

Woodman noted that there will soon be a change in the country's leadership and asked if we would follow the federal government's guidelines in January or do we prioritize our decisions based on the advice of the local health department. Chancellor Green pointed out that we have consistently followed the CDC's guidelines and to ensure that we are in compliance and that this will not change once the new President takes office.

2.3 What are the work expectations for contract faculty after Thanksgiving? Before Spring semester starts?

EVC Spiller re-confirmed, as stated in earlier Executive Committee discussions, that there have been no changes to the contract start and end dates for faculty for the 2020-21 academic year. She stated that faculty members on an academic year appointment began their appointment on August 17th and it will continue through May 14, 2021. She stated that Lecturer-Ts, who are typically appointed on a single semester basis, have a start date of August 17th through January 3, 2021 for the fall semester and January 4, 2021 through May 14, 2021 for the spring semester. She noted that their specific duties are outlined in their contract. She also reaffirmed that she has explicitly asked the Deans to work with DEOs to be mindful of the 9-week interval this year between the end of the fall semester and the beginning of the spring semester as an important opportunity for faculty members and graduate teaching and research assistants to focus on their research or preparations for teaching.

2.4 Update on Improvements for Lecturers

EVC Spiller noted that she indicated at her previous meeting with the Executive Committee that she hopes to provide a substantive update in January regarding Lecturers.

2.5 Can individual colleges set pay scales or promotion paths for contract faculty? Why or why not?

EVC Spiller pointed out that the University has standardized ranks that must be adhered to and it would not be possible for individual colleges to establish their own faculty titles. She stated that if there are any changes to the Lecturer pathway that it would be important that there be equity across the University and any modifications at that level would likely require system approval.

Hanrahan asked if it is a campus rule or a system-wide rule that Professors of Practice must have a doctorate degree and wondered if there will be a move to standardize the

requirement for these positions. EVC Spiller stated that the requirements for these positions would need to be looked at and noted that the College of Arts and Sciences would need to be a part of this conversation.

Woodman asked if colleges could set the salaries for Lecturers. EVC Spiller reported that colleges do have the ability to establish salaries for non-tenure track faculty members and she has encouraged Dean Button to make determinations about improvements in Lecturer salaries. She noted that Deans should be encouraged to move the Lecturer salaries to the level of peer institutions, and it would be best to do this when contracts are initiated or renewed. Woodman pointed out that some Lecturers have different end times for their contract, and they could lag behind those Lecturers whose contracts are up for renewal sooner. EVC Spiller stated that Dean Button is aware of this and she noted that the budget situation is very tight due to the pandemic so changes may not happen immediately.

2.6 Over-ruling of Faculty Votes for Graduate Faculty Status

EVC Spiller shared responses from Dean Carr and recommended that the Senate consider inviting Dean Carr to meet with the group to discuss any additional concerns.

2.7 How will the University respond to the issues raised by the Black Student Union in its recent letter to the editor in the Daily Nebraskan?

Chancellor Green reported that the letter was also sent to a number of administrators at the University and noted that the BSU leaders met with the Co-Chairs of UNL's Journey toward Anti-Racism the day after the letter was sent and positive conversations have been occurring since then between the two groups. He reported that the bias issues are currently being addressed and he has asked Professor Catherine Wilson and Susan Swearer to review our policies and procedures on reporting and outcomes relating to bias incidents. He stated that the goal is to have the review completed before the end of December.

Woodman noted that there were two incidents recently involving members of the Greek system and asked what the outcomes have been. Chancellor Green stated that the issue regarding the stealing of signs has been resolved and processed through the Student Code of Conduct and the individuals involved have been appropriately dealt with. He reported that he met personally with the officers of the fraternity to follow up with them and the house is planning to have meetings and interaction with the neighborhood. He stated that diversity training for the Greek houses is being evaluated and addressed by Greek Affairs.

Gay asked if the public was notified of the actions taken under the Student Code of Conduct to address the stealing of the signs which appeared to be a racist act. Chancellor Green stated that actions have been taken against the four students involved in the incident, but he does not believe any information was made public once the Student Code of Conduct process was completed. He pointed out that the incidents were automatically identified as racist in nature because some of the signs stolen from properties with Black

Lives Matter, but, it was more complex because many other signs were also stolen representing a variety of federal and state political campaigns.

Weissling asked the Chancellor if he feels we are making the kind of progress in diversity that he hoped we would make. Chancellor Green stated that he believes that we are making progress, although most of it may not yet be visible he is very encouraged by the work of the Co-Leaders on UNL's Journey and with the work of the Office of Diversity and Inclusion. He noted that we have not had time in the three months of this work to deal directly with the systemic issues yet, but he is very encouraged by the conversations that are occurring and he anticipates that we will be making progress.

2.8 UNL's Response if COVID cases in Lincoln/Lancaster continue to rise?

Chancellor Green noted that everything is predicated on the public health system's ability to handle the increasing number of COVID cases. He stated that currently we have about 30% remaining hospital capacity to address COVID patients without having to restrict any elective medical procedures. He stated that if the number of hospitalizations increases, we could have to step back on some of our current procedures and noted that some universities have restricted movement on campus which could be an option here. He pointed out that we continue to have very close contact with the local health authorities.

Hanrahan asked if the University has a civic responsibility to handle things differently if the county threat level continues to rise. Chancellor Green noted that he appreciates the question and stated that LLCHD has advised the University that we are safer continuing our current practices rather than changing to a different mode of operation. He pointed out that the University already has practices and procedures in place far beyond the level of what is occurring in the public community.

Chancellor Green noted that this wave of the pandemic is quite different in terms of demographics. He pointed out that locally a much greater percentage (approximately 30%) of the case loads are now in the under 30-year old age categories. He stated that he feels confident that we have minimized the campus risk by taking all of the actions that we have.

Franco Cruz asked if we can be sure that there has been no transmission of the virus from classrooms and labs given the contact tracing that has been conducted. Chancellor Green noted that the 31,000 faculty, staff, and students of UNL make up 10% of Lincoln's population. He stated that there was a period of time in the beginning of the semester when UNL's case load was higher than the community but now our case load is lower than the city's. He stated that we cannot guarantee that there has been absolutely no class transmission but the contact tracing that has been conducted has not detected any transmission from classrooms or labs. Any cases on campus have been through social interactions. EVC Spiller stated that in weekly meetings of Provosts from the Big Ten universities there have been no reports of transmission from classrooms or labs.

Woodman asked if the same logic will be used to determine opening the campus for the spring semester. Chancellor Green noted that the situation is fluid, and we will have to assess the situation on a real-time basis, but people should be prepared to be resilient and flexible with what we end up doing for the spring semester.

3.0 Announcements

3.1 Town Hall Meeting

Buan reported that she attended the Town Hall meeting this week where the Chancellor talked about mandatory testing in the spring semester and AVC Goodburn and VC Wilhelm provided updates on the plans for the opening of the spring semester. She noted that the Chancellor spoke about the budget reduction proposals and she pointed out that the Academic Planning Committee is currently considering the proposed cuts. She stated that the Chancellor talked about the State Legislature and how UNL's budget plans were based on a flat increase of tuition and increased costs to benefits but the Chancellor reported that the State Forecasting Board has shown improved numbers with state tax receipts which might help the University's budget.

Buan stated that the Chancellor talked about racial biases and diversity within the student curriculum and the concerns raised by the Black Student Union. She stated that he also talked about the Office of Diversity and Inclusion's efforts which include a diversity workshop that was recently held.

Buan reported that VC Wilhelm spoke on the positive research expenditures for this year and Chancellor Green talked about research/creative activity. She stated that CIO Tuttle spoke on the need for cyber security and encouraged everyone to sign up for Duo Authentication if they have not done so already and to make sure it is installed on personal devices that connect to the University system.

Buan noted that the Chancellor mentioned the proposed Bylaw changes and thanked the Faculty Senate and the Ad Hoc Committee to Address the AAUP Censure for all of the hard work they have done.

3.2 UNL Police Advisory Board

Buan reported that Kolbe and Professor Cooper Owens, a Senator and faculty member from History, have agreed to serve on the Police Advisory Board.

3.3 Qualtrics for Faculty Senate

Buan stated that the Faculty Senate will have a subscription to Qualtrics for a year and it will be used for the fall faculty survey. She noted that UNL does not have an institutional license, so departments and colleges need to purchase it individually.

4.0 Approval of October 27, 2020 Minutes

Buan asked if there were any further revisions to the minutes. Hearing none she stated that the Executive Committee minutes were approved.

5.0 Unfinished Business

No unfinished business was discussed.

6.0 New Business

6.1 Pass/No Pass Policy for Fall Semester – ASUN President Miller and Internal Vice President Harrahill

Buan noted that she distributed the information provided by Miller to the Executive Committee prior to the meeting. Miller reported that ASUN unanimously passed a resolution on November 4 calling for the University to change the pass/no pass policy to mirror the changes that were made during the spring semester. She noted that the deadline for changing to a pass/no pass grade would be extended until after the final grades were posted for a class and this would apply to all courses and would not be factored into the student's GPA. She pointed out that she sent the Executive Committee, a letter signed by all of the Student Presidents from the Big Ten schools, urging the faculty of each campus to revisit their pass/no pass policy and Penn State, Ohio State, and Michigan State have changed their policy. She reported that ASUN has received over 400 testimonies from students recounting the difficulties they have encountered this semester. She then shared two of the testimonials with the Committee.

Harrahill noted that the spring semester was out of everyone's control and that classes had to be switched to remote instruction quickly causing difficulties for both students and faculty. He pointed out that he served on the Academic Planning Task Force this summer and the expectations for the fall semester was that we would not experience the drastic change that occurred in the spring. However, the preparations did not prepare students for the drain on their academic life with the variety of ways courses were being delivered and the fatigue caused by the compressed semester.

Billesbach asked if ASUN's resolution was for a permanent change. He also questioned whether the change would impact university accreditation. Miller pointed out that the resolution states that the change would just be for the fall semester. Billesbach noted that courses required for majors are currently for a grade only. He asked if the policy would apply to these courses as well. Miller stated that the resolution ensures that all courses can be taken pass/no pass which mirrors the spring pass/no pass policy. Harrahill pointed out that some of the required courses cause the greatest stress for students and if students do not perform well due to the difficulties with teaching during the pandemic, it could interfere with their academic career and factor into retaining their scholarships.

Woodman asked if the spring pass/no pass policy was in place for the summer classes. Miller stated that she did not think it was. Woodman asked if students had any problems because it was not offered. Miller stated that no students reached out to ASUN during the summer with concerns about it. Woodman questioned whether students are aware that this policy would not allow them to meet the requirements of their majors. He pointed out that the last day to withdraw from a class has passed and he is concerned for those students who adhered to the deadline dates dropping a course only to find out that they could have taken the course pass/no pass if the Executive Committee approved the resolution. Harrahill stated that students would be recommended to speak with an advisor before changing a required course to pass/no pass to ensure that this is a good

change for their academic progress. Woodman asked if students who withdrew would be given the option to re-enroll if the pass/no pass option is approved.

Eklund asked whether a pass/no pass, particularly for required courses, would disadvantage a student getting into high level medical universities or other graduate programs. Harrahill noted that he is applying for medical schools and he has found that Admissions at universities have been very forgiving because of the situation created by COVID-19. He pointed out that the policy would still be an opt-in policy and it would be up to the student to determine whether they wanted to stay with the grade only option. Miller stated that the policy would give students more flexibility and control during this difficult semester.

Buan reported that there has not been a large increase of withdrawals from courses. She stated that another option is that the pass/no pass option deadline date could be extended by a week if the faculty agree. Woodman and Billesbach stated that they prefer this option. Billesbach moved that the deadline for a change to pass/no pass be extended until November 18th. The motion failed due to not receiving a second. Minter pointed out that it is very late in the semester to make this kind of change and it disrupts the way teachers and students have been thinking about the semester. She suggested that it could be considered for the spring semester. Kolbe suggested that it be considered for the 3-week sessions. Buan stated that she would communicate the Executive Committees' decision to Miller and Harrahill.

6.2 Spring “Test Holidays” or “Reading Days” - ASUN President Miller and Internal Vice President Harrahill

Miller reported that she asked EVC Spiller about whether there would be the potential to have either some reading days or test free days during the compressed spring semester to help alleviate the pressure on students. She stated that the idea would be to have three separate days during the semester, perhaps one a month, when no tests or major assignments would be due or possibly not even having class.

Buan suggested having a somewhat coordinated unspring break with the three days in one week, or to have wellness days which could be determined by the instructor based on their class plans. Miller pointed out that the administrators were concerned that students might leave campus if the days are grouped together which could lead to the students contracting COVID.

Woodman stated that he is concerned for lab classes which can be taught every day of the week to accommodate all the students in a course. Harrahill suggested having days off from course requirements like the 15th week policy rather than actual days off. Hanrahan noted that it has been a challenge for faculty to get all of the required material in for a course during these compressed semesters and taking three more days away would have impacts. Miller noted that having some time that students can count on for having a little break would be helpful to them. Hanrahan suggested encouraging faculty to build into their syllabi days where no assignments are required or that there is a light load. Harrahill stated that this was first considered but there are concerns that some faculty

members would combine the days into one period creating a de facto spring break and some might not utilize the relaxed days at all.

Dam asked if students feel that professors have increased their daily workload because of online classes in order to make students more accountable as opposed to being in a classroom. Miller pointed out that she and Harrahill are both seniors and well adjusted in what to expect from a course, but she has heard from many freshmen and sophomores that they think there are more assignments.

Minter stated that she is not a fan of the idea because it can impact departments and disciplines differently. She suggested encouraging the EVC to ask faculty to have a day with less expectations for the students and consider drafting a statement that would provide faculty the option of having these relaxed days. Miller stated that having the EVC provide a statement is a good idea, but she would want some guiding framework provided so that all students would benefit from these relaxed days. Eklund pointed out that faculty are struggling to get the end of term activities completed during the compressed semester and eliminating days would make this even more difficult.

Krehbiel asked if other supports to help students need to be put into place besides altering the academic calendar. Miller stated that this is something the ASUN has been working hard on to advocate for students and they are trying to provide students with as much information about CAPS and other services. She noted that the University could do a better job with connecting students with resources but having a layered approach and having some wellness days could help. Weissling stated that if there is going to be a policy faculty need to clearly announce which days they will designate as these relaxed days.

Buan reported that she asked the Teaching Council to consider the proposal and when she asked faculty in her department half of them said they wanted a spring break. Dawes, who is a member of the Teaching Council, reported that the Council felt a statement should be made because they are aware that students are very fatigued, but faculty members should be allowed to opt in for offering these days. She noted that the Council raised the same concerns that the Executive Committee members were raising. Buan asked if the Executive Committee wanted to endorse the recommendations made by the Teaching Council. The Executive Committee decided to address the agenda item further at its next meeting.

6.3 Continuity of Instruction

Agenda item postponed until next meeting.

6.4 Spring Faculty Senate and Executive Committee Schedule

Griffin asked if there should be a January 12th Faculty Senate meeting since the spring semester will not begin until January 25. She also asked when the Executive Committee should begin meeting in January. The Executive Committee decided that the Senate will not meet in January due to concerns that there will not be a quorum and that the Executive Committee meetings would begin January 19th unless it needs to meet earlier.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:50 p.m. The next meeting of the Executive Committee will be on Tuesday, November 17, 2020 at 2:30 pm. The meeting will be conducted via Zoom. The minutes are respectfully submitted by Karen Griffin, Coordinator and Lorna Dawes, Secretary.