

UNL FACULTY SENATE MEETING MINUTES
December 1, 2020
Presidents Nicole Buan, Steve Kolbe and Kevin Hanrahan, Presiding
Zoom Meeting

1.0 Call to Order

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

2.0 Announcements

2.1 Fall Semester Survey

President Buan reported that the Executive Committee recently sent out a survey to faculty members about their teaching experience this fall semester. She asked Senators to encourage their colleagues to fill out the survey noting that it does not take much time and the answers would be anonymous.

2.2 Spring Faculty Senate Schedule

President Buan announced that there will not be a January Senate meeting since the semester will not start until January 25. She stated that an updated schedule will be sent out to Senators later and the new schedule will be updated on the Senate website.

3.0 Chancellor Green

Chancellor Green wanted to thank the faculty for the adaptations they had to make to deliver their courses with such quality which resulted in a successful semester during a very difficult time. He noted that although the semester was exhausting and challenging, we were able to complete it and continued to deliver our educational mission.

Chancellor Green reported that although most students have left campus to return home over the extended break, there are still approximately 650 students living on campus through the intersession. He noted that these are predominantly international students and pointed out that the University will continue to take care of them while they are here on campus.

Chancellor Green stated that the first new three-week intersession started yesterday and the enrollment for the December and the January mini sessions has been quite good. He stated that it is heartening to hear from the students that the three-week session allows them to take courses that will allow them to graduate in a timely manner.

Chancellor Green reported that there will be a celebration of commencement for December graduates which will be hosted virtually and instead of having a guest speaker there will be a conversation with Warren Buffet which will be a special highlight for the graduates.

Chancellor Green stated that the planning for the spring semester continues to progress well, our enrollment is holding strong and he hopes this continues as we welcome the students back. He noted that the campus continues to work with the Lincoln/Lancaster County Health Department about testing for the spring semester. He reported that an announcement will be made later this week about mandatory testing both for re-entry as well as every two weeks for those people coming to campus. He pointed out that we will be setting up our own testing approach which will be a less invasive procedure. He stated that for the fall semester we had slightly less than 19,400 tests with just slightly over 1,780 positive tests for a positivity rate of 9%. He reported that the push to get people tested before they left the campus to return home was successful as seen in the elevated number of tests that were conducted and the need to have additional testing capacity.

Chancellor Green reported that the Academic Planning Committee worked hard through the fall semester to review and consider the Phase 2 proposed budget reductions and recently submitted its

recommendations to him. He noted that he is currently considering the Committee's recommendations and stated that the campus will hear later this week the outcome of his decision.

Chancellor Green reported that if each of the other campuses approve the proposed revisions to the Regents Bylaws it will be on the Board of Regents agenda for February for its first read with a final review and vote in April. He noted that we are all looking forward to it being completed and it successfully moving through the final stages of the process.

Chancellor Green noted that he has been involved in conversations with Chancellors and Presidents from other universities regarding the federal transition when President-Elect Biden will take office. He stated that he is encouraged about the discussions regarding the stimulus funding and there is the expectation that there may be considerable funding for higher education to assist with the cost of COVID testing, deployment of the vaccine and student support. He reported that the University has made a significant request to the State for additional support related to COVID testing which is critical for us to be able to do the increased testing in the spring semester.

Chancellor Green stated that in the spring semester there will be renewed focus on the N2025 Strategic Plan. He noted that the leadership team reviewed what has already been accomplished this year even during the difficulty of dealing with the pandemic.

Chancellor Green reported that several construction projects have been completed or are near completion. He stated that the Dinsdale Family Learning Commons on East Campus is very near completion, the Nebraska East Union renovation and addition is now completed as is the Gnotobiotic Mouse Facility. He stated that the Canfield Administration building renovations are nearing completion, the Scott Engineering building and addition is being enclosed, and the Scarlet hotel being constructed on Nebraska Innovation Campus is moving forward. He noted that the Board of Regents will be considering several building projects including the design for the Barkley Center, renovation of the Law Library, and the Athletics football training facility which is proposed to move forward in two phases. He noted that the design for Kiewit Hall is nearing completion.

Chancellor Green wanted to congratulate all the UNL faculty members who received the University awards this year: Professor Jody Kellas, Sociology, and Professor Walter Stroup, Statistics who were recipients of the Outstanding Teaching and Instructional Creativity Award; Professor Edgar Cahoon, recipient of the Outstanding Research and Creative Activity Award, and Nebraska College of Law received the Inclusive Excellence Collaboration Award.

4.0 Executive Vice Chancellor Spiller

EVC Spiller wanted to extend her sincere gratitude to the faculty, particularly to the Senators and members of the Executive Committee, for all of the thought and care that was given to allow us to continue the fall semester. She noted that this has been a hard time for our students, and she appreciates everything the faculty are doing to maintain high quality in the classroom. She stated that she hopes the 9-week break between the fall and spring semester will allow faculty to spend time on research and creative activities.

EVC Spiller stated that typically in the first 9-months of coming to campus she does a listening tour to meet with the colleges to learn as much as possible and she is looking forward to doing this once the pandemic is under control.

EVC Spiller reported that in response to COVID and the impact it had on lost opportunities for students to participate in study abroad programs and internships, the campus responded by creating more summer courses. She noted that over 100 proposed and expanded courses were submitted by faculty members. She pointed out that the Center for Transformative Teaching offered expanded workshops to instructors to help them with remote teaching and digital learning and many faculty members took advantage of these workshops. She stated that our summer enrollments reflected the energy of the faculty and the interest of the students as evident by the 8% increase in enrollment

and the 9.4% increase in credit hours.

EVC Spiller noted that the usual summer interactions on campus for new freshmen students were not possible due to COVID but we instead offered the Husker Starter package for these students. She reported that 400 students participated by taking almost 500 courses which allowed students to start earlier and allowed them to become part of the Husker community.

EVC Spiller stated that with the modified fall and spring semester we can offer two 3-week remote courses which will be beneficial to students allowing them to continue making progress towards their graduation. She reported that over 1,400 students have enrolled for the December 3-week session and enrollment is looking good for the spring 3-week session. She stated that advisors across the campus and global affairs have spent a great time with international students, many of whom could not go home because of the pandemic.

EVC Spiller stated that regarding faculty affairs the tenure clock extension policy has been modified because of the pandemic and technology in the classrooms was improved due to funding from the CARES Act. She reported that course delivery will be slightly modulated in the spring semester noting that while the high-flex model of delivery worked well for some courses, in others it was difficult if some students were digital while others were in the classroom. She stated that for spring the largest classes will be moved to remote or online to allow a greater number of smaller courses to meet in person in the larger classrooms. She noted that the plan is to have 75% of the spring courses delivered in person. She stated that she is very happy to have discussions about instructional continuity, test holidays, and the difficulty of the compressed semester. She noted that she will be working with the Provost's office on a calendar proposal for the coming year.

EVC Spiller reported that the incentive-based budget model was implemented this year and more information will be provided on how it aligns and supports our academic mission. She pointed out that the value of the model's transparency and how it is outcome oriented allows us to see how we are doing collectively. She pointed out that even as the budget model gives the deans and departments more autonomy to make informed decisions, we do not want to lose our cross-disciplinary work between the colleges. She stated that we want to make sure that the budget model helps us achieve the outcomes we are striving for, and it is good at making sure resources go to certain outcomes that have been achieved.

EVC Spiller reported that Professor Brassil, School of Biological Sciences, is serving as Faculty Director for Undergraduate in her office and is looking at equity gaps in undergraduate education. She pointed out that we now have a much larger database to view and Professor Brassil is meeting with each college leadership and individual academic departments to provide dashboards to see if there are equity gaps within the department and in specific courses. She noted that Professor Brassil will be holding a workshop about equity in the classroom and it is open to any faculty member. She reported that our 6-year graduation rates have been increasing over the last few years, but we still need to make improvements.

EVC Spiller stated that AVC Davis of Global Education has been thinking of how to we can make global education more than just study abroad programs. She stated that we need a wider and more robust definition of global education and AVC Davis is working on a strategic plan for this. She reported that a global engagement fund is being piloted and a call about it will be made in the next few weeks.

EVC Spiller noted that her office has forwarded a number of degree programs to the Academic Planning Committee in the past few months and the proposal to establish a School of Computing will be made to the APC in the coming weeks. She stated that she and the deans have been thinking seriously about undergraduate and graduate remissions and noted that there are some unfunded scholarship programs that need to be considered to make sure we are maximizing our opportunities for our students.

Professor Woodman, School of Biological Sciences, asked for clarification about smaller classes being strictly in person. EVC Spiller stated that if possible, instructors should try to offer their classes in person. She noted that it became clear in looking at the inventory of classrooms that if the large classes were moved to remote teaching it would open spaces which would allow smaller classes to meet in person for the whole semester. She pointed out that there has been interest from both faculty and students to have more in person classes, but it is not a mandate that all smaller classes must meet in person. Professor Woodman stated that web conferencing has been great for students as many of them seem more willing to contribute to discussions and asked if the university has thought about offering this format in the long term. EVC Spiller stated that she has heard that students are more likely to chat via web conferencing and this is something to consider for future courses.

Professor Zuckerman, Educational Administration, asked for more information on the tenure extension policy modification. EVC Spiller stated that letters will be sent out to all of the newest pre-tenure faculty members advising them of the availability of the tenure extension clock. She noted that the tenure clock extension policy has been available, but the process this year has been streamlined because of COVID. She stated that there is not a particular point in time that pre-tenure faculty members need to make the decision to apply, but she recommends that pre-tenure faculty members figure out when the best time will be for them to seek the extension. She recommends that all pre-tenure faculty members should be talking with their mentors about if, and when, they should apply. Professor Zuckerman pointed out that the modification seems to be less helpful for those faculty members who are halfway through their 5th year. EVC Spiller stated that the tenure clock extension is designed to be as straight forward as possible and asked if the process is confusing for faculty members. Professor Zuckerman reported that she had heard a lot of different messaging about what pre-tenure faculty members should be doing. She noted that the pandemic could last as long as 18 months and asked if the extension would be for longer than a year. EVC Spiller stated that extensions are usually for a year-long interval, but we will need to review this in the spring semester given the pandemic. She noted that the Faculty Senate Executive Committee will be asked for input on the issue.

Professor Olmanson, Teaching, Learning and Teacher Education, noted that in discussing the incentive-based budget model that EVC Spiller stated that deans will have more autonomy. He asked how she balances her vision and leadership with the deans' strengths and visions. EVC Spiller stated that she would like to come back in the spring semester to talk about the incentive-based budget model and some of that conversation will address Professor Olmanson's question. She pointed out that we have done two things that are extraordinarily important that is associated with the budget model. The first is the creation of the N2025 Strategic Plan which provides a statement of our core values and commitments. She noted that the Plan is a shared institutional sense of our past, present, and future and is a goal for everything we do, and it is in concert with our identity and our future. She stated that we have built an institutional budget model that recognizes the distinct value of different disciplines and their needs with the colleges. She stated that the N2025 Plan becomes a filter and allows us to see where we need to make investments and pointed out that the N2025 Plan and the budget model are not competing but rather aligns together and allows us to continually set new goals.

Professor Xia, Child, Youth and Family Studies, wanted to thank Chancellor Green and EVC Spiller for continuing to support the campus and international students. She noted that she has an international student who was awarded an assistantship, but she is unable to return to campus due to the pandemic which restricts her from starting her doctoral program here. She pointed out that for some students it is not possible for them to take courses if they don't receive funding and she asked if our university could support these students in some way. EVC Spiller appreciated the question, she noted that she is not certain how common this case is, and stated that there have been some limitations, but her office is working hard with General Counsel to see if we can help international students given the difficulty they are in due to the pandemic. She reported that her office has been

looking at foundations for philanthropic support and she stated she would refer Professor Xia's question to AVC Davis for consideration.

Professor Vakilzadian, Electrical and Computer Engineering, pointed out that some of his colleagues who teach at UNO have had an extended semester with the start of UNL's semester being a week earlier and UNO ending later. Chancellor Green noted that this issue came up at the last Senate meeting. He stated that there is conversation occurring about the calendar next year and the desire is to have uniform schedules as we have done in the past. EVC Spiller reported that the Provost's Office is having discussions about a unified calendar for the coming year and the campuses will be notified when it is approved.

Professor Vakilzadian asked what the status is of the proposal to create a School of Computing and pointed out that many programs will be affected if the School is created. Chancellor Green stated that the proposal is going through the curricular process and should be going to the Academic Planning Committee soon. EVC Spiller noted that the academic degree programs that will be affected will include collaborations with faculty from the units. She stated that the impacts of creating the School are intended to be very limited. She reported that Dean Perez would be able to address some of the questions that Professor Vakilzadian may have about the proposal.

5.0 Approval of March 3, 2020 Minutes

President Buan asked if there were any revisions to the minutes. Hearing none she accepted the minutes by consent.

6.0 Unfinished Business

6.1 Update on the Proposed Revisions to the Regents Bylaws

President Buan reported that the proposed revisions to the Board of Regents Bylaws were previously approved unanimously by the Faculty Senate and were sent to the other campuses for consideration. She noted that UNO and UNK have supported the proposed changes and UNO's Faculty Senate fully ratified the changes. She stated that UNK's Faculty Senate will be voting on the proposed revisions on Thursday and UNMC is reviewing the revisions. She stated that UNL administrators and the Executive Committee are continuing to move forward with the proposed revisions.

7.0 New Business

7.1 Emergency Motion – Spring 2021 Curriculum Resolution

President Buan reported that the Executive Committee worked with ASUN in developing the resolution which seeks to de-stress the spring semester while discouraging travel. She pointed out that the resolution is asking instructors to make accommodations during the spring semester, but any curricular changes must be optional, and faculty are free to organize their curriculum as they see fit.

EVC Spiller noted that course evaluations for this academic year are being distributed, but it is the faculty member who will make the decision on whether they want to include the evaluations in their annual review or their promotion and tenure file. She suggested that the idea that individual faculty members will decide on how to use their evaluations from this year needs to be pointed out to the faculty.

President Buan asked if there was any further discussion. Hearing none she conducted a roll call vote. The resolution was approved.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:09 p.m. The next meeting of the Faculty Senate will be held on Tuesday, February 2, 2021, at 2:30 p.m. via Zoom. The minutes are respectfully submitted by Karen Griffin, Coordinator, and Lorna Dawes, Secretary.

