

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES

Present: Buan, Franco Cruz, Fech, Gay, Hanrahan, Kolbe, Latta Konecky, Minter, Peterson, Purcell, Vakilzadian, Woodman

Absent: Adenwalla, Gay

Date: Tuesday, February 18, 2020

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 2:30 p.m.

2.0 Associate VC Goodburn and Associate Dean Watts

Goodburn noted that Senators asked for additional information regarding academic dismissals and advising programs for students in jeopardy. She reported that a number of advising and transition initiatives have been developed on campus since 2012. These include: MyPLAN advising and referral system; building integrated planning and advising system; creating 4-year plans for all majors and reviewed 6,000 prerequisites; created First Husker, Emerging Leader, FYRE, and Peer Connections; implemented Academic Probation Recovery and COMPASS programs; created “Teaching @ UNL Course”; built the Explore Center, Center for Academic Support and Transition, Military & Veteran Center, Center for Transformative Teaching, and the Office of Undergraduate Research.

Goodburn reported that this academic year we started tracking fall to spring retention rates and we found that we already have lost 294 first-year students this year. She stated that 170 of these students were male and 124 were female. First generation students accounted for 94 of the first-year students who left the university after one semester. She stated that retention rates based on ACT scores showed that 107 of the students had ACTs between 22-26, and 61 had ACT scores of 27-36. Buan noted that the academic preparation factor is not a predictor for retention, and pointed out there is a need for scholarships to assist students.

Purcell asked if we know the reason why the students left. Goodburn pointed out that there are no exit surveys, but finances are the number one predictive factor. She noted that Institutional Effectiveness and Analytics developed a predictive model for retention, and besides finances, another contributing factor for retention is involvement in Greek life. She pointed out that those students involved in Greek life found a sense of belonging on campus and typically come from a higher income family. She stated that students who are Pell grant eligible tend to be retained more than students whose

families' EFC contributions are one level above Pell eligibility, again showing the impact of finances on retention.

Vakilzadian asked how we compare with our peers. Goodburn reported that we have the lowest retention and lowest graduation rates of the Big Ten universities. Purcell noted that we have the lowest tuition rate. Goodburn pointed out that we may have the lowest tuition rate of the Big Ten schools, but the rates are not considered low by Nebraska schools' standards. Goodburn stated that President Carter is lobbying Governor Ricketts to support the STEM scholarships to financially help students in these fields.

Goodburn displayed a table of the percentage of undergraduates on probation by college from 2013-2018. She pointed out that for every college, except Fine Arts, probation levels have dropped, and for undeclared students the number dropped by 6%. She stated that the Explore Center has targeted specific courses that will allow students to be successful and the Center is working to ensure that students are not taking too many difficult courses in one semester.

Goodburn stated that the number of dismissals from 2013-2019 by college has remained relatively stable. Watts pointed out that there has also been a growth in enrollment over the years so the percentage of students that have been dismissed is actually lower in comparison to previous years. Goodburn pointed out that the colleges are doing a good job of advising and working with students.

Goodburn reported that Katie Kerr, Director of the Exploratory and Pre-Professional Advising Center, led a revision of the academic standards process which now requires the students to provide more information to the colleges on what efforts the students have made to get off of probation. She noted that this process has not only been helpful to the students, but to the colleges as well. As a result the number of undergraduate appeals in the colleges have dropped. Watts stated that there is now an academic recovery process which is designed to have one-on-one interactions with the students and it appears to be having a positive impact. Goodburn stated that the number of appeals approved by the colleges has also gone down, and the Academic Standards Committee now has a better sense of what the student has done to get off of probation. The Committee can now see how often the student met with their advisor and if they have been doing what is expected for removal of probation.

Buan asked how much the advising staff works with students and faculty within a college. Watts stated that it varies across the campus. He noted that most colleges have some structure in place that brings advising efforts together, and there is also the campus-wide structure that is in place.

Woodman asked for a comparison between enrollment in the College of Arts and Sciences and the Explore Center. Watts stated that the historical trend shows that the two units swing back and forth together. He noted that Explore Center students are only with the Center for about four semesters and then they move into the colleges. Vakilzadian asked if the Explore Center only sees freshmen. Watts stated that the Center sees

students at all levels. He pointed out that some colleges have rules that might put a student having difficulties into another college to find a major that is more suited to them. Watts noted that there is a limit to how long a student can be undeclared.

Goodburn stated that the majority of students who are dismissed are in their first and second year of college. She reported that the trend then shows that afterwards the numbers of dismissal decrease each year by half. Watts noted that the college makes the recommendation either to approve or deny an appeal, but it then goes to the Academic Standards Committee which then makes a decision on the appeal. He pointed out that students do have the option of filing a final appeal with Goodburn. Goodburn noted that because the colleges now have more information about the student and the reason for the appeal, the colleges feel more confident in rejecting an appeal. Watts stated that not every student files an appeal, and some colleges might discourage a student from appealing while other colleges do not.

Goodburn reported that the number of students reinstated after an appeal has decreased, and stated that her office only receives two or three appeals a semester. She noted there was an inquiry of how reinstated students perform. She showed a chart illustrating their performance and it is a 50/50 toss-up, and Watts pointed out that their success can vary depending on which semester they are reinstated.

Woodman asked how often students are recommended to change their major. Watts stated that the Academic Standards Committee does not give direct advice to the students, but it is not uncommon for it to be part of the discussion with a student. Woodman asked if there was a policy restricting a student from re-registering for a course that they previously failed. Watts reported that there is no policy here at UNL. He pointed out that only a very small percentage of students re-registered for a failed course. Buan noted that some universities have a policy that students can only take a course twice. Kolbe stated that he would hesitate to have such a policy here because he thinks the student should have the choice of wanting to try to overcome the difficulties they previously experienced in a course. Buan pointed out that there may need to be a point to consider if a student re-registers three or four times for a course and continues to fail.

Goodburn stated that the Explore Center tries hard to encourage students to have a realistic plan B option if their first choice of a major does not work out, or if the student finds they are not interested in the field. She noted that the advising community on campus works hard to provide realistic advice without dashing the dreams of the students.

Watts noted that there are some processes around that will catch students if they keep failing a course. He noted that if the students are on federal aid they have to show satisfactory progress. He stated that he would be reluctant to develop a policy based on the few outliers that re-register for courses, unless the number of these students increase significantly. Vakilzadian asked if the colleges can decide to limit the number of times a student can re-register for a course. Goodburn stated that she does not think this is an option. She pointed out that if a student's GPA in Engineering is too low, they will be

removed from the college. She noted that this does not happen in the College of Arts & Sciences.

Goodburn stated that the key takeaways from the research are that first year retention is still a major concern with first generation and African American students most likely to leave after the first term, the number of students on probation has dropped for the colleges, and we will be able to academically track students more effectively.

Hanrahan asked what happens to a student's financial aid if they receive a Regents Scholarship but they transfer to a different campus. Goodburn stated that the campus where the student is attending pays the remission for the scholarship. Hanrahan asked if the remission numbers are up because of transfers. Goodburn reported that they are not because Chancellor Green has changed the criteria for these transfers. Goodburn reported that Regents have increased because Chancellor Green approved a change in GPA criteria for that scholarship three years ago.

2.2 National Survey of Engagement Results

Goodburn reported that the results are in from the 2019 National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) which collects data on how much time students put into their studies and how the institutional resources, courses, and other learning opportunities facilitate student participation in activities that matter to student learning. She noted that the survey is conducted every three years and we started participating in 2004. She reported that there are peer comparisons with the Regents peers, Big Ten peers, Carnegie peers, and even UNO and UNK. She stated that the survey goes to all first-year and senior-year students.

Goodburn stated that the question about how many hours students typically spend preparing for class has been used in the past, and it was found that students who work on campus for 20 hours or less are more successful than those who work off campus. She noted that we are working hard to message to new students that if they need a job they should check for opportunities on campus because there are many of them. Also, the campus jobs are more supportive of a student's academic success and an on-campus job gets a student connected to students, staff and faculty members. She stated that the three largest student employers on campus are the Campus Rec Center, University Libraries, and Housing and Dining halls.

Woodman asked if the survey tracks sexual orientation. Watts stated that our campus just started asking questions at admissions about sexual orientation, which pronoun the student prefers, and some other demographic information. Minter pointed out that the data in NSSE is de-identified.

Woodman asked how safe the data is from the surveys. Goodburn stated that to get access to the data requires dual authentication and it is limited to only certain people.

Goodburn stated that one of the most interesting responses to the survey is in regards to the quality of interactions students have with people on campus. She noted that we are

doing well with this benchmark, and not only does it support one of the guiding principles of the N2025 Strategic Plan, it is an area in which we have made continued improvements. She pointed out that our supportive environment and faculty/student interaction ratings are also very important.

Hanrahan noted that it looks like our effective teaching practices rating needs work. Goodburn stated that this would be a good opportunity for the faculty to think about how they are delivering their courses and articulating outcomes to students. She noted that it could also be that students are not making connections between what they are learning and the NSSE categories. She stated that in 2015 our students wrote 35 pages more than our peers yet we scored lower on the question of reflective learning, which is usually ~~entailed~~ demanded in writing.

Buan asked if there is a cutoff time period for keeping the data that was collected. Goodburn reported that the Board of Regents are requiring us to participate in the survey every three years. Buan stated that her concern is with the information that has been obtained about the students because databases are always under attack. She stated that it would be good to think about when the data should be purged because privacy of information is a growing concern. Goodburn stated that she does not know if NSSE purges the data periodically.

Hanrahan stated that the survey shows that we are not doing well on the academic side. He suggested that there needs to be a conversation on how we can begin to fix this. Minter stated that the Executive Committee should consider speaking with Director Monk of the Transformative Teaching Center who could be helpful in getting faculty to rethink how they deliver their course. Goodburn suggested that the Senate should start this conversation, and it could begin by looking at the data from the survey to see what areas should be prioritized.

Hanrahan thanked Goodburn and Watts for meeting with the Executive Committee.

3.0 Proposal to Modify UNL Syllabus Policy (Ibraheem Hamzat)

Hanrahan stated that ASUN is asking the Senate to consider a proposal to include language on the UNL Syllabus Policy to include information about resources available for mental health issues. Hamzat stated that as External Vice President for ASUN he has been trying to find ways to provide students with more information on mental health resources, and he thought adding a brief statement on a course syllabus would be an additional way to provide the information to the students. He pointed out that students typically look at a course syllabus frequently throughout the semester and providing the information in the syllabus could help students. He noted that it is particularly important for minority students who use CAPS and other resources less frequently than other students.

Vakilzadian questioned whether linking the phrase with the Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) could create a misuse of SSD. Woodman pointed out that, if anything, students do not use SSD often enough and many students will struggle rather than going

through SSD. He stated that he has never come across a student that is misusing the service.

Latta Konecky stated that she prefers the mental health information be in a separate sentence from the SSD statement so that it stands out more clearly. Woodman asked if the statement should be expanded to include other issues. Hamzat cautioned against adding more issues.

Hanrahan asked the Executive Committee if the proposed modifications to the Syllabus Policy should be presented to the Senate for approval. The Executive Committee approved the amended motion and will present it to the Faculty Senate at the March 3rd meeting.

4.0 Announcements

4.1 Meeting with VC Barker

Hanrahan reported that he was contacted by VC Barker to meet to discuss how the Senate can be engaged to help with diversity initiatives and if there is a way to target underrepresented groups to improve diversity on the Senate. He noted that he will be meeting with VC Barker on March 2.

4.2 Update on Proposed Regents Bylaws Changes

Hanrahan reported that he spoke with Associate VC Walker who is fighting valiantly to retain as much of the original proposed language in the Regents Bylaws revisions. He pointed out that members of the General Counsel were disagreeing with language that was already existing in the Bylaws. He noted that the General Counsel office does not want to change the Professional Code of Conduct section because the campuses have different ways of handling these cases.

Hanrahan stated that the delay in getting the proposed revisions to the Board of Regents is because the General Counsel Office still has concerns with some of the proposed language.

5.0 Approval of February 11, 2020 Minutes

Hanrahan asked if there were any revisions to the February 11 minutes. Hearing none he asked for approval of the minutes. The minutes were approved by the Executive Committee, there was one abstention.

6.0 Unfinished Business

6.1 Academic Freedom Statements

Hanrahan reported that he met with Associate VC Walker and Professor Schleck to discuss the Senate voting against endorsing the academic freedom statements. He stated they discussed what the boundaries are for academic freedom, when they should apply and when do they not. He asked if this was an issue with the committee that was formed to develop the statements. Woodman pointed out that the committee met only one or twice and then Walker and Schleck created most of the statements. Hanrahan stated that there was agreement with Walker and Schleck to see if information about when academic

freedom applies could be included in the Professional Code of Conduct being drafted. Minter stated that the Professional Code of Conduct Committee meets tomorrow and she would need to check with them on whether it should be part of the Code.

Woodman stated that the issue with the academic freedom statements is whether it clearly defines the boundary between one's professional life versus the personal life of a faculty member. He stated that he is concerned when an institution's policies are developed with a controlling small group of people to meet some esoteric need for the university, rather than creating a good policy.

Buan pointed out that professors should be able to communicate their expertise and not have their job threatened because of it. She stated that there is a real need to protect the public space from the private space. She stated that it would be good to clearly define the difference between academic freedom and freedom of speech and when these apply.

7.0 New Business

7.1 IT Concerns about FERPA

Buan reported that the Senate IT Committee is very concerned with the University's student data accessibility policy, which defaults to the minimum FERPA protections. She noted that it only protects student's telephone numbers and street addresses. She stated that there is a need to protect demographic information because profiles are being used by outside entities. She stated that the question of what role the university is playing in the protection of student data needs to be considered. She stated that we need to be doing more to protect our students, but a recent Board of Regents policy change eroded the students' privacy protections (March 2019). She noted that in the past we protected more information under FERPA. Woodman noted that the data we collect from our students was a precious commodity as stated by Ellen Weissinger, a previous SVCAA, and should be protected, not monetized.

7.2 Redistricting Motion

Fech stated that he will be presenting a motion to change the districting of the Extension Educators. He noted that he will be presenting language for the motion to the Executive Committee at its next meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:38 p.m. The next meeting of the Executive Committee will be on Tuesday, February 25, 2020 at 2:30 pm. The meeting will be held in 203 Alexander. The minutes are respectfully submitted by Karen Griffin, Coordinator and Joan Latta Konecky, Secretary.