

UNL FACULTY SENATE MEETING MINUTES

March 2, 2021

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 Nebraska Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Impact Awards

Professor Buan reported that the Office of Diversity and Inclusion was accepting nominations for the Nebraska Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Impact Awards. These awards recognize individuals and groups who actively advance diversity, equity, and inclusion in transformative and sustainable ways. She noted that applications were open until March 22.

2.2 Faculty Engagement in Shared Governance

President Buan noted that in the Faculty Senate Bylaws contract faculty members are classified as members of the Academic Assembly and the Faculty Senate acts as the official voice of the faculty as defined in the Regents Bylaws and it can set its own rules. She reported that the Executive Committee is concerned that there are some departments that render contract faculty members as ineligible to serve on department committees. She pointed out that many contract faculty members are heavily involved in teaching yet in some departments they cannot be a member of the curriculum committee or allowed to serve on any other campus committees. She stated that departments that block contract faculty members from participation in shared governance not only wind up being underrepresented, the rules blocking participation are against the Senate Bylaws. She asked Senators to please review their department policies and bylaws to ensure that contract faculty members are not being blocked from participation.

2.3 Faculty Senate Executive Committee and Officer Elections

President Buan reported that elections for the Faculty Senate Executive Committee and the Officers will occur at the April 27th meeting. She stated that two Executive Committee members are needed, a President-Elect and Secretary are also needed. She stated that anyone interested in serving on the Executive Committee should contact either herself or Coordinator Griffin. She pointed out that serving on the Executive Committee is an eye-opening and rewarding experience and faculty members get to meet directly with the Chancellor, Executive Vice Chancellor, and Vice Chancellor of IANR as well as other guests.

3.0 Chancellor Green

Chancellor Green reported that we are now in the sixth week of the spring semester and things are going well. He noted that currently 58% of the seats in classes are in-person which is more than any other university in the Big Ten, but he acknowledged it took a huge effort to be able to do this. He stated that the testing protocols have gone well, and we are now fully in the random testing phase and the results have shown that our positivity rates for the campus community remain quite low. He pointed out that the selection process is completely randomized with 1,000 faculty and staff identified and 4,000 students each week. He stated that the probability rate for being required to test two weeks in a row is 1/25th chance. He noted that people can voluntarily still get tested by making an appointment through the Safer Community app.

Chancellor Green stated that the University is still working with the Lincoln/Lancaster County Health Department about vaccine availability and the thinking is that the University's portal for vaccine registration will be used in the next round of Phase 1B. He stated that he is hoping that the higher education sector will start getting vaccinated in March.

Chancellor Green announced that commencement will be returning to an in-person format in May. He noted that this could be a record setting graduation class due in part to some students speeding up their course schedule by taking the Winterim and summer sessions. He stated that the Pinnacle Bank Arena will be used on Friday, May 7 for the hooding of doctoral candidates and awarding of graduate degrees. He noted that the Law College graduation ceremony will be held in the Arena and the undergraduate ceremony will be split into two ceremonies which will be held at Memorial Stadium. He pointed out that the number of ceremonies will create additional work for the Marshal Corps, but Professors Vanessa and Robert Gorman have been putting in a great deal of extra work to make sure that the ceremonies go smoothly. He reported that there will be backup plans for the undergraduate ceremonies should the weather not cooperate. He stated that the seating plans will accommodate social distancing needs.

Chancellor Green stated that planning is underway for the fall semester and students will be able to register for courses soon. He noted that most everyone who wishes to be vaccinated should be by late summer which should allow us to return to a much more normal semester. He pointed out that consideration is still ongoing about whether large lecture courses should continue to be delivered remotely and EVC Spiller and her team are also considering a backup plan should the vaccines not be totally administered. He reported that summer courses will continue to be delivered as we are currently doing although there will be an opportunity for more in-person classes.

Chancellor Green stated that the academic calendar for 2021-22 is under consideration. He noted that President-Elect Kolbe is serving on the University-wide Calendar Committee and a proposal is being considered to start the spring schedule a week later with it ending a week later to allow a two-week session in January. He pointed out by arranging the spring schedule this way it will allow us to synchronize our spring break with the Lincoln Public School's spring break.

Chancellor Green reported that the University's budget continues to make good progress through the State Legislature, and it continues to receive positive support. He stated that the proposed salary increases of 1.5% and 3% is receiving support, and there is a proposal to increase funding for the Nebraska Career Scholarship program. He stated that a proposal for a capital renewal plan is being proposed and receiving support from the Legislature. He noted that this bill would enable funds totaling \$1.5 billion in capital renewal funding for University facilities over a course of the next forty years to be dedicated to capital renewal. He pointed out that there are 900 buildings in the university system with 600 of them at UNL, and of these, a third of them are over 50 years old. He stated that this bill would help us substantially and allows us to take advantage of the low interest rates which would help us save a significant amount of money. He stated that projects such as the replacement of the Westbrook Music building, renovation of Neihardt, and the completion of Hamilton Hall renovations are examples in the near term which will be enabled with the passing of this legislative bill.

Chancellor Green stated that we will be moving into the implementation of the incentive-based budget in the new fiscal year which begins on July 1. He stated that the budget model will follow tuition revenue and enhancements and over the rest of this semester we will be socializing the model to the campus community. He stated that he is currently working on articulating a budget model advisory committee with members including faculty, staff, and administrators. He stated that he hopes to be able to appoint people to the committee this spring.

Chancellor Green reported that UNL received \$15.8 million from the CARES Act, \$7.5 million which went to students and the other half went to cover costs due to the COVID pandemic. He stated that in the second round of stimulus funding we received \$23.9 million in December, with another \$7.5 million of this second round of funding going for grants-in-aid for students. He noted that if another stimulus package is approved by the federal government the University could receive \$43 million, 50% of this would be required to go as grant-in-aid to students. He reported that we have incurred approximately \$120 million in losses and added costs beyond operating cost savings from the COVID pandemic through February.

Chancellor Green stated that the rolling out of the Grand Challenges identified in the N2025 Strategic Plan has resulted from tremendous work and energy across UNL and he is very excited about them. He noted that we are going to make strategic investments in these areas as well and we are moving forward on the Grand Challenges.

Chancellor Green reported that he is very pleased with the where the proposed revisions to the Bylaws are currently with the first reading occurring at the February Board of Regents meeting and the Board scheduled to vote on the proposed changes at the April 9th meeting. He noted that in his State of Our University Address he reported that while other universities are discussing removing tenure, we are making sweeping changes to protect tenure and academic freedom by strengthening our Bylaws.

Professor Khalimonchuk, Biochemistry, asked if new incoming employees are required to have COVID testing or if they are just subject to randomized testing. He noted that he has a post-doctorate student arriving in a few weeks. Chancellor Green stated that he is not sure that we have a policy requiring the testing but recommended that the person download the Safer Community app and get tested.

Professor Billesbach, Biological Systems Engineering, questioned whether our low positivity rate is because only those people coming to campus are being tested. Chancellor Green reported that the pool that has been tested includes 19,000 plus students, and slightly less than 5,000 for faculty and staff. He noted that the total campus community is 30,000, including part-time and online students, as well as faculty and staff throughout Nebraska in Extension. Professor Billesbach asked if the sampling procedure has a bias in it because only those who feel well enough are coming in to get tested. Chancellor Green stated that there was a slight uptick, .38%, in positivity rates when the campus moved to randomized testing last week. He pointed out that 1,530 voluntary tests were conducted beyond those tests that were required. He stated that we expected our positivity rates would be 1% or less and he is very pleased to see that we were a little lower than what we anticipated.

Professor Brantner, Modern Languages and Literature, asked if there is any news regarding graduate student health insurance rates. Chancellor Green stated that the Chancellors have not yet been informed of what NU Central Administration's recommendation is with regards to graduate student health insurance, but he will be looking at this carefully. He noted that President Buan is serving on the committee that is reviewing the graduate student health insurance and she has provided him with some insight as to what is being considered.

Professor Stevenson, English, asked if the salary increases being considered for the next biennium include increases for contract faculty members. Chancellor Green stated that the proposed 1.5% and 3% increases are for all faculty and staff members. He noted that in addition to the state allocated increases, President Carter has a strategic goal to make strategic investments, one of which is to address the lagging salaries of the non-unionized campuses which will mostly affect UNL faculty. He reported that the parameters for this funding are currently under discussion. He stated that the question has been raised about contract faculty members and whether these strategic funds will apply to them. He stated that EVC Spiller will be discussing this with the Faculty Senate in April.

Professor Dunigan, Plant Pathology, asked if there would soon be any changes in the travel policy, particularly for those doing field work. Chancellor Green stated that the administration thinks there will be changes, but we are still waiting to see how the vaccine rollout and COVID rates stand in the next few months. He stated that he is hopeful that by summer we would be in the position for some relaxation on the travel policy, and in the fall semester it would be mostly back to normal. However, we will have to see what the CDC's guidance will be for international travel.

4.0 Approval of March 3, 2020 Minutes

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

5.0 Committees

5.2 Graduate Council (Dean Carr)

Dean Carr reported that the Graduate Council has been very busy due to an uptick in the number of proposals submitted for new majors, graduate certificates, and new specializations for existing majors. He noted that the graduate certificates are stand-alone credentials that are not tied to a degree program and departments can offer these certificates to current UNL students and students outside the University. He pointed out that graduate certificates are a good segue into a degree program and provides good marketing for the University. He reported that specializations are a cluster of courses within existing majors that programs can use to bolster student transcripts, and these are tied to an existing degree.

Professor Nicholas, Textiles, Merchandising and Fashion Design, asked if there was an existing examples of graduate certificate programs that cut across colleges or disciplines and if the University is interested in cultivating these programs. Dean Carr stated that the University is very supportive of interdepartmental and collegiate programs. He stated that a recent example is a financial communications collaboration between the College of Business and the College of Journalism and Mass Communications. He reported that students in these kinds of programs would take two graduate courses in each college to meet the requirements for the certificates. He noted that developing the proposal for this kind of certificate program does take more work on the part of each program and full agreement is needed from the graduate faculty in the different colleges or departments.

Professor Vakilzadian, Electrical & Computer Engineering, asked if the number of courses and credit hour requirements are the same for graduate certificates. Dean Carr noted that the Graduate College for the University system states that graduate certificates must require between 12-20 credit hours with most of them requiring 15 credit hours. He stated that required courses must be identified and specified in the proposal, but there could also be a selection of courses to choose from. Professor Vakilzadian asked if these are existing courses. Dean Carr stated that the must be existing courses.

Professor Nixon, Panhandle Extension & Research, asked how the graduate certificate programs are marketed. Dean Carr stated that they are available to view on the Graduate Studies website, but the department or college that oversees the program would market and recruit students. He noted that there are people in Graduate Studies who can assist with marketing.

Professor Vakilzadian asked what the tuition is for graduate certificate programs and how the tuition was determined. Dean Carr reported that all graduate courses and tuition are based on the typical rate for the college in which the certificate is based. He pointed out that just as Masters' courses can be applied to a Ph.D. program, graduate certificate courses can be used towards a Masters' or Ph.D. program, although this would be up to the discretion of the department or college. Professor Vakilzadian asked if dual level courses can be applied to a graduate degree. Dean Carr stated that they could, but they would have to be taken at the 800 level.

5.3 Parking Advisory Committee (Professor Leiter and Director Carpenter)

Professor Leiter stated that the pandemic impacted parking due to the loss of revenue from a decrease in parking permits, but he noted that there are no plans to increase the parking permit rate. He stated that the Committee is working hard to deal with the unusual situation that was created last year when the pandemic hit. He noted that some students had purchased permits but either couldn't get back into the country or back to campus and the Committee needed to determine how much a refund these students should get. He noted that the Committee decided to pro-rate the refunds. He reported that there have been some slight changes temporarily to the bus service due to the lack of

students and noted that the University's contract with StarTran will be renegotiated next year.

Director Carpenter reported that the administration requested that the remit policy be reviewed for the students. He noted that permit revenue is a primary revenue source for Parking & Transportation Services and the administration was concerned if that revenue vanished. He pointed out that there were things with the payroll deductions that could not be looked at for those faculty and staff who pay their parking permits through payroll deduction. He stated that the administration asked for us to realign our refund policy with the other campuses, and there would be a percentage discount which would decrease the longer it took people to cancel their permit.

Director Carpenter reported that we have two contracts for bus service that expire in 2022. He noted that the Innovative Campus bus route expired in August and we currently are in a temporary contract until 2022 when we will renegotiate for the entire campus bus system. He stated that StarTran has some new fees which could be of concern, but he will be watching for these when the renegotiation process begins.

Professor Weissling, Speech Communications and Disorders, asked what the decrease was for the number of permits this year. Director Carpenter stated that for faculty/staff the permits decreased by 29%, for students it was 16%. He stated that total aggregate from last year decreased by 21% or about 3,000 permits. Professor Weissling asked if there has been an increase in the number of citations that have been given this year. Director Carpenter reported that there is almost a 20% decrease in citations.

Professor Billesbach asked how the contracts with StarTran work and asked if the bus shuttles between Innovative Campus and East Campus are owned by the university. Director Carpenter stated that one of the ways of reducing the costs in previous contracts was to use vans instead of buses during times of limited use, and vans have been repurposed this year because the transit needs are down considerably. He pointed out that using the vans has helped Parking & Transit Services to save some money and reduced the costs which has helped students. Professor Leiter commended Director Carpenter for the great job he has done to deal with the reduced revenue and to reduce costs during this year.

6.0 Unfinished Business

6.1 Motion to Approve the Ballot for Elections to the Academic Planning Committee, Academic Rights & Responsibilities Committee, and the Academic Rights & Responsibilities Panel

President Buan noted that the ballot was presented to the Senate at the previous meeting. She reported that an additional candidate has been found for the Academic Rights & Responsibilities Panel ballot. She then asked for approval. The motion was approved.

7.0 New Business

7.1 Emergency Motion to Revise the Faculty Senate Bylaws – Extension Districts

President Buan stated that the emergency motion is from the Executive Committee. She noted that Nebraska Extension has changed the way the supervisory units are organized, and the change no longer agrees with the language in the Senate Bylaws. She pointed out that the proposed revisions to the language ensures that Extension maintains its representation in the Senate regardless of the way Extension organizes itself. She asked if there was any discussion. Hearing none she asked for a vote on the proposed revisions. The motion was accepted.

7.2 Motion to Revise the Intercollegiate Athletics Committee (IAC) Syllabus

President Buan reported that the IAC submitted a motion to add the President of the Student Athlete Advisory Board as a voting member. She stated that the motion would be discussed at the April 6 meeting.

President Buan reported that the IAC has provided a frequently asked question document about

proctoring exams and it can be found on the Faculty Senate website at <https://www.unl.edu/facultysenate/committees/IAC%20Proctoring%20Exam%20Guidelines%20January%202018%20%282%29.pdf>.

7.3 Open Mic

Professor Brantner noted that last year there was a proposal in the College of Arts & Sciences to improve contingent faculty salaries, but the proposal seems to have stalled at the administration level. She stated that she wants to re-emphasize the importance of moving this proposal forward so the University can act on the recommendations.

President Buan pointed out that the Executive Committee has continued to push this issue and it has been on the agenda for several months now each time the Committee has met with the administrators. She noted that she has also discussed the issue in person with the Chancellor and the hope is that the Executive Vice Chancellor will be coming to one of the Faculty Senate meetings next month to address the issue. She stated that the Chancellor is committed to making improvements.

Professor Woodman, School of Biological Sciences, stated that he was surprised to learn that there are no campus-wide requirements for Professors of Practice and pointed out that the department determines whether a terminal degree is required. He stated that clarification across the University is needed about these positions since they are often viewed as equivalent in many ways to tenured faculty except Professors of Practice don't receive tenure.

Professor Vakilzadian pointed out that before last year some faculty members in CAS received a substantial increase in their salary and faculty members in Electrical and Computer Engineering feel that they should have an adjustment in their salary and asked if adjustments will be made. President Buan suggested that Professor Vakilzadian should raise this issue with the Faculty Compensation Advisory Committee so they can look into this for salary increases in the next fiscal year. She pointed out that the college-level governance committees that advise Deans on the new budget model would probably be a part of these discussions. She noted that accurate data comparing salaries to our peers needs to be provided to the Deans in order to make fair adjustments.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:51 p.m. The next meeting of the Faculty Senate will be held on Tuesday, April 6, 2021, at 2:30 p.m. via Zoom. The minutes are respectfully submitted by Karen Griffin, Coordinator, and Lorna Dawes, Secretary.