

## EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES

**Present:** Billesbach, Buan, Dam, Eklund, Herstein, Kolbe, Minter, Nicholas, Weissling, Woodman, Zuckerman

**Absent:** Gay, Krehbiel,

**Date:** Tuesday, May 18, 2021

**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.

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### 1.0 Call (*Kolbe*)

Kolbe called the meeting to order at 2:31 p.m.

### 2.0 Director of Undergraduate Education Patty Sollars

#### 2.1 10-Year Ace Review

Sollars noted that during the 2021-22 academic year the ACE program is scheduled for its ten-year comprehensive review, and she is seeking the names of faculty members who would be willing to participate in the review. She stated that she would like faculty who recognize the investment of general education and who have a vision of how we can convey to students why they need to take ACE courses. She noted that the ACE program needs some revisions and committee members need to look carefully at best practices and decide whether our course offerings are sufficient and whether there is meaningful assessment. She pointed out that we need to address ACE 8 and 9 which seeks to educate students about “individual and social responsibilities through the study of ethical principles and reasoning, application of civic knowledge, interaction with diverse cultures, and engagement with global issues.”

Kolbe asked how many faculty members were needed. Sollars stated that she thinks four or five faculty members to review each ACE outcome. She noted that part of the task of committee members is to look at the best practices at our Big Ten peers.

Buan noted that the 10-year review of ACE seems important for our accreditation and asked if there was consideration of bringing in any outside reviewers. Sollars stated that she is reaching out to someone outside the university who has expertise in assessment but otherwise the resources are limited to pay outside reviewers. She noted that in the recent past a group of faculty members went to a Higher Learning Commission workshop, and according to the HLC, we are doing very well with the ACE program, but our assessment practices may need refinement. Buan suggested that having outside input might help to identify where we have overkill with the program. Sollars stated that a starting point to look at is with the assessment. She noted that the “every student, every time” thinking with assessment may not necessary, but the question is how to ensure that assessment is being done. She stated that the review committee needs to consider how to get the

balance with assessment. Zuckerman asked if only summative information is needed for a course. Sollars stated that a sort of formative ACE assessment may be accumulated over the course of the regular five-year review, but each year only summative data is needed for an instructor to see how they are doing in helping students achieve the ACE learning outcomes and to see if any shift in teaching might make improvements in student outcomes.

Buan asked if former members of the Academic Planning Committee would be helpful. Sollars stated that anyone that is interested in reviewing the program could participate. She noted that committee members are not required to teach courses in a specific ACE outcome. She pointed out that she wants to make it clear that the review is a faculty generated process, not an administrative process. Buan stated that strategically it might be good to have some Associate Deans on the review committee to ensure that things are being done so that we have a quality program. Sollars reported that the University-Wide Assessment Committee (UWAC) will be meeting every month to work on the review and will receive regular reports from the review committee and the members of the ACE subcommittee of the University Undergraduate Curriculum Committee (UUCC) will be involved with the review as well.

Eklund asked if there is a concerted effort to get student input. Sollars reported that she is reaching out to ASUN leadership to get student feedback. She noted that we need to better articulate why students need to take the courses offered in the program and she is working with ASUN to see how best to convey this message.

## **2.2 Syllabus Template**

Sollars noted that AVC Goodburn spoke with her about the Executive Committee's concern over the ever-increasing required information on a course syllabus. She pointed out that the syllabus is a contract between the student and the course instructor, and that faculty could inform students that they affirm the University policies mandated for inclusion by the Faculty Senate by providing a link to a website which would have current information and links to provide further information about the policies. She noted that her office could maintain the website and would immediately process any updates to policies. While the Executive Committee is considering maintaining the policies in a Canvas course or module, she noted that courses such as the "Canvas 101" course which was put together for the Husker Starter Pack students last summer are often overlooked.

Buan stated that it would be great to have a website and faculty could provide a link to it on their syllabus, but the Executive Committee was thinking more on the lines of having a separate student Canvas module which could easily be updated, and which faculty and students would review each semester if any updates to a policy occurred. She pointed out that it would also need to pertain to graduate students. Sollars stated that announcing updates through Canvas would be a great idea, but she is concerned that requiring students to review the module each semester could be overkill for the students and noted that someone would need to maintain the Canvas module. Woodman stated that he likes the idea of a Canvas module but thinks the handling of it should be more centralized such as in Academic Affairs.

Woodman asked whether there are institutions that investigate faculty violations of an academic policy. He stated that he would not want administration to target a faculty member because university policies can be different and should not interfere with an instructor's course requirements such as class attendance. Sollars pointed out that the university requires the faculty share information of various policies with the students.

Billesbach noted that the syllabus really needs to go back to its original intent of providing information about a course. He stated that other information should be located somewhere else and asked if the resource document could be college-based and trimmed down so it is not overwhelming for students.

Minter stated that she likes the idea of having some university-wide policies articulated and easily located in a link or in a Canvas module. She noted that she really appreciates Sollars' knowledge and understanding of problems the faculty encounter. She stated that she is concerned about whether the Director of Undergraduate Education would eventually become a more traditional staff role rather than a faculty role. Sollars stated that she suspects that as long as the position exists, it will be occupied by a faculty member because the person needs to work at the faculty level.

Buan stated that she thinks having a Canvas module would be more interactive and would help educate students about the available resources and provide more understanding about the policies, although having a website where the information is contained would still be needed. Nicholas agreed with making the Canvas module more interactive and noted that there are design suite tools available that could be used. She pointed out that in particular the academic policy should be more interactive because students, even at the senior level, do not understand what is considered academic dishonesty.

Sollars stated that she would be happy to help with whatever the Executive Committee decides and noted that the UUCC would really appreciate course syllabi being just about the course and not containing a lot of other information not directly pertaining to the course.

### **2.3 Experiential Learning Requirement**

Kolbe noted that he received an email message from a faculty member with concerns over the experiential learning requirement for students.

Buan pointed out that this requirement was initiated with the N2025 plan which involved significant faculty input in the development of the plan and the feedback sessions on it were open to the faculty. She stated that the process was long and transparent, and it was determined that every unit would determine how experiential learning would be implemented. Sollars noted that she was informed that approximately 600 faculty and staff members were involved, either in the development of the plan or by providing feedback. She stated that the Academic Solution Council is reviewing the requirement, and a survey has been sent to all colleges to see what is already being done that will fulfill the goal of all graduates having an experiential learning documentation portfolio.

She stated that a review of the courses already being offered show that there are 1,590 courses that already meet the goal.

Sollars stated that each college will be creating a zero-credit hour course that students could use for their co-curricular or extra-curricular activities. She pointed out that the requirement for experiential learning is not a required curricular activity. She noted that college curriculum committees will make the final decision about which courses would be considered experiential learning, and in subsequent years, faculty members can submit a proposal to change their course to meet the experiential learning if they wish to do so. She pointed out that students can fill the experiential learning requirement in any college and students will eventually be able to identify which courses meet the experiential learning requirement through the course catalog and MyRed. She stated that the plan is to have the infrastructure in place for experiential learning for the fall 2022 semester.

Minter noted that at the spring College of Arts & Sciences faculty meeting this issue came up and the college curriculum committee was putting a hold on the zero-credit hour course. She reported that there was a long, challenging discussion about the experiential learning requirement, and it feels like new mandates are being made after a long, difficult year for everyone. Sollars emphasized that it is not a new mandate, and it does not involve an assessment burden, but it does benefit the students who are getting their experiential learning opportunities included on their transcripts and credentials. Minter suggested that the message needs to be conveyed that this would not take any new teaching capacity and students can have experiential learning without the need for faculty oversight.

Buan noted that having experiential learning is a universal value and is being done at other universities, although there does seem to be a lot of confusion about what a zero-credit hour course means. She stated that one of the uses for the course is to allow students the ability to gain transcript credit for their extra-curricular activities.

Weissling stated that in the past she had been told that employers wanted portfolios rather than transcripts; this did not bear itself out in the market. She asked if there is data to support the idea that information on an experiential learning on a transcript is desirable to employers. Buan reported that information was gathered from employers about what they are looking for in graduates and human resource departments in companies look at universities and decide who have good experiential learning programs. Weissling asked if experiential learning is needed in every major and questioned whether it is being marketed in a way that goes across programs. Sollars stated that it is not necessary for all units, to offer experiential learning courses within their major, but if we can articulate to the students that they are getting skills from the courses that have an experiential learning component the students can then convey this in their interviews with employers.

Nicholas noted that not all of the categories identified in the mapping process are as obvious as others. For instance, she questioned what problem-solving means, not only at the abstract level, but at a single project level. She pointed out that units were not provided information when the mapping was being done and if experiential learning is

going to be more discipline specific it needs to be more clearly articulated. Sollars agreed that problem-solving is difficult to pinpoint because the definition can be so vast. She noted that as we get more experience with having these courses, students will provide feedback and it will become a more organic process and evolve over time. She pointed out that we are just getting started with the experiential learning requirement and she hopes that it will continually improve and be something that students really seek to attain.

### **3.0 Announcements**

#### **3.1 Incentive-Based Budget Advisory Committee**

Kolbe reported that the Chancellor's office has asked for the names of faculty members who would be willing to serve on the Incentive-Based Budget Advisory Committee (IBBAC): two faculty members from the Faculty Senate, one faculty member from the Academic Planning Committee, and one faculty member from the Graduate Council. He noted that Professor Bloom, who has been serving as the Faculty Associate to the Chancellor for Budget Model Implementation, will serve on the committee and there is to be a total of 14 members, which includes the faculty, three deans, and administrators. Minter noted that the Senate called for each college to have a college budget advisory committee and suggested that having some members from these committees on the IBBAC might be helpful. Kolbe stated that the Senate President-Elect should also serve on the Committee. He stated that he will speak to the Chancellor about having more faculty members represented on the Committee.

### **4.0 Approval of May 4, 2021 Minutes**

The Executive Committee discussed further revisions to the minutes after which Buan moved for approval and motion seconded by Herstein. The revised minutes were approved.

### **5.0 Unfinished Business**

#### **5.1 Continuity of Instruction Statement for Syllabus**

Kolbe noted that AVC Walker sent a request from the instructional continuity working group to include on the Faculty Senate syllabus policy a statement that all instructors should include language on their syllabus that explains the mode of communication the instructor will use (Canvas, email, etc.) if the campus operational conditions are declared to be closed.

Buan stated that she thought the policy would be that the instructor gets to decide whether they want to have class or not when the campus is closed. She pointed out that the full policy that was sent to the Executive Committee is confusing. Kolbe noted that the policy being recommended by the working group is too lengthy, but he likes the idea of being open and transparent with the students. He noted that he is planning to record his classes so they would be available to the students if needed.

Billesbach stated that there needs to be some qualifications on when this policy would go into effect. Woodman stated that the policy requiring continuity of instruction is creating layers of difficulty for the faculty. Minter stated that she thought the policy was advising

instructors of how they would communicate to students on where to find information about their course in the unlikely event that the university is closed. Woodman stated that instructors should be allowed to make the decision about whether they will have class if the campus is closed but would be obligated to make a notification via Canvas. Weissling stated that the continuity of instruction may be administration wanting to have classes continue during inclement weather. Billesbach noted that he was once stuck in a blizzard out west and could not get back to campus for several days. He questioned what defines “operationally closed” but still having instructional capabilities and who makes the decision to close the campus.

Buan asked if the Executive Committee has been asked to endorse the statement. Billesbach stated that he would not vote for approval of the statement and that any such statement be presented to the full Senate. Woodman stated that if it is to be presented to the Senate the Executive Committee should be in agreement with it. Minter noted that the response from the Executive Committee is mixed and she does not think there is enough support to take this forward to the Senate. Eklund pointed out that the Senate protects the faculty’s right to academic freedom, and it should be the prerogative of the faculty member whether they want to hold class during times when the campus is closed. Weissling stated that the faculty should decide what makes the best sense for their classes and pointed out that there are safety issues that need to be considered. Billesbach stated that the policy is not clearly defined. Buan suggested that the Executive Committee should state that it needs more clarity on what conditions would prevail to generate the need for continuity of instruction.

## **5.2 Milage Reimbursement**

Kolbe reported that he was copied on an email message from previous Senate President Purcell regarding the University’s inadequate mileage reimbursement rate and how poorly our rate compares to our peers. He asked if the Executive Committee wants to continue working on trying to get the rate raised. Buan stated that the Executive Committee should definitely continue working on seeking improvements in the mileage reimbursement rate. She pointed out that it not only affects Extension Educators, but it also applies to expenditures on grants. Woodman stated that the question about why our rate is so low in comparison to the federal rate needs to be addressed.

Billesbach stated that when the issue is raised with the Chancellor, he says that the rate is mandated by the Legislature and questioned whether this is accurate. Herstein noted that the state government rate for mileage reimbursement for 2020 was 56 cents per mile.

Dam reported that Interim Dean Varner recently sent out an email message to the Extension Educators asking what the county rate is for mileage reimbursement, but she does not know why he is asking for this information. She pointed out that mileage reimbursement continues to be a major issue for Extension Educators.

Kolbe stated that the Executive Committee should bring this issue up as an Executive Committee goal for the 2021-2022 academic year.

### **5.3 Incentives for Senate Service**

Item postponed.

## **6.0 New Business**

### **6.1 Proposed Revisions for Academic Rights and Responsibilities Procedures**

Kolbe reported that he has received an email message from Professor Peterson, chair of the Academic Rights and Responsibilities Committee, with the attachments for the revised procedures for the Committee as well as for each of the special hearing committee procedures, asking that they be forwarded to the Chancellor for approval by the Board of Regents. Kolbe noted that the Faculty Senate has voted to approve the revisions over the course of several years at various Faculty Senate meetings. He asked the Executive Committee members to review the proposed revisions and indicate by email if they approve of forwarding the proposed revisions.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:53 p.m. The next meeting of the Executive Committee will be on Tuesday, June 1, 2021 at 2:30 pm. The meeting will be conducted via Zoom. The minutes are respectfully submitted by Karen Griffin, Coordinator and Kelli Herstein, Secretary.