

UNL FACULTY SENATE MEETING MINUTES
October 5, 2021
Presidents Steve Kolbe, Deb Minter and Nicole Buan, Presiding
Zoom Meeting

1.0 Call to Order

President Kolbe called the meeting to order at 2:30 p.m.

2.0 Announcements

No announcements were made.

3.0 Chancellor Green

Chancellor Green noted that we are now entering the middle of the semester and reported that things continue to go well for the campus. He stated that the number of Covid cases has gone down, and our current positivity rate has been routinely just below 1%. He noted that the number of tests being conducted are lower than what has previously been done, due in part to the number of people who have participated in the vaccine registry. He stated that the Lincoln/Lancaster County Health Department has extended the mask mandate through most of October and the Department will reassess whether there will be an extension of the mandate. He pointed out that the decision to either extend or remove the mask mandate will be based on the local Covid conditions in the county. He stated that he spoke with a number of students last week and asked them to give him full and open feedback about the University's Covid policies and how it was going for them. He noted that he received positive feedback on the protocols with the only negative being that the Safer Community app sometimes loads slower than desired.

Chancellor Green reported that the Legislature's Appropriations Committee started discussing the process for how to allocate the approximately \$1.1 billion of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding that the State is scheduled to receive. He stated that the Appropriations Committee began hearings today with 51 people speaking, including President Carter who testified on the University's proposal for \$195 million of the funds. He reported that two of the proposed University projects would relate directly to UNL, one is to rebuild and significantly expand the Holland Computing Center and the other project is partial support to build a public-private partnership commercial tech transfer facility to the USDA's National Center for Resilient and Regenerative Precision Agriculture that will be built at NIC. Chancellor Green stated that the largest single proposal in the University's request would expand the Medical Center to UNK to focus on professional development for health care for rural Nebraska. He stated that a facility would be built to house a scaled back version of UNMC with medical, nursing, and pharmacy capabilities.

Chancellor Green stated that the AAUP censure removal process is moving forward. He noted that the interviews with members of the Faculty Senate, Graduate Student Association, and the local AAUP chapter have been completed and he thanked those who were involved. He stated that the initial feedback from AAUP is quite positive, and indications are that there will be a recommendation to remove the censure.

Chancellor Green reported that revisions to the Academic Rights and Responsibilities Committee (ARRC) procedures needed to be made after the changes to the Regents Bylaws were approved by the Board of Regents. He pointed out that there is a statute in the Regents Bylaws requiring any revisions to the ARRC procedures be approved by the Board. He noted that the proposal to revise the ARRC procedures is on the agenda for the October 8th Board meeting and then the Board will vote on the revisions in December.

Chancellor Green noted that he mentioned at the September Faculty Senate meeting that President

Carter is providing \$5 million this year, and another \$5 million next year, to UNL to address inequities in tenure line faculty salaries in order to bring their salaries in line with our peers. He reported that Academic Affairs and IANR worked with the Deans and have now finished the process to identify faculty members who will receive a salary increase to enhance their salaries to the level of our peers. He reported that 63% of the eligible faculty members received an increase this year which will go into effect October 1 and will be retroactive to July 1.

Chancellor Green stated that Student Affairs has called a Greek Life Summit to occur on October 23rd and all members of the Interfraternity Council, and the Pan-hellenic Council are required to attend along with their executive leadership team, advisers, alumni cooperation, and house parents. He stated that there will be upwards of 300 people in attendance, and he will be speaking to them to lay out the challenges for Greek life in today's current climate. He pointed out that he will be very candid about what the challenges are, and he will share data with them about the number of complaints that have been filed and the issues that have arisen, but he will not violate anyone's confidentiality by providing the data.

Professor Woodman, School of Biological Sciences, asked if there is a plan to raise the salaries of non-tenure track faculty members. Chancellor Green reported that the money that was allocated by the University system was for tenure track and tenured faculty members. He stated that he is hopeful that the same argument of market competitiveness can eventually be made for non-tenure track faculty members. Professor Weissling, Special Education and Communication Disorders, pointed out that some of the non-tenure track faculty members would not fare well in reviewing market competitiveness and she thinks there is the case that all faculty salaries need to be reviewed. She stated that there needs to be a base salary for non-tenure track faculty members because no one working at the university should be working at a poverty level salary.

Professor Schubert, Electrical and Computer Engineering, thanked the Chancellor for his leadership to get the campus through the difficulties of the pandemic. He noted that the international travel restrictions were put into place for the pandemic but asked why the international travel committee is still needed now that faculty are starting to travel again for their research. He pointed out that he has been waiting since mid-September for approval to travel, and if faculty are entrusted to make the right decisions for their teaching and research, why are they not entrusted with their research travel. Chancellor Green stated that he understands the frustration, but the reality is that we are not fully through the pandemic and there are still a lot of restrictions on international travel. He reported that UNL is following the university system policy where approval is given on a case-by-case basis. He stated that the hope is that we will be out of the restriction mode soon.

Professor Vakilzadian, Electrical and Computer Engineering, asked for an update on the incentive-based budget model. Chancellor Green reported that the new budget model was implemented with the new fiscal year on July 1. He stated that great progress has been made with incorporating remissions and tuition in the model and more recently it was determined that university-wide research centers that span multiple colleges will be set up as their own independent entity in the model so that the funding flows properly to the centers. He stated that the Budget Model Advisory Committee, co-chaired by VC Nunez and Professor Bloom, has been formed and is now meeting.

Professor Palmer Wackerly, Communication Studies, asked if the tenure line faculty members receiving an increase have been notified yet, and if they are not receiving an increase will they be considered for next year. Chancellor Green stated that he believes the letters of notification will be going out this week and they will see the increase reflected in their paycheck at the end of this month. He stated that the process of looking at the market competitiveness of a faculty member's salary will be conducted next year, and it may, or may not result in an increase.

Chancellor Green thanked each of the Senators for the work they do and their service to the Faculty Senate.

4.0 Approval of September 7, 2021 Minutes

President Kolbe asked if there were any revisions to the minutes. Hearing none he asked for approval of the minutes. Professor Billesbach, Biological Systems Engineering, moved for approval. Motion seconded by Professor Peterson, Agricultural Economics and approved by the Faculty Senate. There was one abstention.

5.0 Committee Reports

5.1 Academic Standards Committee (Director Katie Kerr)

Director Kerr noted that she provides coordination for the Academic Standards Committee and stated what a privilege it is to work with the faculty members serving on the Committee. She reported that last year the Committee met 20 times and its main responsibility is to review dismissal appeals. She reported that if the Committee accepts an appeal, the student has a semester to show they have made improvements. She stated that the academic colleges provide recommendations to the Committee and the Committee's decision agrees with the college recommendation in 82% of the appeals.

President Kolbe asked if the Committee noticed a drastic uptick in the number of appeals due to the way classes were taught during the pandemic. Director Kerr pointed out that the number of appeals was slightly lower than the previous couple of years and the Committee's approval percentage was somewhat normal, but the Committee did take into consideration the impacts of the pandemic. She noted that with the spring buffer provided last year because of the pandemic, students had some time to recover and improve their grades. She pointed out that we do track how students are performing when they are reinstated and about 50% of the students end up doing well, but this number can vary from semester to semester. She reported that there are a few students who get reinstated that wind up graduating that semester.

5.2 Academic Rights and Responsibilities Committee (Professor Peterson)

Professor Peterson pointed out that the Academic Rights and Responsibilities Committee (ARRC) is an important committee for faculty rights. He reported that the chair of the ARRC sends a letter to the department chairs and heads of those faculty members who have served on an ARRC hearing panel acknowledging the work of the faculty member and often he receives a response from the chair saying they did not know how the committee worked or the importance of it.

Professor Peterson reported that last fall the ARRC received seven formal written complaints which is above the average of two or three. He noted that three of the seven complaints went forward to a special hearing committee. He stated that the other four formal complaints did not reach the standards to convene a special hearing committee and the ARRC recommended that the complainant go through other resources such as the Ombuds office which has been very helpful.

Professor Peterson noted that the ARRC was contacted by thirteen other people, and the Committee tried to informally handle their concerns. He pointed out that sometimes just talking to a person helps them to figure out how they can resolve an issue. He stated that four of the thirteen contacts are still open, and they may eventually become a formal complaint.

Professor Peterson asked the Senate to continue to monitor the approval process for the revisions to the ARRC procedures. He stated that one of the revisions calls for a change in the membership of the Academic Rights and Responsibilities Panel. He noted that currently there are 32 tenured faculty members and 4 Extension Educators on the Panel, but with the revisions, there will be 28 tenured faculty members, 4 Extension Educators, and 4 non-tenure track faculty members who are Associate or above. He pointed out that it will be important for people to recruit qualified faculty members to serve on the Panel as it is often difficult to find 24 people to run for election. He noted that it is possible that people can be elected to the Panel and would never have to serve on a hearing panel.

Professor Peterson reported that last year ARRC past chair Professor Falci received a number of complaints from contract faculty members about the renewal process and other issues that they face, but he knows the Senate Executive Committee is working with the administration to address these problems. Professor Stevenson, English, read that there is an increasing number of contract complaints and asked if there is a way to identify patterns that can then be communicated to the administration. Professor Peterson stated that this is a good point, but part of the problem is the confidentiality issue and almost every situation is unique. He noted that over the last 3 or 4 years there has been a number of complaints regarding the renewal process and there are claims of bias, but this is generally hard to prove and there is no guarantee that a contract must be renewed.

President Kolbe pointed out that some form of annual review of Lecturers is needed because it does not always occur. Professor Peterson noted that the Board of Regents Bylaws states that all faculty members should have an annual review and if this is not occurring, a faculty member could file a grievance with the ARRC. Past President Buan wrote in chat that the Executive Committee has raised this issue to the administration and the Chancellor was upset to hear that not all faculty members are getting an annual evaluation because it is stated in the Bylaws that this must be done, and the Chancellor has to sign off that everyone has been evaluated. She stated that if anyone is not being evaluated, they should inform the Executive Committee so it can convey the concerns to the administration.

5.3 Executive Committee Summer Report (President Kolbe)

President Kolbe reported that the Executive Committee continued to meet over the summer and preparations for the fall semester with the increase in Covid cases was a frequent discussion. He stated that the Committee also discussed Lecturer pay increases and promotion, diversity in the upper administrative ranks, the university budget, and the plan to enhance tenure line faculty salaries. The Committee met with Professors Sollars to discuss the ACE comprehensive review. It also met with UNL Police Chief Hassan, with AVC Walker to discuss the instructional continuity policy, reviewed and revised the Faculty Senate Handbook, and discussed Regent Pillen's resolution to prohibit the teaching of critical race theory and then issued a statement in support of academic freedom. The Committee also had an Executive Committee/Administrator Retreat.

Professor Vakilzadian asked what the hold up was with making Lecturer salary improvements. President Kolbe reported that last year the campus had the ability to recommend for some long-term Lecturers promotion to a Professor of Practice position, and salary increases were provided to Lecturers. He noted that the Executive Committee is continuing to push forward with the campus developing a promotion path for Lecturers, and he noted that UNO and UNK are also wanting to make similar improvements on their campus.

Professor Stevenson thanked President Kolbe and the Executive Committee for its continuing effort to make improvements for Lecturers. She asked if the breakdown of the funds disbursed to the colleges to improve Lecturer salaries and the number of Lecturers promoted to Professor of Practice could be provided. President Kolbe stated that the Executive Committee will ask again for this information. Past President Buan noted that the Faculty Compensation Advisory Committee will also raise this question with the administrators at an upcoming FCAC meeting.

Professor Schauer, Modern Languages and Literature, asked what happened to the recommendations made by the ad hoc committee that was working on the Lecturer situation. Past President Buan stated that the Lecturer promotion path recommendation needed to conform with the Regents Bylaws. She reported that EVC Spiller stated that her office would be taking a hard look at Lecturer contracts as we move forward, and Deans will need to annually review the salary benchmarks for Lecturers. She stated that she hopes when the FCAC reviews the salary data for Lecturers that there will be improvements in the median pay across the colleges. Professor Schauer suggested that the FCAC have the ad hoc committee's report when it begins reviewing the data.

Professor Woodman stated that when he chaired the FCAC a number of years ago the Committee asked for data on non-tenure track faculty salaries in comparison with our peers, but the Committee did not receive this information from Institutional Effectiveness and Analytics. He noted that he co-chaired the ad hoc committee on Lecturer salaries for the College of Arts and Sciences and a number of recommendations were made including a promotion path of Lecturers to Professors of Practice, or having a Lecturer I, Lecturer II, or Lecturer III track which would recognize their time and service with raises based accordingly. He stated that the report was given to the EVC's office many months ago and the Executive Committee was told that some improvements have been made but he believes there needs to be a more transparent process. He pointed out that employee salaries are public and can be looked up on the Board of Regents website under the Board's meeting minutes.

6.0 Unfinished Business

6.1 Resolution to Revise the Syllabus Policy

Secretary Herstein stated that the revisions to the policy include a link to the course policy page (<http://go.unl.edu/coursepolicies>) which provides links to various university and campus policies. She noted that the reason for the revisions is to minimize the length of the course syllabus and to have the numerous university policies in one location. She pointed out that the Director of Undergraduate Education would be responsible for updating the website if there are changes in any of the policies. Professor Stevenson asked if a professor has a more lenient attendance policy if they can put that in their syllabus. President Kolbe stated yes and pointed out that faculty members can still put their own information into their course syllabus. Professor Sollars stated that the ad hoc committee made sure that the instructor has priority in their course policies. Professor Rowen, Nutrition and Health Sciences, asked if the University Undergraduate Curriculum Committee has reviewed the policy revisions. Professor Sollars stated that it has, and the members of the committee were thrilled because now all of the information will be located in one place that can be easily accessed. Professor Weissling stated that the revisions did not go through the college curriculum committees. President Kolbe pointed out that the changes went through AVC Walker's office, and she created the ad hoc committee.

Professor Lewis, Teaching, Learning & Teacher Education, asked if the syllabus policy can be loaded into everyone's Canvas website. Secretary Herstein stated that this was discussed by the ad hoc committee that worked on the revisions and the reason for not loading it into the Canvas website is because not all faculty members use Canvas. President Kolbe stated that the policy also needs to be transparent to the students.

Professor Billesbach moved for approval of the revised policy. Motion seconded by Past President Buan and approved by the Faculty Senate. There was one vote against the motion.

7.0 New Business

7.1 Faculty Senate Executive Committee Goals for 2021-2022

President Kolbe noted that the Executive Committee Goals for 2021-2022 were included in the Senator's packet of information.

7.2 Open Mic

Concerns with Safer Community App

Professor Friesen, Finance, stated that he has concerns with the Safer Community app and believes it violates key civil liberties and constitutionally protected rights. He pointed out that UNL does not have a written policy on the Safer Community app, and it is not clear if using the app is temporary or would continue after the Covid pandemic. He noted that the embedded surveillance technology in the app does not protect an individual's privacy and the medical information concerning your Covid test results are no longer private when you have to disclose your status to enter a building.

Professor Friesen stated that the Safer Community app's embedded surveillance technology is

designed primarily to align with their strategic global business interests, not to protect privacy and civil liberty and UNL faculty should be wary of the university using off-the-shelf technology. He stated that vaccine mandates and vaccine passports are essential components of the Safer Community app business plan.

Professor Friesen urged the Faculty Senate to press the administration on the violation of civil liberties with using the app. He stated that anyone who shares his concerns should reach him at gfriesen2@unl.edu.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:14 p.m. The next meeting of the Faculty Senate will be held on Tuesday, November 2, 2021, at 2:30 p.m. via Zoom. The minutes are respectfully submitted by Karen Griffin, Coordinator, and Kelli Herstein, Secretary.