

## EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES

**Present:** Baesu, Bearnese, Billesbach, Boudreau, Eklund, Kolbe, Kopocis, Krehbiel, Lott, Minter, Weissling

**Absent:** Zuckerman

**Date:** Tuesday, May 31, 2022

**Location:** 201 Canfield Administration Building

**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 (*Minter*)

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

### 2.0 VC Boehm/EVC Ankersen

#### 2.1 With gas prices soaring, what is being done to address the mileage and per diem rates?

Minter noted that the current cost of gas is particularly impacting Extension Educators and other faculty members who use their own vehicles to do their work and to conduct research. VC Boehm reported that a proposal from Dean Stoltenow of Nebraska Extension was presented to the Chancellor and President Carter seeking a change to the mileage reimbursement rate for Extension professionals. He stated that the proposal was approved by the President's Office, but some adjustments were needed in SAP to enable the reimbursement to these employees since Nebraska Extension has been restructured from districts to engagement zones. He noted that the adjustments should be ready in the beginning of July. Associate to the Chancellor Zeleny asked if the mileage reimbursement rate for the Extension professionals will be at the full federal rate. VC Boehm stated that it would be at the federal rate.

Billesbach stated that, in reviewing data from the time the mileage reimbursement was changed by the Budget Reduction Taskforces, it is unclear how they came up with the current rate. He stated that he is glad to see the Extension professionals receiving the increase but for those faculty members who use their vehicle to conduct research or teach, they are being hit with a 73% increase in gas prices and only getting 36-cents a mileage reimbursement. He asked why this burden is being put on the backs of these faculty members.

VC Boehm stated that he would ask Vice President Kabourek for information on how the university system determined the current mileage reimbursement rate. He pointed out that the solution for the Extension Educators targets employees who have the most limited access to the UNL motor pool.

Billesbach noted that the funding to reimburse him for travel comes from a federal grant, not state funding, and questioned why faculty members who get reimbursed from a grant are not provided with the federal reimbursement rate. He stated that his grant generates 49% overhead, and the current reimbursement rate reduces the income of the research grant. Associate to the Chancellor Zeleny suggested that this issue be raised with VC Wilhelm.

VC Boehm pointed out that change in the mileage reimbursement rate was determined by a budget reduction taskforce that consisted of faculty, staff, and administrators and it resulted in a savings of \$659,000. He noted that if the adjustment was not made the savings would have had to come from elsewhere. He stated that IANR and Federal funds appropriated for Extension are covering the cost of the increase in the reimbursement rate for Extension Educators.

Krehbiel stated that getting a vehicle from the motor pool is often a time-consuming process and for those faculty members that live outside of the city, coming into town and going through the process can easily add on an additional hour and half to a person's already full day. Billesbach pointed out that his research requires him going into fields in Oklahoma and he not only needs a vehicle that is capable of this kind of driving, but he also must factor in the weather so reserving a vehicle through the motor pool does not always work out.

Minter stated that she is thrilled to hear that some progress has been made and she appreciates the work that VC Boehm and others have put into making this change, but some of the changes made by the BRTs have had significant impacts on faculty work which needs to be reviewed. She suggested that the Executive Committee needs to gather more information about the negative impacts and develop some strategies for moving forward to rectify the impacts. Billesbach pointed out that there was very little faculty involvement in some of the decisions that were made and the impacts from the change in the mileage reimbursement rate is really being felt by faculty at UNL.

**2.2 Will there be contingency plans for conducting Covid testing for the fall semester? Will there be smaller versions of Covid testing available over the summer since there will be summer campus and classes occurring? Is there a backup plan ready if needed?**

Associate to the Chancellor Zeleny reported that testing will still be available but there will only be one testing location, Sunday through Friday, in front of the Nebraska Union. He noted that the UNL Health Center will have testing available on Saturday. He reported that UNL is working with the Lincoln/Lancaster County Health Department (LLCHD) to get home testing kits for those people who cannot get tested on campus this summer.

Associate to the Chancellor Zeleny stated that the campus is working closely with the LLCHD on plans for the fall semester. He pointed out that we have been fortunate to have the testing costs paid by the federal government, but that funding is running out. He

noted that we will do whatever is right for the campus, but the testing may be reduced from what it has previously been.

Billesbach asked if there is concern with the recent spikes in cases across the country and in the county and whether it will impact the campus. Associate to the Chancellor Zeleny reported that the Health Department expects that the spike will continue until about two weeks after the last day of school for LPS. Billesbach asked if there is a contingency plan for the fall. Associate to the Chancellor Zeleny stated that we are prepared to test everyone for re-entry to the campus with the start of the fall semester if it is needed. He pointed out that the current subvariant is much less severe than the previous variants.

Weissling asked if there were any numbers on how many study-abroad students became ill with Covid. Eklund noted that he had to stay overseas six extra days because two of his students contracted Covid. Associate to the Chancellor Zeleny stated that he does not have any information yet and noted that most of the study-abroad programs have gone forward as planned.

### **2.3 Future of Work Taskforce Update**

EVC Ankerson reported that the Taskforce conducted a survey of the staff with the help of the Bureau of Sociological Research and a little over 1200 staff members, from both the office service and managerial/professional pools, responded. She stated that the survey was available through a link in Nebraska Today and it was open for two weeks. She reported that the Taskforce just received the results last week and is now working through the responses. She stated that a report will be developed which will include recommendations that will be given to the Chancellor.

Krehbiel reported that staff members have spoken to her about the need for more flexible work hours and asked how the data from the survey will be used and if there is an anticipation that there will be significant changes. EVC Ankerson stated that the data will be used for developing the comprehensive report and noted that some of the recommendations will be short-term, others would be medium or long-term. She stated that there were not any real surprises with the results of the survey with salary and flexibility being some of the main issues.

Kopocis asked if more employees working from home would create a cost savings for the university because the amount of office space would no longer be needed. EVC Ankerson noted that there are a great number of issues surrounding any element of the future of work. For example, not having to commute to work saves money for an employee, but isolation can create mental health issues and the Employee Assistance Program has seen an uptick in mental health issues since the pandemic began. She stated that flexibility of working hours depends on a person's position. She pointed out that every issue that the Taskforce examines is very complex because of the diverse nature of the university and its mission. Minter noted that it is helpful for students to see the same faces and there is a community impact when people are working on campus versus working from home. EVC Ankerson stated that climate and community play a big role in the campus community.

Minter noted that the Gallup survey results indicated that there are issues around communications and asked if the Taskforce survey had a question about climate issues the staff may be experiencing. EVC Ankerson reported that there were questions about whether they would recommend UNL as a great place to work. Associate to the Chancellor Zeleny noted that the Chancellor's Commission on the Status of Women had a survey that looked at climate issues. Minter asked when the Future of Work Taskforce report will be presented to the Chancellor. EVC Ankerson stated that the Taskforce will act in an expedient manner and will work to get it to the Chancellor as soon as possible.

#### **2.4 2023 Summer Dates - Conflicts for Some Academic Units**

Minter noted that in previous summers the 8-week session started with the pre-session and ended with the last day of the first 5-week session, but the calendar for summer 2023 has the 8-week session beginning with the first 5-week session and ending in the second 5-week session. She pointed out that this creates a conflict for some units, especially those whose students in the 8-week session are primarily teachers and school administrators because they must return to their jobs before the 8-week semester ends. Weissling pointed out that it also has a big impact on UNL students who are graduating in August and will start their employment as teachers.

Eklund asked if there have been any discussions about aligning us with our Big Ten peers in terms of the number of weeks in a semester. EVC Ankerson reported that the primary goal was to align the calendar of the NU campuses and to implement the J-term. She stated that various campus entities were consulted about possible impacts of the change to the academic calendar and there have been discussions beginning last year about going to a 14-week semester. She noted that Provost Gold is asking for a larger group than the University-wide Calendar Committee to review and consider the implications of a 14-week semester. She noted that the larger group would have representation from each of the campuses. Eklund asked if all four campuses would need to move to a 14-week semester. EVC Ankerson said yes noting that there are faculty members and students who take courses or teach at UNL and UNO. Kolbe asked if one of the representatives from UNL could be from the Faculty Senate pointing out that the representative could then report back to the Executive Committee. EVC Ankerson stated that she thought the U-wide Calendar Committee were included in the larger committee, but she would check the invite list.

Kopocis stated that there is concern of encroachment by administrators expecting faculty to work over the J term. She pointed out that if faculty are expected to teach over the J term this would be an increase in their FTE, and they should be compensated for it. EVC Ankerson reported that the deans were sent an email regarding the 2022-23 academic calendar adjustments, and it stated that the 2022-23 academic year would be extended by two weeks. The email also stated that "faculty with academic year contracts will not be required to return from the holiday closedown until January 17, 2023 and will be expected to continue their work through May 26, 2023. Departments are advised not to schedule faculty or college committee meetings in the new year prior to January 17."

Kopocis pointed out that many 12-month faculty members have a teaching schedule already set and would not have the capacity to teach a course during the J session. She questioned where the FTE would come from to teach classes during the J term. EVC Ankerson reported that there are a number of reasons, mostly to do with student success, in offering the J session. Billesbach asked if a department chair could assign a faculty member to teach a course in the J session or whether it would be strictly voluntary. EVC Ankerson noted that the memo to the deans' states that "faculty compensation should be paid out as an overload for instruction related to the Spring 2023 Pre-session for faculty at 1.0 FTE and as additional pay for those below 1.0 FTE." Furthermore, "faculty instructional compensation will use the summer session rate of 2.8% of base salary per credit hour and faculty can earn a maximum of 20% of their academic year or fiscal year salary (base pay minus special stipends) as overload, over the entire year. This includes instructional and non-instructional compensation." She stated that faculty members wishing to teach during the J session need to discuss it with their chair and noted that faculty members are not forced to work if it is an overload.

Kolbe stated that he has heard comments that the failure of students in a course are the fault of the faculty members, and he questions the way the DFW grades are being used. He noted that these comments, and the push to have courses during the J term that students can retake if they fail a course, might be associated with the new incentive-based budget model. He pointed out that this issue needs to be discussed further this summer. EVC Ankerson stated that departments and colleges are being asked to review the prerequisites for courses to see if they are still adequately preparing students for the courses they are associated with and noted that the DFW data is being used by units to ask questions about the curriculum. Minter pointed out that she has received emails from faculty members who have reported that their department chair has commented on the DFW rates of their courses. Krehbiel stated that another question is whether the DFW data are being used in annual evaluations. Minter pointed out that it is not clear how the data is being used and the Executive Committee was assured that they would not be used in faculty evaluations, although faculty members have reported that they are.

## **2.5 Executive Memorandum 16**

Minter reported that she has been receiving many emails from faculty members and colleges regarding concerns over the revised Executive Memorandum 16 and changes to cyber security measures. She noted that she has been speaking with CIO Tuttle about the concerns. EVC Ankerson stated that she knows that CIO Tuttle has been very responsive to make sure that faculty members get the access they need for doing their teaching and research.

Minter stated that she worries that the central ITS office does not fully understand what is occurring on each of the campuses with regards to computing and she is particularly worried about the non-tenure track faculty members who receive low salaries but need to use their own devices to conduct university work which will now be managed by the university. EVC Ankerson pointed out that it is the unit's responsibility to appropriately equip each of its employees.

Minter noted that University Libraries uses open source and shared materials and asked what the implications will be for them with the cyber security changes. EVC Ankerson reported that CIO Tuttle has been working directly with the Libraries about these issues. Minter stated that the Senate's Information Technologies and Services Committee, which includes faculty members and administrators and has the responsibility of developing, assessing, and promotion of UNL campus-wide IT strategies did not have any involvement in developing a policy or being able to express concerns and provide input. EVC Ankerson noted that with any implementation of a policy there are things that need to be worked out or revised. She pointed out that many of our Big Ten peers have already had these sorts of cyber security policies in place because cyber security is not only a financial risk but a security risk. However, she stated that people need to continue to raise their concerns if there are roadblocks which prevent them from doing their work.

## **2.6 Associate Vice Chancellor for ASEM Search**

EVC Ankerson noted that AVC Winter recently left the university, but AVC Volkmer is serving as Interim AVC of ASEM and that he has done this very successfully in the past. She stated that the search process will begin soon.

## **2.7 Competitive Salary Increase for Tenure-Line Faculty Members**

Eklund asked for clarification about the process to distribute the \$5 million earmarked for tenure-line faculty members noting that there are tenured faculty members who have worked very hard and did not receive an increase. EVC Ankerson reported that the \$5 million investment this year and last year to tenure-line faculty members was allotted to the various units based on an analysis of a variety of methodologies which looked at our peers' salaries in comparison to our faculty members' salaries. She stated that each college developed a rationale and looked carefully at the faculty salaries in each department and recommendations were made by the department chair to the deans and then to her as EVC. She noted that she met with each of the deans to hear the rationale for the decisions that were made pointing out that for each of the salary increases, the rationale was related to market competitiveness.

Krehbiel agreed with Eklund that clarification was needed and stated that the total amount of allocation for each of the colleges should be made public. EVC Ankerson pointed out that employees will not receive notification of their salary increases until July 1. She noted that there have been several initiatives in the past few years to improve salaries, one of these was to improve lecturer salaries, the other is the competitiveness salaries for tenure-line faculty members, and the third will be to look at other regular faculty increases. Krehbiel asked how much of an increase people are receiving. EVC Ankerson pointed out that it depends on how far behind their salaries are in comparison with our peers. Eklund noted that there seems to be a lot of autonomy with how the colleges determined the salary increases. EVC Ankerson reported that her office made sure that the college decisions were fair and equitable. Eklund asked who are considered our peers. EVC Ankerson stated that we have the Big Ten peers and there is also the set of peers defined by the Board of Regents (<https://nebraska.edu/get-to-know-nebraska/one-university-four-campuses-one-nebraska/peer-institutions>).

### **3.0 Announcements**

#### **3.1 Summer Executive Committee Schedule Changes**

Minter reported that Chancellor Green will not be able to meet with the Executive Committee on May 31 or July 12 but instead will now meet with the Committee on June 21 and August 2.

#### **3.2 Search for the Vice Chancellor of Business & Finance**

Minter announced that the search committee for the search for VC of Business and Finance has been formed and noted that Kopocis and Professor Bloom, Physics and Astronomy, will both be on it.

#### **3.3 Search for Ombudsperson**

Minter reported that Ombudsperson Kostelnik will be retiring and a search to replace her is underway. She noted that there was a good pool of candidates and she is participating in the interviews. She stated that the hope is to have the new person start in August. Kopocis asked if non-tenure track faculty members were eligible to apply for the position and suggested that it would be good to have a non-tenure track person as an ombuds because they are familiar with some of the issues facing these faculty members.

#### **3.4 NU Worldwide Online**

Minter stated that NU Worldwide Online is being decentralized with the online courses reverting to the purview of the campuses, however compliance regulatory issues and the maintenance of the website listing the full extent of the online courses for each of the campuses will remain with Central Administration.

### **4.0 Approval of May 17, 2022 Minutes**

Minter asked if there were any further revisions to the minutes, hearing none she asked for a motion to approve the minutes. Billesbach moved to approve, motion seconded by Kopocis and then approved by the Executive Committee.

### **5.0 Unfinished Business**

#### **5.1 Professional Code of Conduct**

Minter reported that she is waiting to meet with Dean Hope, Graduate Studies, before making further revisions.

#### **5.2 Executive Committee Retreat**

Minter suggested that the annual retreat could be held on July 26 which is a day the Executive Committee is already scheduled to meet. Griffin noted that the retreat will begin with a lunch and afterwards the Committee will work on defining and developing the Committee's goals for the 2022-23 academic year. Minter stated that anyone who has suggested goals should send them to her.

### **6.0 New Business**

#### **6.1 Update on Correspondence**

Minter reported that she has received emails from groups of faculty members raising concerns about EM 16. She stated that CIO Tuttle will be meeting with these groups, but

she plans on speaking again with the Faculty Senate Presidents from the other campuses to see if they are similarly concerned about the changes to the policy.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:00 p.m. The next meeting of the Executive Committee will be on Tuesday, June 21, 2022, at 2:30 pm. The meeting will be held in 201 Canfield Administration Building. The minutes are respectfully submitted by Karen Griffin, Coordinator and Signe Boudreau, Secretary.