EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES

Present: **Baesu, Boudreau, Eklund, Kolbe, Kopocis, Krehbiel, Latta Konecky, Lott, Minter, Paul, Weissling**

Absent: **Bearnes, Zuckerman**

Date: **Tuesday, November 29, 2022**

Location: **Nebraska Union, Big Ten Conference Room**

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 *(Minter)*
Minter called the meeting to order at 2:38 p.m.

2.0   AVC Goodburn and Professor Brassil
2.1   Data Policy
Brassil reported that he has had an apportionment of .40% FTE serving as Director of Undergraduate Analytics for the past three years and during this period he has tried to create connectors between faculty and existing data in order to increase student success by identifying situations where instructors, courses or students could use additional support. He stated that more detailed information on undergraduate analytics can be found at https://executivevc.unl.edu/academic-excellence/undergraduate-analytics.

Brassil stated that a webpage he has created outlines the utility and scope for using data. He noted that he heard from faculty members various concerns about how undergraduate analytics could be used and worked to address these concerns with a statement on this webpage. He pointed out that great things could result from using data such as deans or chairs providing additional support to faculty members. He quoted information from the website saying that "rather than reducing the complexity of teaching and learning to a metric, the utility of undergraduate analytics is to expand the scope of self-reflection and the tools for pedagogical action".
He reported that there is concern that the data could be used negatively and to address this concern there is a specific statement that says, "undergraduate analytics data should not be used in isolation to determine an instructor's merit increase, retention, promotion, or tenure regardless of appointment types, as such processes can erode the trust necessary for instructor engagement".

Brassil reported that there will be a new tool in Canvas called Course Insights which presents a series of instructor dashboards on key performance, engagement, and diversity information about students within a course. He noted that deployment of the tool will be gradual but there are some departments that are currently using it and the goal is to have it available to all instructors in January. He stated that a number of diversity metrics will be available which will provide a multi-dimensional view of a student. He noted that

performance information will be disaggregated, and instructors will be able to see how students overall are performing in the class.

Brassil stated that with the data provided through undergraduate analytics a view of the community can be generated and course equity gaps can be viewed. For instance, data on the number of first-generation students across the campus or in a course can be provided, as well as what percentage of these students received a DFW. Data can also be broken down by majors as to whether students are from urban or rural areas.

Brassil reported that the data can identify performance outliers, students who are struggling in various ways and the campus has hired Academic Navigators to help these students. He stated that the data can now show if a student is just struggling in one course or is having difficulties in multiple courses and this information can assist the Academic Navigator to determine what assistance the student needs.

Minter pointed out that the statement about not using the data in isolation to evaluate an instructor is very important because both the Faculty Senate and its Executive Committee members have heard allegations regarding the misuse of DFW data in faculty evaluations. She stated that getting the statement out, particularly to those that conduct evaluations, is very important and suggested having AVC Goodburn and Professor Brassil present this information to the full Senate. She noted that chairs, department heads and Deans need to be committed to the statement. Professor Brassil stated that the information can be publicized in Teacher Connect, Nebraska Today, and he is willing to not only speak to the Senate but also would be willing to meet with departments and colleges. He pointed out that in faculty evaluations there needs to be a holistic assessment, otherwise instructors will not trust how the data will be used and the end result will be that we can't help students to be successful. He noted that using the data is about retaining students.

Weissling noted that not all instructors use Canvas, and she is worried about false data that could be generated. She asked if instructors could opt out from having the data generated. Brassil stated that the goal is to have a dashboard and metric that is robust in the various ways that instructors use Canvas. He pointed out that the goal is to identify the student who is an extreme outlier and is struggling and noted that many of those that have been trying the dashboards out have given rave reviews about it. He stated that initially as we move to a larger audience any instructor can opt-in to use the dashboards, but he believes that eventually will move to an opt-out option.

Eklund stated that it is difficult to recruit, and sometimes retain, students because of the difference in the cost of attending UNL versus UNK or UNO. He pointed out that there needs to be a more level playing field and UNL should be allowed to provide in-state tuition rates like UNO can for neighboring states. AVC Goodburn noted that UNL's four-year graduation rate is much higher than our sister campuses and some students would need to take an additional year or two of courses to earn their degrees. She noted that we need to use our data to let people know how successful we are.

Minter pointed to Eklund's observation as support for thinking not just about in-class experience but also about other factors that contribute to retention rates (such as student finances). Brassil stated that successfully educating our first-generation students and underrepresented students could help improve our retention and recruiting rates. He noted that the main point of his work is to get the institutional data to the level of the departments and instructors so they can use the data to make improvements where needed.

Kopocis stated that the data could be very powerful for large classes, but she has concerns for smaller classes where the statistics can look different. She questioned whether the data might lead some faculty members to chase metrics by giving students passing grades in an effort to keep their DFW rates low. Brassil stated that he does not want the use of the data to head in this direction and the intent is for instructors to use it as self-reflection in how they can improve their teaching and to identify students who are having difficulties. He noted that DFW rates cannot be used in isolation to determine salary. He pointed out that the biggest equity gaps are in the introductory courses and the data is only a tool for self-reflection for the instructor. Kopocis reported that there are faculty who are concerned that the data can be used for punitive measures. Brassil pointed out that he would be happy to meet with the faculty and chair of any department to clarify the use of the data. He noted that there is a study that indicates when an instructor is motivated to address equity gaps by an external factor, they are more likely to harm in the long run by passing students not prepared for the next course. A study by Dr. Claude Steele, Stanford University, showed that to be a successful instructor you need to communicate to all students that they belong in the class and give them wise feedback. He stated that he is working with the Center for Transformative Teaching to get this information out to all instructors and noted that this is a conversation that is occurring nationally.

Paul asked if students identify their race when they apply to the university. Brassil stated that students self-identify when they are admitted. He noted that data for small classes is not disaggregated because we do not want to deidentify students. Paul pointed out that with the racial identity data the category of "white" includes middle eastern and some African countries although these students would not identify themselves as white. She stated that the university needs to rethink the racial categories. Brassil agreed these categories have their limitations and stated that he is working with the Office of Diversity and Inclusion about how we can frame these categories.

Weissling asked if neural diversity has been factored in. She noted that students with disabilities are often at a significant disadvantage when coming to the university. Brassil stated that we don't have access to that kind of data right now. He stated that the concern has been raised before but we would need to figure out the best way to get this information. Goodburn pointed out that currently there is not a neural diversity box for students to check when they apply to the university.

Weissling stated that many faculty members will find the data very helpful and will use it but there are others who will be very uncomfortable with it. She stated that more than

education is needed, a sense of trust needs to be developed. Brassil stated that he wants to make the statement about not using the data in isolation during evaluations very public and wants it highlighted on the website. He is hoping that transparency will help ease concerns. Kolbe noted that the Guidelines for Faculty Evaluation are being revised and said that the statement should be included in this document. Minter stated that she will suggest this to EVC Walker who is working with a subcommittee on the revisions.

Lott asked if there could be a code or statement about the ethical use of this data that would need to be signed. He pointed out that the data should not be used as a tool of retribution. Goodburn noted that there is an Institutional Use Data Policy from the Board of Regents and before people are granted access to programs such as MyRed or PeopleSoft for example, they must sign the form.

Minter stated that she has concerns for departments that will not use the data at all. She noted that it is important to make sure that we all agree and understand the ethical principles behind the data use. Goodburn pointed out that not using it allows the equity gaps to continue which would impact student success rates.

2.2   Fall Report and Higher Learning Commission Quality Initiative Proposal and Process

Goodburn reported that the second annual update on the N2025 and the Student Experience is in the Fall Report developed by the Executive Vice Chancellor's office. She stated that the report provides information on degree completion, equity and experiential learning and helps to inform academic leaders where we are in terms of the N2025 goals. She noted that metrics from each college were pulled for the report.

Goodburn reported that UNL was last accredited in 2016 and we will once again go through the accreditation process in 2026. For the 2026 process, UNL is required to identify one major improvement effort it has undertaken as its Quality Initiative or Reaffirmation of Accreditation. She stated that the improvement effort must show the potential for significant impact on the institution and its academic quality, align with the institution's mission and vision, connects with the institution's planning processes, and provide evidence of significance and relevance at this time. She stated that it also must provide clarity of purpose and evidence of commitment to and capacity for accomplishing the initiative.

Goodburn stated that the academic leadership is currently thinking about some different project ideas that we could pursue, one of which is to document how UNL is supporting student success through a new initiative – the Academic Navigator Team. Through this initiative we could measure the intended outcomes to better understand how to improve UNL's undergraduate degree completion and equity outcomes. She pointed out that the Academic Navigator Team (ANT) aligns well with the N2025 plan, particularly with the overarching principle of every person and every interaction matters. She stated that ANT was launched in June and team members are responsible for monitoring multiple forms of data to identify students who are in need and connecting these students to resources with validating, identity and strengths-based approaches. She noted that students may be off

track for a variety of reasons from registering late for New Student Enrollment, receiving incompletes for courses, or for serious health concerns in which case the Academic Navigator would work with the instructor and student to see how a student could complete a course. She stated that ten navigators have been hired and they are embedded across the eight undergraduate colleges. She noted that the funding to support the navigators is from a grant and reported that it is a centrally coordinated team which is overseen by a director who meets with the team twice a week to see if there are any institutional issues that need to be addressed. She stated that as part of the grant each semester data on student engagement with the ANT is disaggregated by first-generation and race and ethnicity metrics are analyzed. The data for the first three months of the ANT showed that approximately 30% of the time students had an engagement with a navigator resulting in over 400 one-on-one meetings.

Goodburn reported that we want to collect as much data as possible from the ANT initiative and the intention is to conduct focus groups and surveys with academic professionals and students involved with ANT. She stated that at the end of the semester a survey will be distributed, and focus groups will be conducted in the spring semester with students about their experience with the academic navigator to see if any improvements need to be made.

Goodburn noted that our quality initiative proposal will be about 15 pages long and it will be vetted to different groups and peer reviewed by the Higher Learning Commission.

Eklund asked where the navigators are located. Goodburn stated that they are in different locations and some travel around the campus serving different colleges. She reported that two of them are housed in the Explore Center. Eklund asked who qualifies to be an academic navigator. Goodburn stated that the position is slightly above an entry advisor position and many of the navigators have a master's degree or were former teachers. She stated that we wanted people who have a strong commitment to higher education and who would represent the identity of the students they would help. She noted that many of them were first-generation students themselves. She reported that Joseph Lynch, who formerly as Assistant Director in the Explore Center, is the director of the Academic Navigators Team. She noted that positive feedback about the team members has already been received from faculty members and also parents. Eklund asked if the grant has the possibility of being extended. Goodburn stated that it is a four-year grant that will run through 2026 after which the colleges will be asked if it has been a worthwhile investment.

Minter asked how the initiative interfaces with other programs on campus that support students from historically underrepresented groups. Goodburn stated that the navigators are given a case load of approximately 1,000 students but work primarily with students who have the highest need for help. Minter stated that a lot of the issues the navigators address with the students are not directly course related. She suggested that it might be valuable to see data on teaching practices. Goodburn pointed out that we are learning as we go along and there could be other data points that could be considered. Brassil noted that the data that is currently being provided can now show if a student is struggling in

other classes whereas before an instructor could only see how a student was doing in their course.

2.3   Shared Governance – Faculty Senate Representative on the Academic Solution Council

Goodburn noted that Professor Sollars used to represent that Faculty Senate on the Academic Solution Council (ASC), but she is no longer a member of the Senate. She stated that it would be fine with her if there was a Senate representative on the ASC and noted that the Council meets on the first Wednesday of every month (except January) from 10:45 - 12:45 in the Alexander Building. She stated that the Council works on curriculum issues such as identifying institutional barriers and is currently looking at zero-credit courses to see what they are being used for and if boundaries need to be set on these courses. She stated that much of the work is done in subgroups and the members are a great group of people who are passionate about supporting student success.

Minter thanked Goodburn and Brassil and asked if they could give their presentation to the Faculty Senate at an upcoming meeting. Goodburn and Brassil stated they would be happy to give their presentation to the Senate.

3.0   Announcements

No announcements were made.

4.0   Unfinished Business

4.1   Postdoctoral Association Representation on the Faculty Senate, Staff Senate Representation on the Faculty Senate

Minter reported that she emailed the President and Vice President of the Postdoctoral Association and told them about the Executive Committee's discussion and the idea to have a representative of the Association as a non-voting member on the Faculty Senate, similar to the ASUN/GSA representative and currently the UAAD and UNOPA representative. She stated that she has not heard back from them yet regarding their interest in having Faculty Senate representation.

Minter noted that the ASUN/GSA, UNOPA, and UAAD representatives are not identified in the UNL Bylaws, rather they are courtesy representatives. However, she felt that the Senate should have a vote whether to include the Postdoctoral Association and she has drafted a resolution which she will send to the Executive Committee members via email for review. She stated that the idea would be to present the resolution to the Senate in February.

5.0   New Business

No new business was discussed.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:36 p.m. The next meeting of the Executive Committee will be on Tuesday, December 6, 2022, immediately following the Faculty Senate meeting. The meeting will be held in the Nebraska Union, Regency Suite. The minutes are respectfully submitted by Karen Griffin, Coordinator and Signe Boudreau, Secretary.