

UNL FACULTY SENATE MEETING MINUTES
September 6, 2022
Presidents Deb Minter, Kelli Kopocis, and Steve Kolbe, Presiding
Zoom Meeting

1.0 Call to Order

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

2.0 Announcements

2.1 2022-2023 Faculty Senate Meetings

President Minter reported that this past spring a survey was sent to Senators asking what their preference of delivery mode was for the Senate meetings and the majority felt that the meetings should be offered in hybrid mode, both in person and by Zoom. She stated that the meetings will continue if this format but if there are any changes, the Senators will be notified.

3.0 Chancellor Green

Chancellor Green welcomed everyone back and noted that it was good to start the year off with a normal semester after dealing with the pandemic for the past two years.

Chancellor Green wanted to congratulate Professor Peterson for being the recipient of the 2022 James A. Lake Academic Freedom Award and noted that he cannot think of a more deserving person on campus for the award than Dr. Peterson.

Chancellor Green pointed out that the official enrollment data will be released tomorrow but noted that there has been some good news and some disappointing news with the figures. He reported that in 2017 we peaked in our enrollment with just over 26,000 students, but we have had an approximate 8% decrease in enrollment since that peak, noting that we had a decrease in Nebraska resident students. He stated that there were several contributors to the decline in enrollment; over the last three or four years we have had great success in graduation numbers with record breaking numbers of students graduating, which is one of our goals, and the number of incoming freshmen students has been consistent, although this year there was a slight drop in their numbers. He reported that we did have more out-of-state students than ever before and the College of Journalism and Mass Communications, the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources, the College of Business, and the College of Engineering saw significant enrollment growth in out-of-state students. He stated that areas of concern are the continued decline in enrollment in the College of Arts & Sciences and in some disciplines such as pre-health. He pointed out that the good news is that we have the academically best freshman class ever and the most diverse noting that the number of minority students has increased almost two-fold from 2017.

Chancellor Green reported that graduate student enrollment is down. He noted that we had a significantly large graduate student commencement class in August and the new graduate enrollment level is down over 6%. He stated that we are renewing our focus on graduate student recruitment, and with Covid becoming more manageable, we hope to see some improvements with international student recruitment. He pointed out that we are exploring some new partnerships with universities overseas which we hope will broaden our international base.

Chancellor Green reported that our research program continues to receive awards and is doing well and noted that most recently a \$25 million federal award was granted to establish the Heartland Robotics Cluster with \$10 million of the award being used to allow the university to build out robotics-related research and teaching spaces in Kiewit Hall, Scott Engineering Center and Splinter labs.

Chancellor Green noted that EVC Ankerson chaired the Future of Work Taskforce which looked at

the changing work environment for staff. He stated that the report generated by the Taskforce effectively called for a move to hybrid work for staff where it is appropriate but acknowledged that part of the challenge is to make it equitable for those staff members whose jobs are not suitable to doing hybrid work. He reported that Central Administration is leaving the decision up to the campuses to decide. He noted that he shared with the Senate Executive Committee that the report would be made public to the campus in the next few weeks.

Chancellor Green reported that the State of the University Address will be on September 28th, and it will be conducted in the traditional manner with service awards being given in the morning followed by the State of the University Address at 11:00 and finishing with the picnic on R street.

Chancellor Green noted that it has been a good start to the semester and at the freshmen convocations barbeque held in front of the Nebraska Union he saw more students engaged and coming up to speak to him than ever before. He stated that he hopes that this was a good sign and that he is excited by their enthusiasm and hopes that their level of engagement will continue into their classes.

Chancellor Green thanked the senators for the service of the current and new members on the Faculty Senate and stated that he is looking forward to working with President Minter.

4.0 Approval of April 26, 2022 Minutes

President Minter asked if there were any revisions to the minutes. Hearing none she asked for a motion to approve the minutes. Professor Peterson, Agricultural Economics, moved for approval of the minutes. Motion seconded by Professor Ourada, Hixson-Lied School of Music and approved by the Faculty Senate.

5.0 Committee Reports

5.1 Academic Rights & Responsibilities Committee (Professor Peterson)

Professor Peterson reported that the Board of Regents Bylaws stipulates that each of the campuses shall create committees to deal with grievance, academic freedom violations, and professional misconduct and at UNL it is the Academic Rights & Responsibilities Committee (ARRC), a very important committee that works to protect the academic rights of faculty members. He stated that the standard procedure is for a faculty member to contact the ARRC and attempts are first made to find an informal solution to a problem, but if this is not possible the complaint would go to a special hearing committee. He stated that the ARRC had 26 total contacts for the year, 17 of these did not progress to a formal complaint but 9 progressed although one was withdrawn. He stated that 4 were resolved and 4 went to a special hearing committee. He noted that usually there are only 2 special hearing committees during the year so this year it has been more complicated to manage the Panel to have 4 separate hearing committees. He reported that all 4 special hearing committee cases are now completed.

Professor Peterson stated that in 2021 the Board of Regents approved revisions to the Bylaws which included revisions to the ARRC procedures. He noted that the approval process for any changes to the ARRC procedures requires Faculty Senate approval, the Chancellor's approval, the President's approval, and the Regents approval. He pointed out that recently it was detected that there may be a couple of issues in the ARRC procedures that require a revision in the language of the procedures. At this time, he stated that the ARRC is waiting to hear back from Attorney Mary Kay Hanson, the attorney for the ARRC, to see if the proposed revisions would be acceptable. If they are, he said that the approval process would be implemented.

5.2 Executive Committee Summer Report (President Minter)

President Minter noted that the Executive Committee had several meetings over the summer with the administrators and discussed concerns faculty had, particularly with the revisions to Executive Memorandum 16. She noted that the Committee met with CIO Tuttle to discuss the concerns and reported that CIO Tuttle met with several faculty groups on campus to discuss their issues with the

changes and how they would impact their work. She pointed out that the revisions came from Central Administration, but where the faculty can have some say is in the implementation of the policy. She noted that in speaking with other Big Ten Faculty Senate Presidents at other universities, they are making the same changes due to the increased risk of cyberattacks and the cost of liability insurance.

President Minter reported that the Executive Committee held a retreat where it developed its goals for the year, and these will be sent to the Senators. She stated that the Committee defined three broad categories including faculty wellbeing, shared governance, and campus safety. She noted that the Committee wants to work with specialists in survey research to create a faculty survey that would be conducted annually pointing out that over time it would provide information on how faculty are faring. She noted that the Committee had considerable discussion on the tasks that have been shifted to faculty members which has taken them away from the work they were hired to do. She stated that the Committee also wants to look at university processes to make sure we are using everyone's time well and the Committee is continuing to advocate for the appropriate evaluation of service and acknowledging faculty members contribution to service. For campus safety President Minter stated that the Committee wants to see how the Senate can continue to support the Chancellor's initiatives to make the campus safer for everyone. She asked Senators to provide feedback on the goals after they review them.

6.0 Unfinished Business

6.1 Election of Non-tenure Track Faculty Member

President Minter noted that just prior to the Executive Committee elections in late April the candidate for the non-tenure track faculty member withdrew but a new candidate has come forward and Professor Paul's bio is in the Senate packet. She asked if there were any nominations from the floor. Hearing none she stated that she would entertain a motion to approve by acclamation. Professor Cupp, Animal Science, moved for approval. Motion seconded by Professor Peterson and approved by the Faculty Senate.

President Minter reported that Executive Committee Member Professor Billesbach will be retiring at the end of September and will need to be replaced on the Committee. She pointed out that the term would continue until early May and that this is a great opportunity to learn more about the university, gain university literacy, and contribute to shared governance.

7.0 New Business

7.1 Open Mic

Professor Katz, Art, Art History & Design, reported that one of her constituents approached her to express concern over a change in the tuition rate for non-resident students to do field work. She noted that previously out-of-state students wanting to participate in field work, such as an archeology dig, were charged in-state tuition but this has now been increased to the out-of-state tuition rate. She pointed out that while this change might not have a significant impact on the university budget, it does have a big impact on the disciplines offering the field studies noting that these field studies are a great way to recruit graduate students. She stated that she did not think this was ever discussed with any of the faculty offering field studies and pointed out that faculty need to be involved in these kinds of discussions. President Minter stated that she believes the Executive Committee can bring this matter up with administrators.

Professor Theiss-Morse, Political Science, stated that there is a matter of increasing concern for shared governance with the directives that have been coming from Central Administration, particularly with information technology and the retirement changes. She pointed out that no time is provided to allow faculty to provide feedback and she is concerned that faculty governance gets weakened by this process of not seeking faculty input.

President Minter noted that the Executive Committee has discussed this issue numerous times and have brought this up to the Chancellor, EVC, and VCIANR. She stated that the Executive

Committee recently met with Vice President Brian Schlichting, Professor Brian Baugh, and Associate Vice Chancellor for Human Resources Steve Beck to discuss the retirement changes.

Past President Kolbe said that the Executive Committee needs to consider how the Senate can get information out to the faculty ahead of time so they can provide input rather than learning about the changes in a news release. He noted that with the drive towards efficiencies the Senate needs to be concerned that shared governance is not overlooked.

Professor Xia, Child, Youth & Family Studies, reported that graduate students are concerned that there will no longer be graduate student housing available for them in the future. She pointed out that providing housing for graduate students is a considerable factor for recruiting and noted that a majority of the graduate students living in graduate housing are minorities. President Minter stated that she met with Andrew Donesky, President of the Graduate Student Assembly to talk about their plans for focusing on this issue and noted that the Faculty Senate needs to keep its eye on this situation because it can definitely impact graduate student recruiting.

8.0 Presentation of the James A. Lake Academic Freedom Award to Professor Wes Peterson

President Minter announced that the James A. Lake Academic Freedom Award Committee recommended the James A. Lake Academic Freedom Award be given to Professor Wes Peterson and at the April 26, 2022, Faculty Senate meeting, the Senate approved the recommendation to award Dr. Peterson. She noted that the award recognizes an individual whose efforts have helped to preserve the most basic freedom of all, the freedom to seek and communicate the truth.

President Minter pointed out that in Dr. Peterson's willingness to serve in demanding, high-level faculty governance positions he has served as a model defender of academic freedom. He has been an active member of the Faculty Senate since 2000, serving as President in 2004-2005, served on the Senate Executive Committee for two terms, and is currently chair of the Academic Rights and Responsibilities Committee. In 2008 the university disinvited a controversial guest speaker, afterwards Dr. Peterson was instrumental in changing the ARRC procedures that were then approved by the NU Board of Regents requiring consultation with the ARRC should similar cases arise. Dr. Peterson was also involved with the updating of several Board of Regents Bylaws which protects academic freedom and other faculty and staff rights at UNL including the strengthening of academic freedom protections for contract faculty members.

President Minter presented the James A. Lake Academic Freedom Award to Professor Wes Peterson. Dr. Peterson thanked the Senate and the James A. Lake Academic Freedom Award Committee and also wanted to thank his department head Dr. Larry Van Tassel for his continuous effort to make sure that faculty members in the unit are awarded and recognized for their outstanding work. He wanted to thank those who wrote letters of support, including two former students who have gone on to Harvard and Princeton universities for graduate degrees and pointed out that we really do have some fabulous students at UNL.

Dr. Peterson wanted to note that whatever he has been able to accomplish he has done it with the help of the network established by the Academic Rights and Responsibilities Committee and the members of its Panel. He noted that these Committees are actively engaged in protecting and promoting academic freedom and other faculty rights. He stated that the work of faculty members who have served on the special hearing cases for the ARRC have done extraordinary work noting that the cases they investigate can be very difficult, intricate and can sometimes be emotionally charged but the members handle the cases with compassion and fairness and reach decisions that are accurate and make sense. He pointed out that we are fortunate at UNL to have such protections in place and to have a committee like the ARRC to protect faculty rights because many universities do not have anything like it.

Professor Peterson stated that he is very honored to receive the award, but he feels like he should receive it on behalf of the ARRC and the special hearing committees because it is the collective

group that has made effective changes in promoting academic freedom.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:35 p.m. The next meeting of the Faculty Senate will be held on Tuesday, October 4, 2022, at 2:30 p.m. in the City Campus Union, Regency Suite, and also via Zoom. The minutes are respectfully submitted by Karen Griffin, Coordinator, and Signe Boudreau, Secretary.