

UNL FACULTY SENATE MEETING MINUTES
December 5, 2023
Presidents Kelli Kopocis, Pete Eklund, and Deb Minter, Presiding
Zoom Meeting

1.0 Call to Order

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

2.0 Announcements

2.1 Tenured Faculty and Extension Educators needed for Academic Rights and Responsibilities Panel

President Kopocis reported that the Committee on Committees is seeking nine tenured faculty members and two Extension Educators (they must be Associate or Full Extension Educators) to run for election to the Academic Rights and Responsibilities Panel. She pointed out that the ARRP is an essential committee involved in shared governance and anyone interested should contact Coordinator Griffin.

2.2 Faculty Member Needed to Serve on Taskforce on International Compliance

President Kopocis stated that a request has been received from the University of Nebraska System for a faculty member from UNL to serve on an International Compliance Advisory Taskforce to develop policies and procedures relating to international compliance for faculty members working abroad. She stated that anyone interested in being a member of the taskforce should contact her.

3.0 Chancellor Bennett

Chancellor Bennett reported that he is very happy to be here and noted that he has been working well with the Faculty Senate Executive Committee. He pointed out that he appreciates how busy everyone is with the end of the semester quickly approaching, noting that Professor Gorman, Head Marshal, is busy preparing for our December graduations which will occur on the 15th and 16th of this month.

Chancellor Bennett acknowledged that the campus is working on some difficult things as we deal with the transition of the university leadership and the budget deficits. He noted that President Carter's last day is December 31st and the Board of Regents has named VP of Business and Finance Chris Kabourek as Interim President. He pointed out that he has developed an excellent working relationship with VP Kabourek and believes it will strengthen over the next few months. He reported that he does not know how long the search for the permanent President will take, but he will share more details with the Senate when he receives more information about it.

Chancellor Bennett stated that the Academic Planning Committee has been working on UNL's \$12 million budget deficit this semester and he is expecting the Committee's recommendations on Friday. He pointed out that throughout the process he has tried to be as flexible as possible to provide the APC sufficient time to do its work. He noted that once he receives the APC's recommendations, he will consider them and then will finalize the reductions after which he will inform the campus, although he does not know if the decisions will be made before the winter break. He stated that he has a deep appreciation for the level of anxiety the budget deficit has created for the campus community, but pointed out that we must deal with the reductions first before we can begin to move forward.

Chancellor Bennett reminded the Senate that, despite the budget reductions, we need to fulfill our mission as not only a land-grant university, but also as an R1 institution and the flagship campus. He pointed out that everyone involved realizes the impacts of these budget reductions and we need to ensure that we continue to offer high quality education and to provide support to our students. He stated that our work towards inclusive excellence isn't halted because of proposed reductions,

but we do need to think carefully about how we can be as efficient as possible. He stated that he is aware of what faculty members are being asked to do to serve our students and he thanked everyone for all that they do to help our students not only advance their careers but also their lives.

Chancellor Bennett stated that as we move into the spring semester, we should refamiliarize ourselves with the aims of the N2025 plan keeping in mind how important it is for us to take seriously the efficient use of the resources entrusted to us. He noted that each of us should be asking ourselves what our part is in dealing with the difficult situation we are currently in and consider how we are going to shape the university for the future. He stated that we will more than likely have additional budget reductions due to the university system's budget deficit and pointed out that we have already reduced our budget as far as we can without cutting academic programs. He reported that he will continue to work closely with the Academic Planning Committee, the Faculty Senate and its Executive Committee, Staff Senate, and ASUN as we grapple with the budget reductions.

Chancellor Bennett noted that a goal that has been put on the table has been for UNL to rejoin the AAU. He stated that he is working on developing a presentation about why it would be beneficial for UNL to rejoin the AAU and he is working with President Kopocis and Coordinator Griffin to determine when the presentation could be given to the Faculty Senate this spring.

Chancellor Bennett reported that he is reviewing the proposed revisions to the Guidelines for Faculty Evaluation, and he hopes to complete this and get the document approved soon.

President Elect Eklund stated that he appreciates that thoughtfulness and care given as we navigate through these challenging times. He pointed out that there are faculty members who are asking for a more detailed, line-item document indicating where the budget reductions will be made, like what has been made public in the past. Chancellor Bennett stated that his goal as Chancellor is to present the materials and interact with everyone as openly as possible, but he knows that there can be a higher level of anxiety if information is released without detail. He noted that currently, things are still very fluid with the budget, but he is willing to do what the campus wants.

Professor Bourke, School of Computing, asked if there is an update on the Schorr Center for Computer Science and Engineering Research since it is slated to be torn down due to the renovation of the stadium. Chancellor Bennett pointed out that he wants to minimize the displacement of the Schorr Center and noted that Interim VC Jones continually brings this issue up whenever she speaks with him. Professor Bourke asked if this could be a standing agenda item whenever the Chancellor meets with the Senate. Chancellor Bennett stated that he would appreciate it being on the agenda and would provide information when it becomes available to him.

4.0 Approval of November 7, 2023 Minutes

President Kopocis 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. Motion seconded by Professor Tschetter, History. The Faculty Senate then approved the minutes.

5.0 Committee Reports

5.1 Faculty Compensation Advisory Committee (Past President Minter)

Past President Minter noted that the Faculty Senate Past President serves as the Chair of the FCAC. She reported that one of the key elements of the FCAC is the data that is prepared by Institutional Effectiveness and Analytics and compares UNL faculty salaries to that of our peers. She noted that the committee checks the five-year trend line to see if there are any significant variations in salaries. She stated that the data is made available in April to the FCAC for its review and typically sends a letter of recommendation to the Chancellor. However, with the announcement of Chancellor Green's retirement and the fact that the Academic Planning Committee was dealing with budget reductions this past spring, the FCAC decided not to send its usual letter to the Chancellor about recommendations for faculty salaries.

Past President Minter reported that the FCAC met twice this fall and looked at data faculty salary specifically to UNL, including data for the five-year trend line. She noted that the Committee will work with the data that has been made available and will make recommendations to Chancellor Bennett this spring.

Professor Vakilzadian, Electrical and Computer Engineering, asked if the \$5 million to improve tenure-line faculty salaries was still available. Past President Minter stated that there was \$10 million in total to increase UNL tenure-track faculty salaries and the FCAC wants to look at whether the salary increases that were made had an impact in how we compare to our peer institutions. She pointed out that our peer institutions don't define their faculty roles like we do so it is difficult to conduct longitudinal tracking on positions like Professors of Practice. She stated that the Committee does a deep dive into the data that is obtained and identifies if any trends are occurring. She pointed out that the Committee cannot recommend salary increases for individuals, noting that this must be done by the Deans. Secretary Boudreau stated that a question was received through Zoom asking if prior data reports can be accessed. Past President Minter stated that there is a binder containing an enormous amount of paperwork that is handed down to the Chair of the Committee each year and stated that it would be useful to archive this information because it does provide a history of faculty salaries.

Professor Stevenson, English, asked if the FCAC also looks at administrators' salaries to see if they are excessive. Past President Minter stated that she believes the Committee can do this and knows that it was done in the recent past. She stated that she would take this back to the Committee for consideration.

Professor Lewis, Teaching, Learning and Teacher Education, asked if the FCAC looks to see if there are any gender gaps in comparison to our peer institutions. She stated that she appreciates the complexity of trying to compare the different positions but many of the Professors of Practice at UNL are women which creates a built-in discrimination of women. She asked if the Committee has resources to investigate this issue. Past President Minter stated that she is not aware if this has been done in the past but there is an annual faculty salary survey of 149 institutions including many who belong to the Association of Public and Land Grant University (APLU) that is conducted by Oklahoma State University and she knows that at some point this data has been accessed by the FCAC. She stated that it would also be good to get historical data from the colleges and units. Professor Peterson noted that when he was on the FCAC it looked at a model that the university used to identify gender discrepancies. He questioned whether the FCAC would be able to separate out the Professor of Practice salaries. Past President Minter stated that the data the FCAC receives from IAE identifies the Professor of Practice budget expenditures. She pointed out that there are some Professor of Practices that do not have 100% FTE as a Professor of Practice which makes it difficult to compare the data.

The question was asked what work is being done in terms of standardizing Professors of Practice at UNL because currently there are serious equity issues in how they are treated. Past President Minter pointed out that this is not in the FCAC's purview, but this has been raised previously in discussions with AVC Walker and the Executive Vice Chancellor. She noted that she understands the barriers that exist because there are many differences with how departments see Professors of Practice. She noted that some professionals are experts in particular fields and they may be compensated relative to the market because of their skills.

Past President stated that she appreciated the comments and will bring them to the FCAC.

6.0 Unfinished Business

6.1 Motion to Approve Proposed Revisions to the Academic Rights and Responsibilities Procedures

President Kopocis wanted to thank Professor Peterson for all the work that he has done on revising

the ARRC Procedures noting that this has been a lengthy process. Professor Peterson pointed out that Professor Lewis is Associate Chair of the ARRC and has also been working on the revisions for a long time.

Professor Peterson reported that the proposed revisions grew out of some things that happened over time with the special hearing committees. He noted that the first revision is to make it easier to manage the number of people on the special hearing committees, reducing it from six to five members. The second revision is to address the lack of communication regarding responses to a special hearing committee's report, especially those cases that go to the Board of Regents for a decision. He noted that the third revision is to try to insert language into the procedures requiring General Counsel to provide legal representation for both parties involved in a complaint. He pointed out that he met with two attorneys from the General Counsel's office along with Chief of Staff Davis explaining why the university should provide equal representation but noted that the General Counsel's office would not accept this revision.

President Kopocis noted that the motion to revise the procedures was presented at the September 5th Senate meeting and since it was coming from a Faculty Senate committee, it did not need a second. She asked the Senate to vote on the proposed revisions. The Faculty Senate overwhelmingly approved the revisions.

7.0 New Business

7.1 Motion to Approve the Professional Code of Conduct

President Kopocis reported that the Executive Committee was bringing forth a motion for approval of the Professional Code of Conduct. She noted that included with the document is the timeline for the creation of the document which needs Faculty Senate approval. She pointed out that the Code is meant to protect faculty and to not be punitive in any way. Past President Minter suggested to the Senators that they contact either her (dminter1@unl.edu) or President Kopocis (kellikopocis@unl.edu) if they should have any questions after reading the document. President Kopocis stated that the motion would be voted on at the February 6th meeting.

7.2 Open Mic

Professor Lewis noted that with the January pre-session being discontinued in 2026, there is concern about our spring break not aligning with LPS' break when we return to our previous academic year calendar. She asked what the Senate's input has been on this issue.

President Kopocis reported that she serves on the University-wide Calendar Committee. She noted that the January pre-session began with the pandemic and has only been scheduled through the 2024-2025 academic year. She stated that the decision to return to our previous academic calendar during the 2025-2026 academic year was due to the number of days available for teaching being reduced because of when the winter holiday break occurs. She noted that the university's calendars are set ahead for several years, and the effort has been to align the schedules for the four NU campuses to accommodate the faculty and students, particularly those who teach or take courses on two different campuses. She stated that at one time UNL's spring break was aligned with LPS' break, but LPS recently changed their schedule.

Professor Bourke suggested having the fall break occurring during the week of Thanksgiving so there is a full week break. President Elect Eklund asked if anyone has reached out to the LPS superintendent to see if LPS would consider readjusting their schedule. President Kopocis stated that she does not know if this has occurred, but she could reach out to Provost Gold to see if this has happened. Professor Zuckerman, Educational Administration, pointed out that it does make sense to align the spring breaks with the local schools and suggested that there be exceptions for NU courses that have students and faculty members from different campuses. President Kopocis stated that she would reach out to Provost Gold about the suggestions to see what can be done.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:34 p.m. The next meeting of the Faculty Senate will be held on Tuesday,

February 6, 2024, at 2:30 p.m. in the East Campus Union, Great Plains Room A. The minutes are respectfully submitted by Karen Griffin, Coordinator, and Signe Boudreau, Secretary.