

## EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES

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

**Absent:** Krehbiel

**Date:** Tuesday, January 31, 2023

**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.

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### 1.0 Call (*Minter*)

Minter called the meeting to order at 2:34 p.m.

### 2.0 EVC Ankerson

#### 2.1 Status of Revisions to Guidelines for Evaluation of Faculty

EVC Ankerson reported AVC Walker is making some further revisions to the document after which she will share it with the subcommittee that has worked on the language before going to the full committee reviewing the Guidelines. She noted that eventually it will go through the full process for approval including presentation to the academic leadership team and the Faculty Senate.

#### 2.2 When will the academic calendar be confirmed for upcoming years? Faculty often need to plan at least a year in advance for some events. Who is responsible for updating the academic calendar on the Registrar's website.

EVC Ankerson noted that the Board of Regents approved the calendar for the next two academic years (2023-2024, 2024-2025) and this has been updated on the Academic Calendar website, however the summer 2024 and 2025 schedule has not been updated yet because the dates of the summer sessions are still being worked out.

Minter asked if the 2023-24 and 2024-25 academic years will both have the spring pre-session in January. EVC Ankerson said yes, and this was approved by the Board of Regents this past fall. Minter pointed out that in 2024 UNL will be out of sync with the LPS spring break. EVC Ankerson stated that the focus of the calendar committee was on coordinating the calendar of UNL, UNK, and UNO. She reported that the calendar for academic calendar has not been set yet for 2025-2026 and later years.

#### 2.3 If the University decides to go with a 14-week semester, how soon would it begin?

EVC Ankerson noted that the University-wide Calendar Committee is composed of representatives from each of the campuses and it is working on a number of things regarding the calendar. She stated that some UNL representatives have advocated for having a 14-week semester and there has been some agreement from the other campuses,

but not all are in favor of it. She pointed out that work would still need to be done before a switch could happen and it would not take place until after the 2024-2025 academic year. Kolbe suggested that there would not be as much of a driving force to shift to a 14-week semester if there was no spring pre-session.

#### **2.4 Spring Pre-session Information**

EVC Ankerson reported that for the spring 2023 pre-session a total of 68 courses were offered, noting that these included a total of 108 class sections. She stated that 41 academic units offered courses and a total of 1,764 students took courses for a total of 4,110 student credit hours. She pointed out that since this is the first time the formal 3-week pre-session has been offered (outside of COVID-19), we do not have data from previous years that we can compare the figures with. Kolbe noted that there must have been courses ranging from one to three credit hours. EVC Ankerson stated that this is correct, but she does not have the breakdown on the number of credit hours per course. She stated that 70% of the courses were offered online.

EVC Ankerson stated that some faculty reported that students felt the break was too long for them. In speaking with the Student Advisory Board (SAB), one first-generation student pointed out that she couldn't afford to take a course during the pre-session, but she was able to work 40 hours a week to earn money. She stated that for some student-athletes having the pre-session allowed them to take a course that would be difficult to take during the spring semester due to traveling for games. She noted that the Architecture master student on the SAB was thrilled to take a course during the pre-session because it lightened their workload for their busy spring semester.

EVC Ankerson stated that some students with the Student Advisory Board did think that the break between the end of the fall semester and the beginning of the spring semester was too long. They suggested having some no-cost activities at the university so they could still feel connected. She pointed out that during the winter months mental health issues are more prone to occur and suggested that the campus have some wellness events or make sure students know that CAPS is available during this time.

EVC Ankerson reported that AVC Goodburn had mentioned that the three-week session allowed a group of 22 pre-health students to go to Costa Rica on an internship which would not have been possible without the pre-session.

EVC Ankerson reported that the President's office will be surveying students to get their perception on the spring pre-session. She surmised that once information is gathered there will probably be some ideas on how to make greater use of the pre-session. She noted that it is too early to tell if the summer courses will be impacted by the spring pre-session.

#### **2.5 Impacts of a shorter summer: Is there a concern of faculty burnout from having a shorter summer? Has there been consideration how a shorter summer could reduce the earning potential for those students working during the summer?**

EVC Ankerson noted that these are all issues that the calendar committee has been talking about and UNL representatives have raised many concerns about the impacts of having a shorter summer. She pointed out, not only does a shorter summer impact research work and courses, but it also impacts campus events such as the ability to offer conferences and the various camps that occur. She stated that the shorter summer also makes it difficult for the Housing staff to prepare the rooms for students coming in the fall. She stated that the shorter summer is difficult in many ways.

**2.6 Are efforts underway to address graduate student compensation, either salary and/or benefits? If so, what is the process and status of that effort?**

EVC Ankerson noted that Provost Gold is planning to conduct a survey of graduate students across the system about benefits but as far as she knows there is no data available yet. She pointed out that the UNL GSA has done a comparable study of graduate student benefits/stipends in the Big Ten.

EVC Ankerson reported that the graduate student stipend for positions between .33-.49 FTE make eligible for up to 12 hours of tuition remission and 79% of paid health insurance premium. She stated that the minimum stipend at UNL for 2022-23 is \$10,930 and that this amount has incrementally changed every year. She noted that Graduate Studies is working hard to improve graduate student stipends and pointed out that our average stipend is \$19,410. She reported that currently we have 1,858 graduate students on assistantships and of those, 142 will be affected by an increase in the minimum stipend which is being raised to \$14,000 for 2023-24. She pointed out that this still below the minimum of our Big Ten peers, but we will be working to evaluate and take next steps for the future.

Eklund asked if the funding in colleges and departments for graduate stipends will increase, or will the units have to cut the number of assistantships offered in order to reach the minimum stipend. EVC Ankerson noted that there is no pool of funds set aside at the university level for graduate students. Each college takes care of the expense in their own way, some use foundation funds, some of the stipends are state aided. She noted that there are two colleges which will be impacted more than the other colleges and her office will bridge the additional expense for the first two years for these colleges which will allow them to develop strategies on how to fund the minimum stipends. Eklund stated that in a recent meeting the faculty were told to prepare for the worst in regard to graduate stipends. EVC Ankerson pointed out that during the 2020 budget cuts hard decisions had to be made and in some cases the number of graduate teaching assistantships were reduced.

Eklund stated that graduate students in his department were expected to contribute 13.3 hours per week but that has now increased to 16-17 hours per week. EVC Ankerson reported that for graduate students with a .49 FTE the expected hours are 19.6 hours per week and for .33 FTE the expectation is for 13 hours a week. Anything else in between would be proportional. She pointed out that the current Comprehensive Campaign is focusing on student support for both undergraduate and graduate students which will hopefully help to provide more funding for students.

**2.7 The time period for students to complete their course evaluation for fall was extended into final weeks after most students would have received their final grades which could result in negative evaluations. How is this being addressed for the spring term?**

EVC Ankerson stated that the Teaching Council approved a recommendation to extend the time for graduate students to do course evaluations, but she does not have information about undergraduate course evaluations. She pointed out that it is often recommended that teaching evaluations be conducted during the 8<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> week of classes. She stated that she would need to check to see when undergraduate course evaluations are conducted.

**2.8 Will the Budget Model Advisory Committee be Reinstated?**

EVC Ankerson pointed out that the BMAC has not been dissolved, it just hasn't met for a while. She anticipates that there will be a meeting sometime this spring once VC Mike Zeleny settles into his new position as VC of Business and Finance.

**3.0 Update on IChange Initiative (Professor Buan, VC Barker, AVC Walker)**

Buan reported that UNL's participation in the Association of Public & Land-Grant Universities (APLU) Aspire IChange program helps support three of the six aims of the N2025 Strategic Plan. These aims are to increase impact and innovation of research and creative activity and promote faculty diversity and inclusive excellence. Over the past two years the UNL IChange Team of faculty and administrators have had discussions to assess and recommend best practices for enhancing data collection, recruiting, evaluation, and retention of faculty from diverse demographics. She noted that subcommittee workgroups were formed to delve more deeply into each of these categories.

Buan reported that the UNL IChange team leadership includes VC Barker and AVC Walker as co-chairs and she serves as coordinator. She noted that Kopocis has joined the team as the Faculty Senate representative. She stated that in 2019 the leadership team was formed and initially a self-study was conducted to determine what UNL was already doing in terms of increasing faculty diversity and inclusive excellence, and eventually a plan began to develop to address areas where we need to make improvements.

Buan stated that in 2021 a team was assembled to take the self-study data and to develop an action plan. She stated that stakeholders across the campus, not just in the STEM fields for which the IChange initially focused on, were engaged and this engagement led to the development of a draft plan of action. She reported that currently the draft plan is being shared with specific groups to obtain feedback before it is disseminated more widely.

Buan stated that the self-assessment workgroup looked at existing efforts and what individual STEM units were doing that were good best practices. She noted that search committee training was already being conducted at UNL, but the workgroup noticed that there were some challenges and opportunities that could be explored.

The recruiting workgroup found there was a need for centralized, coordinated strategies for recruiting and outreach of diverse under-represented faculty. She stated that it is

important to communicate that we care about the success of the faculty, not only during recruitment, but afterwards as well. For retaining diverse faculty members, the workgroup found that additional development and mentoring at all stages of faculty life are needed for faculty to be successful. She noted that onboarding practices need to be reviewed, and it is known that faculty evaluations are a key component in retaining faculty members.

Buan reported that a retreat was held in August with IChange team members, stakeholders, and administrators and the recommendations from each of the workgroups were brought together and reviewed. She stated that another theme, crosscutting, was then identified. She stated that the fastest way to enhance the experience of all faculty across UNL is by engaging with each other teaching and learning from each other. She stated that the workgroup identified current best practices and new ideas to promote dissemination and scaling up of successful practices across the institution.

Buan pointed out that the plan calls for identifying Champions, those individuals that lead the team that will do the work and who are empowered to effect change. She noted that Champions could be Vice Chancellors, Deans, Chairs and Directors, faculty, or the Faculty Senate.

Buan stated that in order to know if improvements are being made assessments will need to be conducted. She noted that early indicators of assessment need to be defined. How will we know in 6 months or a year if an action is working as intended or what adjustments need to be made to ensure that efforts that are working well can be increased or whether improvements need to be made. She stated that late assessment indicators would be to look at what the expected outcome is in 3 or 5 years, what data should be collected to determine if an action should be institutionalized longer-term, and whether a policy versus a practice change needs to be made.

Buan reported that Accountability Partners would need to be determined. These would typically be an outside person or group that the assessment data would be shared with and who would be empowered to help reinforce successful interventions.

Buan stated that the Action Plan addresses recruiting, retention, evaluation, crosscutting, and data and identifies some best practices for each. For recruiting best practices include integrating DEI practices in recruitment strategies and processes known as BRIDGE, making diversity and inclusive excellence visible and prominent in job ads and websites, improving DEI culture and climate messaging by UNL, developing resources for colleges to implement Pathway to Faculty Programs to recruit postdocs and visiting scholars to UNL who have a commitment to DEI.

Buan stated that retention best practices include regularly communicating key support resources and policies with all faculty and DEOs; generating a workload equity study with assessment indicators; establishing an incentive fund between ORED and EVC/IANR to support DEI research, teaching and service; generating more

communication highlighting women and BIPOC faculty; and having proactive one-on-one meetings to discuss retention at career stages.

Buan stated that a critical component of professional development, and thus retention, is having robust and transparent annual evaluations. Best practices for evaluation include anti-bias training for promotion and tenure evaluators, identifying and documenting principles of faculty evaluation that take into consideration DEI and mentoring in evaluations and promotion metrics and how it is applied equitably, developing and review holistic, transparent metrics for evaluation and promotion that include impact and engagement in multiple forms, and providing annual education on using revised evaluation metrics for all faculty.

Buan reported that crosscutting seeks to promote the success of faculty and to disseminate information on best practices that enhance the experience of all faculty as quickly as possible across UNL. She stated that best practices include developing a department-level self-assessment and report rubric to track DEI metrics over time, to developing a DEI working symposium, and to developing a comprehensive and two-way communication channel that focuses on resources, strategies, and opportunities.

Buan stated that having accurate data is essential for evaluating our success at promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion in the faculty ranks. She reported that tracking and reporting faculty search data on an annual basis, tracking annual promotion and tenure evaluation outcomes, tracking promotions and retentions, tracking rates of promotions and promotion timelines, tracking promotion training attendance by all faculty, tracking Academic Rights and Responsibilities demographic information to identify common themes or actionable interventions, and developing action-based responses are all means of collecting needed data. She pointed out that with the changeover of personnel that occurs at the university, there is a need to collect accurate data and to be able to look at it over time.

Minter asked if the Action Plan would apply to Extension faculty as well. AVC Walker stated that the entire Plan has not been implemented yet, although parts of it are being implemented by some deans. She stated that Extension can and should look to see what parts of the Action Plan it can use. Bearnese stated that she did not see any Extension Educators listed on the IChange committee. AVC Walker stated that AVC Bischoff has been the main IANR voice on the committee and he has brought up issues pertaining to Extension. She suggested that the IChange Team be expanded to include some Extension Educators.

VC Barker noted that a question is whether the Action Plan should apply to all faculty and whether it should apply to staff and students as well. He pointed out that there are some efforts, such as recruiting and mentoring, that would fit all faculty, but there are some aspects of the initiatives that are very specific to STEM. He stated that the hope and intention is that this initiative is just the start of our efforts and initially the Action Plan will be implemented in a few STEM departments. He noted that once we see some

of the outcomes from these efforts the Action Plan would be expanded to other departments.

Buan reported that she will keep in touch with the Faculty Senate when the IChange initiative is to be spread more broadly with the campus, but it would also be helpful if the Executive Committee members could communicate about the initiative in their own spheres. She pointed out that all of us want to recruit the best to UNL and to increase our status in the Big Ten.

Minter thanked Buan, VC Barker, and AVC Walker for coming to the meeting and she suggested when the time is appropriate, that there be a presentation to the full Faculty Senate.

#### **4.0 Announcements**

No announcements were made.

#### **5.0 Approval of January 24, 2023 Minutes**

Minter asked if there were any further revisions to the minutes. Hearing none she asked for approval of the minutes. Eklund moved and Baesu seconded for approval which was then confirmed by the Executive Committee.

#### **6.0 Unfinished Business**

##### **6.1 Resolution in Support of University's Biennial Budget Request**

The Executive Committee worked on revising and refining the resolution. She noted that the resolution will be presented to the Faculty Senate on February 7.

#### **7.0 New Business**

##### **7.1 Contract Faculty Members**

Minter reported that an issue was raised by the Academic Rights & Responsibilities Committee regarding whether the Executive Committee was working on addressing expectations of reappointment for long-serving lecturers. The Committee pointed out that there is a wide-spread shared sense of contract-based employment (in and outside of higher ed. There is no guarantee that the contract will be renewed, and supervisors are not required to provide an explanation for this decision. The Committee recognized that it is very difficult when this happens but did not feel that shifting attention to this at the current moment was feasible. However, we could bring the attention to Associate Vice Chancellor for Faculty, Judy Walker.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:56 p.m. The next meeting of the Executive Committee will be on Tuesday, February 7, 2023, immediately following the Faculty Senate meeting. The meeting will be held in. The minutes are respectfully submitted by Karen Griffin, Coordinator and Signe Boudreau, Secretary.