

UNL FACULTY SENATE MEETING MINUTES
November 7, 2023
Presidents Kelli Kopocis, Pete Eklund, and Deb Minter, Presiding
East Campus Union, Great Plains Room A

1.0 Call to Order

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

2.0 Announcements

President Kopocis reported that the Nebraska Cooperative Extension Association has once again given a generous donation to the Mr. & Mrs. Ed Schwartzkopf Faculty Senate Development Fund. She thanked the NCEA members for their continued support of shared governance and the Faculty Senate.

3.0 Chancellor Bennett

Chancellor Bennett stated that it was good to be at the meeting and to see each of the Senators. He noted that the administration is still having conversations with Central Administration about the budget situation, and he noted that he and his team are working well with the Academic Planning Committee (APC) and its chair, Professor Vuran. He stated that he hopes that he will soon be able to speak publicly about the budget situation. Chancellor Bennett pointed out that while these are challenging times, we have an amazing chance to set our goals for the future, and for higher education in Nebraska. He asked if there were any questions.

Professor Kolbe, Johnny Carson School of Theatre and Film, asked if the budget reductions have stalled any of the construction projects on campus. Chancellor Bennett stated that he does not believe there have been any delays across the enterprise.

Professor Bourke, School of Computing, reported that the announcement of the plans to renovate the south portion of the stadium came as a shock to people in his department because half of the faculty, and numerous graduate assistants, in the School of Computing are housed in the Schorr Center which is attached to the south side of the stadium. He pointed out that they have no idea where they will be relocated and asked if there are any updates on the renovation project.

Chancellor Bennett stated that he shares Professor Bourke's concerns and noted that he has toured the space on two occasions now and spoken with AVC Alberts about the impacts the construction will have, not only to the immediate space, but to other buildings located in the vicinity. He pointed out that a construction project of this magnitude will cause disruption across the campus, and we need time to discuss how we can prepare for this, and time is needed for the School of Computing faculty to move. He noted that conversations are ongoing but not definitive. He encouraged the faculty to keep asking about this every month, and he will be transparent with any updates that he receives about the project.

Professor Gay, Physics and Astronomy, noted that the Chancellor enthusiastically wants UNL to get back into the AAU, but in order to do this we need a large number of faculty members that are members of a national academy. He agreed that we need more national academy members but to hire the needed amount of these people would require approximately \$20-\$30 million. He asked how we can hire these faculty members given the budget constraints that we are in. Chancellor Bennett stated that it is true that he, as well as President Carter and Regent Clare, have a goal for UNL to once again be a member of the AAU, and he noted that President Carter has been helpful to get the other Regents to see how important this is for UNL. He reported that he recently spoke with Dr. Berdahl, who was President of the AAU when UNL was asked to leave the Association. He stated that Dr. Berdahl has a very distinguished career and provided very good feedback saying that if any university could be readmitted to the AAU, it would be us. He noted that Dr. Berdahl continues to respect the work that we do, and he agreed to help guide us in our efforts to become an

AAU member once again. He stated that Dr. Berdahl felt that if we could think structurally about how we do our work at UNL with UNMC, that would help us, pointing out that many AAU members share a medical center. He stated that there may be another way for us to regain membership without having to pay so much money to get faculty members who are national academy members.

Chancellor Bennett noted that another part of the conversation regarding national academy members includes us investing in our own faculty who are interested in advancing their careers and becoming a member of a national academy. He reported that AVC Zavala, Office of Research and Economic Development, is doing research to see if there are people at a stage in their career who, with a little investment from the university, could get into a national academy. He pointed out that people are still the greatest asset that we have, and he believes the university system understands that we need assistance to get national academy members to gain readmittance to the AAU.

Professor Zuckerman, Educational Administration, pointed out that if there is going to be investment into faculty, the faculty in the social sciences and humanities need investment to make sure that they have enough travel funds to do their work and receive equity in salary. Chancellor Bennett stated that he has had discussions about the speed it takes to get people reimbursed. He noted that with the budget challenges we have an opportunity to think about the university's processes to see where improvements can be made. He reported that the academic deans and the vice chancellors are all engaged in making sure we have a balance in how we approach the future, and we need to think about how we build the type of university we want and to get the students that we want.

Professor VanderPlas, Statistics, asked if IANR's research and the arts and humanities creative activity does not count towards getting membership in the AAU, why we are pursuing these outside metrics. Chancellor Bennett stated that this is an important question. He noted that while Agriculture and Natural Resources research won't get us across the finish line to gain reentrance into the AAU, student success and graduation rates are an important factor. He said that the long-term benefits for us to being a member of the AAU is worth the pursuit. Professor VanderPlas noted that she has not heard clearly what the benefits will be for us, and it seems like there will be incentivizing investment in very specific areas while taking funds from other areas. Chancellor Bennett stated that he is not prepared today to walk the Senate through all of the benefits, but he would be happy to bring the right people to a Senate meeting to speak about this issue. He stated that hard decisions about resources, priorities, and being intentional will be needed and he can talk further with the Executive Committee about this.

Professor Kolbe noted that we need to go after quality students to grow the university. He has heard that notification of Regents scholarships is being delayed until the spring. AVC Goodburn reported that the Office of Admission, in coordination with the Office of Scholarships and Financial Aid, will be notifying students of all their scholarships on February 1. She pointed out that the prediction is that we will have better yield when we can notify students of all their scholarships at one time. Chancellor Bennett stated that we will look to see how this strategy works and noted that we need to be aggressive with recruiting students and with retaining students. He stated that retention is a large piece of enrollment, and it is important work to keep these students.

4.0 Graduation and Equity Initiatives Update (Senior AVC Goodburn)

Senior AVC Goodburn reported that part of Academic Affairs' initiatives is focusing on first-generation students and there will be a lot of activities starting this evening because tomorrow is national first-generation students' day. She noted that on Friday there will be a symposium on first-generation students' success.

Senior AVC Goodburn stated that she will be speaking about the student experience and the efforts we are making to improve our graduation and retention rates. She stated that with regard to the N2025 plan, she will focus on gender and equity outcomes and pointed out that we are coming off

of the first year of the experiential learning component. She reported that the retention rate is based on the number of students who started last year at the university and the number that returned this year. She noted that our retention rate is the highest it has ever been at 84.3%. In addition, we also have a historically high four-year graduation rate at 52.6% which is an improvement. She attributes this record high number due to the hard work of many people including the faculty and the advising community which implemented a degree plant tool to enable students to plan their college courses at least a year in advance. She reported that our six-year graduation rate has also reached a historical high of 64.0% showing that we are moving our students through the university more quickly.

Professor James, Agronomy and Horticulture, asked if there were any statistics on how many students are entering the university with 15-30 credit hours. Senior AVC Goodburn reported that there was approximately an 11% increase in terms of the percentage of students who are entering with more than 20 credit hours. She noted that last year for first-year students, 45% had at least one course that provided college credits and the largest increase was in students bringing over 20 credit hours due to dual and AP credit courses.

Senior AVC Goodburn pointed out that these are the campus rates, but there is also the system rate which represents students who have transferred from UNL to another campus, typically nursing students, and this amounts to an additional 2.1% of students who started at UNL but then completed their degree at one of the other NU campuses. She pointed out that we do not get credit for these students in our graduation rates. She stated that more information can be found in IPEDS data and noted that if a student transfers to another college, about 85% of those who started at UNL graduate somewhere in the country by the six-year graduation rate.

Senior AVC Goodburn reported that the Boyer 2030 Commission was convened to look at ways to improve undergraduate education at research universities. She stated that the belief of the Commission is that “excellence and equity are inextricably entwined, such that excellence without equity (privilege reproducing privilege) is not true excellence, and equity (mere access) without excellence is unfulfilled promise.” She pointed out that UNL graduation rates show white/non-Hispanic students having a four-year graduation rate of 55.3%, for Hispanic students it is 37.3%, American Indian students 30.8%, Black/African American students 23.7%, Asian/Pacific Island students 59.3%, and those of two or more races 43.2%.

Senior AVC Goodburn stated that the Commission focuses on At-Promise students who are students from historically marginalized backgrounds and the Commission wanted to highlight the assets and strengths these students bring to campus and to create systems and structures that support all students. She noted that we are looking at our policies to see if there are things in place that impede these students. She reported that when looking at race and ethnicity we can see significant equity gaps and if we can close these gaps, we will see an increase in our student success rates. She pointed out that there is a 19.2% gap between white students who come from families with prior college-going experiences and the students in the At-Promise population noting that last year we would have had to graduate 178 more first-generation students in order to get equitable rates of first-generation students. Senior AVC Goodburn stated that many colleges are doing things to help these students be successful and there are university-wide efforts as well. She stated that we are focusing on national initiatives that allow us to share support to deal with barriers and to improve instructional designs.

Senior AVC Goodburn reported that the First-Scholars initiative is a national initiative working in collaboration with 21 institutions in collaboration which are going through rapid improvement cycles to tackle problems for first-generation students. She noted that there are four different working groups: connections and celebrations, faculty and staff development, communications, processes, and procedures. She stated that our Retention Leaders Council is focusing on policies and practices related to not just first-generation students, but she believes these policies and practices will have especially positive benefits for these students. For instance, there will be better

communications on the costs of a higher education and the benefits of it. She stated that we are identifying better stop-out processes for students who may need to sit out a semester and how we can support their transition back to the university. She reported that academic holds were analyzed and it was found that approximately 1800 holds were on students the week before the priority registration period because they were missing things like a transcript or missing a required immunization vaccine. She pointed out that the time was too short for these students to be able to get the needed information to Admissions which resulted in their not being able to sign up for classes. As a result, the Retention Leaders Council worked over the course of a year to revise these processes and this year before priority registration only 112 students had similar enrollment holds. She stated that there are some institutional processes that oftentimes had good intentions, but we don't realize the unintended consequences for our students' success. She noted that these are the types of barriers that we are trying to identify and eliminate.

Senior AVC Goodburn noted that the STAR Initiative, which stands for successful teaching with affordable resources, is another area we are working on. She reported that we have now saved over \$10 million for students in their course materials through inclusive access and open educational resources. She stated that the Huskers Power Survey given to first year students conducted during the fourth week of classes showed that there has been a significant drop in the percentage of students who say they do not have all course materials they need. She believes this drop is because many of the programs and departments are using inclusive course access and open educational resources.

Senior AVC Goodburn noted that she and Professor Brassil spoke to the Senate in February about equity initiatives and since that time he has developed a whole suite of reports that focus on equity which are useful for academic leaders at the program or subject level and can also be drilled down to specific courses. This allows an instructor to see how their students perform on particular assignments disaggregated by equity filters and whether the students are first-generation or under-represented students. She stated that a pilot program called the Course for Performance Outlier Project is currently identifying students who are performing at 50% below their peers. She noted that the Academic Navigators then reached out to those students to provide them with the support they needed.

The question was asked how differential tuition rates impact our enrollment and retention rates. Senior AVC Goodburn stated that we know that finances impact students and low-income students have a 14% differential rate, and we know that for our first-year students the top concern is financial. She pointed out that we are working to prepare students for what the true cost of education is. She stated that the Retention Leaders Council will recommend a banded tuition rate rather than a credit hour tuition rate. With a banded tuition rate a student would pay the same amount when they are taking 12-18 credit hours. She noted that courses that have an additional fee can really add up for students if they have several of these courses during a semester or academic year.

Professor McElravy, Agricultural Leadership and Education, stated that he appreciates these reports because of all of the information they provide for faculty members. He asked about the gaps in DFW rates and asked what the exchange is like when faculty members with high DFW rates are contacted. Senior AVC Goodburn acknowledged that DFW rates are really challenging, and it is hard to change these rates, especially in STEM courses. She noted that we are a member of a Big Ten consortium and eight of the members have been looking at DFW rates and sharing them across the institutions which have enabled them to identify 25 of the highest enrollment courses that are shared across the eight institutions. As a result of these discussions, UNL's Center for Transformative Teaching has been offering equity grants and two years ago the School of Computing and then the History department, were awarded grants to focus on DFW rates and equity rates. She pointed out that you need an incentive for faculty members to work on addressing these rates. She noted that the mathematics department has worked very hard in their introductory level courses and have created active learning classrooms to improve their equity rates and to

reduce their DFW numbers, but she does not believe there is just one solution to addressing these rates. She reported that if a department has high DFW rates and they want to try a different approach to reducing these rates, they can be awarded a grant. She pointed out that if a student receives a DFW in their first semester, the predictor for graduating drops by 20%.

Professor Shrader noted that the overall graduation rate for four years is about the same for the three identified At-Promise student groups as the six-year rate. He asked if the students are getting the financial aid, they need during their fifth and sixth years. He asked if there were donors who would offer scholarships to help these students. Senior AVC Goodburn stated that the colleges have identified scholarships as one of the main priorities during the capital campaign that is currently taking place. She noted that there are some private scholarships to assist students although they must make academic progress taking at least 12-credit hours per semester. She reported that we are also trying to leverage Pell grant eligibility for federal work study through the First-Year Research (FYRE) program, which provides first-year students the opportunity to use their work study to participate in faculty-mentored research.

Professor Gay noted the difficulty to lower DFW rates in STEM fields but questioned how low these rates should go. He pointed out that there is a quality control issue in the STEM fields. Senior AVC Goodburn stated that course design can sometimes be a problem and a lack of academic preparation can also contribute to the high DFW rates. She noted that there was a humanities course that had a 40% DFW rate. She reported that chemistry developed an organic chemistry prep course and those students who took the course did better in their chemistry courses. Professor McElravy asked if there are some projects that we could participate in and noted that there is a program that helps graduate students in their teaching development. He noted that we need to think differently about how we can engage our students more. Senior AVC Goodburn stated that mathematics has been part of an NSF grant and Seismic is another national program that has focused on improving equity in STEM courses. She noted that there was an article last week in the Chronicle of Higher Education about basic things instructors can do to help students with their learning and their mental health.

Professor Krehbiel, 4-H Development Program, pointed out that there has not been discussion about the cost-of-living expenses and how it impacts students. She asked if it is known how many first-year students use other resources like food banks. Senior AVC Goodburn reported that she does not know how many students use the Husker Pantry, but Student Affairs might have that data. She knows that our room and board expenses are higher than tuition and many students opt not to live on campus, although we know from data that students do better when they are living on campus because they have more opportunities to connect with other students. She reported that some solutions to reduce housing costs have been floated, but pointed out that Housing is totally supported by student fees.

5.0 Approval of October 3, 2023 Minutes

Professor Kopocis asked if there were any revisions to the minutes. Hearing none she asked for a motion to approve the minutes. Professor Tschetter, History, moved for approval. Motion seconded by Professor Katz, School of Art, Art History and Design, and then approved by the Faculty Senate.

6.0 Committee Reports

6.1 Academic Standards (Associate Dean Watts, Director of Academic Navigators Joseph Lynch)

Director Lynch noted that he is Director of the Academic Navigators program and pointed out that the Academic Standards Committee approves or denies written appeals for students who have been academically dismissed. He noted that there are 22 faculty members on the Committee and the EVC for Academic Affairs or designee. He reported that there are approximately 20 meetings throughout the year, but only three faculty members are present at each meeting.

Director Lynch stated that there were 472 students dismissed during the 2022-2023 academic year. Of these students, 128 made an appeal to the Academic Standards Committee and 66 of these students were reinstated. He reported that 1 student who was dismissed appealed to the EVC who then approved the appeal. He noted that 1 student who was dismissed appealed to the VC of IANR who then approved the appeal.

Director Lynch stated that college advising offices can make recommendations and provide insight as to how the students are engaged. He pointed out that about a quarter of the time, the college recommends readmittance for a student, but the Academic Standards Committee denies the readmittance.

6.2 University Commencement and Recognitions Committee (Professor Gorman)

Professor Gorman, Head Marshal, reported that the Committee planned and executed five ceremonies, including a location switch to the Devaney Center for the May Graduate ceremony and all ceremonies were successful. He noted that the report was included in the Senators packet.

President Kopocis asked if any decision has been made about whether to have the May undergraduate ceremony in the stadium again. Professor Gorman reported that the decision has been made to hold the May commencement at the Pinnacle Bank Arena due to the cost of using the stadium and the possibility that there may be construction occurring on the stadium.

6.3 Research Council (Professor Katz)

Professor Katz noted that this is her second year on the Research Council and the main purpose of the Council is to advise the Vice Chancellor of ORED after reviewing internal grant applications. She reported that the Council also reviews nominations for the University speakers. She stated that if a faculty member submits an application for a grant, the application goes to a subcommittee of the Research Council which ranks and organizes the proposals. The entire Council then meets and listens to the subcommittee's recommendations.

Professor Katz pointed out that in 2016 there were 75 total applications for the different grants that are offered, but this year there were only 35. She noted that the Council is not sure why there is such a decrease in internal grant funding.

7.0 Unfinished Business

7.1 Motion to Approve Proposed Revisions to the Guidelines for Faculty Evaluation

President Kopocis noted that the motion was presented in September, but a vote was postponed due to additional suggestions coming forward. She noted that in the Senators' packet the additional suggestions are included and asked if the Faculty Senate wanted to vote on each of the newly proposed revisions separately or as a package. Minter moved that the additional proposed revisions be approved as a package. Tschetter and Eklund both seconded the motion. There was no further discussion and the proposed revisions to the document were approved by the Faculty Senate.

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

President Kopocis reported that ARRC Chair Professor Peterson is going to meet with General Counsel to discuss the Counsel's objection to one of the proposed revisions to the Procedures. She stated that consequently, the postponement to vote on the proposed revisions will be extended but will hopefully occur at the December 5 Senate meeting.

8.0 New Business

8.1 Election of Executive Committee Member

President Kopocis noted that Professor Paul needed to step down from the Executive Committee resulting in the need for an election to fill the Executive Committee seat. She stated that there are two candidates. She stated that an electronic poll will be sent out tomorrow morning and voting will be open until 5:00 p.m. on Thursday.

8.2 Guidance for Faculty for Engagement with Legislature and Other Governmental Bodies

President Kopocis reported that a document providing guidance for faculty members when speaking to the Legislature or with other governmental bodies has been created and is on the Faculty Senate website

<https://www.unl.edu/facultysenate/senate/Faculty.Senate.Guidance.on.Public.Advocacy.Revision.pdf>. She wanted to thank Professor Zuckerman for her work on writing the document.

8.3 Open Mic

Professor Krehbiel asked if there was information on the President's Search Committee. President Kopocis reported that the search committee is a 22-member group and includes each of the Faculty Senate Presidents. She noted that all eight of the Regents are also on the Committee. Professor Shrader asked if there were any other faculty members on the search committee. Professor Gay stated that there is a faculty member from UNMC on the Committee. He pointed out that like the search for the Chancellor, there are no fully promoted professors on the President's Search Committee.

Professor Krehbiel asked if there is any timeline for the search. President Kopocis stated that the committee was told that it should work as quickly as possible.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:04 p.m. The next meeting of the Faculty Senate will be held on Tuesday, December 5, 2023, at 2:30 p.m. in the Nebraska Union, Platte River Room and by Zoom. The minutes are respectfully submitted by Karen Griffin, Coordinator, and Signe Boudreau, Secretary.