

UNL FACULTY SENATE MEETING MINUTES
October 3, 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 2:32 p.m.

2.0 Announcements

2.1 Faculty Members Needed for Course and Lab Fees Committee

President Kopocis reported that two faculty members are still needed to serve on the Course and Lab Fees Committee. She noted that committee members review proposals for special fees for courses and labs and then meet virtually once to discuss the proposals. She asked that anyone interested in serving contact either herself or Coordinator Griffin.

3.0 Chancellor Bennett

Chancellor Bennett noted that he has now been here 90 days and he would like to share some of his perspectives. He stated that he is proud that, even though he had to deal with difficult budget reductions at Southern Mississippi University, he never received a vote of no-confidence from either the faculty, students, or the governance structure of Southern Mississippi University. He stated that he is a steward of shared governance, and he made sure that the voices of the various groups at Southern Mississippi University were heard and included when decisions were made, and he intends to do the same at UNL. He pointed out that we have a lot of goals that are a priority, and he believes it takes a truly collective effort for us to deal with the challenges we face so we can attain these goals.

Chancellor Bennett stated that the university system has a \$58 million deficit and a hiring freeze for non-academic personnel has been put in place and the President has also developed a five-point plan to create a long-term solution to the deficit. He reported that in addition to the system's deficit, UNL has a deficit that is being carried forward from previous years so the campus will need to deal with its own deficit as well as its share of the university's deficit. He pointed out that as we address the total deficit, we need to determine what the university is going to look like in the future.

Chancellor Bennett reported that he has consulted with the Senate's Executive Committee about the budget situation, and he will be speaking to the Academic Planning Committee soon noting that he will closely follow the Procedures to be Invoked for Significant Budget Reallocations and Reductions. As such, he cannot release the timeline for dealing with the budget reductions until the APC has voted on the budget framework.

Chancellor Bennett noted that during his first 90 days he and his wife traveled across the state with the IANR Roads Scholar tour which provided them with the opportunity to see the statewide impact that IANR and Nebraska Extension have made in Nebraska communities and enabled him to discuss the importance of the university and what we are as a land-grant university. He stated that he has met with students across the campus and with ASUN leaders, while also meeting with a variety of faculty and staff members. He noted that it is the passion of the students he encountered that reminds him of why we are here and why we need to elevate the university. He reported that he continues to be proud of Volleyball Day in Nebraska and stated that we have received so much promotion, not only nationally but internationally as well, from that day.

Chancellor Bennett noted that he met with Dean Perez of the Engineering College to discuss strategies and the importance of the College to the state. He pointed out that we need to meet the workforce demands of the community and state and stated that the partnership in Engineering and the vision that led to the construction of Kiewit Hall is the forward-thinking strategies that we need

to move the university forward.

Chancellor Bennett pointed out that one of our top priorities is the recruitment and success of our students and the faculty and staff are our most important asset and have the greatest influence in meeting this priority. He noted that even simple moments with a student can give them the confidence they need to achieve their goals and a simple act can lead to alumni engagement throughout the student's life.

Chancellor Bennett stated that although we are facing budget challenges, he believes the best days are still ahead of us and he encouraged everyone to look forward rather than in the rearview mirror. He stated that he firmly believes in shared governance and working together in collaboration which will allow us to meet our goals and he hopes that he has conveyed his willingness to work with the Faculty Senate and Executive Committee. He noted that we need to have honest conversations about what things we should keep doing and what things we no longer need to do.

Professor Vakilzadian, Electrical and Computer Engineering, stated that he appreciates the Chancellor's transparency with the budget situation. He noted that the \$450 million proposal to renovate the stadium included \$50 million coming from the university yet the system is facing a budget shortfall of \$58 million. He asked the Chancellor to clarify where the \$50 million would come from. Chancellor Bennett responded by saying that the funding will come from sources that will not be impacting our general funds and he pointed out that he is not setting aside any of our funds for the stadium renovation. He stated that the Board of Regents will be discussing the issue at its upcoming meeting. He pointed out that there would be ramifications with academic instruction and services when the renovation begins due to the heavy equipment that will be required to demolish the existing structure. He stated that he wants to make sure that the normal operations of the campus are not adversely affected by this renovation project.

Professor McElravy, Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Communications, stated that he appreciated the Chancellor speaking to the Senate but is wondering about the announcement that the incentive-based budget model is not being implemented. He noted that not having clarity around a transparent budget model creates difficulties because we don't understand what the ramifications would be for our units, and it is difficult for us to be able to develop strategies without knowing what the budget model is. Chancellor Bennett stated that this is a good point and reported that there are many changes occurring at the system level that could impact the budget situation. He noted that one of his concerns is when he would be able to initiate the budget reduction process. He reported that he was initially given some information pertaining to the amount of our needed budget reductions, but he was hoping to wait until we received absolute numbers. However, in discussions with people around the campus one concern that was often raised is not having enough time to do the work that we need to do to identify budget reductions in a sound way. He stated that knowing that budget reductions were inevitable, he did not want to delay the process and decided to begin the process with the APC in order to give the committee the most amount of time possible.

4.0 Approval of September 5, 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 Kolbe, Johnny Carson School of Theatre and Film, moved for approval and Professor Vakilzadian seconded the motion which was then approved by the Faculty Senate.

5.0 Committee Reports

5.1 Academic Rights and Responsibilities Committee (Professor Peterson)

Professor Peterson reported that the Academic Rights and Responsibilities Committee's primary responsibility is to ensure and arrange an appropriate investigation or hearing concerning any important problem involving the relationship between any faculty member and other professional persons in the university community. He noted that the Committee receives complaints and promptly determines whether an investigation should be carried out.

Professor Peterson stated that the ARRC received two formal written complaints, one by President Carter seeking to terminate a tenured faculty member. He noted that a special hearing committee was convened and pointed out that if the university wants to terminate a faculty member for cause, it must go through the ARRC process. He stated that in one case of terminating a faculty member the administrator asked if the faculty member wanted to resign or retire early. He reported that these kinds of cases are a complicated process that can involve quite a few people.

Professor Peterson stated that the ARRC has made recommendations to the ARRC procedures, and these recommendations were presented to the Senate at the September 5th meeting.

5.2 Summer Faculty Senate Executive Committee Report (President Kopocis)

President Kopocis reported that the Executive Committee had a busy summer starting with the May 31 emergency Board of Regents meeting where there was a proposal to change the Chancellors from being the Chief Executive Officer of their campus to Chief Administrative Officer and to move the responsibility of UNL Athletics to the President rather than the Chancellor of UNL. She noted that she spoke to the Board raising concerns regarding this change and reported that the Executive Committee will continue to work on the issue. She stated that the Executive Committee met every two weeks during the summer. She pointed out that the full report was included in the Senator's packet and anyone with questions or comments should send her an email.

6.0 Unfinished Business

6.1 Motion to Approve Proposed Revisions to the Academic Rights & Responsibilities Committee Procedures

President Kopocis reported that the motion was presented at the September 5th meeting, but she has learned that General Counsel does not agree with all the proposed revisions. She suggested that the motion be postponed until we learn what General Counsel's objections are.

President Kopocis noted that a friendly amendment to the proposed changes has been made by Professor Katz, Art History and Design. Professor Katz stated that the friendly amendment calls for the following additional language in section 3.8 Academic Advisors, "Parties can seek advice from the special committee chair or the ARRC chair to help in selecting an academic advisor." She noted that the amendment seeks to formally put in place that a faculty member receives assistance to find an academic advisor when they are going through an ARRC investigation. Professor Peterson seconded the motion. He stated that he has been doing this informally and has been on the ARRC for a long time but stated that it would be good to put the language into the document. He reported that the ARRC has discussed putting together a manual for the special committee chairs to provide them some guidance as they go through the process. President-Elect Eklund thanked Professor Peterson for his long service record on the ARRC. The Faculty Senate then approved the friendly amendment.

Professor Lewis, Teaching, Learning and Teacher Education, moved to postpone the vote on the proposed revisions to the ARRC procedures. The motion was seconded by Professor Katz and then approved by the Faculty Senate.

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

President Kopocis noted that the motion to revise the Guidelines for Faculty Evaluation was presented at the September 5th meeting. She stated that since that time a number of suggestions have come in from faculty members and the Executive Committee wants to compile the suggestions and review them to see if friendly amendments need to be made to the document. She asked for a motion to postpone voting on the proposed revisions. Professor McElravy moved, and Professor Kolbe seconded the motion to postpone voting on the motion to revise the Guidelines. The motion to postpone was then approved by the Faculty Senate.

7.0 New Business

7.1 Emergency Motion – Approval of Ballot to Elect Replacements for the Academic Planning Committee, Academic Rights and Responsibilities Committee, Academic Rights and Responsibilities Panel

President Kopocis noted that openings have occurred on the Academic Planning Committee, Academic Rights and Responsibilities Committee and the Academic Rights and Responsibilities Panel. She pointed out that all three of these committees are very important and members are elected by the UNL faculty. She reported that the Committee on Committees created the ballot after receiving nominees from faculty members for the open seats. She stated that since the motion to approve the ballot comes from a Faculty Senate committee, it does not need a second. The Faculty Senate approved the ballot. President Kopocis stated that the ballot will be sent out for voting.

7.2 Executive Committee Goals for 2023-2024

President Kopocis reported that the Executive Committee held a retreat during the summer to work on developing its goals for the 2023-2024 academic year. She noted that a list of goals is included in the Senate packet and if anyone has questions or comments, they should contact her or any member of the Executive Committee.

7.3 Open Mic

7.3.A. Workshop for Faculty Being Targeted by Outside Groups

Professor Zuckerman, Educational Administration, noted that one of her colleagues, Professor Flores, who is currently a fellow with the University of California National Center for Free Speech, will be visiting UNL and would be willing to discuss issues of what faculty should do if they become a target for harassment. She pointed out that some faculty members at UNL have been targeted with open record requests and have been harassed in their offices. She noted that this is an emotional, psychological, and safety issue for faculty and asked if the Faculty Senate would be interested in meeting with Professor Flores to talk about these issues.

Professor Seymour, Extension Zone 10, asked what has precipitated the need for the workshop. Professor Zuckerman stated that she herself, and other professors on campus, have been targeted for some time by certain political groups. Professor Seymour noted that free speech is a very important issue and faculty need to learn more about it and how they can protect themselves. Professor Peterson noted that this is an important conversation for people in general across the campus. Professor Shrader, College of Journalism and Mass Communications, asked what the date would be for the discussion. Professor Zuckerman stated that Professor Flores would be on campus October 22-24.

Professor Lewis noted that nationally there have been professors assaulted on campus and there is a great deal of concern about personal safety. She stated that it would be really important to have as many opportunities as possible for people to learn about what actions they can take if they are harassed, and it is important to make sure the faculty in IANR are included. She suggested that advertising such an event might be easier at the college level. Professor Kolbe suggested contacting AVC Walker about sponsoring the event because it impacts all faculty, not those just in the Faculty Senate.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:38 p.m. The next meeting of the Faculty Senate will be held on Tuesday, November 7, 2023, at 2:30 p.m. The meeting will be held in the East Campus Union, Great Plains Room A and by Zoom. The minutes are respectfully submitted by Karen Griffin, Coordinator, and Signe Boudreau, Secretary.