

## EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES

**Present:** Baesu, Bearnese, Boudreau, Bouma, Dawes, Kopocis, Lott, Minter, Shrader, Tschetter, Vakilzadian, Zuckerman

**Absent:** Eklund

**Date:** Tuesday, March 19, 2024

**Location:** 201 Canfield Administration

**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 (*Kopocis*)

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

### 2.0 Chancellor Bennett

Chancellor Bennett reported that Dr. Bergdahl from Academic Analytics offered his sincere apology for not being able to speak during the March 5<sup>th</sup> Faculty Senate meeting and suggested finding another time when his schedule would enable him to meet with either the Faculty Senate or the Executive Committee. Kopocis noted that there are only two Faculty Senate meetings left this academic year but a meeting with the Executive Committee could be arranged during the summer.

Chancellor Bennett reported that he sent a letter to the campus reminding everyone that this weekend is Admitted Student Day and over 3500 guests will be on campus. He asked everyone to be as helpful as they can with our guests.

Chancellor Bennett noted that he was at Innovation Campus this morning with Governor Pillen, Interim President Kabourek and many others during which time Governor Pillen presented a proclamation for this being Agriculture Week in Nebraska. He noted that the event included tours of research spaces and a preview of the \$160 million National Center for Resilient and Regenerative Precision Agriculture.

Chancellor Bennett stated that he is aware that many people on campus have been frustrated this year because of the budget situation and the transitions in leadership. He stated that he has asked VC Zeleny to speak to the Faculty Senate to explain the budget and how we came to be in a deficit. Zuckerman stated that she believes the whole faculty would be interested in this and suggested that there should be annual budget reporting to the Senate by the VC of Business and Finance. Chancellor Bennett pointed out that the more members of the community that are informed the better, but he would leave it up to the Faculty Senate to decide how to do this. Vakilzadian asked if the budget presentation would just be on UNL's budget or whether it would include the university system budget as well. Chancellor Bennett stated that the presentation would focus mostly on the UNL budget. He stated that having such a presentation would be helpful to do on a regular

basis and pointed out that it would help provide information that many people don't have access to.

**2.1 What are some ways to work more collaboratively in shared governance? Is it a good time to reassess the role of the APC and focus on it being more proactive rather than reactive, especially in looking at the future budget cuts and changing university priorities?**

Chancellor Bennett noted that for the past 30 years he has worked to find common ground and to provide a transparent and healthy work environment. He stated that what has been done in the past 8-9 months with the budget reductions has been in accordance with the current policies and procedures. He reported that he has asked Associate to the Chancellor Davis to walk the Executive Committee through these policies and procedures and suggested that we might need to look at them to make sure they are working well for us now or whether they need to be updated.

Associate to the Chancellor Davis noted that at the top of the list are the Board of Regents Bylaws, which are then followed by the UNL Bylaws which were last updated in 2017. He pointed out that the Academic Planning Committee is defined in the UNL Bylaws (Section 1. Structure of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, number 2.7) and it is here that the membership of the committee and responsibilities are defined. He noted that the APC was created to help facilitate the Chancellor's work and it is not a Faculty Senate committee. Next there are the APC's specific operating procedures which reiterate what is in the UNL Bylaws and then there are the Procedures to be Invoked for Significant Budget Reallocation and Reductions which were last updated in 2022. He stated that the Chancellor invokes the Procedures and then develops a budget framework document which the APC evaluates through a confidential process. According to the Procedures, once the APC accepts the budget framework, the Chancellor develops a specific plan which is presented to the APC. The APC then obtains feedback from the university community about the proposed reductions and reallocations.

Chancellor Bennett stated that he is interested in seeing if there are ways to improve the budget reduction process, noting that we still do not have any information from Central Administration about further budget reductions. He suggested we need to identify what parts of the budget reduction process have worked well in the past and we need to identify where improvements can be made. He noted that he does not have any affinity to the existing processes and suggested that we need to figure out a process that is more open and transparent which would hopefully eliminate the stress people are feeling.

Chancellor Bennett reported that there are some campus initiatives that need to be done to help facilitate any changes that may be considered, noting that we need to update our strategic plan. He reported that he will be meeting with each of the deans of the colleges to get input about our next steps.

Zuckerman noted that the procedures for budget reductions mentions holding public conversations regarding budget reductions and questioned why this did not occur. Associate to the Chancellor Davis and Tschetter pointed out that the APC collected

feedback from the campus community regarding the proposed reductions by publicly announcing that there was a website for them to express their concerns. Associate to the Chancellor Davis stated that there is a precedent that written feedback can be gathered but that this is something that should be clearly defined in the Procedures.

Dawes stated that in looking through the documents, it is not clear that the processes are followed in relation to the procedures and the APC budget framework. Associate to the Chancellor Davis stated that this is the part of the process that is confidential. Tschetter pointed out that the APC deals with student credit bearing programs, but the APC was given information that was not considered as academic programs by the administrators.

Zuckerman asked what faculty body would look at things like Graduate Studies being cut. Associate to the Chancellor Davis stated that this would go to the APC. He noted that in 1993 the Procedures stated that the APC would look at academic and service reductions, which is in contradiction to other documents.

Minter stated that the process this year felt a little different than from previous years. She noted that in previous years the non-academic cuts were closely guarded, and the administrators felt it was their responsibility to keep this information close to themselves. She stated that EVC Ankerson discussed the CCPE's threshold for programs and noted that there is the perception that universities continue to keep adding on new programs and retaining programs that are no longer relevant. However, she pointed out that the CCPE considerations seem to be parallel to the budget reductions. Tschetter pointed out that there are some under-performing programs that are not doing well, and these are being presented as the university not being a responsible steward. Kopocis noted that some of these programs may still be producing significant student credit hours.

Shrader asked if cleaning up the Procedures would make for a more efficient budget reduction process. Associate to the Chancellor Davis noted that there is a difference of opinion as to whether the APC is an advisory committee or a group that just wants a submitted proposal on the budget reductions. He stated that the idea is to shift towards a more collaborative process. He pointed out that if you look at the responsibilities of the APC, they state that the committee shall formulate goals for UNL and shall engage in university-wide planning which very much puts the committee in a planning advisory role. He stated that the disconnect comes with the specific operations of the budget reductions and stated that having the operation more in line with the UNL Bylaws would be helpful.

Minter noted that the colleges are separate administrative units and stated that a senator reported in the March 5<sup>th</sup> Faculty Senate meeting that programs were already being cut in her college by the dean, however the APC has not been given a proposal to delete any programs in this college. Minter stated that she understands that colleges were assigned a number by which they had to reduce their budget and they were given some latitude in how they could meet that number. She stated that the PIESL program is another example of a program that has been rumored to be considered for elimination, but it has not come before the APC for consideration. Bearnes and Griffin asked if the deans are being made

aware of the protocols they must go through whenever a program is being proposed for elimination. Associate to the Chancellor Davis stated that the Executive Vice Chancellor's office needs to inform the deans of the proper steps that need to be taken with elimination of a program. Dawes stated that deans should be provided with helpful information on how they can best communicate reductions within their colleges. This would include when they should release the information to departments slated for elimination.

Chancellor Bennett stated that the administrators were given their target number through areas that were recommended by the budget advisory taskforce that had been established by former Chancellor Green last spring. He stated that the deans asked for, and were given, more latitude to determine how they would meet their target number.

Tschetter noted that the APC does not receive a list of what programs could potentially be cut and the time crunch for the APC to review the proposed reductions this past fall was very short. Zuckerman stated that there should have been public hearings about the reductions to the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. Tschetter and Davis stated that in lieu of a public hearing, the campus community was solicited for feedback on the proposed cuts. Tschetter noted that many comments were received and the majority of them were opposing the cuts to the ODEI budget.

Tschetter pointed out that one of the frustrations for the APC has been that it does not get enough information so it could even talk about possible alternative reductions. She noted that the deans made the decisions, but the APC does not know how this occurs within colleges and whether there was consultation with the college faculty.

Chancellor Bennett pointed out that he did hear the APC's concerns about not having enough time to deal with the budget reductions and he did push the deadline date as best as he could, but people need to understand we were getting a lot of pressure from outside sources to deal with our \$12 million deficit. Kopocis noted that UNK did everything they were supposed to do to address its budget deficit but even then, they were informed that they would not get their budget rescission back.

Minter pointed out that there isn't very good ongoing budget literacy across the campus. She noted that a lot of time went into working in the incentive-based budget model but now it seems to have faded. She asked if there is anything we could do to keep the whole campus informed regularly about the budget, particularly before budget reductions are needed. Zuckerman noted that other universities have budget townhalls and faculty budget committees. Chancellor Bennett stated that we need to change it so the faculty are a part of the conversation about the budget and noted that he must be provided with accurate budget numbers, which he can then present in a townhall meeting.

Kopocis asked if the Chancellor knew of any processes that were employed at other universities that could be employed here. Chancellor Bennett stated that he believes we have the right categories of processes, but he does think we are spending funds in some areas where we don't need to, and the campus needs to decide where we should tighten

our belts. He pointed out that he asked for alternatives to the proposed cuts and only received one from Sara Haake, President of the Staff Senate.

Associate to the Chancellor Davis stated that if we made any adjustments to the budget process, he would recommend that we try to keep things as streamlined as possible as we get pressure from Central Administration and others about our processes taking so long. He suggested determining differentiation between what is truly an academic cut and allowing the APC to focus on academic programs, and doing this would allow the administration to have more flexibility. Zuckerman pointed out that budget reductions are not always clear cut and consideration needs to be given to auxiliary units that provide services that impact academic programs.

Chancellor Bennett noted that he does not have any clear budget models that he is required to use and said that all models have pros and cons of what we can do within a timeline. He stated that we should consider revising our models and processes so we can be nimbler and to be able to get to a decision point quicker because Central Administration does not understand the need for such a lengthy process. Associate to the Chancellor Davis suggested that we have a more standard process such as if a projected budget is going to be missed, it would trigger a timeline which requires the work to be completed by the end of the academic year.

Shrader asked if the APC receives the context of all of the budget numbers. Chancellor Bennett stated that the \$12 million budget numbers were broken into categories. Tschetter reported that the APC received a list of categories with a large budget reduction number, but the categories provided few specifics, in part because the deans were able to make reductions within the categories without providing details. Associate to the Chancellor Davis stated that in the past the deans worked out the target numbers, but he has heard that the APC didn't like this and wanted the specifics. He noted that the deans did have to tell their administrators how their budget reductions would be implemented. He stated that we need to determine what the overarching goals would be.

Vakilzadian asked how the decision was made to cut the Office of Diversity and Inclusion budget by nearly 50%. Chancellor Bennett stated that it is his understanding that the deans made the most compelling case for this because they said the work that was being done in ODI was being done in the colleges so there was a duplication of services. Shrader asked if thought wasn't given to anticipating the results of this decision and the optics of it. Chancellor Bennett noted that most people are aware of the recent efforts in the Legislature regarding diversity and inclusion, however, he pointed out that he never received any phone calls to cut ODI and it was the deans' case that compelled him to suggest the reduction.

Kopocis asked if the next step is for him to discuss proposed changes with the APC. Chancellor Bennett reported that he was meeting with APC Chair Professor Vuran later this week.

### **3.0 Unfinished Business**

#### **3.1 Faculty Senate Newsletter**

Agenda item postponed.

### **4.0 New Business**

#### **4.1 Agenda Items for EVC Ankerson**

The Executive Committee identified the following agenda items for EVC Ankerson:

- There is a requirement in the EVC's office that promotion files contain at least three external letters from R1 institutions, yet this is not stated in the Guidelines for Faculty Evaluation. How can this be enforced when it is not policy?
- Why are the same requirements for promotion applied to professors of practice when they are not involved in getting publications?
- How many programs fall short of meeting the CCPE threshold? How many of these programs would impact students getting a degree and is this a factor that is considered before a program is eliminated?
- Where do you think the next round of budget reductions would impact academic programs and are you preparing for this?
- The Senate has received word that some faculty members are being told by their dean that their program is going to be eliminated yet no proposals for deletion of the programs has been proposed to the APC. How are you going to ensure that any academic program cuts are given to the APC for consideration?
- Enrollment Update and Trends in the Colleges
- Are DFW rates being addressed by colleges, deans, and directors of schools?
- With the Athletic Department oversight further away from campus and the impacts of NIL, how are we going to keep the student-athlete and support players' academic success as well as athletic success?

The meeting was adjourned at 5:02 p.m. The next meeting of the Executive Committee will be on Tuesday, March 26, 2024, at 2:30 pm. The meeting will be held in the Nebraska Union, Big Ten Conference Room. The minutes are respectfully submitted by Karen Griffin, Coordinator and Signe Boudreau, Secretary.