

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES

Present: Baesu, Bearnese, Bouma, Boudreau, Dawes, Eklund, Kopocis, Lott, Shrader, Tschetter, Vakilzadian, VanderPlas

Absent: Leiter

Date: Tuesday, May 14, 2024

Location: 203 Alexander Building

Note: These are not verbatim minutes. They are a summary of the discussions at the Executive Committee meeting as corrected by those participating.

1.0 Call (*Eklund*)

Eklund called the meeting to order at 2:30 p.m.

2.0 Rejoining the AAU (Dr. Bob Berdahl and Nameen Thompson, Academic Analytics)

Chancellor Bennett stated that this is his favorite time of the year with commencement ceremonies taking place on Friday and Saturday. He asked everyone to show some good Lincoln hospitality to the students and their families who will be coming to campus.

Chancellor Bennett wanted to thank the Executive Committee for a really productive year noting that while there were some challenges, he feels that he and the Executive Committee have had good communication and dialogue and he appreciated working with Kopocis. Kopocis stated that she enjoyed working with the Chancellor and values his contribution and thanked him for working with the Executive Committee.

Chancellor Bennett noted that at the March 5 Faculty Senate meeting there was a very good discussion about the University rejoining the AAU. He pointed out that unfortunately Dr. Berdahl was unable to attend the meeting but that he is here today and believes he can provide input into the process of rejoining the AAU and what we need to do to be eligible for membership. He noted that we were members of the AAU until 2011-12 when we were asked to no longer continue our membership. He stated that when you consider with where we are now and how bright our future looks, it makes sense to consider working towards being eligible for the AAU again and he appreciates the Executive Committee's willingness to discuss this.

Chancellor Bennett reported that Dr. Berdahl is a Senior Advisor in Academic Analytics and noted that he has had many positions at prominent universities. He was also President of the AAU at the time when Nebraska was asked to leave, and he values his counsel on the AAU and on other administrative matters.

Dr. Berdahl stated that he is pleased to meet with Chancellor Bennett and the Faculty Senate Executive Committee. He pointed out that the AAU Membership Committee, composed of members who are Presidents of both public and private AAU institutions, is

tasked with reviewing the membership of the organization every year. He stated that as President he was not a member of AAU Membership Committee. He noted that he left as President of AAU thirteen years ago after serving for five years and stated that the membership requirements may have changed from when he was President. He stated that he understands that the University of Nebraska now includes the research dollars from UNMC which was not happening in 2011-12. He pointed out that this change has beneficial effects on the University's research dollars metric considered by the AAU. He reported that non-competitive research dollars are not included in the required metrics for entry into the AAU which puts land-grant universities at a disadvantage.

Dr. Berdahl noted that he was somewhat frustrated by the criteria that the AAU used to evaluate membership in the organization when he was President and reported that he became acquainted with Academic Analytics when he was looking for better metrics to use. He stated that the AAU has now begun to use some of the metrics identified by Academic Analytics including major awards for faculty and books published.

Dr. Berdahl pointed out that when he was President of AAU there was a determination to keep the AAU as a small collection of universities with a relative balance of public and private institutions. However, in the 1990's there was some consciousness that there were other universities that met the criteria more strongly than some of the current members of the AAU and as a result, some of the member institutions were asked to leave the organization. He stated that the AAU adopted a policy that would allow the organization to ask member institutions to leave the organization. He noted that the pressure to keep the AAU as a small organization is less today and pointed out that the AAU recently admitted four institutions.

Vakilzadian asked why UNL was asked to leave the AAU. Dr. Berdahl noted that at the time there were institutions outside of the AAU members that had a larger research profile than Nebraska. He pointed out that the question became whether the AAU would be considered credible if there were stronger institutions outside the AAU that had a stronger research profile than some current members but who were not admitted. He pointed out that an institution had to have a research rank about the 25% percentile, and if a current member was below the 25% percentile, it was slated for review. He noted that there were several other universities that were reviewed at the same time Nebraska was reviewed, and some of them worked very hard to increase their research productivity. Shrader asked if Nebraska was given the opportunity to improve their research productivity. Dr. Berdahl stated that he did not believe so. Shrader asked if there were any other AAU members at that time that were below the 25% percentile but were allowed to remain in the organization. Dr. Berdahl said no pointing out that Nebraska and Syracuse were the two institutions who were asked to leave the AAU at that time. Thompson noted that institutions need to be above the 25% percentile to have membership in the AAU.

Vakilzadian asked if student population was a metric and whether it had any influence in being a member of the AAU. Dr. Berdahl reported that it had very little influence, noting that there were no good metrics at that time other than the student-faculty ratio.

Eklund stated that he remembered former Chancellor Perlman during his State of the University address, listing all of the accomplishments that UNL made after being asked to leave the AAU and how the university's agricultural research is paramount to the state. He noted that Iowa State University left the AAU in 2022 because it felt that the AAU favors members with institutions with medical schools and associated medical research funding. Dr. Berdahl pointed out that he was not associated with the AAU at that time and therefore did not have any information when Iowa State concluded its membership. Eklund asked if some of the Presidents in AAU were more outspoken about wanting Nebraska out of the AAU. Dr. Berdahl pointed out that The Ohio State University President was a strong supporter for Nebraska.

VanderPlas asked what the rationale is for the AAU not counting membership in national academies, such as the National Academy for Education. Dr. Berdahl stated that the AAU does count all honorific awards and from what he understands, they are using Academic Analytics' metrics. Thompson stated that Academic Analytics provides full accounting of all national and international awards, although he cannot say how the data being provided is being used by the AAU. He noted that AAU is now requesting data on the number of books being published by an institution.

Eklund asked if the metrics AAU uses will be changing in the future to include agricultural research or whether it will continue to focus on health and medical research. Dr. Berdahl stated that he is unable to answer that question. He pointed out that the AAU looks at the entire profile of an institution to see whether it is winning competitive awards and/or grants. He noted that awards that are considered block grants, which includes many USDA grants, have not been counted in the metrics before, but he does not know if this will change.

Eklund reported at this year's Big Ten Academic Alliance conference the President and President Elects of the Faculty Senates from the Big Ten universities had discussions about athletics where it was pointed out numerous times that UNL is not a member of the AAU. He also noted that it appears that the AAU does not care about the arts at all. Dr. Berdahl agreed and stated that this was one of the reasons he became involved with Academic Analytics and suggested that the AAU's membership committee should consider other metrics. He noted that it is difficult to get any comparative data about the arts.

Dr. Berdahl stated that two metrics that are detrimental to gaining entry into the AAU is the growth of contingent faculty members who are typically not research faculty which decreases the number of faculty that are research intensive. He noted that the decline of state support for universities is linked to the growth in contingent faculty and has also depleted the ability of public institutions to compete with private institutions.

Dr. Berdahl stated that he does not think the decision that was made in 2011 to discontinue UNL's membership in the AAU necessarily determines what happens in the future. He pointed out that the University of Nebraska has made some changes that

bodes well for readmission, and he believes that some prior restrictions have now been relaxed. He noted that Nebraska is still focusing on the right things to gain reentry and believes it would be worthwhile for Nebraska to seek admittance into the AAU. He stated that with determined leadership he thinks it is possible for Nebraska to once again be a member of the AAU.

Dr. Berdahl stated that he thinks public university's flagship campuses are one of the geniuses that America has created, particularly for land-grant universities, but he believes they are at risk because of the decline in confidence in higher education and due to the current political climate which does not seem to value higher education. He thanked the Executive Committee for the invitation to meet with the Committee.

Eklund asked where we need to invest in order to help us gain entry into the AAU. He pointed out that there are people on campus who want more information about joining the AAU. He noted that LPS faculty will be receiving a 4.5% salary increase and wondered if the university will see a salary increase pointing out that it is important for us to retain good faculty members particularly if we plan to pursue readmittance into the AAU. Chancellor Bennett reported that there will be a 3% salary increase pool this year which will help in retaining faculty members. He noted that we need to make an investment in the fundamentals: being clear and committed to faculty and staff, being available to our students and committed to recruiting and retaining students. He stated that we need to think how we can support our faculty at the different levels of their career development. He noted that a lot of the pain we are dealing with goes back to being undisciplined with our budget by not adjusting our budget accordingly when we did not reach the enrollment numbers, we thought we would have. He reported that in his meeting with the colleges he heard the faculty saying they want to get things resolved first with improving our fundamentals and basic needs before we can launch the support of the campus community in our effort to rejoin the AAU.

3.0 Approval of May 7, 2024 Minutes

Eklund asked if there were any revisions to the minutes. Hearing none he asked for a motion to approve the minutes. Tschetter moved and VanderPlas seconded, approving the minutes. Motion approved by the Executive Committee.

4.0 Unfinished Business

No unfinished business was discussed.

5.0 New Business

5.1 Agenda Items for EVC Ankerson

The Executive Committee identified the following agenda item for its meeting with EVC Ankerson on May 28th:

- Enrollment numbers for summer session courses
- Enrollment predictions for fall semester
- What is happening with the Google Courses?
- What is the hiring situation on campus? Is there still a hiring freeze?

- What proactive steps can colleges do to become more advanced in the metrics required for reentry into the AAU?
- What business centers fall under the EVC office? Who in the EVC office oversees the business centers?

The meeting was adjourned at 4:40 p.m. The next meeting of the Executive Committee will be on Tuesday, May 28, 2024, at 2:30 pm. The meeting will be held in the Nebraska Union, Room 213. The minutes are respectfully submitted by Karen Griffin, Coordinator and Signe Boudreau, Secretary.