

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES

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

Absent: Leiter, Lott

Date: Tuesday, December 10, 2024

Location: 201 Canfield Administration

Guests: Interim VC Nelson, Assistant VC Zavala

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 precisely at 2:29 p.m.

2.0 Chancellor Bennett

2.1 Cuts in support staff for Sponsored Programs – there are growing complaints that there is a lack of assistance.

Chancellor Bennett asked what the Office of Research and Innovation (ORI) was doing to provide assistance to the faculty. Interim VC Nelson stated that she appreciates the chance to meet with the Executive Committee. She noted that the core principle of the ORI is to provide the best service as possible, and the Office is working to get back to the level of operation that we previously had. She stated that reductions in staff have not occurred due to budget reductions, and in fact, there has been an increase of 40% FTE in the office, but there are vacancies among the staff and currently there are four unfilled positions. She pointed out that since 2022 there have been unprecedented turnovers in Sponsored Programs here and at other universities. She stated that post-pandemic more of the work of support offices across the country have moved to remote work, but our policy has not been as flexible. Also, she reported that she has seen some universities offering a \$20,000 hiring bonus. She noted that someone in Nebraska can work remotely for a University in California and make California wages while having Nebraska cost of living.

Interim VC Nelson stated that two things that ORI is doing to rebound its service level are paying attention to the post-award team where there has been a high level of turnover, and the team has been dealing with challenges because many of the staff are new to their job. She stated that she has asked Shelly Cutsor, Director of Research Finance in ORI, to step in to lead the post-award team. She noted that Director Cutsor is focusing on briefing and working on the backlog in Sponsored Programs. She stated that Director Cutsor is very equipped to get the team back on track and she has heartfelt praise for Director Cutsor. She reported that the goal is to have Sponsored Programs performing well again in three-four months.

Interim VC Nelson reported that ORI has launched a program this semester called the Nebraska Research Enterprise Program which is for undergraduates who would do an internship within ORI. She stated that the internship provides students with foundational knowledge, hands-on experience, soft skills cultivation, and job placement coaching across the research spectrum. She stated that hopefully the program will help to generate new employees for ORI.

Vakilzadian reported that colleagues have stated that they do not know who they should contact about pre-awards. Interim VC Nelson stated that the team that handles the pre-awards is more fully staffed but they have been experiencing some turnovers as well. She noted that the team needs to work with the departments to let them know who their new contact person is. Vakilzadian suggested having the team members come to a department meeting so the faculty members can meet them. VanderPlas pointed out that it would also be helpful if one of the team members is going on leave to notify the faculty member(s) who they will now be working with in ORI. She stated that communications with the faculty working with the ORI is very important. Interim VC Nelson stated that she appreciates having this feedback and will make Director Cutsor aware of what is happening.

Dawes pointed out that a part of the problem is not only recruitment but retention of staff members and being competitive with other institutions. She questioned how the university can help in this regard because she said if ORI can't retain people, it's going to have continual turnover. Chancellor Bennett noted that this has been a discussion for a while now and states that we clearly have some issues with turnover and staffing, and it would be good to think about what we can do differently to help with our hiring and retention. Dawes asked what Nebraska is going to offer if you are demanding that people work in person and the salaries are not competitive with other institutions. AVC Zavala stated that ORI is trying to be competitive with salaries and is making sure we are in the top 25% percentile of salaries. She pointed out that it is the issue about not allowing remote work and taxing out-of-state employees that are the main obstacles. She reported that Human Resources is starting to be easier to work with by addressing some of these issues and she believes the apprenticeship program will help. Dawes asked if the students from the apprenticeship program will stay if they are very good. AVC Zavala noted that there are ORI employees who have been there 20 years who started as students.

Interim VC Nelson asked the Executive Committee to please feel free to report any problems to her and noted that she would be happy to come back and speak with the Committee.

2.2 Is there a current sick leave policy for 9-month faculty members?

Chancellor Bennett noted that for faculty members on 12-month appointments the Board of Regents Bylaws state that the employee can have up to six months of sick leave if it is medically supported by the employee's physician. He stated that he will ask Interim EVC Button to address the question for 9-month employees when the Executive

Committee meets again in January. Davis pointed out that the current Board of Regents Bylaws is not as clear as it could be about sick leave for 9-month faculty members.

2.3 Proposed Family-Friendly Leave Policy – What is the Status?

Eklund reported that he spoke with Interim Provost Jackson about the status of the Family-Friendly Leave Policy which had been sent to the Board of Regents last fall but was later pulled by then President Carter. The reason given that it was removed from the Regents' agenda was that the Faculty Senates did not have a chance to review the policy. Kopocis pointed out that the Faculty Senates did not have any complaints about the proposed policy. Eklund noted that the Faculty Senate Presidents, the Presidents of ASUN, GSA, and the Staff Senate are all in favor of the policy. Chancellor Bennett stated that he will ask that the policy be put on the agenda for the President's Council meeting tomorrow.

Eklund stated that he thinks that some of the Regents may have been concerned about the possible cost of such a policy, but Interim Provost Jackson reported that only one father out of the four campuses took full advantage of the leave policy. He stated that for us to be competitive with the other Big Ten universities in recruiting faculty and staff members, we need to improve our family leave policy.

Davis pointed out that there had been several drafts of the policy and the draft that the Board of Regents reviewed raised concerns that the policy did not meet all the needs of the campuses and there may have been further revisions to the policy, but this was done some time ago. He suggested that the policy may need to be reviewed and possibly revised for it to go to the Board. Kopocis reported that the original version was a parental leave policy, but some people were interested in having a family leave policy which would allow leave for people dealing with other family events such as taking care of an ill family member. Eklund pointed out that UNK and UNO are unionized, and they are getting enhanced family leave coverage.

2.4 Faculty and students feel that our reputation has been tarnished due to the lack of sportsmanship by the football players who refused to shake the hands of the Iowa football players. Has anything been done or said to Coach Ruhle about this lack of sportsmanship?

Chancellor Bennett reported that he has received at least a dozen complaints from donors and others about the behavior of the football players. He noted that since he no longer oversees Athletics, he sent the complaints to President Gold. He noted that Nebraska has a high standard for sportsmanship and the behavior displayed was a departure from our standard. Shrader stated that he believes that Coach Rhule has addressed the issue and stated that the Coach did not know beforehand what the students were going to do.

2.5 What are the plans for the Gender and Sexuality Center?

Chancellor Bennett reported that Director Pat Tetreault, a long-serving member of the university community, is retiring and he spoke with VC Anderson about the Center. He stated that the plan is to conduct a national search to fill the position. However, he said that VC Anderson wants to evaluate the position to see what the needs are for the Center

and whether the job description needs to be revised. He stated that hopefully the search will occur in the spring. He pointed out that there has not been any discussion that the position would not be filled, but it will not occur in the next 30 days.

Shrader asked if the Center will remain. Chancellor Bennett stated that the Center will remain and pointed out that there has not been any discussion about changing its name. Tschetter noted that there have been concerns that the Center would be eliminated and that it was good to learn that it will remain.

VanderPlas pointed out that retirements are predictable and that most businesses would think about succession planning. She questioned why we are leaving the position open for a semester and why we didn't try onboarding someone in August. Chancellor Bennett stated that he did not know when Director Tetreault announced that she would be retiring or when her last day would be. He reported that there are several people in the Center who are interested in the position and willing to move into it, but VC Anderson wants us to review the position before starting a search.

2.6 Is it confirmed that there will be another VSIP?

Chancellor Bennett stated that President Gold is allowing a VSIP tool in his toolbox to grapple with the budget reductions. He stated that if the VSIP is going to be offered again an announcement would be made in January. He pointed out that this would be for tenured faculty members, and they would need to be at least 62 years of age or older and have been here for 10 years or more.

Bearnes asked if Extension Educators were mentioned during the discussion on VSIP. She pointed out that the rules and policies for Extension Educators have not always been applied equally in comparison with other faculty members. Chancellor Bennett stated that this would be clarified when the announcement is made.

2.7 Update on what the university's plans are if ICE comes to campus looking for people to deport.

Chancellor Bennett stated that this question is on the President's Council agenda for tomorrow's meeting.

2.8 Issues on the Horizon

Chancellor Bennett reported that UNL's choral group has been invited by Senator Fischer to perform on the steps of the capital during inauguration. He noted that this is an unbelievable opportunity for the students to experience something that most people do not get the opportunity to do, and the singers will be led by the Senate's very own President Pete Eklund. He stated this is a great opportunity to showcase to the country what goes on in Nebraska with our choral group and the Glenn Korff School of Music.

Chancellor Bennett noted that work has been going on to have his investiture occur at the December 21 graduation ceremony. However, on December 21st the funeral service for former Regent Howard Hawks will be held and he noted that it was important for the campus leaders to attend the service which will be held in Omaha. Therefore, his

investiture has been postponed until the spring semester. He stated that an announcement about the postponement would be coming soon.

3.0 Campus Emergency Preparedness (Director Abby Schletzbaum)

Schletzbaum reported that as the Emergency Management Director she is located within the University Police Department. She stated that her primary duties are to develop campus emergency operations plans, business continuity plans, hazard mitigation plans, and building safety plans. She noted that she needs to make sure that faculty, staff, and students have the resources they need for emergency planning. She stated that she is currently working on developing signage for classrooms, is developing a safety video, and has been meeting with some departments to discuss emergency preparedness plans and she is willing to work on initiatives or concerns that the campus community may have.

Schletzbaum stated that she is working on doing a lot of outreach training which typically takes an hour or less, and active threat training. She noted that the training focuses heavily on the active response method of run, hide, fight and tabletop messages providing emergency preparedness information can be provided for units and that templates can be provided to departments and buildings.

Schletzbaum reported that there is an Emergency Operational Team which is composed of over 30 members across the campus from multiple departments. She stated the team handles communications to logistics and provides an organized and uniform response on campus. She pointed out that the team has been on campus for over two decades and has responded to multiple emergencies including protests and miscellaneous campus incidents and was involved with COVID-19 plans. The team also coordinates resources after critical incidents such as a gas leak or power outage. She noted that the campus leadership team participated in an exercise which tested their capabilities of what to do if an emergency arises. She pointed out that if anyone has situational awareness concerns, they should contact UNL Police officers as well.

Schletzbaum stated that the Crisis Communications Team is the information center which handles communication responses. She pointed out that not only are team members out there receiving intel and monitoring social media, but they are also seeing what people are saying out in the public. She reported that the team is also receiving messages from the Chancellor's office and other important individuals on campus to make sure that we are communicating what we need to in a time of crisis. She pointed out that it is the Executive Leadership Team that makes more large-scale policy decisions, and they will update any UNL stakeholders and elected officials on our response plan. She stated that the Emergency Operations Center will be involved with a long-term recovery strategy and will work with the Family Assistance program if needed.

Shrader asked who are the members of the Emergency Operational Team? Schletzbaum stated that members are heavily involved from the logistical side of the university, there are some students, people from Parking & Transit Services, Campus Recreation,

representatives from Athletics, and there is heavy involvement from people with Facilities.

Vakilzadian noted that the Kiewit engineering building is all glass and asked what people should do if there is a weather emergency or an active shooter. Schletzbaum stated that there are specific routes to get out of a building if there is a disaster and the goal is to have a preparedness coordinator for each building on campus. She stated that people in the building should seek shelter in the restrooms or go over to the Scott Engineering building. She noted that currently there is only about 40% participation with the campus buildings, but the plan is to have 100% participation.

VanderPlas stated that she was trying to figure out years ago what the seating layout was in an auditorium on campus, but she was told that UNL does not do this because of security risks. She pointed out that it would be helpful to know the layout of a room to help people escape should there be a disaster. Schletzbaum stated that information is available by request but only to UNL employees. She reported that blue plans are being considered that would identify exits in buildings.

Eklund asked how long there will be free access to buildings on campus. Schletzbaum stated that this is being discussed and noted that we need a campus-wide strategy. She stated that we may need a system-wide approach where we can lock down buildings.

Eklund thanked Schletzbaum for meeting with the Executive Committee. Double click on the slide below to see the PowerPoint presentation.



UNL Emergency Management Program Overview

Abby Schletzbaum, UNL Police Department

4.0 Announcements

No announcements were made.

5.0 Approval of November 19, 2024 and December 3, 2024 Minutes

Eklund asked if there were any further revisions to the minutes. Hearing none he asked for a motion to approve the minutes. Tschetter moved to approve the November 19th minutes. Motion seconded by Vakilzadian and then approved by the Executive Committee.

Tschetter moved for approval of the December 3rd minutes. Motion was seconded by Vakilzadian and then approved by the Executive Committee.

6.0 Unfinished Business

No unfinished business was discussed.

7.0 New Business

7.1 Proposed changes to Parking Advisory Committee's Membership

Griffin noted that Leiter, who chairs the Parking Advisory Committee, stated that PAC is asking for the number of faculty members on the Committee to be reduced to two rather than three. She stated that for several years now one of the faculty seats has remained unfilled due to a lack of faculty volunteers. The Executive Committee approved the request to reduce the number of faculty members on the PAC.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:26 p.m. The next meeting of the Executive Committee will be on Tuesday, January 21, 2025, at 2:30 pm. The meeting will be held in 201 Canfield Administration Building. The minutes are respectfully submitted by Karen Griffin, Coordinator and Signe Boudreau, Secretary.