

## EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES

**Present:** Bouma, Boudreau, Dawes, Eklund, Kopocis, Leiter, Shrader, Tschetter, Vakilzadian, VanderPlas

**Absent:** Baesu, Bearnese, Lott

**Guest:** President Gold, Interim VP for External Affairs Chris Kratochvil

**Date:** Monday, July 22, 2024

**Location:** Varner Hall

**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 (*Eklund*)**

Eklund called the meeting to order at 2:07 p.m.

### **2.0 President Gold**

President Gold stated that he is looking forward to working with the Executive Committee and noted that he would be willing to meet with the Committee as often as the members like. He pointed out that the Faculty Senate Presidents meet with the provost after each of the Board of Regents meetings and he has asked to attend these meetings. He reported that he is planning to hold campus meetings which will be open to faculty, staff, and students and which will coincide with the start of the fall semester, and he noted that he will be traveling through rural Nebraska all next week to meet and talk with people about the university.

President Gold stated that he has a very long history of shared governance going back to when he was a department chair at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine where he had the pleasure of serving on the Faculty Senate. He noted that he found his nearly ten years serving in the Senate to be very fulfilling. He stated that he greatly appreciates the value of shared governance which is why he is willing to spend as much time with the Executive Committee as the members wish and during this time, he will do his best to provide the Committee with the information that it needs so the Committee can be effective in what it does which is to serve the faculty.

Interim Vice President Kratochvil introduced himself saying that he was joining President Gold as the Interim VP for External Affairs. He noted that he has spent the last 25 years as an UNMC faculty member in the Department of Psychiatry and oversaw clinical research, served as UNMC's interim Vice Chancellor for External Relations and as Chief Medical Officer for UNeHealth. He previously served as Associate Vice Chancellor for Clinical Research at UNMC and Vice President for Research at Nebraska Medicine.

### **2.1 Budget transparency. Last year we were told that the University had a \$58m**

**budget shortfall, but this spring, Interim President Kabourek announced that there was only an \$11m shortfall. Can you help us understand the difference. What will be UNL's portion of the deficit? Can you explain why Varner Hall's budget has grown while other campus's budgets have decreased significantly?**

President Gold reported that he is still learning how the budgets have historically been handled and with his experience as UNMC's Chancellor, he knows that robust communication and transparency is needed whether we are in challenging times or times of great opportunity.

President Gold stated that we have an \$11.8 million gap in the budget which will be divided proportionally as it has been done in the past, although he noted that the formula may not remain the same for the future. He reported that the decision, which was made with the Board of Regents, was to use the previous longstanding formula whereby UNL would be responsible for approximately 50% of the deficit.

President Gold stated that centralizing services such as procurement, ITS, and other services came with an extensive number of salary lines along with benefits which resulted in increases to Varner Hall's overall budget. He stated that he is a fundamental believer that excellence is a journey, but we may need to eventually look at the centralized services to see if they are working well. He pointed out that he is aware that there are existing concerns with procurement and ITS and noted that there are still some shared lines between the campuses and Varner Hall in procurement services, ITS, and facilities. He stated that there is no reason to grow resources at Varner Hall when it is the campuses that need the resources to maintain the quality of the education they offer, unless there is an efficiency or effectiveness benefit, although he did note that Varner Hall does need to have some reserve to provide some resilience.

President Gold pointed out that historically across the United States, revenue support for higher education institutions, particularly for public universities, has been difficult and sensitive and relying on tax dollars for support is under a lot of stress and concern. He noted that higher education's reputation as being valuable is under attack and we will all need to work together to tackle this problem. He stated that this cannot be done without there being a good relationship between Varner Hall and the campuses, especially our land-grant campus.

Professor Vakilzadian asked how the deficit figure of \$58 million was first determined and how the deficit number is now \$11.8 million. He also asked if there was any relationship with our attempts to rejoin the AAU and the \$58 million deficit. President Gold reported that the figure was projected at the beginning of the biennium based on enrollment numbers and other factors. He pointed out that at that time there had been no tuition increases but noted that the Board of Regents have now approved two years of tuition increases. He stated that there was also a degree of contingency funding that was factored into the \$58 million but he believes that rather than putting contingency funds into the coffers of Varner Hall, he would rather it be held at the campus level and used as effectively as possible. He stated that the original amount of \$58 million should have

been reduced in half after the first year of the biennium and other factors resulted in the reduced budget deficit. These factors included that we underspent in some areas, and we had some increases in revenue sources. He reported that with the contingency funds taken out and some other factors we were able to get the amount down to \$11.8 million. He pointed out that VP Kabourek worked very hard to arrive at the current deficit number. He stated that at the August 8<sup>th</sup> Board of Regents meeting the focus will begin to work on the projected state budget request for the next biennium.

President Gold reported that he had an excellent meeting last week with the President of the AAU, Dr. Barbara Snyder who he has worked with in the past, and she stated that there was definitely a pathway for us to be reconsidered for membership in the AAU. He noted that she did state that it could take ten years for us to be invited to rejoin the AAU because we need to improve our metrics which we know relates to academic productivity, research, awards and recognition. He stated that they also briefly discussed structural changes that might need to be made to meet the needed metrics and he noted that Dr. Snyder has offered to continue to meet with him occasionally to answer questions. He stated that the question that he believed Professor Vakilzadian was asking is whether we are going to invest in going from excellence to extraordinary which will be the subject of his investiture on September 5<sup>th</sup>.

**2.2 UNL faculty teach, grade, assist in recruiting, administer, must deal with class incumbrances like weekday Husker football games, financially support the academics, primarily house student athletes, and answer/address noteworthy issues like Title IX. Many people feel that the UNL Athletics Director should once again report to the UNL Chancellor. What is your position on this issue?**

President Gold reported that he spoke with the Commissioner of the Big Ten Tony Petitti this morning about intercollegiate athletics and how things are changing rapidly due to the class action lawsuit settlements that have occurred because of the name, image, and likeness litigation. He pointed out that the litigation is going to have tremendous financial impacts on all of the conferences across the NCAA, but particularly on the power five conferences, however, he thinks we are well positioned to withstand and to sustain the changes. He reported that he is looking forward to participating in the Council of Presidents and Chancellors of the Big Ten, but if the day comes when he feels that the domain of athletics should be in the hands of the UNL Chancellor he would have that discussion with all those concerned. He noted that he has spoken to Chancellor Bennett and Athletics Director Troy Dannen about the issue and pointed out that if you look at the reporting relationships across the Big Ten, they are all over the map, but AD Dannen's preference is to report to the President of the system.

President Gold stated that there will be a lot of work occurring with intercollegiate athletics in the near future and some difficult decisions will need to be made but people should rest assured that Chancellor Bennett will be involved in the decision making. He reported that the settlement for the NIL claims that have been agreed upon by the nation's five biggest conferences amounts to \$2.8 billion which will be paid over a 10-year period through a groundbreaking revenue-sharing model that could start directing millions of

dollars directly to athletes. He reported that there are also Title IX issues that will also need to be addressed.

Professor Eklund stated that another concern of the faculty has to do with the movement of some of the games from Saturday to a weekday. He pointed out that with the stadium being directly on campus a weekday game significantly disrupts teaching and research and the faculty would like to have a say in the decision to make this kind of schedule change. He noted that another issue is that UNL Athletics leads the nation in the amount of funding it provides to the academic portion of the university but now with the loss of the \$10 million it will definitely impact the campus. President Gold pointed out that he is a die-hard academic and he will do everything to avoid weekday games from occurring. He noted that he does not know what the drive has been to make these changes.

Professor Eklund stated that at the Big Ten Academic Alliance Conference there was discussion about the expansion of the Big Ten and the travel that will be required of the teams and how this will impact the student-athletes. President Gold stated that he understands these concerns and noted that we need to make sure these student-athletes receive a world-class education. He reported that he has helped Coach Ruhle and Coach Cook recruit some students by talking about the academic experience and we have a tremendous responsibility to deliver a high-quality education and experience to our students. He stated that as a first-gen student himself he believes that education is the key to success and getting out of poverty and essential to having a successful democracy. He stated that he won't do anything to stand in the way of the students' academic experience and he has talked about this frequently with Chancellor Bennett.

### **2.3 What are your short-term and long-term visions for both the NU System and UNL?**

President Gold stated that our goal is not to be average but rather to be an extraordinary institution. He noted that we can't be everything to everybody and we need to define the future of what public education should be and we need to consider thoughtful change. He stated that we need incremental changes where we get better each year in our colleges; we need opportunistic changes such as being asked by some agency or outside entity to do something special such as to create something specific; and we need to define aspirational goals for the next decade. He stated that we need a unifying vision that is not just a single vision. It must be based on excellence, and we need buy-in by our faculty and staff. He stated that he wants to have discussions to ask what higher education in Nebraska should look like in ten years and what will inspire the next generation of students. He noted that no aspirational goal is too big, it is just a matter of defining it.

President Gold stated that his short-term goal is for us to balance all of the different roles that we have. We need to look at what the AAU stands for in research, publications, doctoral degrees, retention and graduation rates and consider what structural changes need to be made to improve our metrics. He stated that we need to define our future together.

**2.4 What are your plans for addressing our state government when tough questions resurface regarding DEI, tenure, and academic freedom?**

President Gold noted that discussions in these areas are not going to end, and he spent a decade in Ohio dealing with these questions. He pointed out that academic freedom is the core of what we do, and we need to convince people of the importance of academic freedom because if we depart from academic freedom, faculty tenure, and being a truly inclusive system, we will be far less able to get readmitted into the AAU. He reported that there are 14 states that either have or are in the process of looking at bills to eliminate diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts in higher education institutions, but he stated that we need to meet the needs of our students.

Professor Eklund asked if there are Legislators that put AAU membership on a high level of importance. President Gold stated that it varies. He noted that he has been asked about the AAU and what structural changes need to be made and how changes would relate to the structure of IANR and the rest of the university. He pointed out that he is not sure how it resonates with some of our faculty members.

**2.5 How do you see the role of shared governance in budget reduction and curriculum decisions?**

President Gold stated that throughout the discussion today he hoped that he addressed his belief about shared governance. He noted that the campuses will be hearing a lot from him and stated that no questions are too hard to ask, and he will try to do his best to answer any questions. He stated that he plans on holding some townhall meetings on campus and said that he is more than willing to share information with the Executive Committee and for the Committee not to hesitate to reschedule meetings with him.

**5.0 New Business**

No new business was discussed.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:14 p.m. The minutes are respectfully submitted by Karen Griffin, Coordinator and Signe Boudreau, Secretary.