

## EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES

**Present:** Baesu, Bearnes, Bouma, Boudreau, Dawes, Eklund, Kopocis, Leiter, Shradler, Tschetter, Vakilzadian, VanderPlas

**Absent:** Lott

**Date:** Tuesday, June 11, 2021

**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.

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### 1.0 Call (*Eklund*)

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

### 2.0 Interim VC Jones

#### 2.1 Discussion about AAU Metrics

Jones stated that when she considers the AAU, she is thinking about our stature and moving forward to elevate our stature. She noted that there have been a lot of questions about why we should be in the AAU, and she stated that one overarching reason is that we are worthy of being in this group of institutions that sit at the table with policy makers and funding agencies, and she believes we should be part of such discussions. She reported that in looking at our numbers for AAU metrics, she concluded that we are not at the bottom of AAU institutions, but we are not where we want to be.

Jones stated that the AAU examines indicators for membership as well as a more qualitative set of judgements about institutions and their trajectories: Phase I metrics include competitively funded federal research support expenditures, awards, fellowships and memberships, citations, and books; Phase II metrics include USDA, state and industrial research support, doctoral education (research doctorates) and postdoctoral appointees; Informational Metrics include Pell enrollment; undergraduate graduation rates; Pell-grant recipient graduation rates, and graduation rate gap. She pointed out that the figures are based on a 10-year data set which currently reviews the 2012-2022 period. She stated that there is raw data and data that are normalized to the number of tenured and tenure track faculty members. Eklund asked if the 10-year timeframe is a sliding period. Jones stated that it is. She reported that the metrics she has reviewed contain our combined data with UNMC and UNOP.

Jones noted that the University of Oregon will soon join the Big Ten, and we actually rank higher than Oregon on a number of metrics, the exception being awards and some other informational metrics. She said in looking at all of the institutions in the AAU, awards are the one area where we are behind, but she believes we can improve this metric because we have many faculty members who are worthy of receiving awards and the same is true for UNMC's faculty. She reported that the AAU uses the National Research

Council list of prestigious awards for the awards metric. Bearnese asked if awards for Extension faculty qualify for the list. Jones stated that a complete list of the accepted awards can be found at:

<https://www.aau.edu/sites/default/files/AAU-Files/Who-We-Are/Highly%20Prestigious%20Awards.pdf>.

She pointed out that if an award is not on the list, it doesn't mean we should ignore it and faculty should be nominated for all kinds of awards to better position them for the prestigious awards. Vakilzadian asked who decides what awards are considered prestigious and what is the relative weight of them. Jones stated that it is the National Research Council that maintains a list of highly prestigious awards.

Jones noted that there is no application for becoming a member, instead you must be invited/nominated by a sitting member of the AAU. Once invited, your institution's metrics are evaluated along with other subjective factors, and a vote is taken on whether you should be admitted. She stated that we need to position ourselves to potentially receive an invite or nomination for AAU membership. Eklund asked if she has any sense that some AAU members feel it would be awkward to ask UNL to rejoin the AAU. Jones stated that she has not perceived any awkwardness and is not aware that there has even been any discussion about it.

Jones stated that she wanted to discuss the contributions of the colleges to the metrics. She noted that there seems to be this idea that there is just a small subset of departments on campus that are contributing to the metrics, but she pointed out that a large segment of the campus is contributing. She reported that in federal research expenditures the science units, and some of the centers, contribute significantly to the research expenditures and citations are highly correlated with this metric. However, if you look at the book metric, a whole different set of units are contributing with most of them coming from the humanities and social sciences. She stated that there is also the misconception that contributions are being made mostly by the larger departments but there are also some small departments that are contributing. She reported that in looking at the awards metric there are basically four units that have contributed 80% of our awards. She pointed out that the units with higher federal research expenditures only encompass 19% of our awards and noted that it will take a large part of the campus to be involved in contributing to our stature to position us well for future AAU membership.

Eklund asked about the combining of UNL and UNMC and whether it will morph into something larger. He pointed out that the University of Kansas' medical school is not located in Lawrence but rather in Kansas City, yet they are considered a combined campus. Jones stated that there are members of the AAU where the medical school is located elsewhere, and while other academics are separate from the main campus, they still combine their research expenditures together. She reported that President Carter worked with the NSF and received approval from them to report our federal research expenditures with UNMC's expenditures. She stated that she does not know whether other commitments were made in order for us to be able to combine our research expenditures with UNMC.

Shrader noted that some of our metrics improved when we combined research expenditures with UNMC, but he asked what metrics went down because of the combination. Jones stated that our federal research expenditures increased, but a decrease occurred when the data are normalized for tenured and tenure-track faculty because UNMC has a lot of faculty members who are tenure-line but are primarily involved with clinical work, not with research.

Jones reported that UNL's most recent research expenditure data shows that we are moving in the right direction. She noted that when she stepped in to the role of Interim VC of ORED there was concern about us having stagnation in our federal research expenditures and this was true for 2021 and 2022. She stated that we have risen in our federal research expenditures for 2023 and are now really propelling forward, and currently we are on track to exceed fiscal year 2023's level of federal research expenditures in FY24. She pointed out that ORED is watching our research awards data carefully because our ability to increase federal research awards, and ultimately expenditures, depends upon hiring and retaining faculty members.

Eklund stated that it is obvious that we will need financial support from the state to help us with our efforts to regain entrance into the AAU and for us to remain in the Big Ten conference pointing out that he was reminded at the Big Ten Academic Alliance Conference that we were the only member of the Big Ten not to be a member of the AAU. He asked what the strategies will be to help us get the financial assistance that will be needed. Jones stated that additional strategies are still being developed. She stated that she has been meeting with the deans and discussing strategies to help elevate our AAU stature. She noted that strategic hiring is one area that has been discussed and what we can do to support mid-career faculty. Enhancing identification of funding opportunities and leveraging our research centers and core facilities are also important. She pointed out that the University Libraries is one of our core infrastructures that could enable us to facilitate forward progress on all AAU metrics. Jones stated that ORED has also discussed how the colleges have lost grant specialists due to the budget reductions and perhaps a set of grant specialists could be hired and trained by ORED but positioned within the colleges where they can provide assistance to the faculty.

Jones stated that she has asked incoming President Gold for some funding to be able to build an awards team who would help faculty members put together successful nomination packets for awards. She noted that we currently have only one person who does this work and Dr. Gold has made a verbal commitment to help expand this team.

Shrader pointed out that faculty members don't get much money to write books so there is limited incentive. Jones agreed and noted that some colleges have a book subvention which is a mechanism for faculty to get access to funding in order to write books, although some of that funding has dwindled because of the budget reductions. She stated that ORED is considering launching a book subvention opportunity.

Vakilzadian pointed out that faculty feel that they don't receive enough of the F&A funding from the grants they are awarded. Jones stated that faculty members should visit with their deans about this issue because the dean decides what percentage of F&A return would go to the faculty member. She noted that the colleges get 26.5% of the F&A funds, 26.5% is held for compliance and business costs associated with research, and 26.5% is held by the chancellor and vice chancellor for research and economic development for strategic initiatives. There are also amounts that are automatically taken off the top of the F&A funds. She stated that UNL's F&A Distribution Policy can be found at <https://research.unl.edu/sponsoredprograms/faq-facilities-administrative-f-a-costs-on-sponsored-projects/>. She reported that F&A funds that are generated enable us to fund strategic initiatives and provide program support. She stated that she has had her office review the policy to see if any changes could be made to it but right now that is not feasible due to the budget constraints, but she will continue to raise the question to see if the percentage of returned F&A could be changed.

## **2.2 SAM Registration**

Jones reported that it is an annual registration process, and the Office of Sponsored Programs started this process early this year to ensure that it was completed well before our deadline. Completing the registration process early also moved our deadline date away from the end of our fiscal year, so our next annual renewal is scheduled for June 2025. Previous challenges with SAM registration were primarily due to implementation of a new system at the federal government, but we will be diligent, so we never again experience a lapse in our SAM registration.

## **2.3 What do you see as the future of the Office of Research and Economic Development?**

Jones reported that ORED has recently reviewed its vision, mission, functions, organization, and has updated these areas and reviewed all processes and policies. She noted that everyone who has some title in the office has a portfolio of work that they are held accountable for. She noted that some areas of ORED have experienced turnover and there has been some reorganizing for sponsored programs. To address turnover, ORED implemented an intern program where 14 students have been hired for a two-year period. She noted that when the students complete the intern program, they could get a job in research administration.

Jones stated that there has been some consideration of renaming the office to Office of Research and Innovation. She noted that the office needs to think about how to support innovation, promote it, and how we can impact the real world. She stated that looking far into the future she believes that the office will always be needed, however we should always be open to change. For example, she reported that ORED is planning to invite our UNMC colleagues to join us in professional development programs and we are considering other ways that we might partner with UNMC in research administration. She pointed out that when opportunities arise, we should be the leader with a forward-looking mindset.

Vakilzadian asked if ORED is continuing to send out to faculty the brochure listing all of our accomplishments. Jones stated that a much smaller version which provides links to the website for expanded information is being produced.

Dawes asked what the reason is for the high turnover in staff. Jones stated that she does not know the reason for it although it may be a mix of retirements, people concerned with the longevity of their jobs, and some staff members taking opportunities with other institutions. Dawes pointed out that it is necessary to support ORED and she asked if it would be helpful if the researchers were informed if there is a turnover of a staff member, particularly if they have been working with a person on a grant who is or has left the university. Jones reported that our new director for sponsored programs has been hired and he has a great vision for the office including cross-training and opportunities for career advancement to improve retention.

### **3.0 Approval of May 28, 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 and Boudreau seconded, approving the minutes. Motion approved by the Executive Committee.

### **4.0 Announcements**

#### **4.1 Meeting with President Gold**

Eklund reported the tentatively, the Executive Committee will be meeting with President Gold on July 23<sup>rd</sup>.

#### **4.2 Meeting with Professor Niehaus**

Eklund reported that the Executive Committee will meet with Professor Niehaus on August 20<sup>th</sup> to discuss the pros and cons of being a unionized campus.

### **5.0 New Business**

#### **5.1 Problems with EmpiRX Prescription Plan**

Eklund reported that he has been receiving some complaints from faculty members about the EmpiRX prescription plan. Griffin noted that she has also received a report from a faculty member stating that EmpiRX is refusing to pay for medication that was previously covered through the Caremark Plan. She suggested that Eklund should contact Associate Vice President Schlichting to let him know about the problems that are being experienced by some faculty and staff members.

#### **5.2 Agenda Items for Chancellor Bennett, EVC Ankerson, and VC Boehm**

The Executive Committee identified the following agenda items for the administrators:

- What are the plans with the budget if there is no tuition increase?
- What is your relationship with the Director of Athletics, and does he hold a Vice Chancellor position at UNL? Can you provide an update on the plans for renovating Memorial Stadium.
- The timeframe for the N2025 Strategic Plan will be ending in 2025. What plans are being put in place to begin a new strategic plan?

- What has happened to the Chancellor's Commission to Prevent Sexual Misconduct? No meetings have been held in a long time. What are your plans for the Chancellor's Commissions?
- What is the strategy if the tenure issue and the diversity, equity, and inclusion issues are brought in front of the State Legislature again?
- Will an Interim CIO be identified after CIO Tuttle leaves?
- A department has voted to have a Professor of Practice, who has been serving as Interim Chair, to be the permanent chair yet she is being asked to step down as a chair. Why is the department's decision being denied?
- More Professors of Practice are being hired but there is little protection for them. Are there efforts to make improvements for all levels of Professors of Practice?
- Update on the renovation of the East Campus landscape. Where are all of the statutes?

The meeting was adjourned at 4:57 p.m. The next meeting of the Executive Committee will be on Tuesday, June 25, 2024, 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.