

## EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES

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

**Absent:** Eklund

**Date:** Tuesday, June 25, 2024

**Location:** 201 Canfield Administration 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*)

Shrader called the meeting to order at 2:33 p.m.

### 2.0 Chancellor Bennett/VC Boehm

**2.1 Earlier this year we have heard that the University has a \$58 million shortfall, but Interim President Kabourek's recent email message stated that the University needs to cut \$11.8 million in permanent spending. Can you explain the difference in the amounts?**

Chancellor Bennett noted that the memo from Interim President Kabourek stating that the University had an \$11.8 million deficit instead of a \$58 million deficit was welcome news. He reported that he will be meeting with President Gold after July 4<sup>th</sup> to get clarity on the budget and to learn what UNL's portion of the deficit will be. He pointed out that when we learn what our budget number is we will go through the normal budget reduction process involving the Academic Planning Committee.

Chancellor Bennett stated that a concern with the budget is that Athletics is not going to transfer the \$10 million to the University that it has normally done for many years. He noted that there are actual charges by Athletics that cost UNL money and pointed out that losing the Athletics money will impact us, and we will need to figure out how to deal with this loss. He stated that with what will be happening with athletics across the country, the need for transparency and accountability is going to be even more crucial.

Chancellor Bennett noted that there is also the \$7.5 million budget matter from Nebraska Innovation Campus that needs to be covered. Shrader asked if this is a deficit for NIC. Chancellor Bennett stated that it is a deficit which has been covered by IANR. He noted that when NIC was being created then Chancellor Perlman signed off on two master lease agreements for a 35-year period. However, when ConAgra moved its offices back to Chicago the budget model for dealing with escalating costs crumbled when ConAgra extracted its funding for NIC. He reported that the Board of Regents actually owns the NIC land.

**2.2 What is your relationship with the Director of Athletics, does he hold a Vice Chancellor position at UNL? Can you provide an update on the plans for renovating Memorial Stadium?**

Chancellor Bennett stated that he has a good relationship with AD Dannen. He noted that AD Dannen does not have a Vice Chancellor position at UNL, but he has asked to be a member of the Chancellor's cabinet because he would like to be more engaged with campus life. He pointed out that with the upcoming Friday night football game there will be significant implications for the campus community so having AD Dannen at the cabinet meetings would be critical. He noted that it is likely there will be more night games with the way the Big Ten conference is evolving.

VanderPlas asked if plans will be developed to deal with evening games in order to avoid having so many instructional continuity days. She stated that we need to keep in mind that the primary mission of the university is education. Chancellor Bennett stated that no plans have developed yet, but this is something to think about in the future. He noted that the campus population increases significantly whenever there is a home football game. Vakilzadian pointed out that many of the faculty members are not happy with the Friday night game and feel that academics are being pushed aside for athletics. Chancellor Bennett stated that he thinks we can develop a plan to help get faculty input when these athletic events are being considered.

Chancellor Bennett reported that AD Dannen has put the renovation of Memorial Stadium on pause until further notice.

**2.3 The timeframe for the N2025 Strategic Plan will end in 2025. What plans are being made to begin work on a new strategic plan?**

Chancellor Bennett noted that he has completed all the listening sessions with the colleges, and he believes the feedback he has received will help guide our updating of the strategic plan. He reported that he wants to have the opportunity to speak with President Gold about what his expectations are for UNL before we begin work on updating the plan.

**2.4 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?**

Chancellor Bennett stated that he now understands how the Commission's are viewed by the campus and how critical and important they are to us. He stated that he is trying to figure out how best to work with the Commissions to meet our goals and strategies. He reported that VC Anderson has had conversations with some members of the Commissions about what next steps they should take, and she could probably provide an update in the fall.

Shrader asked how the roles of the Commissions are different. Chancellor Bennett reported that the Commissions are already defined and information on the Commissions can be found at <https://www.unl.edu/about/leadership-organization/>. He noted that they function differently here in that they can implement their recommendations. Shrader

asked if the Chancellor preferred that the Commissions not do programming of their recommendations. Chancellor Bennett pointed out that there are some duplications between some Commissions and existing offices. For instance, there is the Chancellor's Commission of the Status of People of Color, and we also have the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and then there is the Chancellor's Commission on the Status of Women and there is the Women's Center. He stated that he wants to sort out who takes the lead on addressing the various issues.

Dawes asked if the Chancellor's Commission to Prevent Sexual Misconduct has met. Chancellor Bennett said that VC Anderson has only met with a few members and has not pulled the full Commission together. He stated that he wants to make the Commissions as beneficial to the campus community as possible. He noted that the Commissions bring attention to issues on campus that we need to be paying attention to.

## **2.5 What is the strategy if the tenure issue and the diversity, equity, and inclusion issues are brought in front of the State Legislature again?**

Chancellor Bennett noted that with this last legislative session, Central Administration issued a directive saying that the Interim President was the representative of the University who was going to speak to the legislature on both issues. He pointed out that the issues are likely to come up again, but we will have to see how President Gold wants to proceed on how the University should respond.

VanderPlas asked what the process is for shared governance when directives come down from the President's office. She stated that faculty not being able to have conversations with administrators about issues like tenure and diversity, equity and inclusion and the lack of conversations circumvents shared governance. She asked if there were some formal means of inter-campus shared governance that would allow for feedback from the campuses to Central Administration to occur. Chancellor Bennett stated that people can speak to the legislature, but they should be clear that they are speaking as a citizen, not as a representative of the University. He pointed out that the Faculty Senate Presidents worked together to write a letter that was sent indicating their support for tenure and diversity, equity, and inclusion. He noted that the provost meets with the Presidents of the Faculty Senate after each Board of Regents meeting and the Presidents could convey the concerns of the faculty from their campus at this time.

Chancellor Bennett stated that it would be wise to stay up to speed with what is happening with other state legislatures regarding tenure and diversity, equity, and inclusion issues.

## **2.6 Will an Interim CIO be identified after CIO Tuttle leaves UNL?**

Chancellor Bennett reported that Vice President Blackman met with the Executive Leadership Team to discuss plans about replacing CIO Tuttle. He stated that the plan is to name an Interim CIO and to have that person in the role for six months after which there will be a search for a new CIO.

**2.7 Recently salary increases were given to the Extension Assistant base to hopefully help in hiring new Assistants. Will there be an increase in the salaries of existing Extension Assistants, particularly since there will be an increase of 12-15% in medical benefits? Do you know what the County Boards think of this increase and whether they can handle it? (Boehm)**

VC Boehm reported that the base salary for hiring new Extension Assistants has been increased to \$40,000 and existing Extension Assistants and Associates that received a “meets Expectations” or better in their FY2024 annual review were eligible to receive a market equity salary adjustment in addition to their annual merit increase. He said that of the 69 Extension Assistants and Associates, 62 were eligible for the market equity adjustment with an average salary increase of 4.1%. He noted that of the seven employees not eligible for an increase, six were already compensated at a higher rate than their peers, and one was not eligible due to performance.

VC Boehm stated that this past spring Dean Stoltenow and Associate Dean Varner attended the regional meetings of the Nebraska Association of County Officials (NACO) and discussed with the leaders Extension’s efforts to increase compensation and market competitiveness of Extension Assistants and Associates salaries. He reported that the NACO leaders were supportive of Extension’s efforts and shared that they were in the midst of conducting their own internal assessment and were likely to take similar action.

VC Boehm noted that a county’s ability to handle the salary increases for Extension Assistant and Associates varies by county. He stated that Nebraska Extension has offered to work with those individual counties that had an issue associated with the increase. He pointed out that the process would be managed in accordance with the Interlocal Agreements that govern the employment of county funded, university employed Extension Assistants and Associates.

**2.8 What are some of the plans for new and upcoming programs/buildings/projects for IANR? What is on the horizon? (Boehm)**

VC Boehm stated that IANR faculty, staff, students and stakeholders are consistently innovating to maximize UNL’s connectedness relevance, and impact for those the Institute serves, here in Nebraska and beyond. He stated that IANR co-created and released the next iteration of its 5-year Strategic Directions 2024-2028 document entitled [“Integrating Learning, Discovery, and Engagement for an Even Better Nebraska.”](#) He pointed out that the pillars of this direction are bold, ambitious, and necessary: grow and strengthen Nebraska’s agricultural and natural resources ecosystems; improve the health and well-being of all Nebraskans; and promote progress and prosperity for all Nebraskans.

VC Boehm stated that IANR continues to advance UNL’s commitment to enhancing access, success, and a sense of belonging and connection with IANR’s focus on being more intentional, accountable, and reflective. An example is IANR’s continued refinement of IANR’s shared governance and expectations documents, policies, and procedures.

VC Boehm stated that IANR continues to advance key strategies, partnerships, and strategy implementation. These efforts include:

- Leading UNL's efforts to advance the construction and staffing of the USDA Agricultural Research Service's National Center for Resilient and Regenerative Precision Agriculture.
- Created UNL/IANR Brag sheets for each of the 49 Unicameral districts as requested by the Ag Builders of Nebraska (ABN). These sheets provide information about UNL and IANR, contain a map of UNL's statewide campus with each district highlighted and provide brief but impactful stories of how IANR programming touches that district. ABN members use these sheets widely to enhance connections with Unicameral members, staff, and local leaders.
- Nebraska Extension has worked with county governments to author and execute new and contemporary interlocal agreements with each of the 93 counties in Nebraska.
- To meet the needs of Nebraska's workforce the Elite 11 Veterinarian Initiative has been created. This program seeks to increase the number of new veterinarians in product animal practices in rural Nebraska.
- UNL is one of 18 selected institutions to be involved with the Bayer University Mentoring Program which is a one-year mentoring program for graduate students in fields related to plant breeding, plant biology, gene editing, crop physiology, entomology, plant pathology, and environmental science.
- The launch of the second targeted 3 + 1 pathway program with Northwest Agriculture and Forestry University in Yangling, China. The focus is on plant science and plant protection and the first cohort begins in August 2024 with 50 students per year for a ten-year period.
- Through groundbreaking research and scientific discovery, the Agricultural Research Division (ARD) creates innovative solutions designed to use insights about the future to anticipate change and overcome challenges. IANR faculty staff, and students were responsible for \$167 million in total research expenditures, accounting for more than 49% of UNL's total research expenditures.
- Facilities: implemented LB384 renewal and deferred maintenance projects at IANR locations across greater Nebraska, on East Campus, at NCTA, upgrades were made at the Panhandle Research, Extension, and Education Center in Scottsbluff and at the Great Plains Veterinary Education Center in Clay Center.
- Facilities on the Horizon include the opening of the Klosterman Feedlot Innovation Center at the Eastern Nebraska Research, Extension and Education Center (ENREEC); construction of a new 12-student housing unit at West Central Research, Extension and Education Center; construction of the new Nebraska Future Ag Research & Management Systems or NFarms platform at ENREEC; design and planning for a new Equine Sports Complex on East Campus; working with the Lower Platte South Natural Resource District and the City of Lincoln to advance a \$25 million project to address flood control along Deadman's Run; working with the leadership team from the Lincoln Botanical Gardens on early-stage planning for a new Botanical Conservatory and Gardens on East Campus; continue to provide leadership for both the new USDA National Center for

Resilient and Regenerative Precision Agriculture and the Nebraska Ag-Tech Innovation Accelerator on Nebraska Innovation Campus.

**2.9 Can you provide an update on the landscaping project on East Campus? What happened to the statues? (Boehm)**

VC Boehm reported that there are two recent landscaping projects on East Campus. One is improvements to the Maxwell Arboretum which include improved access, lighting and safety, and installation of a new bridge connecting the green space to the College of Dentistry. The other project is the Legacy Plaza Meadows which spans from the Nebraska East Union south to the Dairy Store and Filley Hall and east to the Dinsdale Family Learning Commons. He noted that this project is scheduled to be completed by fall 2024. The changes to this area will create additional outdoor seating at the East Union, a vehicle entrance for the East Union's loading dock, a new outdoor patio at the Dairy Store, grading changes to increase accessibility for people with disabilities, and new lighting.

VC Boehm stated that the statues of Nebraska's four U.S. Secretaries of Agriculture were removed prior to construction and are being safely stored. They will be returned once the Legacy Plaza Meadows project is completed.

**3.0 Approval of June 11, 2024 Minutes**

Shrader asked if there were any further revisions to the minutes. Hearing none he asked for a motion to approve the minutes. Tschetter moved and Leiter 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 President Gold**

The Executive Committee began discussing agenda items for its tentative meeting with President Gold on July 23.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:53 p.m. The next meeting of the Executive Committee will be on Tuesday, July 9, at 2:30 pm. The meeting will be held in 203 Alexander Building. The minutes are respectfully submitted by Karen Griffin, Coordinator and Signe Boudreau, Secretary.