

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES

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

Absent: Kopocis, Leiter, Lott

Date: Tuesday, October 29 2024

Location: 201 Canfield Administration

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 exactly 2:30 p.m.

2.0 Chancellor Bennett/Interim CIO Haugerud

2.1 Is there any news on the budget? Is the hiring freeze still in effect for non-faculty appointments?

Chancellor Bennett noted that he hopes to soon get to the time where we don't have to talk about budget reductions. He reported that EVC Ankerson is currently meeting with the Deans to discuss how we might tackle our budget shortfall, pointing out that the amount we would deal with for this fiscal year is \$15 million, noting that this is not the full amount of our deficit. He stated that the loss of the \$10 million from UNL Athletics has definitely exacerbated the budget situation.

Eklund stated that he has heard the term structural deficit used and asked the Chancellor if he can define what this means. Chancellor Bennett stated that our expenses exceed our revenues, and this has been occurring for a number of years, but some of our cash reserves were used to offset previous deficits, but no adjustments were made when our enrollment projections and investments did not meet our expectations. He noted that he does not know whether we carefully reviewed how the loss of ConAgra on Nebraska Innovation Campus would impact us because we have been using funds from IANR's budget to cover the costs of NIC. Eklund asked if salaries and benefits were our major expenses. Chancellor Bennett stated that they are the major expense from our state-aided budget, and the student tuition remissions have certainly had an impact on our budget. He pointed out that he realizes that we have to offer scholarships and discounts, but this is a hard model to sustain if so many discounts are provided without us receiving funds to specifically address these remissions.

Eklund noted that some of the \$10 million from Athletics went to support Husker scholarships. Chancellor Bennett stated that this is correct and by the time we received notice that Athletics would not be giving UNL the \$10 million last year, pledges of these scholarships were already granted, and we needed to keep our commitment to these students.

Chancellor Bennett stated that the challenge for him is to figure out how to reduce our budget, so it doesn't compromise the equity of the Big N. He pointed out that he is reluctant to make a lot of reductions until we have a sense of what the restructuring of the university will look like and there are numerous conversations swirling around about the budget. He reported that he believes the Deans are having a conversation about the list of courses that are not meeting the CCPE course requirements, there is still some thought about whether to do another early retirement program, and we are looking at administrative structures to see where we can make reductions. He stated that he does not believe we are in a hiring freeze, but approval for hiring is being more scrutinized. He noted that we have about 6,000 employees, and about 1,800 are faculty members, but while there are more staff members, their salaries are far lower than most faculty members' salaries.

VanderPlas asked if the Husker scholarships were awarded again this year. Chancellor Bennett stated that they were awarded this year and noted that we received \$5 million from Varner Hall, however, the \$5 million did not come from the Athletics' funds but from our own rescission money which was \$11 million. He noted that he thought we might be getting the full amount of the rescission money back in addition to \$5 million from Athletics but this has not happened.

Shrader asked how much of tuition covers the cost of teaching. Chancellor Bennett stated that not much of the tuition covers teaching costs and pointed out that we have a number of things that are not profitable. For instance, the cost of NIC is creating a budget deficit for IANR, and he has been asking if we might need a different model to let other companies, who have some connection to students, be located there. He pointed out that the current rules are restrictive. Shrader asked if the rules are being reimaged. Chancellor Bennett stated that they are being considered and he is hopeful that there may be some changes, perhaps after the first of the year.

Chancellor Bennett reported that he recently had a good meeting with Interim Associate VC for Enrollment Monique Snowden to discuss our enrollment, and he noted that at this time she is optimistic about our enrollment, and pointed out that we are tracking well in comparison to last year at this time. He stated that in addition to recruiting students, retaining students is very important, and increasing international student and graduate student enrollment will all help to turn our budget around.

VanderPlas stated that at a recent department meeting the faculty were informed that the graduate teaching assistant budget would be reduced. She pointed out that her department, Statistics, currently has 22 graduate teaching assistants, each teaching two service courses, but the department has been told they may only be able to have enough funding to support two GTAs. She stated that her department is not sure how it can continue running the department under this model if enacted, or how the department can continue to enroll more students. She pointed out that several years ago the Data Science Interdisciplinary Program began, which is a program which businesses really want students to have expertise in. Chancellor Bennett stated that he is unaware of what VC

Boehm is thinking and noted that currently there is so much ambiguity across the system that we don't have any real answers yet about where we are with the budget and where things are going with restructuring the university. Shrader stated that he believes the faculty would welcome the opportunity to help determine what will happen with the restructuring. Chancellor Bennett asked if faculty meet regularly with their deans to have conversations about things such as restructuring. The Executive Committee agreed that it can vary from college to college. Chancellor Bennett noted that he has been meeting with the deans and allowing them to invite whoever they would like to join the discussion. He pointed out that he is open to another model of communicating with the faculty if anyone has a suggestion.

Eklund noted that with previous reductions the deans were asked to prepare for a 3%, 6%, or 9% reduction to their budget. He asked if that model is being used again. Chancellor Bennett reported that the deans are being asked for strategic reductions which may include vertical cuts, but he stated that this is difficult to do when we don't know what the structure of the university will be. He stated that there have been robust discussions about the programs that are on the list for not meeting the CCPE requirements but pointed out that because a program might be on the list does not necessarily mean that it should be eliminated. He stated that smaller departments could be serving a unique purpose and elevating our status and noted that the programs need to be intentional with the role they still play in the comprehensive structure.

VanderPlas pointed out that the climate of uncertainty can cause people to start looking for jobs elsewhere. She noted that she knows three people who are looking to leave UNL. Chancellor Bennett reported that he will be meeting with President Gold next week and he suspects that after that meeting, we will know how we need to move forward after the start of the new year.

2.2 Search for Vice Chancellor for Research and Innovation

Chancellor Bennett stated that Interim VC Jones has done phenomenal work, and she will be missed terribly. He stated that AVC Nelson will be the interim and suggested that the Executive Committee meet with her. He noted that he does intend to fill that position, unless he gets a directive from the President not to conduct a search. He stated that we need to think of the timing of the search.

2.3 Update on the Former Staff Members of the Office of Diversity and Inclusion and current progress to decentralize the tasks of the office.

Chancellor Bennett reported that there were three staff members in the ODI and a graduate student, and all but one have been placed in another position on campus. He stated that the last person is still in the process of transitioning to another position. He noted that EVC Ankerson, VC Zeleny, and VC Anderson are working on reimagining diversity and inclusion efforts in their units and stated that so many people are coming here every day and working hard to move things forward. He stated that we are thinking about the future to ensure that we are relevant in the Big Ten and as an R1 university. He stated that a question the faculty might want to ask is what investments have been made

in the past and when can we expect an investment into the land grant campus, particularly if we are going to pursue reentry into the AAU.

Baesu asked if Huskers is a trademark of UNL. Chancellor Bennett stated that all of the campuses share the Big Red N as being representative of the University.

2.4 Problems with ITS Support Since the Centralization of ITS

Interim CIO Haugerud noted that he has been on the campus since 1983 when he came here as a freshman and since that time, he completed his degree, worked in Telecommunications, and in 2010 was asked by then CIO Askren to work in the cybersecurity office. He stated that he has worked in cybersecurity for 15 years and has worked on trying to unify the university's systems.

Vakilzadian pointed out that since the centralization of ITS, the service to the faculty, staff, and students has not been as good as it used to be. He stated that previously if you had a problem, you could make a phone call, and someone would come out to help you. Now, you must send an email, a ticket then needs to be generated, and it takes at least a day before the problem has been taken care of. He stated that this is a real problem when the classroom equipment fails while the class is being taught. He noted that his team had a research project on remote experimentation with a robot that was to be connected to the network last November for remote experimentation, but this still has not been completed. As a result, his team has been unable to do any research on the project. He pointed out that we need IT people who have expertise with different operating systems such as Windows, Mac, and Unix derivatives.

Baesu noted that part of the problem is that the deans may have cut their IT staff. She stated that the College of Engineering is now down to one IT person for the whole college and stated that there are student IT workers, but she does not want a student to have access to her computer. VanderPlas stated that she echoes the problems being voiced. She pointed out that while in a classroom there can be no place to submit a help ticket and if you call the number provided in the classroom you are put on hold for 15 minutes but then no one comes back to help. She stated that it is hard to get through the layers of bureaucracy to get assistance. She reported that she cannot print anymore because she can't connect to VPN because, for some reason, the VPN client will not install or start on her computer, and she cannot get anyone to help figure out how to install it.

Baesu reported that sometimes Duo has asked her to authenticate getting access to a software program, but she hasn't made attempts to get into the program. Interim CIO Haugerud pointed out that if anyone is getting Duo prompts and they are not trying to sign into a program or system that means that somebody else has your username and password. He stated that this incident would trigger an outreach to change your password.

Vakilzadian stated that another issue is that it appears that every five minutes the computer screen goes off and then he has to start all over again reentering his password

each time. Interim CIO Haugerud pointed out that after 15 minutes computer screens go dark, and this occurs to minimize cyber threats. He stated that we have an exemption process that would allow you to change the blackout feature, but he noted that the importance of the blackout feature is the documentation it provides so we can attest to the level of security that we provide to the campuses. He reported that we get asked every year by our insurers what our security posture looks like and whether we can pay our obligations if we ever have a ransomware attack. He stated that when all of the security controls were being designed for Executive Memorandum 16, an effort was made to recognize controls that could be disruptive and to try to avoid these, but he acknowledged that there was some disruption. He noted that there are exception requests that can be made if disruptions are encountered by faculty members.

Interim CIO Haugerud stated that there are two different issues with IT support. He noted that one of them is that the Dean of the College of Engineering has not filled two IT positions within the college and ITS has reached out to see if the college could use some help. He reported that the other issue is that there are 200 classrooms that are supported by ITS, and then there are approximately 400 classrooms that are supported by the colleges. He noted that there have been discussions about how technology can be standardized for each of the classrooms which could possibly alleviate some problems. He pointed out that his technical support team for classrooms is made up of only five people so most of them will not be able to get to a classroom quickly unless they happen to be in the vicinity when a problem arises. He noted that the team works before the semester begins to make sure that all equipment is functioning in the classrooms. The challenge is how to keep it up and running once different people start using the equipment. He suggested that ITS should have conversations with the Deans to see how they can provide better help.

Vakilzadian asked how other universities handle their ITS. Interim CIO Haugerud reported that a common issue for universities is the difference between college support and central support. He stated that if anyone is experiencing difficulties with the support desk, which is handled by students, to please let him know. Tschetter stated that she had called for assistance because the equipment in the classroom would not work and the student which she spoke to was extremely rude. Shrader stated that he has had problems and wondered if some of the problems were due to the upgrades of the computer system. He suggested that it would be helpful to know ahead of time when those upgrades will occur so faculty can work around them. He stated that having problems with the equipment in the classrooms negatively impacts the students' experience. Interim CIO Haugerud stated that there is a website that shows when updates will occur <https://status.nebraska.edu/> and the list is distributed to all ITS colleagues. He pointed out that most upgrades are done on Sunday mornings but sometimes they are also done on Saturday. He stated that if anyone has any creative way to make the information available to the faculty, to please let him know.

Interim CIO Haugerud stated that research often involves newer equipment, but some new equipment can be difficult to obtain which creates some issues. He stated that we want to make sure researchers have the right equipment that they need, and he has had

conversations with Interim VC Jones about this issue. Shrader asked if funding is needed. Interim CIO Haugerud said yes. Shrader asked if the other NU campuses were having the same problems. Interim CIO Haugerud noted that UNL is the major research campus, and he is not hearing as many problems that the other campuses are having. He questioned how you can migrate old equipment to new equipment when you don't have the resources to buy new equipment.

Eklund noted that the CMS platform, Drupal, has been upgraded and websites will need to be upgraded to this new format. Interim CIO Haugerud stated that the content of the websites will be retained but they will be in the upgraded format. He pointed out that our websites must be 100% accessible. Eklund asked how he would know if his website has been updated to the new Drupal version. Interim CIO Haugerud suggested that he contact Bob Crisler, Director of Digital Experience Group. He pointed out that our websites need to be in compliance in about fifteen months.

Interim CIO Haugerud wanted to remind everyone that ITS is not looking at anyone's data or what they are doing. He stated that what they look for is any kind of spikes in either the activity of things either coming in or going out. He noted that the only time actual streams of traffic are viewed is if there is a support issue and the owner of the data makes a request for assistance. He stated that the systems we use are third party systems from vendors, but they do not have access to get into the programs that we use. He pointed out that the only time a third party could get into the program would be if we requested it. He stated that we make sure that these are credible parties, and General Counsel creates a security agreement that they must sign to ensure that we are protected. Vakilzadian asked who would be responsible if the data was exposed. Interim CIO Haugerud stated that the vendor would be responsible.

Eklund thanked Interim CIO Haugerud for meeting with the Executive Committee.

3.0 Announcements

3.1 Faculty Senate Diversity and Inclusion Committee

Baesu reported that the Diversity and Inclusion Committee met and felt that it would be helpful if the Executive Committee would recommend to either the Chancellor or the EVC that each of the colleges have a diversity and inclusion committee and have them share with the Senate Diversity and Inclusion Committee what is being done in the colleges. The Executive Committee agreed to ask the Chancellor and EVC for this to be done.

4.0 Approval of October 15, 2024 Minutes

Eklund asked if there were any further revisions to the meetings. Hearing none, he asked for approval. Shrader moved and Boudreau seconded approval of the minutes. Motion approved by the Executive Committee.

5.0 Unfinished Business

5.1 President's Newsletter

Eklund stated that he was thinking that the next President's Newsletter would be to explain what efforts are occurring in the EVC Office, the Office of Student Life, and the Business and Finance Office to reimagine diversity and inclusion efforts on campus. He noted that he wants to provide links to resources for the faculty. The Executive Committee agreed that providing this information would be beneficial to the faculty.

5.0 New Business

5.1 November 5 Faculty Senate Meeting

The Executive Committee reviewed the agenda for the November 5th Faculty Senate meeting and suggested that there be discussion during the open mic session about Athletics and the loss of \$10 million to UNL's budget.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:58 p.m. The next meeting of the Executive Committee will be on Tuesday, November 5, 2024, immediately following the Faculty Senate meeting. The meeting will be held in the East Campus Union, Great Plains Room A. The minutes are respectfully submitted by Karen Griffin, Coordinator and Signe Boudreau, Secretary.