

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES

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

Absent: Bearnese, Bouma, Leiter

Date: Tuesday, October 8, 2024

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.

1.0 Call (*Eklund*)

Eklund called the meeting to order at 2:45 p.m.

2.0 Announcements

No announcements were made.

3.0 Approval of September 24, 2024 and October 1, 2024 Minutes

Eklund reported that the edits from the Chancellor were not received in time last week for the Executive Committee to consider. He asked if there were any further revisions to the September 24, 2024, minutes. Griffin asked VanderPlas whether she wanted her comments about basing budget projections on out-of-state enrollment figures removed from the minutes. VanderPlas stated that she wanted her comments retained in the minutes. Eklund asked if there was a motion to approve the September 24th minutes. Tschetter moved and Boudreau seconded approval of the minutes. Motion approved by the Executive Committee.

Eklund asked if there were any revisions to the October 1, 2024, minutes. Hearing none he asked for approval of the minutes. Kopocis moved and Tschetter seconded approval of the minutes which were then approved by the Executive Committee.

4.0 Unfinished Business

4.1 Faculty and Staff Criminal Background Check Policy

Eklund reported that he was in a number of meetings to discuss the proposed changes to the Human Resources policy noting that the proposed revisions would require that a criminal background check be conducted on the final candidate for academic faculty as well as for staff. He pointed out that there are some departments that are not conducting these searches. He stated that he asked what reasons would prevent someone from being hired and noted that the proposed revisions provide a list including the nature and gravity of any criminal offense, the number and type of offense, the sentence or sanction for the offense, and the amount of time that has passed since the offense. He stated that another concern is the cost of conducting a criminal background check.

Shrader asked what would happen if a long-time employee had been doing very well, had excellent evaluations and seeks a promotion and then a background check is conducted which shows the person had a criminal offense. He questioned what the real reason is for these proposed changes. VanderPlas questioned what the context is for the proposed changes. She pointed out that some things may not even come up in a background check. Lott questioned if there is a statute of limitations for these offenses.

Dawes noted that the policy states a criminal conviction history but asked if a criminal offense needs to be proven in court. She pointed out that the real difficulty is after a background check has been conducted. She questioned whether it is the department that makes the decision to hire a person and whether the department consults with Human Resources to make the decision. She pointed out that this is where the danger is with this policy. She stated that she understands why there is the desire to make the policy flexible, but it's not certain that units are qualified to make the decision.

Kopocis pointed out that looking at the current policy it specifically states non-faculty. She questioned why the revisions are being proposed now and noted that they seem almost targeted to faculty members. She wondered whether a faculty member who might have been arrested for civil disobedience would be disqualified for a position. VanderPlas noted that background checks can show other charges as well, not just convictions and the use of the policy could be used to chill academic freedom.

Vakilzadian asked whether the policy would apply to graduate assistants as well. Tschetter wondered if faculty members receiving federal funding have to get a background check.

Shrader stated that he is not comfortable signing off on these proposed changes and stated that the Executive Committee needs to find out what the impetus is for these changes. Kopocis suggested that a financial analysis needs to be provided on what the costs are for conducting these background checks since the department is required to cover the cost. VanderPlas noted that conducting a background check for someone who is local would certainly be less expensive than conducting one for a person from a different state, or a different country.

The Executive Committee agreed to ask EVC Ankerson about the proposed changes when they meet with her on October 15.

4.2 Executive Committee Goals for 2024-2025

Eklund noted that several of the goals identified by the Executive Committee have already been implemented. He reported that he is working with the Faculty Senate Presidents at the other three campuses to get their support for the proposed revisions to the Family Leave Policy and will contact them on other cross-campus matters. He stated that the first President's newsletter for this year has already been sent to the faculty and that there will be future newsletters. He reported that a meeting with AVC Mark Pearce will be set up during the spring semester and the same will be done with Chief Ramzah of the UNL Police. He noted that he would also like to have a meeting with Staff Senate

President Jordan Gonzales, a meeting with Venn Jemkur, President of the Graduate Student Assembly, and a meeting with ASUN President Elizabeth Herbin.

Eklund stated that the Executive Committee will revisit the goals in the spring to see if the Committee has made progress on achieving the goals.

4.3 How to Implement the Faculty Budget Committee

Shrader stated that he is working to schedule a meeting with Professors Zuckerman and McElravy to discuss how the proposed Faculty Budget Committee could work within the existing UNL and Board of Regents Bylaws.

5.0 New Business

5.1 Agenda Items for EVC Ankerson

The Executive Committee identified the following agenda items for EVC Ankerson:

- The Chancellor reported that he gave a directive to your office to reimagine diversity and inclusion efforts for faculty. What is your office doing to meet this directive and how do you see your role in providing support for faculty?

- The Senate has heard concerns from faculty members regarding the micro-credential courses being offered through Ziplines and Coursera. What efforts are being made to see if these courses compete with existing UNL courses? There needs to be a clearer distinction between UNL and these micro-credentials, some faculty members feel that not having this distinction is tarnishing UNL's reputation. Who gives approval to these micro-credential courses?

- The Faculty Senate is being asked to endorse a policy requiring criminal background checks on faculty and staff candidates. What is the impetus for this policy being applied to academic faculty? The departments are expected to cover the cost of a criminal background check. What are the costs for these checks, particularly if the candidate is from out-of-state or from another country.

5.2 Agenda Items for VC Anderson

The Executive Committee identified the following agenda items for VC Anderson:

- How is the Office of Student Life meeting the directive from Chancellor Bennett to reimagine diversity and inclusion efforts for students.

- Can you provide an update on the changes that you have made to the Office of Student Life since you became Vice Chancellor.

- What plans are there to replace Pat Tetrealt, Director of the Gender and Sexuality Center?

The meeting was adjourned at 4:50 p.m. The next meeting of the Executive Committee will be on Tuesday, October 29, 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.