

## EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES

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

**Absent:** Leiter, Lott

**Date:** Tuesday, September 17, 2024

**Location:** Nebraska Union, Platte River Room North

**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 2:34 p.m.

### 2.0 Improving Collaboration Between APC and Senate Executive Committee (Professors Bloom, Clarke, Cressler, Niehaus, Vuran)

Eklund noted that the Faculty Senate narrowly approved a resolution to create a Faculty Budget Committee, but after carefully reviewing the charge to the Committee, the Senate Executive Committee had some second thoughts and wondered if it would be wiser to put our clout into an existing committee.

Clarke reported that she wrote to Eklund this summer to see if the Faculty Senate and the Academic Planning Committee could have better communication. She noted that the faculty's confusion over the budget reductions last year showed clear evidence that there was a need to have a robust communication channel between the two groups and she thought it would be helpful if some of the APC members met with the Faculty Senate Executive Committee periodically rather than the APC just giving an annual report to the Senate each year.

Clarke noted that the APC met last week, and she presented a PowerPoint presentation outlining the committee's responsibilities. She noted that the majority of the APC's work is to review proposals for either new programs, elimination or revisions of programs; monitoring academic program reviews; discuss goals for the campus through strategic planning; and serve as a forum for faculty, staff, and students. She suggested that the APC and the Senate could work together on strategic planning. She pointed out that the Committee only deals with budget reductions if the Chancellor invokes the procedures for reallocation and reduction and noted that the APC does not receive regular budget updates. She suggested that getting regular budget updates could perhaps be given to the Faculty Budget Committee.

Clarke reported that she has been on the APC for several years now and during that time when there have been budget reduction proposals there was never any discussion about how we evaluate different programs up until this past year when Cressler looked at the

different metrics for each of the units. She stated that it became clear that it really depends on what the department's priorities are and what they value. She questioned whether we should ask units what they value and feel that they should be evaluated on. Eklund asked how this information would be gathered.

Clarke asked for clarification on what the Faculty Budget Committee's responsibilities are. VanderPlas stated that the goal of the FBC is to bring more transparency to the budget process and to make sure the faculty are aware of how the budget comes together as well as the nuances of it before reductions are proposed. Niehaus stated that the idea was that the APC is limited in its influence over the budget planning and was only involved in the budget reduction process. The FBC would provide more faculty input into the budget planning process. Eklund pointed out that the deans are under no obligation to share their budget information and questioned how the APC or the FBC would be able to get access to that information.

Niehaus questioned whether our budgets were now following the zero-based budgeting model. Bloom stated that with a zero-based budget model units have to build their budget starting from zero. He pointed out that the campus was never told what the outcome was of the zero-based budget model exercise.

Eklund asked if there are things that the APC could bring to the Executive Committee to work on. Clarke pointed out that the centralized processes are awful. All the faculty members in attendance agreed that IT, procurement, and travel processes are terrible and horribly time-consuming for faculty which takes away from the responsibilities they were hired for which is teaching, research and extension. She noted that when changes are made to the processes there is never an explanation of why things must be done that way.

Vuran reported that last year the APC tried to tackle two main concerns. One was to expedite the approval process for program proposals. He noted that it could take over a year from the day a program leaves a department unit until final approval. He pointed out that the university and campus are slow to adapt to changes, but the APC pushed to expediate the process and there has been some improvement with how quickly the APC now processes the proposal without jeopardizing the integrity of the process.

Vuran stated that historically, with the budget reduction process the APC was involved at the last minute and much of the time was spent trying to understand how the administration came to the decisions it made. He noted that last year, following conversations with Chancellor Bennett, the APC was able to be involved earlier in the process and was able to look at the metrics. He pointed out that at one point the APC was asked to recommend where the budget reductions should be made, but the APC members were overwhelmingly against this finding it outside the APC's purview. He noted that there were a lot of challenges in terms of the APC's approach and the administration's approach to the budget reduction process. He stated that the APC had to ask for more details in some of the recommendations that were made by the administration. He stated that after all of the work and discussions, many of the APC's recommendations were not

acted on by the Chancellor, which clarifies that APC's role in the budget reduction process is ultimately advisory.

Shrader asked if it is written somewhere that the Chancellor must share information with the campus about the budget. Bloom stated that more transparency about what is going on with the budget would at least be a start.

Eklund noted that in recent years UNL has had to cut \$72 million from its budget and we are once again hearing that we may have further budget reductions. He asked what the process in the past has been with Chancellor Perlman and Chancellor Green. He stated that in discussions with President Gold the Senate Executive Committee has pointed out that the \$10 million from Athletics that UNL is no longer receiving is hurting us right now. He stated that additionally IANR is having to cover costs for NIC and the combination of these two things alone is negatively impacting UNL's budget.

Clarke stated that the campus usually hears from the Chancellor that there is going to be a budget reduction. The Chancellor needs to invoke the budget reduction procedures after which the Chancellor must distribute the framework to the APC. She noted that the framework includes the amount of the reduction needed and the timeline for the Committee to work on the budget reduction proposals. She pointed out that the APC needs to have time to thoroughly discuss the reductions and if programs are to be eliminated, public hearings need to be held after which the APC would make its recommendations to the Chancellor.

Clarke stated that the APC usually hears about the budget deficit that must be dealt with and then hears how the budget reduction percentages are distributed to the administration and then down to the colleges. She noted that the Deans often complain about how the distribution to the colleges was made and why they do not think it is fair. She pointed out that each of the college Deans then decides how they want to handle their college budget reductions noting that it varies as to how open the budget reduction process is in the colleges.

Vuran noted that the budget reductions the APC needs to consider are the reductions to the state-aided budget which is only about one-third of UNL's total budget. He pointed out that the APC has not seen any details on the other two-thirds of the budget and this year the APC did not initially get detailed information on the proposed reductions, only a sum for specific categories was provided. Clarke pointed out that the APC is supposed to have a voice over academic programs and things that impact academic programs but depending on the administration, the definition of "things that impact academic programs" varies. She noted that defining an academic program can be done in a very narrow sense, but you could also make the argument that almost everything we do on this campus impacts academic programs. Griffin reported that [Executive Memorandum #24](#) defines a program and noted that the characteristics are broad. Tschetter questioned how faculty governance was not involved in the decision to eliminate the Office of Diversity and Inclusion.

Niehaus asked what can be done to ensure that the APC gets the information it needs and has more of a voice in how the budget is determined. Vuran stated that the faculty need to continue communicating with the administration, and he is hoping that the APC will remain involved early in the process. Tschetter pointed out that the Faculty Senate President meets once a month with the Chancellor and suggested that the APC Chair should be able to meet with him once a month as well.

Shrader stated that President Gold has spoken about an eventual restructuring of the University, although noted that this will take some time to do. He asked how the faculty are going to demand that we are part of the restructuring conversation.

Cressler suggested that the Faculty Senate and the APC could create bi-direction communications noting that there are several members of the Faculty Senate who also serve on the APC, and they could provide reports and vice versa. Griffin noted that the faculty members of the APC and the Senate Executive Committee have met before to address issues and that this could be another means of bi-directional communication. Vuran cautioned that not all of the information provided to the APC from the administration can be shared.

Eklund thanked the guest faculty members for their input and stated that the Faculty Senate and the APC need to work more closely together, particularly if we get another budget reduction.

### **3.0 Announcements**

#### **3.1 Email Message to President Gold About IT Problems**

Vakilzadian reported that he sent President Gold an email stating the problems with IT support that he spoke to the President about at the September 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting. Eklund stated that at the Chancellor's Cabinet meeting yesterday the Interim CIO Haugerud noted that President Gold reached out to him to tell him about the problem with the lack of support for classroom IT problems.

### **4.0 Approval of September 10, 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 both VanderPlas and Baesu seconded the motion which was then approved by the Executive Committee.

### **5.0 Unfinished Business**

#### **5.1 Executive Committee Goals for 2024**

Eklund stated that one of the implementations plan for the Executive Committee goals is to generate a Faculty Senate President's newsletter. He asked for a meeting between himself, Shrader, and Griffin to work on writing the newsletter.

### **6.0 New Business**

#### **6.1 APC Special Election Ballot**

Griffin reported that one of the members of the APC retired this summer and needed to be replaced quickly and since the Senate does not meet again until October 1, the

Executive Committee needed to vote on the ballot which was developed by the Committee on Committees. Shrader moved for approval of the ballot. Motion seconded by Tschetter and approved by the Executive Committee. Griffin stated that she would send out the ballot to the faculty for voting tomorrow morning.

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

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

- How do you envision the reimagining of diversity, inclusion, and equity efforts on campus? The students received an informative email explaining what resources will be available to them on campus now that the ODI has been eliminated. Can this please be shared with the faculty since the message provides information that would be good for faculty to know. Faculty advisors now do not know who they should call if racist or anti-Semitic incidents occur on campus.
- What is the process when structural changes are made to the campus or the university?
- Budget update. How are your offices promoting increased transparency with the budget and can you articulate what the steps will be to ensure that there is transparency if we need to go through another round of budget reductions.
- Numerous faculty members have reported problems with getting timely IT support in the classrooms and in their offices to enable them to conduct their research. What can be done to address these problems?
- What is the university doing to market our accomplishments and how the university benefits the state?
- When will the State of the University address be held?
- Concerns have been raised over the Legacy Plaza renovation and design, particularly whether the statutes should be reinstalled. Has the University-wide Aesthetics Committee considered whether the statutes should be placed on campus again, or perhaps located in other areas?

## **6.3 Well Being Survey**

Eklund reported that he and Griffin met with a Senator to discuss the elimination of the Office of Diversity and Inclusion and during the discussion it was mentioned by the Senator that some of the Deans were interested in conducting a wellness survey of the faculty. He asked the Executive Committee if it was interested in partnering with this effort. The Committee expressed interest but said that it would want to have input into the questions that would be asked in the survey. VanderPlas stated that the Statistics Consulting Desk could help with analyzing the data and that she would be willing to help with developing the survey.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:04 p.m. The next meeting of the Executive Committee will be on Tuesday, September 24, 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.