

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES

Present: Baesu, Bearnese, Eklund, Kopocis, Leiter, Lott, Reimer, Shrader, Tschetter, Vakilzadian, VanderPlas

Absent: Boudreau, Bouma

Date: Tuesday, April 8, 2025

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.

1.0 Call (*Eklund*)

Eklund called the meeting to order exactly at 2:30 p.m.

2.0 Chancellor Bennett

2.1 Has there been an agreement between President Gold and Governor Pillen about the University's budget?

Chancellor Bennett noted that the University asked for a 3.5% budget increase and pointed out that the Appropriations Committee was meeting this afternoon. He stated that he is hearing that the recommendation from the Committee will be for a 1.25% increase but we do not know whether that is for both years of the biennium.

VC Davis reported that he received notice that the Appropriations Committee just came out of a meeting and stated that the Committee approved a 1.25% increase for the university's budget for the first year of the biennium, but the second-year budget was to remain flat with no increase. Chancellor Gold reminded the Executive Committee that the budget would still need to be debated on the floor of the State Legislature.

2.2 Is there any update on a forensic audit of the university's system budget?

Chancellor Bennett stated that he is not aware that a forensic audit has been completed. He pointed out that he suggested to President Gold that a system forensic audit was needed, and he also told Athletics Director Dannen that the same should be done for Athletics. He noted that President Gold has asked Interim VP Barnes to take a close look at the university's budget.

Chancellor Bennett pointed out that Athletics still owed UNL \$10 million, which was the amount that was provided to our budget for many years, but he does not know if we will get that full amount back. He noted that Interim VP Barnes has helped to transfer part of funds, and he is working with President Gold to try to secure the remaining amount.

2.3 Update on LB551 and LB552

Chancellor Bennett reported that neither legislative bill made it out of committee, and they have not been prioritized. He pointed out that it is likely that these bills will be brought up again in the next legislative session.

2.4 Is there a plan for faculty salary increases?

Chancellor Bennett stated that it is too early to tell what will be done with salary increases because we need to see where the final budget will land. He pointed out that this does not mean that we shouldn't do an increase, and he noted that promotion and tenure increases will still be honored as well as continuing to ensure that we retain good faculty members. Shrader pointed out that when it comes to inflation UNL salaries continue to fall further behind.

Chancellor Bennet reported that UNO and UNK, which have collective bargaining agreements, are working on faculty salary increases although he does not know how much of an increase is being considered. VC Davis stated that the increase for both campuses is projected to be roughly 4%. Reimer noted that she has heard that it is 3.5%. VC Davis stated that UNO and UNK salary increases are on the Board of Regents agenda for Friday's meeting.

Eklund stated that everyone knows there are some upticks to being unionized, but there are also some downsides as well such as program cuts. Reimer pointed out that UNO and UNK do not get additional funds to their campus budget to support their salary increases. Instead, they must figure out how to redistribute their campus funds to accommodate salary increases which could lead to academic program eliminations. Shrader stated that UNL does not have any protection of academic program eliminations either. VC Davis pointed out that UNK and UNO do not have the option of waiving salary increases during budget duress and instead must adjust their budget to accommodate the salary increase.

Chancellor Bennett reiterated that he is not saying that there won't be a salary increase, but what will happen will be determined on what happens with the Legislature, whether there will be a tuition increase, and how our enrollment is. He noted that international recruiting is critical for our community and impacts our tuition revenue. Eklund asked if we are seeing some signs of increased enrollment. Chancellor Bennett reported that enrollment numbers currently show an increase, but international recruiting is down. Vakilzadian asked if our international student enrollment will decline. Chancellor Bennett stated that it is too early to tell but it may remain flat or possibly decrease given the current political climate in the country.

Reimer stated that the number of students who are receiving free tuition through programs like Nebraska Promise are definitely impacting our budget. She asked how much of an impact these remissions are having on our budget. Chancellor Bennett noted that he does not have the figure right at hand but pointed out that the number of these students could be growing because of actions taken by the Legislature. He stated that the faculty can speak up to advocate for UNL.

Eklund asked if there are countries, we should invest in for recruiting students. Chancellor Bennett stated that UNL received approval from the Board of Regents which allows us to have agreements with agents to recruit students. He noted that international recruiting is currently difficult given the federal administration's recent actions with some international students. VC Davis reported that India and Vietnam are two countries we are prioritizing. He pointed out that things are so unpredictable right now with some visas being revoked that it makes international recruiting challenging. Reimer stated that the faculty in her department received a memo about visas being revoked and resources for international students.

Chancellor Bennett reported that Global Affairs has done a good job connecting with our students who have concerns about ICE. VanderPlas asked if we would provide legal assistance to an international student if they found themselves with orders to be deported. Chancellor Bennett stated that it is his understanding that they would have access to legal services.

Leiter suggested that students who have concerns or feel threatened would be appreciative if they received a statement from the administration letting them know that the university is going to support them and will direct them to the appropriate resources. Chancellor Bennett reported that the university has not been silent with our international students and others who may feel threatened. He pointed out that there was a recent town hall meeting coordinated by Global Affairs which he participated in and there were about 70 students in attendance. He stated that numerous emails about the resources that are available to students have been sent out and the Office of Student Life has done outreach as well. Shrader suggested that it would be helpful if the broader campus community was made aware of these efforts and the resources that are available to assist people. Leiter suggested putting an article in Nebraska Today about it. Lott pointed out that the fear is not only felt by some people within the university community but is also occurring throughout the state and there are many people who have become fearful of using any technology. Chancellor Bennett noted that we want to be aware and inclusive to support everyone that we can.

Tschetter noted that many students do not pay attention to the messages being sent out by President Gold and the Chancellor. She asked if there is a way for the faculty to send out some of these messages to the students. Chancellor Bennett stated that the campuses want to hear from the Chancellors but there has been some discussion about tailoring the messages for the different groups on campus because the issues for the students can differ from the faculty and from the staff.

3.0 Announcements

3.1 B1G TEN Faculty Leadership Statement

The Executive Committee discussed how to best distribute the B1G Ten Faculty Leadership Statement that was approved by the Faculty Senate on April 4 and the resolution to support the formation of a B1G Ten defense compact which was passed by the Senate on April 1.

3.2 ASUN Vote to Discontinue Adobe Creative Solution

Shrader pointed out that the Executive Committee needs to follow up on whether ASUN voted to discontinue the student license for Adobe Creative Solution. Baesu stated that the faculty needs the software program. Eklund stated that he would contact Interim CIO Haugerud to find out what is going on with our Adobe contract.

4.0 Approval of March 1, 2025 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 VanderPlas seconded, approving the minutes. Motion approved by the Executive Committee.

5.0 Unfinished Business

5.1 Faculty Senate Executive Committee Elections

Griffin reported that there will be three Executive Committee seats open and there are now two Senators who are willing to run for election to the Executive Committee. Tschetter stated that Professor Gorman is willing to serve on the Executive Committee as well as serving as Parliamentarian. Griffin noted that this only leaves the Secretary seat open and asked Executive Committee members to reach out to Senators who might be willing to serve as Secretary. She noted that the Secretary is only a one-year term.

6.0 New Business

6.1 Speaking with the Director of the Services for Students with Disabilities

Baesu asked that the Director of the SSD office be invited to an Executive Committee meeting to discuss special exam accommodation needs. Griffin stated that she would contact the Director of SSD.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:03 p.m. The next meeting of the Executive Committee will be on Tuesday, April 15, 2025, 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.