

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES

Present: Baesu, Bearnes, Boudreau, Bouma, Eklund, Kopocis, Leiter, Reimer, Shradler, Tschetter, Vakilzadian, VanderPlas

Absent: Lott

Date: Tuesday, February 18, 2025

Location: Zoom

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 2:33 p.m.

2.0 Announcements

2.1 IT migration and potential disruptions for faculty members including the need to reshare shared links from OneDrive and SharePoint. (Interim CIO Haugerud)

VanderPlas noted that some faculty members have received emails about the transition to system-wide authentication which will remove the links in your OneDrive and SharePoint folders and in Canvas. She asked why this was being done.

CIO Haugerud stated that the main reason is to ease the collaboration between the NU campuses because currently we have four different Microsoft 365 tenants which run all our office environments and the plan is to consolidate them into nebraska.edu, but each campus will maintain their local brand so email addresses would still identify their campus, i.e. unl.edu. He stated that with the change sharing between the campuses will be more natural and the disruptions we currently experience will go away. In addition, we will also be consolidating the active directory environments where we do the authentication into one large environment.

CIO Haugerud stated that some questions that have been raised about the migration is why we are doing it in the middle of the semester rather than in the summer. He acknowledged that there would be disruption, but the belief is that it would be more of a disruption in the fall when faculty come back to campus and find that the migration has occurred while they were gone. He reported that there are three large entities that are scheduled to be migrated this spring, the first one being Athletics which will be unique due to the department having an outside brand with huskers.com which makes the migration more difficult. He reported that Political Science's migration is a small pilot in CAS that is scheduled to occur in the next week or so. He noted that a pilot migration was done within COB in December and five or six rather large issues were identified with the migration, but which have since been cleared up. He stated that ITS's goal is that by the time most departments go through the migration process, the only

inconvenience will be to identify the links that need to be reshared. He pointed out that ITS has identified some tools that can be used within Canvas that can find those links that need to be reshared. He stated that one thing that won't happen until an entire college is migrated is that the sharing you have done with OneDrive and SharePoint by using the name of a colleague will continue to work, but anytime you've copied the link and pasted the link, it will then break.

Interim EVC Button suggested that CIO Haugerud should also inform the Executive Committee of all the support, both in person and online, that the IT team will provide when any unit goes through this migration. He noted that the IT team might want to address some of the concerns with the departments about the possible disruptions that people might experience. CIO Haugerud reported that everyone will receive 30-day notice when the migration is to occur. A second notice will be given 7 days in advance and then another notice will be given the night before the migration. He stated that an IT team will be in the building where the migration is occurring and there will be a Zoom room open starting the next morning to field calls from anyone that is experiencing difficulties.

VanderPlas asked if during the migration, would disruptions occur within department collaborations or would it impact UNL campus collaborations. CIO Haugerud reported that all the departments within a college will be scheduled together for the migration. He stated that you do not want to share new links until the migration is fully done in your college, which will likely be at the end of the week of the migration. He noted that sharing with other departments at UNL will break the link. VanderPlas asked about sharing with the other campuses and what will happen with those links. CIO Haugerud stated that UNK will be migrating in about a month, UNO's migration will take about two – three months and UNL's migration will take the longest.

VanderPlas asked whether most of the issues are with the active directory and not having the same active directory systems. CIO Haugerud stated that this is what is driving the migration. He noted that historically we have people who have aliases in the directory, but your official identifier has always been your first initial, last name and a number. He stated that if someone has an alias and shares a file, it doesn't work because you have to share it with what is their true active directory identifier. He stated that going forward our real address will be our NU ID number, and for us, @unl.edu. He pointed out that this is only for services that are tied to single sign-on or active directory. He stated that if you have other departmental services that you use accounts on, those won't be impacted unless they are tied to the university's single sign on.

Eklund asked if OneDrive will still be available. CIO Haugerud stated that all of the same services that we have now will still be available, it's the collaboration and sharing that we've done historically with those services that is going to break and will need to be redone.

Baesu asked if IT knows the exact dates of when colleges will be migrated. CIO Haugerud stated that he is hoping that this information will be known before we get too

far into March. He stated that the goal is to have a master list of when the migrations will occur in the next 30 days or so. He pointed out that this would allow departments to notify IT if the time they are scheduled for the migration will not work for the department, but he noted that IT may not be able to shift the migration to the optimal time because there is so many to do at UNL.

CIO Haugerud stated that he would be happy to come and speak with the Executive Committee again to provide updates on the migration.

2.2 Sixteen students who are part of the Project Raices, a federal seed grant, lost their scholarships last Monday due to the federal regulations. Is this occurring in other departments on campus? Where is the communication and support from the campus leadership about the damage this is causing?

Interim EVC Button reported that the PIs on the federal seed grant met with the 16 students last week. He noted that the full cost of attending the university for these students is covered through this semester and a host of campus leaders are reviewing our options to support these students and in-service teachers. He noted that we do not see another project where student scholarships have been impacted by the federal regulations, pointing out that this was a unique grant. He stated that it is truly unfortunate and very challenging for the students and their families. He stated that students have been advised to work with their resources offices, and they are being counseled individually.

Interim EVC Button pointed out that he believes it is important to advocate for these kinds of grants. He pointed out that there is a high demand for teachers across the state, and our commitment as a land grant university is to provide continuing support for currently employed teachers and to educate and train future teachers. He stated that we will continue to do everything we can to address the needs of the state.

Interim EVC Button stated that if we should hear of other affected programs, we will work quickly and diligently to try to mitigate the impacts and we will work with their departments, Deans, and business centers to try to find alternative sources of funding.

Interim EVC Button reported that he along with Interim VC Nelson, and the Chancellor hosted a gathering of NIH scholars where the emphasis was to get the message out about the benefits to the state of NIH grants and the critical nature of the F&A funds to help support the grants along with the facilities and staff needed to conduct the research.

Eklund asked Interim EVC Button to clarify what F&A is. Interim EVC Button stated that it is facilities and administrative costs associated with conducting research. He noted that the actual cost of conducting research is typically 80%, but we negotiate this rate down to usually about 55.5% for federal agencies. He noted that the administrative costs cover the administration required by the federal government to ensure that we are in compliance with federal regulations. He noted that there is a federal case about the cap on NIH F&A because the impact this reduction would have on universities across the country would be significant. He stated that for us it would be about a \$27 million reduction for the NU system of which UNL would have a \$6 million reduction. He

pointed out that educating people about the importance of the research work that we are doing is something we all need to do. He stated that Chris Dunker of the Lincoln Journal Star wrote a good article about what F&A does. He stated that there is also detailed information about [F&A on the Office of Research and Innovation website](#). He pointed out that there has been a 75-year partnership with the government and the university to help define cutting edge research.

2.3 Faculty Background Checks Update (AVC Marks)

AVC Marks reported that the Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance provided some information on the Faculty Background Check policy and the EVC's Office is now establishing how to move forward with implementing the process. Interim EVC Button noted the importance for us to be doing faculty background checks as part of our standard hiring practice and pointed out that it has been a policy for staff employees for some time.

Interim EVC Button noted that given the sensitivity of this kind of process, the thinking is that it would be wise to keep the number of people involved in the background checks to a small number. He stated that the people involved would be the hiring authority, the relevant Associate Vice Chancellor, and possibly a representative from Human Resources. He noted that this is a slight change from what the Senate Executive Committee has seen with the draft policy, and there will probably be some further refinements to the guidance document. He stated that at some point, he anticipates this being shared with the full Faculty Senate so everyone is aware of what we are doing and hopefully after that we can begin putting the policy into practice.

Eklund wanted to be clear that this is not a policy that the Faculty Senate or the Executive Committee can vote on, correct? Interim EVC Button stated that it is correct, this is an institutional practice that we need to have and a management personnel decision that the university needs to take. He stated that the administration appreciated the feedback the Executive Committee has already provided and the EVC's office will continue to look for the Faculty Senate's involvement as the policy is finalized.

VanderPlas noted that the proposal to have a limited number of people involved in the process appears to have removed any faculty consultation. Interim EVC Button pointed out that either the chair of the department or the dean would be involved. He stated that we would not be widening the group out to a larger audience such as members of the Faculty Senate. He noted that the smaller group was recommended by the IEC Office who have been reviewing these kinds of practices across other universities. He stated that we could have more discussions about this at some point.

Eklund stated that he was appreciative of the correspondence he received from AVC Marks and his response to additional questions that the Executive Committee has raised. To be clear, he pointed out that faculty already employed at the university would not be having a background check conducted on them unless they were applying for an administrative position. AVC Marks stated that it is correct, the background check would just be for new hires and if someone wants to take on administrative responsibilities.

Eklund asked what would appear in a background check that would make the hiring authorities reconsider whether to offer the position to someone. Interim EVC Button stated that the background checks are considered on a case-by-case basis. He stated that this is one of the reasons why just a small number of people will be involved in reviewing the background check. He pointed out that everyone here recognizes the legal exposure not conducting faculty background checks could have for the university.

Eklund noted that doing a background check on someone who is from Nebraska will not take long compared to someone who is from another country and has lived in several different places. He asked what the cost would be for these background checks. AVC Marks stated that he believes the cost is less than \$100, especially for the simple checks. He pointed out that conducting a background check is a lot less expensive than taking a search committee out to dinner. He reported that in conversations with Human Resources, he believes the number of times that a job was not given to a staff applicant were extremely rare.

Shrader asked what would happen if a long-term faculty employee decided to apply for an administrative position and a background check is conducted which raises a red flag. He asked if it would change their current standing. Interim EVC Button stated that it would not change their current standing, but it would change the way we think about an elevation to a position for this person and whether you would want that person in a leadership role or taking on additional responsibilities. Shrader asked what if the person was applying from an associate professor to full professor. AVC Marks stated that applying for a promotion in rank would not trigger a background check, unless that person was applying to become a chair or dean.

VanderPlas asked how it would be handled if a faculty member was arrested for protesting and this shows up in their background check. Interim EVC Button stated that legalistically it would not rise to a level of concern. He noted that things that are misdemeanors and infractions are not a concern. It is more things like violent crimes or fraud that would raise the level of concern. AVC Marks stated that if whatever would turn up in a background check that intersects at all with the job responsibilities such as being a chair or a dean, things like embezzlement, sexual molestation, more serious kinds of crimes would be of concern. VanderPlas asked what would happen if the person was arrested for public intoxication, or multiple times of getting into a bar fight. AVC Marks stated that this is a good question and VanderPlas has put her finger on a gray area. He stated that in cases like this an individual review would need to be made. Interim EVC Button stated that while we would rely on the discretion and good judgement of the people reviewing the background check, we may also need to consult with General Counsel and the IEC office in these situations.

Eklund reported that the Executive Committee will have a short discussion about the background check at the next meeting to see if there are any additional concerns.

2.4 Summer Session Classes – are there plans to continue summer session classes and can instructors on a 9-month contract still teach and get paid during the summer session?

Interim EVC Button reported that there are no changes to our campus-level guidance on Summer Sessions. He stated that we are still offering classes and guidance procedures about Summer Sessions were distributed in November.

2.5 Are we still in a hiring freeze? There are reports that people are still being hired.

Interim EVC Button stated that we are in a hiring freeze in that different levels of approval are required for any hiring. He stressed that we are still hiring for open faculty, staff, and student worker positions after we have completed all levels of review.

3.0 Approval of February 11, 2025 Minutes

Griffin reported that she has not received revisions yet from President Gold. The Executive Committee postponed approval of the minutes until President Gold has had a chance to respond.

4.0 Announcements

No announcements were made.

5.0 New Business

5.1 Proposal to Implement a Regulation Process for Inappropriate Student Comments in Instructor Course Evaluations (Professor Jennifer Ryan and Professor Sonmez)

Sonmez reported that based on his experience last spring, he created a proposal to have some kind of regulation process for removing inappropriate student comments on a course evaluation form. He stated that the inappropriate comments would include hate speech, profanities, threats, and false allegations. He pointed out that faculty are concerned about these kinds of comments and UNL has no regulation for overseeing student comments. He noted that teaching evaluations are not always private information for the faculty members and can be shared with others at administrative levels. He stated that when applying for a position elsewhere, the applicant may even have to provide a copy of their teaching evaluations. He reported that he has discussed the issue with his department chair and with AVC Marks who did not support the idea.

Sonmez stated that the extreme negative comments create psychological stress on the faculty member, yet there are no consequences for students who make these kinds of comments. He asked if the Senate could provide some recommendations on how to protect faculty members from these vicious comments.

Eklund asked if the Business College sends out teaching and service portfolios to outside professors who are reviewing a promotion and tenure file. Ryan stated that teaching evaluations can be used in a variety of ways, depending on the department and the college. She pointed out that these teaching evaluations are used for annual evaluations, promotion and tenure files, and some outside universities could ask to see the files if

someone is applying for a faculty position at their university. She noted that there is the issue of students expressing their anger through the course evaluations but stated that faculty have no rights when accusations are demonstrably false, racist, or sexist. She stated that students shouldn't have the right to comment on things other than the teaching of the course, instead of commenting on an instructor's appearance. Erkut agreed and stated that students can dislike your teaching, but they shouldn't have the right to make racial or sexist comments about the instructor. Ryan reported that the question is whether there should be a process that allows the removal of these kinds of comments from a course evaluation.

Baesu pointed out that it can be difficult to get students to fill out the evaluations and faculty should be given the option of being allowed to do something, such as giving extra credit, if a student completes the evaluation. VanderPlas asked if the comments would possibly stop if the reviews were no longer anonymous. Ryan stated that she thinks removing anonymity would be extreme and there might be other solutions.

Vakilzadian stated that if threats are being made this is a Police matter that should be brought to their attention.

Erkut asked whether some kind of sanction could be put on a student for making false accusations, threats, or writing hate speech. VanderPlas suggested putting a hold of a student's transcript.

Shrader stated that a group is needed to determine whether comments would be considered free speech versus hate speech. He questioned who would decide what the threshold would be for getting language expunged from an evaluation.

Tschetter pointed out that the teaching evaluations allow a student to express their concern. Ryan agreed that the students need to have the opportunity to express their concern, but she and Sonmez are talking about comments that go well beyond criticism of the teaching and the course. Tschetter pointed out that student comments can sometimes establish a pattern of behavior by an instructor. Ryan noted that an instructor should have the mechanism to challenge a comment that is accusatory or outside the teaching of a course. Eklund stated that if there are comments that are blatantly out of line, a faculty member should be able to speak to their department chair about it. He noted that faculty members need some protection.

Shrader questioned what the Faculty Senate could do since AVC Mark, and the IEC office did not want to deal with it. Kopocis suggested that the Student Code of Conduct should be referenced in these circumstances.

Eklund stated that the Executive Committee will discuss the issue further and will do some checking to see if any of our Big Ten peers have a similar policy to the one that is being proposed.

5.2 Agenda Items for Chancellor Bennett

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

- UNL's Structural Budget Deficit – when is the Chancellor going to Invoke the Procedures for Significant Budget Reallocation and Reductions to the APC?
- Possible ICE raids on campus and the university's stance on such incidents. Have other campuses been impacted by these raids.
- Are there contingency plans if we have NIH/NSF budget reductions?
- Outside entities are trying to look at our course syllabus and materials. What kind of support will faculty get from administration if outside forces are digging around our course materials and trying to influence what professors do in their classes. What is the university doing to protect faculty?
- Do we need to lock down our buildings to ensure people's safety? Should buildings be locked down so only those with key cards can gain entrance?

The meeting was adjourned at 5:01 p.m. The next meeting of the Executive Committee will be on Tuesday, February 25, 2025, 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.