

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES

Present: Bearnes, Boudreau, Eklund, Kopocis, Leiter, Lott, Reimer, Shrader, Tschetter, VanderPlas

Absent: Baesu, Bouma, Vakilzadian

Date: Tuesday, February 25, 2025

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 2:31 p.m.

2.0 Announcements

2.1 Report on Board of Regents Special Meeting

Eklund reported that he and Shrader attended the Board of Regents Special Meeting when [proposed revisions to the Board of Regents Bylaws and Policies](#) will be presented. He noted that the proposed revisions are to implement necessary updates and clarify language in compliance with Executive Orders and additional Department of Education mandates. He stated that the Board would not be able to vote on the proposed revisions until the next Board meeting.

Shrader pointed out that the Executive Orders are pending because they are still being considered in the courts as to whether they are legal, and he questioned why the university is pre-empting the courts' decisions. Leiter noted that the mandates are in violation of Civil Rights Laws. Eklund reported that President Gold met with the four Faculty Senate Presidents and stated that all the 18 Big Ten universities were making these kinds of changes.

Eklund noted that he would like to send a letter out to the faculty to provide them with the facts about what is occurring with the Board of Regents Bylaws and Policies. The Executive Committee agreed that Eklund should send out information to the faculty.

3.0 Approval of February 18, 2025 Minutes

Eklund asked if there were any further revisions to the minutes. Hearing none he asked for a motion to approve the minutes. Shrader moved and Leiter seconded, approving the minutes. Motion approved by the Executive Committee. There were no abstentions.

4.0 Unfinished Business

4.1 Faculty Background Checks

Griffin reported that she asked AVC Marks if there was an updated draft of the faculty background check policy that could be shared with the Executive Committee, but she was told that an updated draft of the policy is not available yet.

Eklund pointed out that he has questions about the policy that have not been fully answered yet. He stated that the first is about the timeline of the policy and the second is what the costs would be. Another question is what Human Resources would consider a trigger to conduct a closer investigation of an applicant. VanderPlas stated that she has concerns that a faculty member is not involved in the process.

Bearnes reported that Extension has been conducting background checks for all volunteers, particularly 4-H volunteers and the cost is \$17. She noted that the background check is good for five years and pointed out that there have been a few problems identified through the check.

4.2 Proposal for Implementing a Regulation Process for Inappropriate Student Comments on Instructor Course Evaluations

The Executive Committee considered the discussion that occurred last week about a proposal for having a process that allows an instructor, or their chair, to remove inappropriate course evaluations. Tschetter stated that she understands the concern about hate speech or threatening speech but pointed out that students have the one opportunity through the course evaluations to provide input on an instructor's teaching. She noted that it would be a dangerous path to go down where you are trying to determine what would be considered acceptable comments and what would not. She pointed out that all instructors have received some negative comments in their career at some point and some comments that are not even related to the teaching of the course, such as comments on their appearance.

Leiter stated that instructors often receive positive and negative comments for the same class. He stated that you throw out the bottom and top comments and read the ones in the middle to get an idea about your teaching and he pointed out that we really have no legal strength with modifying course evaluations. Reimer suggested that if a faculty member feels that a student is writing comments that are threatening their personal and physical well-being, the faculty member should be encouraged to contact the appropriate law enforcement. Tschetter stated that if a faculty member is concerned with the comments they are receiving, they should also contact their chair, dean, and the appropriate people in their department to discuss their concerns. Tschetter made a motion to not move forward with the proposed resolution. Motion was seconded by Boudreau and approved by the Executive Committee.

5.0 New Business

5.1 March 4 Faculty Senate Meeting

Griffin reported that Interim EVC Button would be speaking at the March 4th Faculty Senate meeting. The Committee then identified the following topics they would like the Interim EVC to address.

- Faculty Background Check Policy
- What is the process and timeline for the budget reduction process?
- What recommendations would you have for people who put their syllabus online given that people are looking to see who teaches diversity, equity, and/or inclusion subjects.
- With the restructuring of the university, is there any thought for having shared administration across the campuses?
- Dear Colleague Letter from the Department of Education

5.2 Shared Statement from the Big Ten Academic Alliance (BTAA)

Eklund reported that the BTAA is calling for a shared statement from all 18 of the universities in rebuttal to the Department of Education and the Dear Colleague letter. The Executive Committee enthusiastically agreed to be a part of the statement. Eklund noted that the four NU campuses are also wanting to create a statement.

5.3 Meeting with Chancellor Bennett

Eklund announced that he and Shrader will be meeting with the Chancellor on February 27th.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:44 p.m. The next meeting of the Executive Committee will be on Tuesday, March 4, 2025, immediately following the Faculty Senate meeting. The meeting will be held in the Nebraska Union, Platte River Room. The minutes are respectfully submitted by Karen Griffin, Coordinator and Signe Boudreau, Secretary.