

UNL FACULTY SENATE MEETING MINUTES
February 4, 2025
East Campus Union, Great Plains Room A
Presidents Pete Eklund, John Shrader, and Kelli Kopocis, Presiding

1.0 Call to Order

President Eklund called the meeting to order at 2:35 p.m.

2.0 Announcements

2.1 Faculty Senate Executive Committee Elections

President Eklund announced that elections for the President-Elect, Secretary, and two Executive Committee members will be occurring at the May 2nd Senate meeting. He asked the Senators to consider running for election and if anyone is interested to contact either himself or Coordinator Griffin.

2.2 Meeting with President Gold

President Eklund reported that the Executive Committee will be meeting with President Gold next week. He stated that agenda items for discussion with the President will be 1) restructuring of the university and how faculty can be a part of the process, 2) update on the budget, 3) what are the plans to fill the interim administrative positions in Varner Hall, 4) what the engagement strategy is of the university the legislature, and 5) is there any anticipation about capping the amount of money that can be gained from NIL and payment to student athletes. He asked that anyone with additional questions for President Gold to send him an email message at pae@unl.edu.

2.3 LB551- Legislative Bill on Tenure

President Eklund stated that he reached out to Jessica Herrmann, Director of Government Relations, and asked what the latest status was of LB551. He noted that Director Herrmann responded that the bill had not been scheduled for a hearing yet and she knew that the NU System office is planning on opposing the bill and President Gold will be testifying against the bill. There will also be a lineup of people to accompany President Gold to testify on behalf of the entire NU system.

President Eklund noted that the bill has come up previously, but it did not make it out of committee. However, he noted that there are thirteen new members in the legislature and perhaps Senator Lippincott, who presented the bill, thought he might have a better chance of getting the bill passed.

A Senator asked what the status is of LB552. President Eklund stated that he has not received any updates on this bill.

2.4 Voluntary Separation Incentive Program

Professor Kolbe, Johnn Carson School of Theatre and Film, asked if the VSIP was going to be offered this year. President Eklund reported that the Executive Committee met with VC Zeleny last week who informed the Committee that the VSIP would not be offered this year.

3.0 Interim VC Nelson and Associate VC Zavala, Office of Research and Innovation (ORI)

3.1 Federal Regulations

Interim VC Nelson reported that she was really pleased to speak to the Faculty Senate this afternoon and noted that there has been a lot happening on the federal landscape with respect to research and it is important that this group is informed about what is being done in the ORI to provide the latest information. She stated that when the memo dropped from the Office of Management and Budget last Monday, she cancelled a trip to DC that was scheduled so she could stay and work with the ORI team in order to learn as much as we could about the implications of the federal order. She reported that the team in ORI have been keeping in touch with our partners around the country, both in the Big Ten and the Association for Public Land Grant Universities who

are all in the federally research funded community. She noted that the ORI communications team quickly created the [Federal Research Updates 2025 webpage](#) on the ORI website that is being continually updated with the latest information.

AVC Zavala reported that the timeline of events, since January 20, 2025, when the Executive Orders were issued to today is on the website. She noted that on January 23rd we received communications from the Department of Labor, the Department of Energy, and NASA calling for us to cease activity on those sponsored projects related to DEI activities. On January 24th the Department of Education suspended the requirement for including promoting inclusive and equitable research or peer plans on any proposals that would be submitted to the agency.

AVC Zavala stated that our first official stop notice on a NIH sponsored research project was received on January 27 and we first started hearing about study sections being cancelled. She noted that the OMB issued Memo 2513 ordering a temporary pause of agency grant, loan, and other financial assistance programs. She pointed out that this included shutting down the payment systems which reimburse universities for existing sponsored projects. On January 28th the ORI was able to confirm that Pell grants and federally sponsored direct student loans would not be impacted by Memo 2513. She reported that both President Gold and Interim VC Nelson issued memos to the campus to provide the latest information.

AVC Zavala stated that on January 29th we received communication from NSF and the Center for Disease Control to cease activity related to DEI activities. She noted that that same day ORI communicated directly with PIs with sponsored projects with NSF and the CDC to share the information they received from the federal agencies and to pass on additional information on how to move forward. She pointed out that on January 29th a federal judge temporarily blocked the OMB Memo 2513 and later that day the Office of the OMB officially rescinded Memo 2513. On January 31st, we received notification from the Department of Energy to suspend all promoting inclusion and equitable research or peer plan activities associated with ongoing and active Department of Energy sponsored grants. She stated that on January 31st a federal court issued a temporary restraining order directing Federal grant making agencies to not pause, freeze, impede, block, cancel, or terminate awards and to provide federal assistance to the states and to not impede the state's access to such awards and obligations. She reported that on February 2nd and 3rd we saw the federal payment systems open back up which allowed us to go in and withdraw funds for expenditures that have already been incurred on active federal grants.

AVC Zavala stated that we are currently awaiting further information about the temporary restraining order and General Counsel is expecting there will likely be an injunction filed in the near future, and we might have more information available at that time. She stated that we will continue to communicate with the PIs whenever new information is available.

Professor Leiter, College of Law, asked what the program was that received the stop order. Interim VC Nelson stated that it was a USAID grant of \$20 million.

Professor Gel, Supply Chain Management and Analytics, pointed out that for new NSF grant proposals the guidelines require a statement about the broader impact of the research project. She asked whether this should still be included when submitting an application for a grant. Interim VC Nelson stated that some agencies have been changing the RFP, but there has not been much change with respect to the guidelines and deadlines. She recommended that faculty members pay careful attention to any potential changes in the RFP and what is required. AVC Zavala noted that the Department of Energy made specific comments about the peer plan inclusion, so those should no longer be submitted to this agency. She stated that with any pending proposals the peer plan will be ignored. She pointed out that the ORI is not being made aware of any changes to the grant applications, so she urged researchers to review the applications carefully. She stated that if anyone has questions, they should contact the federal agency. She pointed out that they are seeing the agencies responding to inquiries but asked that they keep ORI in the loop of information received.

President Eklund thanked Interim VC Nelson and AVC Zavala for all of the work they are doing to help the university during these challenging times.

4.0 Approval of December 3, 2024 Minutes

President Eklund asked if there were any revisions to the December 3, 2024, minutes. Hearing none, he asked for a motion to approve. Professor Vakilzadian, Electrical Computing and Engineering, moved for approval. Motion seconded by Professor Bearnes, Nebraska Extension, and approved by the Faculty Senate.

5.0 Committees

5.1 Academic Planning Committee (Professor Clarke)

Professor Clarke, Chair of the APC, reported that the committee is a shared governance committee with members from the faculty, administration, and students and includes staff members during budget reduction procedures. She stated that the committee's responsibility is to formulate and recommend the campus goals in the areas of education, research, and service, although the committee mostly focuses on academics. She stated that a complete list of the committee members can be found on the APC website at <https://apc.unl.edu/members/>.

Professor Clarke noted that the APC oversees academic program reviews, and a member of the committee serves as a representative on the review to make sure the procedures for the APR are followed correctly. Once the APR is completed and the reports have been filed, the APC representative provides a summary report to the APC on the APR. She noted that there are usually about six APRs conducted during an academic year.

Professor Clarke reported that last year the APC discussed the budget reduction process and what went well and what didn't and whether the committee needs to reconsider the process for dealing with budget reductions. She pointed out that currently the Chancellor must Invoke the Procedures for Significant Budget Reallocations and Reductions and the APC needs to follow these Procedures when reviewing proposed budget reductions. She stated that the APC has looked into having earlier participation in the budget reduction process and hopes to have more work done in advance based on data-based decisions. She noted that the APC meets with the Chancellor at times to discuss issues such as the effort to get UNL readmitted into the AAU, and strategic planning since the N2025 plan expires this year.

Professor Clarke noted that the APC discussed the Business Simplified Initiative which is looking into how business practices could be more efficient. She reported that all program proposals come to the APC for review, and once approved they are forwarded to the Chancellor who then submits it to the President's office. She pointed out that the APC reviewed and approved ten academic programs last year but also approved the deletion of ten academic programs.

Professor Clarke reported that the APC has had discussions and has started the process about what is going to be the procedure for developing our next strategic plan. She stated that we want UNL's strategic plan to be in alignment with President Gold's strategic plan.

Professor Vakilzadian, asked what process the APC follows for budget reductions. Clarke stated that the committee follows the [Procedures to be Invoked for Significant Budget Reallocation and Reductions](#) which were approved by the APC and the Faculty Senate. She stated that the Chancellor's office brings a set of proposed budget reduction proposals along with the justification for the reductions to the APC and the Chancellor informs the committee of the budget situation. She pointed out that the APC is an advisory committee and makes recommendations on the proposed reductions. She reported that if an academic program is identified to be closed due to budget reductions, there needs to be a public hearing. She stated that once the APC considers the proposed reductions, the committee makes recommendations to the Chancellor and then it is his decision whether to accept the committee's recommendations or not. She pointed out that

Chancellor Bennett asked the APC chair for suggestions of what should be cut last year, but she pointed out that the APC is not in the position to make those decisions. She reported that when the APC evaluates the proposed reductions, it looks at criteria such as whether a program has a history of low enrollment and the importance of the program to the state.

Professor Vakilzadian asked how the APC reconciles the differences with the budget. Professor Clarke stated that there is a certain target number that must be eliminated from the budget and the APC advises whether some of the reductions should be pursued or whether some of the proposed reductions should not be considered and recommend that the Chancellor should look elsewhere to make reductions. She pointed out that this is what has occurred in the past. She noted that it is an iterative process. Professor Tschetter stated that the Chancellor can disagree with the APC like he did last academic year.

President Eklund noted that since 2020 UNL has had to reduce its budget by approximately \$70 million. He stated that in previous reductions the deans were asked to consider a scenario of a 3%, 6%, or other number in reduction for their budget, although he is not aware if that has occurred for the structural deficit we are facing. He asked if this is what the APC has experienced. Professor Clarke stated that the APC gets the same information as the rest of the campus, and currently the committee has not received any additional guidance. She stated that what has been communicated to the committee is that the upper administration and President Gold are in negotiations with the Governor and the State about the budget. She reported that at some point the APC receives the final number for the budget reductions needed, but it is usually late, and the APC has a limited time to deal with the reductions which is why the committee is trying to be more proactive.

Secretary Boudreau read from the chat session the question of how low state funding needs to be for us to no longer be considered a state university. Professor Clarke stated that there is no easy quick answer to that question and there would need to be a lot of discussions and negotiations before anything like that could happen.

5.2 Teaching Council (Professor Cress)

Professor Cress, Chair of the Teaching Council, reported that the Council is in charge of teaching excellence and accessibility for students. She stated that the Council looked at the awards for teaching this past year and talked about the accessibility of materials for STAR. The Council also approved the resurgence of the Century Club, which features faculty members who teach classes of 100 or more students. She noted that the Council would like to get people to come and speak about how to get students engaged. She stated that the Council worked with the Center for Transformative Teaching (CTT) to implement teaching related activities. She noted that the Council reviewed and recommended candidates for the following teaching awards: OTICA, UDTA.

Professor Cress stated that she wants to share some models of teaching and mentoring in her department and to invite others to participate, particularly junior faculty members. She stated that anyone interested should get in touch with the CTT.

6.0 Unfinished Business

6.1 Proposed Revisions to Diversity and Inclusion Committee

President Eklund noted that the proposal to make revisions to the membership of the Diversity and Inclusion Committee was presented at the December meeting and will be voted on today.

Professor PeeksMease, Sociology, noted that previously the D&I Committee suggested removing the ASUN and GSA representatives to the Committee due to lack of attendance, but after speaking with the Presidents of both groups that revision has been removed, and the two groups will still be able to have representatives on the Committee.

President Eklund asked for a motion to approve the proposed revisions. Professor PeeksMease

moved and Professor Tschetter, History, seconded the motion. The Faculty Senate approved the motion with no abstentions.

6.2 Proposed Revisions to the Syllabus Policy

President Eklund reported that the motion was presented at the December meeting and will be voted on today. He noted that the revisions are just to clarify some language within the policy. He stated that the motion does not need a second since it is coming from a Faculty Senate Committee. President Eklund then asked for a vote. The Faculty Senate approved the motion.

Professor Gorman noted a point of order, he stated that the question should be asked if there were any abstentions or disapprovals. President Eklund then asked if there were any abstentions or disapproval. None were made.

7.0 New Business

7.1 Proposed Revisions to Parking Advisory Committee Membership

Professor Leiter, Chair of the Parking Advisory Committee, stated that the proposed revisions are practical changes. He noted that the Committee has a hard time reaching a quorum because currently the membership calls for three faculty members and three staff members, but the Committee has not had three faculty or staff members for a long time, so the proposed revision is to reduce the numbers from three to two. Also, UAAD no longer exists as we now have the Staff Senate which is reflected in the proposed changes. He noted that the Chancellor's office no longer wants to have a designee on the committee so that is also reflected in the proposed changes.

President Eklund stated that the Faculty Senate would vote on the proposed changes at the March meeting.

7.2 Motion to Approve the Ballot for Elections to the Academic Planning Committee, Academic Rights & Responsibilities Committee, and the Academic Rights & Responsibilities Panel

President Eklund noted that the Committee on Committees is forwarding the ballot for elections to the Academic Planning Committee, Academic Rights and Responsibilities Committee, and the Academic Rights and Responsibilities Panel. He noted that the Faculty Senate will need to approve the ballot at the March meeting and then the ballot will be sent out to UNL faculty. Coordinator Griffin pointed out that there are open spots on the ballot; one for Extension Educators, one for a non-tenure track faculty member, and eight tenured faculty members. She stated that the Panel is a very important part of shared governance and asked Senators to recommend faculty to run for election.

Professor Peterson, Agricultural Economics, and member of the Academic Rights and Responsibilities Committee, stated that there are proposed changes to the Panel syllabus which will require only five faculty members to serve on a special hearing committee and pointed out that the ARRC tries not to have Panel members serve on several special hearing committees. He noted that it is feasible that a Panel member can serve the whole three years and never be appointed to a special hearing committee. He stated that the Panel is extremely important dealing with foundational and fundamental things in a faculty member's life and serving on the Panel is one of the more important things that we can do.

7.3 Open Mic

Professor Rumann, Educational Administration, asked if there has been any further discussion on what the university will do if ICE comes to campus. President Eklund reported that the Executive Committee has not been able to meet with the Chancellor again to follow up on this discussion.

Professor Rumann noted that the faculty and staff keep getting messages of how they are not to speak to the Legislature about LB 551 and LB 552 and said there needs to be greater clarity of when a university employee can speak to a legislator. President Eklund pointed out that University

employees have the right to speak on behalf of yourself as a private citizen, not on behalf of the university.

Professor Harris, Biochemistry, reported that he had two faculty members from the English department come to his office to speak about forming a faculty union and they were collecting signatures for a petition. He asked what having a faculty union would look like under our current structure. President Eklund noted that the Executive Committee met with Professor Niehaus last summer to discuss the pros and cons of having a faculty union. He pointed out that establishing a union takes considerable time and it would have to be negotiated in the contract as to how it would fit into our structure at UNL. He noted that UNO and UNK are both unionized.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:49 p.m. The next meeting of the Faculty Senate will be held on Tuesday, March 4, 2025, at 2:30 p.m. in the Nebraska Union, Platte River Room and by Zoom. The minutes are respectfully submitted by Karen Griffin, Coordinator, and Signe Boudreau, Secretary.