

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES

Present: Bearnes, Gorman, Leiter, Lewis, Pierobon, Reimer, Shrader, Tschetter, Vakilzadian, VanderPlas

Absent: Baesu, Eklund, Gruverman

Date: Tuesday, July 8, 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*)

Shrader called the meeting to order at 2:32 p.m.

2.0 AVC Hope – Graduate Studies

AVC Hope reported that all the Fulbright Scholars coming to UNL did get funding. She discussed the challenges faced by graduate students due to changes in federal funding and visa issues, highlighting the efforts made to ensure all students received funding. She described a collaborative approach involving various campus stakeholders such as ISSO and Graduate Studies, to address funding gaps and support students in need. She also mentioned the impact of the new student loan bill on graduate students and the need to collect data on affected students. Pierobon shared a specific case of a graduate student who experienced significant stress due to a background check, prompting AVC Hope to discuss the support systems in place, including graduate student dialogues and resources provided by Student Advocacy and Support and ISSO. She pointed out that there were less than 10 students who were not performing well and therefore did not receive funding to continue their assistantship. She stated that if any faculty member learned of a graduate student having their assistantship removed and no additional funding was found, they should contact her. She stated that, as far as she knows from conversations with the Office of Research and Innovation, colleges were able to come up with funding for those students who were originally being paid from a federal grant which has been suspended.

Vakilzadian asked if there will be funding for Fulbright Scholars next year. AVC Hope stated that the Fulbright students coming in should be fine, but she does not know what the funding status will be for either future incoming students or undergraduate students looking to get a Fulbright.

Tschetter asked if the federal government's plan to cut back on student loans will have a huge impact on graduate students. AVC Hope stated that it is possible. She noted that she has been talking with Dean Moberly and Justin Chase Brown about this and the issue would be for students who have significant loans of about \$100,000 or over. She pointed out that it might impact medical students more than law college students since our Law

School tuition is not that expensive. She believes that since our tuition and other costs are lower, it may not affect us as much as some of our peers.

Pierobon reported that he knows of a graduate student who had a thorough background check and was told by authorities that he may have to leave the country. He stated that the student has been very distraught over this and asked if there is anything we can do to help students who may be going through this situation. AVC Hope stated that she has heard similar stories and in January the Graduate Student Dialogues were started and her office met with the graduate students from the different colleges to keep them informed about what was happening with the federal government and what university resources are available to them to help them. She noted that ISSO did a lot of similar outreach programs, and the College of Engineering had a follow-up meeting for graduate students and brought in mental health professionals. She pointed out that with all the external things happening, domestic students have been affected as well.

AVC Hope stated that she is keeping an eye on fall enrollment and while graduate student applications are up, it is unclear how many of the international students will be able to get here. She noted that acceptance rates are down slightly and noted that this may be due to programs feeling that they do not have the capacity to have more graduate students. Shrader asked what our strategy is to recruit domestic graduate students. AVC Hope pointed out that recruiting graduate students is different from undergraduate students. She stated that graduate recruiting is more program-driven and more decentralized than undergraduate recruiting. She stated that Graduate Studies is working with graduate programs that are interested in growing and helping them to develop their websites to be more appealing to prospective graduate students.

AVC Hope reported that Graduate Studies is working on a lot of accelerated master's programs so we can get our undergraduate students to stay another year or two to get a master's degree. Shrader asked if these would be 4+1 programs. AVC Hope stated that they are but that is not what they are called now. She stated that Computer Science has the most success with the accelerated program and Journalism also has had success. She noted that the undergraduate recruiters are very excited about the accelerated master's program because they believe it will be attractive to students.

Lewis stated that they have had mixed results in Teaching, Learning, and Teacher Education with science teachers in an accelerated master's program, but if they apply to the professional part of the program, the accelerated program is successful. She asked what other programs have been successful. AVC Hope stated that some of these accelerated master's programs are more successful because of their discipline and the need in the job market. She noted that informing a student that they can earn a higher income when they finish the program can be a compelling case for students to stay in the program to obtain their master's degree.

AVC Hope reported that Graduate Studies recently hired Professor Brigitte Tenhumberg as Associate Dean of Graduate Studies. Shrader asked if Graduate Studies has enough help. AVC Hope stated that they are quite thin on staff, but they are trying to work as

efficiently as possible, and if necessary, will prioritize things again. Shrader noted that the administration is putting pressure on recruiting more graduate students, yet it does not appear that Graduate Studies is being given more resources to achieve this goal. He asked if they have professional recruiters assisting them. AVC Hope stated that recruiting efforts have been undergoing some reimagining and they have some partnering with ISSO, but mostly they partner with faculty members in recruiting graduate students.

VanderPlas noted that the office is focusing on recruiting students and helping them to be successful in getting through their program. She asked if any assistance is provided in helping students get a job after they complete their program. AVC Hope reported Graduate Studies still has some workshops helping graduate students with teaching assistant training, but the office is not doing individual reviews of the student's CV. Instead, Graduate Studies staff are going to departments and jointly doing a workshop with the students or visiting a class. She pointed out that they are trying to do things that will have greater impact.

Shrader asked what countries we are getting fewer applicants from, particularly given the greater scrutiny that is being placed on certain countries as defined by the federal administration. AVC Hope reported that many of our programs receive a lot of applications, but we only admit about 60% of the students. She stated that the issue tends to be more about our capacity, but some of the applicants are just not qualified. She stated that where international students come from varies, noting that currently we have a lot of interest from India, Bangladesh, and sub-Saharan areas but we also had 35 applicants from Iran.

Vakilzadian noted that the departments decide who to accept in a graduate program but asked if Graduate Studies had any further input into the decision. AVC Hope stated that Graduate Studies initially does a quick review to ensure that the applicant has an undergraduate degree and to ensure that the application is legitimate. She stated that a deeper dive will be conducted if the applicant is seriously interested to see if the applicant has the requirements for the program they are applying to. Vakilzadian asked if there are concerns if an applicant receives their undergraduate degree through an online program. AVC Hope pointed out that this would be up to the department.

Lewis stated that with the uncertainty of grant funding, she wonders if she should even make an assistantship offer to graduate students because the reliability of the funding source is questionable these days. AVC Hope noted that she has had this conversation with other faculty members and pointed out that even though we don't promise funding beyond a year, we typically provide funding to the student until they complete the program. She suggested that faculty members should try to figure out a way to continue funding a student, should the grant funding be terminated. She stated that we can usually cobble together funding to continue supporting graduate students.

Lewis asked how much notice a post doc receives if a grant they were hired to work on is no longer going to be funded. VanderPlas reported that she has recently been working with the Office of Research and Innovation and pointed out that post docs are not on

actual contracts and their position can be eliminated at any time. AVC Hope stated that for graduate students they could reach out to Student Legal Services for assistance. She stated that graduate students on an assistantship can be given a 30-day notice of termination which has been the policy for many years. She stated that post docs are technically faculty and faculty on research appointments funded by grants can be given at least 90 days written notice of the date of termination.

AVC Hope noted that she is working on possible revisions to the contract template for graduate students.

3.0 Announcements

3.1 Meeting to Discuss Proposal for Faculty to Respond to Extremely Negative Course Evaluations

Griffin reported that the Executive Committee will be meeting with AVC Goodburn, AVC Marks, and AVC Pearce on August 26 to discuss the proposal and course evaluations.

4.0 Approval of June 24, 2025 Minutes

Shrader asked if there were any further revisions to the minutes. He stated that he had concerns over a deletion requested by Interim VC Heng-Moss. Gorman moved that the original language be kept in the paragraph in section 2.2. VanderPlas seconded the motion. Gorman pointed out that there was no confidential information in the original language that would warrant the need to delete it. Shrader stated that he would contact Interim VC Heng-Moss to discuss the committee's concerns. Gorman then moved to table approval of the minutes, noting that this new motion supersedes his first motion. Tschetter seconded the motion which was then approved by the Executive Committee.

5.0 Unfinished Business

5.1 Questions on Title II Compliance

Shrader reported that he is contacting General Counsel to arrange a meeting to discuss questions that have arisen with Title II compliance. Gorman stated that the rules for compliance are not onerous but pointed out that the faculty have been given terrible advice by the University about the compliance. For instance, he stated that outside links provided in course materials are not the faculty member's responsibility for being compliant. He stated that the new Ally tool in Canvas works well. VanderPlas stated that it works only if you use Canvas but not every faculty member does. Gorman pointed out that only content delivered by a web or app needs to comply with the Title II regulations. He reported that if an instructor shows information digitally, such as using digital controlled microscopes, the Title II regulations would not apply. He said the same is true if you are giving a PowerPoint presentation which is not being delivered through the internet. Shrader stated that a problem is that the use of Canvas is not required and not all instructors use it. Gorman suggested that the Faculty Senate could make a motion to have the university provide the faculty with the tools needed to convert their documents for Title II compliance.

6.0 New Business

6.1 Executive Committee Retreat

Griffin noted that the Executive Committee has an annual retreat to discuss the goals of the Committee for the upcoming academic year. She stated that she will send a poll out to the committee members to see when a good date for the retreat would be.

6.2 University Commencement and Recognition Committee

Gorman stated that the UCRC will be making a motion to the Faculty Senate to change the voting rights of members on the Committee. He noted that it can be difficult to get a quorum but providing ex-officio members with voting rights would help address the problem.

6.3 Elimination of SNAP-ED

Bearnes reported that the federal government's plan to eliminate the SNAP-ED program will have serious impacts on families throughout Nebraska and could result in the elimination of 30 Extension Educators. The Executive Committee agreed that we need to keep an eye out of the outcome of the federal government's decision.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:00 p.m. The next meeting of the Executive Committee will be on Tuesday, July 22, 2025, at 2:30 pm. The minutes are respectfully submitted by Karen Griffin, Coordinator and Ann Tschetter, Secretary.