

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES

Present: Baesu, Bearnese, Eklund, Gorman, Leiter, Lewis, Pierobon, Reimer, Shrader, Tschetter, Vakilzadian, VanderPlas

Absent: Gruverman

Date: Tuesday, June 10, 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*)

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

2.0 Chancellor Bennett

Chancellor Bennett suggested that the Faculty Senate Executive Committee pay attention to the Board of Regents meeting that will occur on June 19th. He noted that during the meeting the Board will consider the university budget and there will be a request to increase tuition. He pointed out that the state legislature only approved an increase of .65% to the University for each year of the biennium, noting that this increase will not even address the cost of inflation. He stated that as a result, structural changes will more than likely occur across the system which could result in a very different university.

2.1 The Executive Committee was told by you during the December 10th meeting (<https://facultysenate.unl.edu/sites/unl.edu/academic-affairs.faculty-senate/files/media/file/24Dec10mins.pdf>) that the plan was to conduct a national search for the Director of the Gender and Sexuality Center. Can you provide an update with what is going on with this search.

Chancellor Bennett stated that he has not received an update yet from Vice Chancellor Anderson, but he does know that the Center is open and operating. Shrader ask what the Chancellor's recommendation will be to Vice Chancellor Anderson about filling the position of Director for the Center. Chancellor Bennett stated that he had originally planned to conduct a national search although the position does not require it. He stated that due to budget constraints he is thinking about doing something that does not require a lot of expenses, possibly conducting an internal or local search for the position.

2.2 Will there be a search for the Vice Chancellor for Research and Innovation?

Chancellor Bennett noted that Jennifer Nelson is currently Interim Vice Chancellor for Research and Innovation, Mark Button is Interim Executive Vice Chancellor, Tiffany Heng-Moss is the Interim Vice Chancellor for IANR, and there is an Interim Dean for the College of Arts and Sciences. He stated that conducting national searches to fill these positions would take at least a full year to complete and would cost probably about \$5 million.

Shrader asked how long these positions can be filled with an Interim. Vice Chancellor Davis stated that they can be filled as an Interim for two years.

2.3 Are there any updates on the budget situation?

Chancellor Bennett reported that our deficit will likely be around \$20 million. He stated that we are now at a point that there will more than likely be an elimination of, or merger of some programs, and things that have traditionally been done at the university will no longer be offered resulting in the campus being considerably different. He stated that he has been working to make sure that President Gold realizes that we have a set process here that needs to involve the Academic Planning Committee when we make significant budget reductions and reallocations. He pointed out that he doubts that we will have a full year to address our structural deficit of \$20 million. Reimer suggested that it would be useful to let the Academic Planning Committee, and the Faculty Senate know about the dramatic timeline we could be facing this fall.

Chancellor Bennett pointed out it is due to our \$20 million structural deficit that he is unable to provide a salary increase for faculty and staff this year. He noted that President Gold told him that it was up to his discretion if he wanted to provide a salary increase but President Gold stated that the funds for the increases would have to come out of UNL's budget because the system would not be giving any additional funds to provide for a salary increase.

Shrader asked how much of the \$10 million from the athletics we have received to date. Chancellor Bennett reported that the System said it would give \$5 million, and Athletics would give the other \$5 million but so far, he believes we have only received \$3.5 million, and he does not believe any of the funds from the System have been transferred yet, but he would need to verify this with Vice Chancellor Zeleny. He noted that the System is unwilling to give us a pass on our budget deficit and instead said that they want to see us take the full cut this year and for us not to use other funding sources to cover it.

Vakilzadian asked why UNO and UNK were receiving salary increases and questioned whether they have any structural budget deficit. Chancellor Bennett responded that both UNO and UNK have a budget structural deficit. He pointed out that both of these campuses are unionized which is why they are receiving an increase, but the campuses will have to find a way to cover the salary increases through their own budget because the System would not be providing any funds to cover the increases.

VanderPlas stated that last year we had a \$11.9 million budget deficit, and it was reported that the System had a \$58 million deficit. She asked how much of the System's deficit will UNL have to cover. Chancellor Bennett pointed out that this is an unknown variable that will hopefully be clarified on June 19th. He noted that we will be able to survive the \$20 million reduction, but there will be a reduction in force, and it is likely that we will not offer all the degrees that we offer today.

2.4 What are we doing as leaders and educators to prepare for not just a few but scores of athletes on campus making hundreds of thousands of dollars? Is there any information on how these funds are impacting the academic performance of these athletes?

Chancellor Bennett stated that at this time we do not know how the university will handle the House versus NCAA Antitrust Settlement that was settled in early June. He noted that the university could give up to \$25 million to Division I athletes and that the biggest winners of this settlement will likely be the revenue generating sports such as football. He pointed out that the non-generating sports teams will be the ones who might suffer, and unfortunately, many of these are women's teams.

2.5 What is the university doing to ensure that graduate students have sufficient support for the summer? What are the rules for notifying these decisions to allow graduate students adequate time to apply for internships? International students are having a hard time getting internships this year. Are there any resources available to students who are having financial difficulties? Are there additional supports for international students who cannot get unrelated jobs (e.g. food service) due to visa restrictions?

Chancellor Bennett stated Graduate Studies is working to find alternative funding typically from the colleges or departments to ensure that graduate students slated to receive summer funding do so. He stated that if any graduate student that was expecting funds during the summer but is not receiving them, should reach out to Graduate Studies.

Chancellor Bennett stated that international students who had originally planned to go home for the summer but decided against it can reach out to the International Student and Scholar's Office (ISSO). He pointed out that international students can work on campus during the summer and if they are facing any financial crisis they should reach out to the ISSO and if they are a graduate student they should reach out to Graduate Studies as they may have resources to help them. VC Davis noted that Karen Cagley, Director of ISSO, would be the person to contact. Pierobon asked if funding could be provided to students who were being paid through an NSF grant which was suspended. VC Davis stated that he would need to check on this.

VanderPlas asked if Graduate Studies and ISSO are receiving funding to help these students. Chancellor Bennett stated that we need to get resources for these students and he would be open to having conversations about possibly providing some funding to the offices.

2.6 Is there a plan in case the federal government starts coming after the University like it has done recently to other universities?

Chancellor Bennett stated that in conversations he has had with President Gold the President does not believe that we will be targeted like other universities such as Harvard. He noted that the Senate Executive Committee will be kept posted if there are any changes.

3.0 Announcements

3.1 Letter to Athletics Director Troy Dannen

Shrader noted that there was an article in the Omaha World Herald about how the nutrition and athletic development program offered by Husker Athletics has a \$7 million budget. He reported that after reading the article he sent an e-mail message to Athletics Director Troy Dannen pointing out that 1/3 of UNL students are food insecure and asked if Athletics can explore ways to get involved with Husker Pantry which helps to provide food and other items to students in need. He noted that Athletics Director Dannen wrote back and provided information on what Athletics is currently doing, like providing funding to the local food banks, but that Athletics would explore ways to possibly get involved with the Husker Pantry.

4.0 Approval of May 27, 2025 Minutes

Shrader asked if there were any further revisions to the minutes. Hearing none he asked for a motion to approve the minutes. VanderPlas moved for approval of the minutes and Lewis seconded the motion. The motion was then approved by the Executive Committee.

5.0 Unfinished Business

5.1 Revisiting Proposal to Allow Faculty Members to Respond to Vicious Comments on Course Evaluations

Eklund noted that we are in a different culture now than we have previously been with people being able to make anonymous, sometimes negative and downright vicious, comments online and this can be seen in some course evaluations. He asked if the next step to address the problem should be raised with AVC Marks. Griffin suggested that AVC Goodburn needs to be part of the discussion. The Executive Committee agreed that the current online course evaluations were not working well with the response rates being extremely low and wanted to pursue the issue of revising them with AVC Goodburn and AVC Marks.

Lewis stated that the proposal to allow faculty members to respond to vicious comments was very thoughtful and critical. She pointed out that we need to think about course evaluations from both sides of the situation. She noted that typically, if a student has a problem with an instructor, they should go to the department chair, but not all students know this. She stated that faculty members should have the opportunity to review the evaluations to see if there are any that are personal attacks. She reported that CEHS revised the course evaluations, so they are more focused on student learning and asked fewer questions. She stated that it is important for colleges across the campus to have evaluations that focus more on student learning, and she suggested that it would be a good opportunity to have Senators interact with their colleagues to discuss the issue.

Shrader agreed that the Executive Committee should meet with AVC Goodburn and AVC Marks to begin discussions and suggested that a committee should be formed that would include Lewis and a faculty member from Educational Psychology.

6.0 New Business

6.1 Agenda Items for Interim EVC Button and Interim VC Heng-Moss

The Executive Committee identified the following agenda items for Interim EVC Button and Interim EVC Heng-Moss:

- With the existence of the student-athlete transfer portal, how are we properly educating students who are jumping from university to university? (Mark)
- Update on enrollment, particularly international enrollment. (Mark)
- Have deans been asked to come up with budget reduction plans based on a prescribed percentage? If so, how was the percentage determined? (Mark and Tiffany)
- How much tuition increase would be needed to help us with our structural deficit?
- How do you prepare the faculty for what is coming with the changes that will be occurring because of the budget reductions? (Mark and Tiffany)
- How can there still be a push for AAU membership if UNL is going to be so damaged from the budget reductions? (Mark and Tiffany)
- How can UNL be reimagined following the budget reductions?

The meeting was adjourned at 4:56 p.m. The next meeting of the Executive Committee will be on Tuesday, June 24, 2025, at 2:30 pm. The minutes are respectfully submitted by Karen Griffin, Coordinator and Ann Tschetter, Secretary.