

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES

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

Absent: Gruverman, Pierobon, Vakilzadian, VanderPlas

Date: Tuesday, June 24, 2025

Location: Nebraska Union, Chimney Rock Room

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 2:35 p.m.

2.0 Interim EVC Button/Interim VC Heng-Moss

2.1 Update on enrollment, particularly international enrollment.

Interim EVC Button stated that we're very focused on enrollment at this time and reported that we are seeing a modest increase of 1.9% overall for new student enrollment. He reported that international student enrollment is up a little over 15% equating to 84 students and overall net deposits are up over last year. He pointed out that non-resident domestic student enrollment is up 14.2% which is positive for our net tuition. He noted that enrollment is being monitored daily, and we are encouraging those students who submitted deposits to sign up for orientation, advising, and then we are working to get them enrolled.

Interim EVC Button stated that we are being realistic in terms of international student enrollment because some students are encountering difficulties in getting interviews for their visa and we could possibly see a decrease in projected international enrollment. He reported that we are doing everything we can to assist graduate student enrollment, although he anticipates that our graduate enrollment numbers will be down slightly. He pointed out that the challenges with federal funding are making it harder for us to commit graduate assistantships but stated that Graduate Studies is working very hard to assist graduate students and is coaching international graduate students for their visa interviews.

Schrader noted that nonresident domestic student enrollment is crucial for us. Interim EVC Button agreed and reported that we are doing careful analysis of where we are getting students from other states noting that we are not only getting students from the Midwest region particularly Illinois, the Dakotas, and Minnesatoa, but we also have strong numbers coming out of California and he believes we could get more students coming from Texas. Shrader asked what our selling point is for nonresident domestic students. Interim EVC Button pointed out that our actual total cost of attendance looks better for some students, especially when you consider some of the scholarships and assistance we can give them. He stated that another unique competitive advantage we have is that we are smaller in size than most of the other Big Ten universities. UNL

combines the strengths of a Big Ten research university with leading scholars in their fields with a close and caring community where we support all students. Interim VC Heng-Moss stated that we are unique in that we are a comprehensive land-grant university, and we have signature programs that we can market which gives us a competitive advantage. She pointed out that many of the other Big Ten universities have capped their enrollment numbers so they can turn students away. This is an opportunity for UNL to recruit students wanting to get into a Big Ten University. She also stated that we need to make sure that Nebraska students, particularly in the western part of the state, know that we want them to come here. She pointed out that we lose students to Colorado and Wyoming because universities in those states are closer to students in western Nebraska, but Admissions is partnering with the Panhandle Research, Extension and Education Center to help recruit students from that area. Shrader asked if the border states offer reciprocal tuition to students in Nebraska. Interim Vice Chancellor Heng-Moss noted that some do but usually it is not the comparable university but rather smaller colleges and universities.

2.2 Have deans been asked to come up with budget reduction plans based on a prescribed percentage? If so, how was the percentage determined?

Interim VC Heng-Moss reported that the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) is using a different approach to address UNL's \$20 million structural budget deficit. She stated that we will be using a holistic approach and using multiple factors – metrics, strengths, needs of the state workforce alignment, etc. in considering where to make reductions. We recognize the importance of quantitative metrics as well as qualitative factors also need to be considered. She said we also need to consider what the workforce needs of the state are, how things like the impact of extension and engagement get factored into budget decisions, what the university's priorities are, and how we build for the future.

Interim EVC Button stated that he, Interim VC Heng-Moss, and the entire ELT are committed to being transparent with the budget reduction process and for it to be an inclusive project. He noted that we are moving beyond the percentage-based approaches and instead to be more strategic. He pointed out that UNL has already reduced our budget by \$75 million and each additional budget reduction becomes harder to do.

Interim EVC Button reported that the metrics that will be used have been developed with input from many people. He noted that the draft metrics were presented to the Academic Planning Committee, Deans, Executive Leadership Team, and department executive officers and from these meetings a lot was learned so that improvements could be made to have a metrics based approach that is consistent and fairly applied across programs. However, he pointed out that the quantitative approach does not capture everything. As a result, they have talked with every college Dean to understand the nature of their programs, their contributions, missions, and what they do well so there is a qualitative supplement as well. He stated that this is being done across UNL and at the same time there are other dimensions that are being considered, such as administrative positions and administrative efficiencies, for the holistic reduction approach. In addition, consideration is being given to how to improve the revenue side of the picture. He stated that one way

of improving the revenue is to reduce the use of institutionally controlled remissions by utilizing actual dollars through private giving.

Reimer stated that a frequent question she is hearing from colleagues is what has been communicated to the deans because there are a lot of discussions already occurring concerning budget reductions. She asked if the deans know how much they need to reduce their budgets, are these reductions related to the \$20 million deficit, or are there college specific reductions that are based on state funding that need to be made. Interim EVC Button pointed out that there is still no formalized budget reduction plan, nothing has been approved yet or assigned to the colleges. He stated that there is still a lot of consideration and work that needs to be done with the Chancellor, President Gold, and the Board of Regents. Interim VC Heng-Moss noted that some units/colleges may be proceeding cautiously with allocating operating funds given the uncertainties with federal grants and F&A.

Leiter asked what the timeline is for the campus to deal with the reductions. Interim EVC Button reported that the ELT is to deliver a preliminary plan to the Chancellor Monday, June 30th, the Chancellor will then be meeting with President Gold to make sure the plan is in alignment with the university's mission and current strategic plan. After that, we will follow our existing campus procedures for addressing significant budget reductions. The APC process and the wider campus and community consultation process will need to proceed efficiently as our proposed plan will need to be ready for the December Board of Regents meeting. He stated that we will need to begin confidential consultations with the APC this summer if there are proposed eliminations or realignment of programs.

Shrader asked if we can do some crisis management by looking forward to how we can reimagine the university and whether there were some lagging forces that need to be considered. Interim VC Heng-Moss stated that there are some lagging indicators that can be looked at. She stated that we need to focus on how we position ourselves, so we are not in the same situation in another year or two. It is important to be forward It -focused as we plan for the future and navigating uncertainties with budgets, federal impacts, and higher education.

Interim EVC Button pointed out that we do not have control over some remissions such as the Regents' Scholarships, but we do have control over other scholarships like the Davis-Chambers Scholarship which is for students who fall just below the qualifications for a Regents' Scholarship. He noted that some of the criteria for achieving some of the scholarships, the expectations for renewals, and the expected academic standards will be changed. He reported that this summer UNL has been actively fundraising \$2.5 million that we hope will continue annually to help offset the cost of remissions. He stated that there is an additional \$1 million for Nebraska College Preparatory Academy, which is another kind of remission program, and it is funded through a donor/university match fund. He pointed out that we would do much better if we had a larger actual scholarship pool of funds, and Interim VC Heng-Moss pointed out that if the donated funds in the scholarship pool could be used more broadly, it would definitely help UNL's net tuition.

She stated that our state legislative team is working with state leaders to fully understand the implications of the unfunded state mandated remissions on net tuition. She stated that we want to support the needs of the state, but the remissions but the unfunded state mandated remissions put a burden on the university's net tuition.

Lewis noted that decisions are being made at the state level such as teachers not needing to go through a teacher education program, that seem to be deliberately trying to dismantle education at all levels. She questioned how we try to combat these kinds of decisions that are being made that are hurting all levels of education. Interim VC Heng-Moss stated that Matt Blomstedt, Associate Vice President for Government Relations, is a huge asset for the university given his time as Commissioner of Education and can be a resource to address the concerns that Lewis has raised.

2.3 Will the 5% tuition increase approved by the Board of Regents, would be needed to help us with our structural deficit?

Interim EVC Button stated that the increase in tuition will help us move forward with the university budget although there will still be gaps in our funding and the university system is looking at an \$18.3 million deficit that will need to be addressed. He pointed out that the state increase of 1.25% to the university's budget over two years does not keep us up with the cost of inflation, and in addition, he noted that other pressures on the university's budget include health care costs, utilities, and other operating expenses. He stated that UNL is currently focusing on addressing its \$20 million structural deficit which is separate from the system's deficit. He stated that how the system manages its deficit still needs to be determined. Interim VC Heng-Moss pointed out that historically, when there has been a system deficit UNL is given approximately 50% of the deficit to cover because we receive about 50% of the state budget. She stated that one factor driving the anticipated system deficit are the collective bargaining that happens at UNO and UNK, so it's not going to be a straight 50% deficit for UNL. She pointed out that UNO and UNK also have structural deficits and in addition, they are going to have to figure out how to cover the salary increases made in agreement with their collective bargaining unions.

Leiter asked if the revenue collected from the tuition increase will go towards the funding of UNK and UNO faculty. Interim VC Heng-Moss stated that each campus is held accountable for finding ways to fund their collective bargaining agreements. Shrader pointed out that the funding of the salary increases for faculty at UNK and UNO should not be used as an excuse for the financial trouble that the university is experiencing.

Lewis asked how UNL has been operating with a deficit for so long and asked if loans have been called in. Interim EVC Button reported that we balance our budget at the end of the year and for a number of years we have been balancing it with funds from our cash reserves. He pointed out that UNL has been reducing its budget for years and has already reduced its budget by \$75 million. He stated that we need to address the way UNL is supported by the system and the state and noted that we need to continue telling people how much UNL contributes to the state.

2.4 How do you prepare the faculty for what is coming with the changes that will be occurring because of the budget reductions?

Interim VC Heng-Moss stated that transparent communication is essential and there needs to be consistent messaging to keep our UNL community updated. Tschetter pointed out that currently there is a lot of mistrust in the overall system and asked if there is a rough plan of communications. Interim EVC Button stated that the administration is in the process of thinking through different communication plans and noted that there will be other communications forthcoming relating to the actual process. Interim VC Heng-Moss stated that communication will need to be coordinated.

Reimer pointed out that faculty members want to help with trying to resolve the problem but there appears to be some gatekeeping on the part of chairs and deans to allow faculty participation.

Shrader suggested that there needs to be some creative ways for the administration to show how they appreciate the faculty and staff, and the administration needs to find ways, so everyone feels valuable. Interim EVC Button acknowledged that this is a difficult period for everyone and there are some morale challenges, and the question is how we navigate these challenges together. He stated that his goal is to lead with as much empathy and respect as possible and for people to be included in the process. He stated that he and Interim VC Heng-Moss are committed to a really robust process with the Academic Planning Committee and to communicate with the Faculty Senate Executive Committee and the Staff Senate. He noted that the challenge is how we get through this period in a way that leads us to our strengths so we can continue to work together. He pointed out that every 1% salary increase equates to \$3 million and if salary increases were given this year, it would put us that much further into a structural deficit.

2.5 How can there still be a push for AAU membership if UNL is going to be so damaged from the budget reductions?

Interim EVC Button stated that our aspiration to become an AAU member again continues to be a core part of the way we are thinking about the process of dealing with our structural deficit. He pointed out that the AAU metrics allows us to see clearly our areas of strength and where joint accreditation with UNMC can be strong. He noted that even though it is challenging to be doing joint accreditation and working on the budget deficit at the same time, it allows us to be forward leaning, and AAU phase one indicators are built into the metrics that we are utilizing in our planning.

Interim EVC Heng-Moss believes we have a real opportunity to share the impacts that UNL has on the state pointing out that we contribute to half of the NU system's contribution to the workforce in Nebraska. She stated that Associate VP Blomstedt will be talking to the state leaders about the importance of the university, noting that he envisions this to be a year-round engagement process. She stated that we need to determine how we position the university and share the impactful work we do, so decision-makers understand the need to invest in their land-grant university. She pointed out that higher education across the nation is changing and we can have the opportunity to better position ourselves to be a leader in higher education. Some examples include

leading in the areas of internships and experiential education. She stated that we have the right innovators at UNL to shape the future of higher education and how we can be the leader.

3.0 Announcements

3.1 Report on Board of Regents Meeting

Shrader reported that he spoke at the Board of Regents meeting on behalf of the Faculty Senate Presidents from the four campuses about their concerns with the proposed revisions to the Regents Bylaws and how these revisions give the President of the University the ability to create administrative unit, academic unit, teaching department or school or division or any administrative/business unit of the University, or the consolidation or eliminations of any administrative unit, academic unit, department or school of division or administrative/business unit upon recommendation of the CEO/President. He noted that the Board of Regents did not make any amendments to the Bylaws and instead approved the proposed revisions originally put forward.

4.0 Approval of June 10, 2025 Minutes

Shrader asked if there were any further revisions to the minutes. Hearing none he asked for a motion to approve the minutes. moved and seconded, approving the minutes. Motion approved by the Executive Committee.

5.0 Unfinished Business

5.1 Academic Rights & Responsibilities Committee Procedures

Lewis reported that she is working with VC Davis, Professor Peterson, and Griffin to get the proposed revisions, which the Faculty Senate approved in the fall of 2023, ready to go to the Board of Regents for final approval.

5.2 Proposal to Allow Faculty Members to Respond to Extremely Negative Comments on Course Evaluations

Shrader noted that a meeting still needs to be set up with AVC Goodburn and AVC Marks to discuss teaching evaluations.

6.0 New Business

No new business was discussed.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:50 p.m. The next meeting of the Executive Committee will be on Tuesday, July 8, at 2:30 pm. The minutes are respectfully submitted by Karen Griffin, Coordinator and Ann Tschetter, Secretary.