

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES

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

Absent: Baesu

Date: Tuesday, May 13, 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 (*Shrader*)

Shrader called the meeting to order at 2:31 p.m.

2.0 Chancellor Bennet/VC Boehm

Shrader asked if the Chancellor received a letter from Interim Vice President and Chief Financial Officer Barnes describing the University's current budget situation, and whether he could categorize the letter. Chancellor Bennett noted that the letter was a reminder of where we are with the budget, but he pointed out that we do not know at this time what the final budget of the state will be. He stated that the full hiring freeze indicated in the letter is not being implemented and stated that each administrative unit should move forward with the appropriate constraints as we invest in our priority areas. He pointed out that this could change depending on what happens if the federal government is allowed to limit F&A funds.

Shrader noted that the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) is coming to the campus in early June and asked who the lead campus in the joint accreditation will be. Chancellor Bennett stated that no final decisions have been made and suggested that the Executive Committee ask Interim Provost Jackson this question. Shrader asked if UNL will retain its R1 status. Chancellor Bennett reported that he asked President Gold about this and if we are still focused on being eligible for AAU. He pointed out that UNL is the R1 university in the Big 10 and that he does not think there would be substantive impacts due to joint accreditation. He stated that the greater concern is the budget situation pointing out that UNL can not continue to have the level of reductions it has been facing in the last few years.

2.2 What efforts are being made to ensure that faculty are retained amid increasing workload and failure to replace retirements? Are you planning anything to ensure that morale doesn't drop even lower?

Chancellor Bennet reported that those faculty members who received promotion and/or tenure this month will still receive their increase, and we will not stop making retention offers to keep good faculty members here. He noted that he receives a list every week from across the campus of units who are hoping to get approval for hiring or retaining

people and he reviews all of the requests before he gives final approval. He pointed out that more than likely there will be greater scrutiny of these requests. However, he stated that he is committed to retaining our most productive faculty and staff. He noted that GSA President Jemkur has been raising concerns for graduate students and for faculty members who need more graduate students. He reported that he is trying to see if there is a way to increase graduate stipends and to improve the graduate health care package to try and retain our best graduate students.

Chancellor Bennett stated that he would like to have a salary pool of 3%, but given the current budget situation, it would be difficult to figure out how we could do this. He pointed out that UNK and UNO have bargaining agreements, but the campuses will have to determine how they can cover the salary increases through their own budgets. VanderPlas noted that there could be some things other than salary increases that could be done to show that the employees are valued. Lewis stated that prior to the Chancellor coming to UNL, there was a situation where the salary compression had become so dire and inherently sexist that we had to fix 700 faculty members' salaries. She cautioned that if the salary increase situation is not solved, it will become another point in time in which the university is going to be facing lawsuits for discrimination against equal pay. She noted that it is in the best interest of the University to resolve this, not all at once, but there should be some good faith effort to resolve the salary issue.

Chancellor Bennett stated that people need to understand the severity of what the university is facing. He pointed out that even before the federal government's proposal to put a 15% cap on F&A funds the university was facing budgetary problems, in part due to lack of support. He noted that we have been trying to deal with the budget difficulties, but the university did not expect the cap on F&A funds and suspension of some grants, which significantly impact the university's budget.

2.3 What is the timeline for dealing with the remainder of UNL's structural deficit?

Chancellor Bennett noted that UNL made \$5 million of budget reductions this spring, but we may have an additional \$20 million to eliminate from our budget this fall. He reported that Interim EVC Button is working with the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) to see how we could reduce our budget by \$20 million. He stated that he is hoping to have information from the ELT by June 30, but the question is whether we want to try and take any action over the summer. He pointed out that the faculty members on the Academic Planning Committee are on nine-month appointments, but he does not know if we can afford to wait until the fall semester begins although he said that he told President Gold that we wouldn't be able to deal with the \$20 million reduction until the fall semester begins. He noted that there will need to be very significant conversations including discussing mergers, possible elimination of programs, reviewing the administrative staff across the enterprise as well as there needs to be discussions university wide. He reported that he is not making the budget reduction decision unilaterally and is having meetings with the Academic Planning Committee, Staff Senate, the ASUN President, and the Faculty Senate Executive Committee in order to get a broad range of voices on the subject.

Leiter questioned whether the application to HLC would be impacted if we were to close some of our programs due to the budget reductions. Chancellor Bennett pointed out that Central Administration is the architect of the application, but he believes the thinking is that having the system holder of the university's accreditation would make it easier for students across the university to take courses at any of the campuses.

Eklund pointed out that there needs to be discussion on whether the state needs to have six different programs at different colleges/universities teaching the same thing. Chancellor Bennett noted that he presented President Gold with a couple of models that would over time, incorporate the state colleges into a broader university.

Lewis urged caution in how budget reductions are made, and decisions need to come from the bottom up, not top down. She pointed out that some programs are complex and some courses that are offered by her department bring in considerable revenue each year. She noted that UNL is the top producer of teachers for the state.

Lewis asked what percentage of the budget reductions UNL receives. VC Davis reported that historically UNL received 50% of the proposed budget reductions. Tschetter noted that a \$20 million budget reduction for UNL will be catastrophic and will fundamentally change the university. Chancellor Bennett stated that he wants to commit to engaging as many voices as we can in making decisions on budget reductions.

2.4 IANR did not pass the 1% budget cuts on to the units — how is IANR implementing those cuts and how will future cuts be handled? (VC Boehm)

VC Boehm stated that IANR's share of the most recent \$5 million reduction requested by Chancellor Bennett was \$1.198 million. He stated that this was accomplished by further reducing the state-aided budgets of the IANR VC, CASNR, Extension, a0633 and ARD. He reported that the IANR VC and CASNR offices eliminated two positions to cover ~\$0.225M. Extension's state-aided budget was reduced by \$0.633M or approximately 2.3% to be made at the discretion of the Dean/Director of Extension. ARD's state-aided budget was reduced \$0.350M by moving skilled trade team members from state-appropriated funds to revolving accounts funded by those using the Eastern Nebraska Research, Extension, and Education Center in Mead.

VC Boehm stated that going forward, the IANR expanded leadership team—which includes academic unit leaders, Extension program area leaders, center directors, and Research, Extension, and Education Center directors—has been working collaboratively to explore potential structural changes, including the merging or elimination of academic, Extension, and research programs. He noted that this work aims to preserve IANR's core strengths while reducing reliance on state-aided funding. These deliberations are guided by a set of impact metrics that have been in development over the past two years and align closely with the draft metrics currently under discussion at both UNL and across the NU System. In addition to these metrics, two key dimensions will inform any resulting proposals: each program's relevance to the citizens of Nebraska and the region, and the distinctiveness of its contributions.

VC Boehm provided a table highlighting the permanent budget reductions taken in IANR between 2017-2024.

Summary of IANR's Permanent State-aided Budget Reductions - 2017-2024*

Amount Reduced	% of IANR's Cumulative Cut	Description of Cut
\$ 5,719,311	31.8%	IANR Administrative Reductions (Positions and Operating Budgets)
\$ 4,241,920	23.6%	Permanent re-basing of IANR Unit state-aided budgets
\$ 4,056,155	22.5%	Elimination of t/tt faculty lines (41)
\$ 2,574,670	14.3%	Elimination of staff lines (41)
\$ 1,271,400	7.1%	Rural Futures Institute
\$ 126,435	0.7%	Academic Degree Program Support (CASNR HRTM Program)
\$ 17,989,891	100.0%	

*Does not include one-time cash that was returned - ~\$7M

Shrader asked if IANR has received any relief on the cost of operating Innovation Campus. VC Boehm stated that this is an ongoing conversation with the Chancellor. Chancellor Bennett noted that President Gold recently spent half a day on Innovation Campus, and he is supportive of reimagining it. He pointed out that reimagining NIC will require the support of UNL, President Gold, and the Board of Regents.

Chancellor Bennett stated that our campus community needs to accept that we are not in a place where it is business as usual and this is true for universities across the country. He stated that we will need to alter, pivot, and make changes in order to get through these challenging times, but we should take this as an opportunity to do things differently in order for us to move forward.

3.0 Interim Provost Jackson (3:15)

3.1 Informal discussion on faculty governance as we move forward with HLC to achieve a single accreditation for UNL and UNMC

Interim Provost Jackson noted that we have all heard from President Gold that we are seeking joint accreditation from the Higher Learning Commission for UNL and UNMC. He pointed out that joint accreditation would not fundamentally change the reporting lines of either campus and would position us for the future so that we look like other Big Ten institutions. He noted that any structural changes that might occur would not have anything to do with the accreditation.

Interim Provost Jackson stated that one thing that would need to be addressed if we received approval for the joint accreditation, is how joint programs between UNL and UNMC would be approved. He noted that the faculty governance structure for the two campuses is quite different, with UNMC having a college level process for approval and UNL having the Academic Planning Committee. He stated that there is no existing structure at the system level that could approve joint programs and asked what a good faculty governance structure could be. He stated that it has been alluded that one option

would be to have something similar to the existing Executive Graduate Council. Eklund noted at some other universities, the medical college is not located in the same place as the main campus and asked if anyone has looked at the models that these universities have used to address this issue. Interim Provost Jackson stated that we could explore how some of these universities are set up. Lewis asked if an ad hoc committee has been created to explore the creation of this higher-level program approving committee. Interim Provost Jackson stated that a committee has not been created yet.

Leiter asked if the HLC has rules or standards in place with regard to faculty governance and asked if the Faculty Senates of UNL and UNMC would be combined. Interim Provost Jackson stated that the HLC wants to see shared governance structure at each of the campuses so the Senates would not be combined.

Shrader asked if the application to the HLC is being made on behalf of the university. Interim Provost Jackson noted that President Gold is the CEO for the university system and the Chancellors are the Chief Academic Officers which matches up with federal regulations. He pointed out that we want to maintain the existing administrative layer that interacts with the Board of Regents. He stated that the system level would be deemed as the main campus if the joint accreditation is approved and this would allow us to maintain the structural independence of UNL and UNMC which would be considered branch campuses. He noted that this alignment would get UNL and UNMC to look like the other Big Ten peers.

Shrader asked how UNK and UNO would be defined. Interim Provost Jackson stated that they would be part of the system but not part of the University of Nebraska. VC Boehm pointed out that there would be three accredited systems: University of Nebraska, UNK, and UNO. Shrader asked if this matches federal regulations. Interim Provost Jackson stated that this is the pathway to meet the regulations. Shrader asked how UNL faculty are going to feel knowing that they are no longer the flagship campus. Interim Provost Jackson noted that the identification of the main campus and the branches would just be behind the scenes. He stated that UNL still has the most academic programs, is the primary undergraduate institution in the state, has the most Ph.D. and Master's program so front facing, there should be no change.

Interim Provost Jackson stated that the research enterprise would be considered as one which would allow us to combine our research expenditures which reputationally improves our rankings for both UNL and UNMC. He noted that our combined research expenditures moved us up to 55 in the rankings whereas before both campuses were ranked between 120-130. Shrader asked if we would still be trying to get joint accreditation if we weren't trying to regain admittance to the AAU. Interim Provost Jackson stated that we would still be seeking joint accreditation because it provides opportunities for growth and there is a need for us to portray to external groups some common metrics.

VanderPlas asked if the joint accreditation would open opportunities for greater use of the libraries, software programs, etc. Interim Provost Jackson stated that this could

eventually happen. VanderPlas noted that many things shifted when services were centralized and she asked how faculty would have any say in these centralized services. Interim Provost Jackson stated that the Faculty Senate Presidents meet with him and President Gold after every Board of Regents meeting and the Senate Presidents can speak to the Board. He noted that the faculty would be in a better position to provide faculty input if we get joint accreditation. He pointed out that there are pathways now for faculty to communicate if things are not working.

Shrader asked if the HLC team that is coming to campus will ask about shared governance. Interim Provost Jackson stated that the review team will want to hear that conversations have started about shared governance. He pointed out that the HLC team will want to make sure that the accreditation is met and they are more concerned about the process. He noted that the faculty is probably wondering how this is going to work, but he pointed out that the only real thing that would change is that there might be an additional layer of faculty involvement.

Interim Provost Jackson reported that once the review is written it will go to the full HLC Board in November, and we have 30 days to declare that we are done. He noted that our application is unusual in that we have two strong campuses coming together that will in the future strengthen the entire institution. He stated that the next visit from HLC would be six months later when an on-site team will ascertain if the changes have been made. He noted that having the branch campuses gives us an enormous amount of flexibility and we don't have to instantly report IPEDS and other data but instead will have some time to report this information.

Shrader asked if the branches would have separate budgets. Interim Provost Jackson stated that currently there is the system and then the campuses, the branch campuses would have an element of independence but at the same time there are opportunities to combine some things. He stated that the budgets will not act or be different than they are now.

Leiter asked what the history of UNMC is and when it was founded. Interim Provost Jackson reported that UNMC started out as a city metropolitan campus and once it became part of the university UNL and UNMC were considered the University of Nebraska. He stated that it was in 1968 that UNMC became a separate campus. He noted that in some sense we are going back to how it was originally arranged. Shrader asked if IANR changes in this dynamic. Interim Provost Jackson stated no. He pointed out that if there are any structural changes across the entire system, it will happen due to financial concerns, not because of joint accreditation. VC Boehm noted that IANR is part of UNL, and state statute requires that there be a Vice President of IANR.

Tschetter asked why this isn't a moment we make some structural changes that could help us out financially. She pointed out that there are a lot of fearful faculty members and that UNMC is the favored child, and that the President is stuck with UNL because of athletics. Interim Provost Jackson stated that this is not the case at all. He stated that President Gold truly recognizes the value of UNL and for the state to have a strong

University of Nebraska which means combining UNL and UNMC. Tschetter stated that there are a lot of unhappy faculty members these days because of both external and internal changes occurring and she noted that faculty want to be heard and know that they are valued. Interim Provost Jackson stated that the system level administration recognizes the concern and nervousness of everybody. He pointed out that President Gold is the most transparent administrator that he has worked with.

Pierobon asked if there will be a difference in submitting grants for research with joint accreditation. Interim Provost Jackson reported that in the short term there will not be any changes, but over time there will be an opportunity when we do not have to subcontract with each other if we do research together. Currently, he stated that if the PI is from UNL but wants to collaborate with someone from UNMC the PI would have to write a subcontract for the UNMC person to receive some of the grant money.

Pierobon asked if there will be a common Office of Research. Interim Provost Jackson stated that this might occur due to financial problems, not because of accreditation. He pointed out that we do not have an over abundance of capacity in the research offices on either campus. Pierobon stated that he had problems with collaborating with UNMC faculty because we do not share the same online filing system and it took months before data could be exchanged. He noted that it has been partly resolved with an ad hoc solution but it would help to have a more unified system so proposals can be submitted together. Interim Provost Jackson reported that a study is being done to see if changes could be made which would facilitate joint research efforts better.

4.0 Announcements

No announcements were made.

5.0 Approval of May 6, 2025 Minutes

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

6.0 Unfinished Business

6.1 Reconsideration of Proposal to Allow Faculty Members to Respond to Vicious Comments on Teaching Evaluations

Eklund stated that after speaking with a colleague he thinks there should be reconsideration about faculty being able to respond to vicious comments that are made by students. The Executive Committee agreed that the current teaching evaluation system is a failure and needs to be reconsidered. The agenda item will be included for further consideration.

6.2 Title II Compliance Follow-up Discussion Request

Griffin reported that Professor Harris, who spoke at the May 6th Faculty Senate meeting about the university misinterpreting the requirements for Title II Compliance asked for the Executive Committee to follow up with a meeting with someone from General Counsel and perhaps Director Monk, CTT, and others.

7.0 New Business

7.1 Summer Session Schedule

Griffin reported that the Executive Committee will be starting its summer schedule so the meetings will only be held every other week, which means that there will not be a meeting next week.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:10 p.m. The next meeting of the Executive Committee will be on Tuesday, May 27, 2027, at 2:30 pm. The meeting will be held in 203 Alexander Building. The minutes are respectfully submitted by Karen Griffin, Coordinator and Ann Tschetter, Secretary.