

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES

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

Absent:

Date: Tuesday, April 21, 2026

Location: Nebraska Union, Big Ten Conference Room

Note: These are not verbatim minutes. They are a summary of the discussions at the Executive Committee meeting as corrected by those participating.

In order to provide more context, an addendum with additional information from Interim Chancellor Ankerson is attached to these minutes.

1.0 Call (*Shrader*)

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

2.0 Interview of Associate Dean Mark Riley for VC of Research and Innovation (2:30-3:00 p.m.)

The Executive Committee interviewed Associate Dean Mark Riley, College of Engineering and asked him why he was attracted to the position, what he thought were the research and innovation challenges facing the campus and how he would overcome them, what his priorities would be, faculty concern about how little they get from F&A and what they should expect and what he would fight for, what his plans are to change the relationship between faculty and administration, and asked him how he would navigate the management of the research compliance office. The individual Executive Committee members had the opportunity to submit evaluations of the candidate.

3.0 Interim Chancellor Ankerson

Shrader stated that he enjoyed the Our Bold Path Forward listening sessions and noted that he attended one of the sessions virtually and remarked that there was really good, earnest, honest conversation and pointed out that faculty should keep contributing to the conversation. He reported that the Executive Committee met with EVC Button and VC Heng-Moss on April 14th and had a good discussion about the strategic framework.

Interim Chancellor Ankerson wanted to thank the members of the Executive Committee for their service, particularly those whose terms are ending on the Committee. She pointed out that service at the level of the Faculty Senate Executive Committee is really important and helps to guide much of what happens at the university. She stated that she appreciates the service and commitment to the university and to your fellow faculty members and to the future of the university.

3.1 Would you like to clarify the process that was used to determine the appointment of VC Heng-Moss

Interim Chancellor Ankerson stated that the process of Dr. Heng-Moss's appointment was conducted in good faith and with transparency. She reported that the process began under former Chancellor Bennett with a 360-degree review of Dr. Heng-Moss' performance, and Shrader was explicitly invited to provide input. However, Shrader did not provide input and on February 18th Interim Chancellor Ankerson stated that she personally initiated a Zoom meeting with Shrader and ASUN President Libby Wilkins to allow them to provide input. At the meeting, she noted that Shrader stated that he had not responded previously because he did not feel he had sufficient experience with Dr. Heng-Moss. She said she wanted the Executive Committee to know that the opportunity for shared governance was extended and more than once. She noted that the advisory committee made a unanimous recommendation to approve Dr. Heng-Moss' appointment as Vice Chancellor, and UNL's Institutional Equity and Compliance Office granted a full search waiver. She reported that the UNL bylaws do allow deviations to the outlined processes for targeted searches or other reasonable situations, and she was proud of how the appointment was handled and proud of Dr. Heng-Moss' leadership.

Shrader noted that former Chancellor Bennett sent an email on December 16 and a reminder on January 9th but neither of those emails was an official notification that a job search was being initiated, so there may be some misunderstanding about the campus being informed that a job search was occurring. VanderPlas suggested that there was a lack of transparency from Chancellor Bennett about the search process and wondered why the Faculty Senate President was asked for feedback but the faculty in IANR were not solicited for feedback even though they had more contact with Dr. Heng-Moss than Shrader.

3.2 Are there any initiatives or issues on the horizon that the faculty should be aware of?

Interim Chancellor Ankerson noted that there are several significant initiatives, some in the early development stages and others moving forward. She reported that a request has been made by Alumni Association Executive Director Shelley Zaborowski to explore the possibility of alumni taking online courses either at a reduced rate or at no cost. She stated that this idea is in the very early-stage and no commitments have been made because we need to examine how such a model might work in practice, including implications for instructional capacity, faculty workload, and program integrity. She stated that she wanted faculty to be aware that this is being explored so they can be engaged in conversations about this idea. She reported that there have been other institutions who have this arrangement and often people who take these online courses enroll to get a higher degree.

Tschetter asked if faculty would get to opt out of teaching these online courses. Interim Chancellor Ankerson stated that this would be something to discuss. She noted that some schools have a curated set of courses that they offer that the alumni can take. Tschetter stated that she has some qualms about the idea pointing out that non-traditional students typically take a lot more time to work with. Shrader asked if these students would be

taking the course for a grade. Interim Chancellor Ankerson stated that they would be auditing the courses. VanderPlas pointed out that there have been persistent budget reductions for a number of years and she doesn't understand why we would want to give up even more tuition than we already do, and additionally asking faculty to do even more work. She stated that she applauds making education available to everyone, but in a time of limited resources, it's very challenging to push an initiative like this forward. Interim Chancellor Ankerson reported that this idea just recently came up and she would like to have further feedback from the Executive Committee on it.

Interim Chancellor Ankerson stated that at a recent President's Council meeting, President Gold asked campus chancellors to provide information on reduced credit degree programs. She pointed out that reduced credit bachelor's degrees are undergraduate programs that can be completed in fewer than 120 credit hours; typically, it is 90 to 119 credit hours. She noted that HLC has authorized institutions to pursue these programs, and there are more than 60 institutions that are already implementing or actively exploring these programs. She stated that the programs span a wide range of disciplines from typical business or cybersecurity to public health and education. She stated that she has asked EVC Button to establish a working group to examine this topic for UNL and pointed out that this is a conversation worth having but not a foregone conclusion and the working groups will be charged to assess having these programs. She pointed out that the faculty voice is central to the process of assessing the programs.

Shrader asked if the reason for offering these programs is financially or educationally motivated. Interim Chancellor Ankerson reported that the typical reason is the speed to work force preparedness, especially for the technology fields, and students completing the program bring in competency and evaluation skills. In some cases, prior experience would be given credit. Tschetter noted that we have something similar with the military where the students come in with experience. Interim Chancellor Ankerson stated that this was a good example and the program could be similar, but it could also be where we have a program that only requires 90 – 119 credit hours. She reported that Iowa passed a state law that every university in the state must have at least one reduced credit degree program, although she noted that we do not have a similar law in Nebraska. Shrader pointed out that a lot of questions would need to be answered.

Interim Chancellor Ankerson stated that another initiative is regarding strategic faculty investment in AAU stature aspirations. She noted that EVC Button has spoken to the Executive Committee about this and reported that the EVC office has been working toward development of a strategic faculty investment program. She noted that the program works in parallel with the work of identifying ways to position UNL for AAU stature being spearheaded by Interim VC Nelson. She pointed out together these initiatives are directly tied to our long-term implications for UNL and the stature that we have in research, institutional prestige, resources, collaborations, and graduate training opportunities. She stated that the analysis is clear in terms of what it will take to get to the AAU stature that we will need in order to be readmitted into the AAU. She reported that currently we are sitting at approximately the 10th percentile for normalized federally funded research expenditures, but to reach the AAU threshold across all Phase 1

indicators we would need to grow federal research expenditures by roughly \$21 million annually, we would also need approximately 51 additional honorific awards, increase citations by about 21,000 per year, and add approximately 125 more books over the measurement period which is for 10 years. She noted that this is an investment in a long-term strategy.

Shrader pointed out that an incredible amount of capital investment will be needed to reach the Phase 1 indicator thresholds. Interim Chancellor Ankerson stated that it would depend on how quickly we want to accelerate our efforts. She noted that EVC Button previously told the Executive Committee how some of the VSIP funds would be used to reinvest in strategic hires which could help us reach the indicator thresholds.

Eklund stated that he was happy to hear President Gold say that the arts and humanities are important to the AAU metrics. He noted that eight faculty members in the Glenn Korff School of Music are retiring and the only thing the faculty have been told is that adjuncts are being brought in to cover the courses these faculty members taught. He pointed out that there has been interest in the musical theater education program which would increase enrollment, but it was cut without the faculty ever being consulted. He stated that the faculty are getting zero information from the college administrators. Interim Chancellor Ankerson noted that she has not recently asked EVC Button about hiring faculty members, but she pointed out that current information on the budget is limited as the legislature is just starting to finish up its session and a tuition increase request will not go to the Board until June. She said that she can see people wanting to be careful with providing too much information, but some communication is needed.

Shrader stated that the university is being asked to have these other programs, but faculty members are being asked to do more, and they are already stretched so thin. He pointed out that we are not going to be able to keep offering these new programs if there is no new money coming into the university.

Gorman reported that it was published in the Federal Registry yesterday of a policy from the Department of Education that basically states that they were going to start cancelling the ability for student loans for some degrees that aren't making money. He noted that some programs cannot make it if their students can't get loans and this would be very detrimental to universities. Interim Chancellor Ankerson reported that our government relations people are aware of this and we are watching this carefully.

Interim Chancellor Ankerson stated that an online program growth incentive is coming out of the EVC's office. She noted that the current model is that the academic colleges bear the full cost of developing and delivering online programs without receiving the proportional financial return. The result is that this model creates a disincentive for colleges to invest in online program development, even in areas of strong market demand. She stated that the proposal under consideration would return 60% of net tuition generated by the online-only programs directly to those academic colleges that would provide the program, and the remaining 40% would be retained centrally within UNL. She pointed out that the new model could position UNL to compete more

effectively in a rapidly expanding online market, particularly for graduate programs and working adult learners. She noted that quality standards and faculty governance central to program development would be kept.

Tschetter asked how this would be different from what was done a few years ago. Interim Chancellor Ankerson stated that the program would be strictly online, similar to the MBA program. Gorman asked if the student would be taking only online courses to get a degree in a major or does it mean that the program is a special major that only exists online. Interim Chancellor Ankerson stated that the program would only be offered online.

Shrader asked if we are competing with our peers by offering these programs or whether we just need to do better with the online market. Interim Chancellor Ankerson stated that this is an opportunity for growth, but some departments have been reluctant to offer these programs because there wasn't any reward in doing so.

3.3 What will happen to the space in buildings that will become empty when the four departments are eliminated next year?

Interim Chancellor Ankerson stated that it is too early to make any determinations and noted that there is an established process for space allocation that will be followed. She stated that decisions will reflect strategic priority and it could take up to a year to look across the full realm of what our needs are and to make decisions.

Pierobon pointed out that the renovation of the stadium is impacting buildings as well. He stated that the loss of the Schorr Center, a beautiful building that has housed faculty offices, including his own, and has been used to host ceremonies and other events, is being torn down. He asked if the campus is getting any compensation for the loss of the building. Interim EVC Ankerson stated that the renovations to the stadium will not be a cost to UNL. She suggested that Pierobon speak with his dean about being relocated.

3.4 With the Our Bold Path Forward strategic framework there has been discussion about the curriculum and changes that could occur with ACE. Are there any ideas of how the ACE program could be changed?

Interim Chancellor Ankerson noted that ACE started in 2009, and at the time, it was a departure from the previous ES/IS program. She stated that the goal of ACE was to give students an integrative program and the framework has served us well. She pointed out that a lot of changes around education have occurred across the country and the fundamental questions we need to consider are what features, knowledge areas and experiences we want every undergraduate to have. She stated that we want to prepare our students for the future, to be life-long learners, to be curious about learning, and to engage in civil discourse. She suggested that conversations about this could be discussed through Our Bold Path Forward listening sessions. *(See attached addendum from Interim Chancellor Ankerson for more detailed information about the ACE program).*

3.5 UNK and UNO have directives telling their faculty that they must use Canvas. Can UNL have such a directive. Students need to be able to see their grades during the semester.

Interim Chancellor Ankerson stated that she understands the appeal of having a directive and she noted that the right thing to do is to let students know where their grade stands during the semester, but how faculty members structure their courses for learning, falls within faculty expertise and she does not believe that the administration should make such a mandate. She suggested that the Executive Committee members speak to their colleagues about the idea and pointed out that a directive could originate from the Faculty Senate. *(See attached Addendum from Interim Chancellor Ankerson for further information)*

Gorman pointed out that Canvas infringes on his ability to teach the course like he wants, in part because Canvas would not let him add certain extra credits. Tschetter suggested having a faculty Canvas working group. Interim Chancellor Ankerson stated that should would be happy to facilitate creating a working group. Shrader stated that in 2026 when we have so much technology available, he thinks it is ridiculous that everyone person on campus does not use the technology we have available.

4.0 Discussion about APC Membership and UNL Bylaws (Kevin Hanrahan, APC Chair and Jeff Bradshaw, APC Chair Elect)

Hanrahan stated that he and Bradshaw wanted to talk about ideas being discussed with the APC subcommittee that is reviewing some of the APC and Faculty Senate related documents. He noted that one of the discussions is about representation of faculty on governance committees and changing the list of discipline groups defined in the Syllabus of Campus-wide Committees.

Hanrahan reported that EVC Button has pointed out that there is uneven representation of the faculty on the APC and suggested that each college should have a representative. He noted that for smaller colleges this could put more pressure on having faculty members serve on university-wide committees.

Shrader asked what the drive was for the changes. Hanrahan stated that the idea is to make sure there is representation from a broader group of faculty members on governance committees. Leiter pointed out that faculty members need incentives for them to serve. Griffin noted that numerous faculty members have said that they are not given credit in their evaluations for the service work they have done, and in some cases, chairs have discouraged faculty members from serving on committees. Shrader stated that the deans need to be more flexible with faculty service apportionments.

Griffin pointed out that currently faculty members across the campus and Extension vote on who should serve on the Academic Planning Committee, the Academic Rights and Responsibilities Committee and the Academic Rights and Responsibilities Panel. She questioned how a representative from each college would be elected and what would happen should no faculty member in a college be willing to serve on the APC. The

Executive Committee, along with Bradshaw and Hanrahan, discussed the pros and cons of how a faculty member from each college would be identified.

Hanrahan asked if the Executive Committee felt that the APC should have budgetary responsibilities and pointed out that little information on the budget was provided to the APC during the budget reduction process. Tschetter noted that Interim Chancellor Ankerson has said that she would be willing to work with a Senate budget committee and suggested that the APC could work together with the Senate committee.

Hanrahan reported that the merger of Agricultural Economics and Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Communication and the merger of Entomology and Plant Pathology are both going well.

5.0 Unfinished Business

No unfinished business was discussed.

6.0 New Business

No new business was discussed.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:14 p.m. The next meeting of the Executive Committee will be on Tuesday, May 5, 2026, at 2:30 pm. The minutes are respectfully submitted by Karen Griffin, Coordinator and Ann Tschetter, Secretary.

ADDENDUM – INTERIM CHANCELLOR ANKERSON SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION

3.4 With the Our Bold Path Forward strategic framework there has been discussion about the curriculum and changes that could occur with ACE. Are there any ideas of how the ACE program could be changed?

Interim Chancellor Ankerson stated that ACE was approved by the faculty in January 2008 and implementation began in fall 2009, and at the time, it was a departure from the previous ES/IS program. Interim Chancellor Ankerson said that, at the time, ACE was a genuinely bold departure from what we had been doing. It was built around four institutional objectives and ten student learning outcomes; ACE was designed to give students a broad, integrative education with exposure to multiple disciplines, critical life skills, and civic capacities while remaining simple and transparent for students, faculty, and advisors. She said that framework has served us well, but it is now nearly seventeen years old. And the landscape around general education — nationally, politically, and pedagogically — has shifted considerably.

Interim Chancellor Ankerson cited how Inside Higher Ed featured one institution is responding. She said Johns Hopkins University is replacing its traditional distribution model with a smaller set of foundational qualities students must acquire, such as complex creative expression and ethical reasoning, while simultaneously asking departments to resize their majors so that students have more room for unprescribed, interdisciplinary exploration. This is but one example of the conversations occurring across the nation.

At the same time, she said, there are real external pressures we cannot ignore. The conversation about reduced credit degree programs, which she mentioned earlier, raises direct questions about how we think about the qualities and experiences each student graduating from UNL possesses, in relation to any undergraduate pathway (even if less than 120 credit hours).

Separately, Interim Chancellor Ankerson said there are legislative and political currents nationally that are pushing institutions toward gen-ed reform from the outside, in ways that do not always reflect faculty expertise or institutional mission. She would rather UNL shape this conversation from within — on our terms, led by our faculty — than have it shaped for us.

Interim Chancellor Ankerson said that whatever comes next, we should be bold and forward-looking, rooted in evidence about what actually serves our students well — not just for now — but for the future so they are lifelong learners, curious about learning, and embrace civil discourse.

3.5 UNK and UNO have directives telling their faculty that they must use Canvas. Can UNL have such a directive. Students need to be able to see their grades during the semester.

Interim Chancellor Ankerson spoke about the things this administration must do: directives that flow from Board of Regents policy, accreditation requirements, legal mandates, or system-level governance. And then, she said, there are things this administration should do: areas where the right answer exists, but where the path to that answer matters as much as the destination itself.

She said this question lives firmly in the second category, and that distinction is not a technicality. It reflects a core value of how UNL functions as a community of scholars.

She agreed that UNK and UNO have issued administrative directives requiring Canvas use, and she understands the appeal of that approach. It is direct, it is fast, and the underlying goal is one she fully supports. She said students deserve to know where they stand academically throughout the semester. Grading transparency is a matter of student success, trust, and equity. In her eyes, there is no reasonable argument against it.

Interim Chancellor Ankerson said teaching — how faculty engage with students, how they structure learning environments, and yes, how they communicate grades — falls squarely within the domain of faculty expertise and academic governance. She said an administrative mandate in this space, even a well-intentioned one, would bypass the very people best positioned to lead it. Interim Chancellor Ankerson said faculty are the experts on teaching. She also said this administration should not, nor needs to, reach past the Faculty Senate to direct instructional practice.

She encouraged the Faculty Senate to take up this issue and send a clear, faculty-led message to your colleagues that Canvas should be used consistently, particularly for grade communication, in support of student learning. A directive that originates from within the faculty, she said, carries a different kind of authority and legitimacy than one handed down administratively. She said it signals professional commitment to students rather than compliance with a top-down mandate.

Interim Chancellor Ankerson said her administration stands ready to be a supportive partner in that effort. If there are resources needed for Canvas training, instructional support, or implementation assistance, the administration will work to provide them. But she reiterated the leadership on this should come from the Faculty Senate and she believes that is exactly the right way for UNL to approach it.