

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES

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

Absent: Gruverman, Pierobon,

Date: Tuesday, February 10, 2026

Location: Nebraska Union, Platte River Room North

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 2:30 p.m.

2.0 Faculty Athletics Representative Professor Scott Fuess

2.1 What is the NCAA doing to help the matriculation of students who are going to their second or third different school? How are they helping them graduate?

Fuess reported that he has been serving as UNL's Faculty Athletics Representative (FAR) for six years now and he reports to President Gold. He stated that as FAR he makes sure the Athletics Department is in compliance with NCAA and Big Ten bylaws and their bylaws require that institutions must demonstrate that they have institutional control of athletics from within, which is the responsibility of the Athletics Director Troy Dannen, and also institutional control from outside of athletics, which is the responsibility of the FAR.

In answer to the questions, Fuess pointed out that the universities set their own admissions and graduation policies. He stated that when it comes to student athletes transferring what matters is whether they meet the standards for admissions. He pointed out that there are advisors who assess the transcript of a student athlete to see what classes are transferable and which are not, how many hours would be transferred, and whether the student athlete meets the standards for academic eligibility and the standards for admission to the university. He noted that universities are getting transfers from all over the country, not just from those universities within their conference.

Shrader pointed out that it seems like we are at a time when so many student athletes are transferring. Fuess reported that there are some student athletes who have transferred six or even seven times, although he stated that this is an extreme example and most student athletes transfer one, two, or three times. He stated that in calendar year 2025, 30% of Division 1 student athletes transferred. He noted that this figure represents transfers from all sports, both men and women with the highest percentage of transfers, 45% occurring in men's basketball.

Leiter asked how many of these transfer students wind up graduating. Fuess reported that universities must report a metric called the graduation success rate which is measured for all student athletes who are receiving athletically related financial aid. He noted that this information is reported back to the NCAA every year and is publicly available. He stated that the NCAA's Office of Research determined that if a student athlete transfers once early in their career, it does not slow down their progress towards degree completion. However, once a student athlete starts transferring a second time or more, they typically delay their graduate success rate by one term for each transfer.

Eklund asked if a student athlete has one year left of eligibility for playing, but they want to come here and play for that year, is this possible? Fuess stated that typically in this kind of scenario, you are talking about someone who has already earned a bachelor's degree, and they spend their fourth year of athletic eligibility in a graduate program, or as a postgraduate student. He stated that approximately a quarter of student athletes have already graduated and are in a graduate program or postgraduate. He pointed out that the figure he quoted for the percentage of students who transfer includes students who have completed a degree. He stated that if a student athlete has played for three years and has not earned a bachelor's degree, but they want to come here and play for a fourth year they must meet the university's admission standards and also must meet the NCAA academic eligibility standards.

Reimer asked if there may be any moves in the future that might limit the number of times a student athlete can transfer. Fuess reported that currently, there are no restrictions on the number of times a student athlete can transfer. He pointed out that this policy has nothing to do with NCAA membership, it has everything to do with legal proceedings, where Federal judges have so far upheld NCAA regulations, but a number of state judges have issued restraining orders, effectively overruling NCAA regulations. He noted that previously the NCAA standards limited transfers and required student athletes to sit out a year before they could play. However, the NCAA standard has been rendered null by local judges who typically say that regular rank-and-file students can transfer as many times as they want, and to limit student athletes treats them differently from regular students.

Gorman asked if the student athletes who come as a graduate student here get their graduate degree or are they just taking graduate courses in order to be able to continue playing. Fuess reported that there are two ways a postgraduate student can proceed academically, they can enroll in a graduate degree program, or they can enroll as a post-bachelor student who can take a distribution of graduate-level courses or are enrolled in graduate certificate programs. Eklund asked if it is possible for a student athlete to come here and not have to take classes to play. Fuess pointed out that they must be enrolled as a full-time student, and they must maintain academic eligibility which is that they have to pass at least six credit hours per semester. He stated that this is a NCAA bylaw. He reported that every fall and spring semester he looks at every student athlete's record to ensure that they maintain academic eligibility so that they can compete. He pointed out that if a university allows a student athlete who is not academically eligible to compete, there are consequences, both reputationally and financially, for the university. He noted

that there is one exception of a student athlete not being required to be a full-time student and that is if the student is in their final semester and they are scheduled to graduate at the end of that semester. He stated that the NCAA academic eligibility standards are predicated on a five-year schedule. He pointed out that every student athlete must meet certain benchmarks for their first, third, fifth, seventh, and ninth semesters. He reported that at the beginning of the third semester the standard a student athlete must meet is that their cumulative grade-point average must be at least 90% of the institution's minimum acceptable grade point average. At the beginning of the fifth semester, the cumulative grade-point average must be at least 95% of the university's minimum acceptable grade point average and it must be 100% of the minimally acceptable grade point average in the beginning of their seventh semester. He stated that if the student athlete does not meet the standards they cannot compete, in some cases they might be allowed to practice, and they don't get paid if they have rendered themselves academically ineligible. He noted that typical NIL agreements have a clause that states that the student athlete must be academically eligible in order to compete and get paid. Gorman asked if a university could have higher standards than what NCAA requires. Fuess stated that institutions can have higher standards.

Fuess pointed out that where there is big money, it comes from football. He noted that the other sports do not bring in as much money, and it is the institutions in the power conferences that make the most money. He reported that the financial world for collegiate sports has changed college sports greatly this year because of the class action lawsuit, which calls for revenue sharing with the student athletes, which results in an additional \$20.5 million additional cost for Athletics. He pointed out that this cost is scheduled to increase by 4% each year for the next few years. He noted that before the class action lawsuit, there were scholarship limits but no roster limits, but that changed and there are now no scholarship limits but there are roster limits. He reported that there are some universities that have publicly stated that they will expand the number of scholarships they offer to student athletes. He noted that UNL will expand the number of scholarships.

Fuess stated that every athletics department has had their expenses increased greatly and he believes there will be some schools in the power conferences that will struggle, some may struggle greatly, to provide their current athletic programs. He stated that donor fatigue in supporting Athletics might have a major impact as well. In his opinion, there could be some realignment in the future that might have a major impact on the conferences, but he noted that his opinion does not necessarily reflect the view of the institution, the Big Ten conference, or the NCAA. Eklund asked if there had been any discussion about capping salaries. Fuess pointed out that only collectively bargained wages can have salaries capped. Otherwise, it would take Congressional action to enact that change.

2.2 Faculty, especially those who teach large classes, are complaining about the increased time commitment to managing athletes' academic performance. They are particularly against it now that Athletics no longer gives \$10 million to UNL.

Fuess reported that in 2014-15 Athletics typically finished with a \$10 million surplus and the Chancellor and Athletics Director met and agreed that it was mutually beneficial for both parties to have Athletics contribute \$5 million to UNL which occurred for four years. He noted that soon after joining the Big Ten, Athletics' surplus was large enough for them to contribute \$10 million and this occurred for two years starting in 2014-15. He pointed out that no funds were given during Covid. He stated that as the contours of the looming House Settlement came into focus, it would be unlikely for there to be sufficient cushion to continue with \$10 million payments every year.

Shrader asked about payment for the services UNL renders to Athletics. Fuess stated that when Athletics uses a university service, they pay for it. Gorman asked if the faculty get paid for having to fill out the forms from Athletics about how a student is doing in a course. Fuess pointed out that it is the institution's responsibility to focus on students who are at risk for academic under achievement which is why Athletics asks faculty to complete those forms on how a student athlete is performing in their course. He stated that this allows Athletics to focus their attention on students who might be more academically endangered. He noted that faculty are not compelled to fill out the forms, but this leaves the academic advisors to try to determine how the student athletes are doing in their classes.

2.3 Does Athletics work with the rest of the campus when scheduling special events, such as the fall concert that will be held the weekend before classes start.

Fuess reported that Athletics works with the Chancellor and AVC Jackson to plan large scale events on campus. He stated that Athletics is hoping that the events planned for the spring and in August will help generate revenue, and he pointed out that Athletic departments at universities are doing these kinds of things across the country.

Shrader asked what is happening with the renovation of the stadium and what the timeline for it will be. Fuess stated that the timeline is up to the Board of Regents.

Shrader questioned at what point are we going to decide that we will or won't continue to ask the student athlete to continue to matriculate in a business while still asking them to be students. Fuess pointed out that the governing structure is still the NCAA and the student athletes are not designated as employees. He stated that it is only football that is commercially viable, and it helps pay the bills for the other sports. He noted that Nebraska is highly unusual in that there are five sports that can generate money into the seven or eight figures. He reported that some sports are very expensive and most expenses per student athlete, in large part is because of travel expenses with the basketball teams having the most travel expenses due to their game schedules. Eklund asked if it is possible to change the list of sports that we offer, such as adding men's volleyball. Fuess pointed out that this cannot be done because of Title IX.

Shrader stated that Big Ten media rights will amount to approximately \$85 million, and next year there will be an additional \$21 million from the college football playoffs, and we would get even more money if we were in the college football playoffs. He stated

that we need to stop hiring so many expensive people in Athletics and they need to start managing their money like it is a business. Fuess reported that about 62% of our revenue is from media rights and 27% is from ticket sales. He pointed out that we need to continue to be a part of the Big Ten, although, in his opinion, our continued membership in the conference could be called into question because we have some strikes against us. He stated that the strikes are that we are not a member of the AAU, our football team has not been successful, and we don't have a big media audience, due to the small size of the population of the state. Reimer asked if it would matter if we were not a member of the AAU if our football team was stronger. Fuess noted that UNL would probably not be invited into the Big Ten today due to our non-AAU status.

The Executive Committee thanked Fuess for coming to speak with them and noted that it was a very informative discussion.

3.0 Announcements

3.1 EVC Button Meeting with Colleges

Shrader reported that EVC Button is meeting with each of the colleges to discuss ways of reducing administrative costs. He noted that the EVC met with the College of Journalism and Mass Communications suggesting the Dean of Arts and Sciences could also serve as the Dean of Journalism, or that Journalism could become a school and be housed in Arts & Sciences. Tschetter pointed out that this was proposed to the APC in the budget reduction proposal last semester and the APC was against the proposal to merge the Journalism college with Arts & Sciences.

4.0 Approval of January 27, 2026 and February 3, 2026 Minutes

Shrader asked if there were any further revisions to the January 27th minutes. Hearing none he asked for a motion to approve the minutes. Tschetter moved and Vakilzadian seconded, approving the minutes. Motion approved by the Executive Committee.

Shrader asked if there were any revisions to the January 27th minutes. Hearing none he asked for a motion to approve the minutes. Eklund moved and Leiter seconded, approving the minutes. Motion approved by the Executive Committee.

5.0 Unfinished Business

5.1 Special Committee Examine Draft System Metrics

Shrader reported that the following faculty members have volunteered to serve on the Faculty Senate's special committee. They are L.J. McElravy, Leslie Delesone, Beth Lewis, Maria de Guzman, and he volunteered as well. Lewis agreed to serve as chair of the committee.

Gorman reported that the chairs of Arts & Sciences recently met to discuss their concerns with the system's draft metrics, and they are wondering who they should contact to report their concerns. Reimer reported that she asked colleagues in her department to provide feedback on the draft metrics.

6.0 New Business

6.1 Agenda Items for Interim Chancellor Ankerson, EVC Button, Interim VC Heng-Moss

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

- ❖ How many faculty members from departments that are scheduled to be eliminated received retention offers? (Button and Heng-Moss)
- ❖ The Executive Committee is requesting a detailed report on the actual savings from the budget reductions.
- ❖ Can you address why some departments are being pressured to hire faculty members that are interdisciplinary rather than specializing in a specific area? (Button)
- ❖ Concerns about the recent effects of Executive Memorandum 40 on people, particularly safety concerns for some students. (All)
- ❖ Reducing administration by merging colleges. (Button)
- ❖ What is happening with interim positions: Interim VC of ORI, Interim VC of IANR, Interim Dean of CAS, Interim Dean of Journalism? (Ankerson)
- ❖ How are the mergers of the IANR departments going and do you have a goal of when the programs will receive approval? (Heng-Moss)
- ❖ Can you provide better clarification for why it was felt that a letter needed to be sent to the faculty after the listening session with President Gold. (Ankerson)
- ❖ Do you have any thoughts on the potential impact of the recent change to the Extension Administration policy on salary savings for grants for Extension Educators? Previously, administrators allowed 50% of salary savings written into grants to be returned to the Educator to support their programming. They recently reduced this to 30%, with 70% retained by Extension Administration. Were you aware of this change? How does this policy align with IANR priorities for encouraging the pursuit of external funding? (Heng-Moss)

The meeting was adjourned at 4:53 p.m. The next meeting of the Executive Committee will be on Tuesday, February 17, 2026, at 2:30 pm. The minutes are respectfully submitted by Karen Griffin, Coordinator and Ann Tschetter, Secretary.