

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES

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

Absent: Leiter, VanderPlas

Date: Tuesday, February 17, 2026

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 2:32 p.m.

2.0 Interim Chancellor Ankerson, EVC Button, Interim VC Heng-Moss

Shrader first thanked Interim Chancellor Ankerson for her comments made during the Charter Day event.

2.1 How many faculty members from departments that are scheduled to be eliminated received retention offers?

EVC Button reported that 11 faculty members have been retained for a total of 10.5 FTE. He noted that this represents just under 25% of the total faculty across the impacted units. Vakilzadian asked if it was possible to get a breakdown by departments, but EVC Button said that he can only provide aggregate numbers at this time.

Gorman asked if the Faculty Senate will be notified of the effective date of the closure of the departments that will be eliminated, pointing out that this will impact the Faculty Senate membership. EVC Button pointed out that the Board of Regents stated that the departments were eliminated on December 5, 2025, but it is not practical to close the departments because we are still providing degree completion for students. Shrader asked how long before degree completion is met. EVC Button stated that currently the thought is that the plans will not be completed until 2028. Gorman asked if the faculty would continue to get paid. EVC Button noted that faculty members whose positions are being terminated will get paid through May 2027. He pointed out that the faculty members still have every right to serve as a faculty member whether it be on the Faculty Senate or on other committees until the end of next May.

2.2 The Executive Committee is requesting a detailed report on the actual savings from the budget reductions.

Interim Chancellor Ankerson stated that a detailed report will be made available and it will also be on the budget reduction website, regularly updated as we progress. She pointed out that the information will still be at a high level, individuals will not be specified.

Reimer pointed out that she has been hearing concerns from faculty members about faculty and staff being reduced to meet the reduction needs, but they see hiring for positions occurring and they want to know how these hires are balancing out the budget reductions. She asked if these kinds of questions will be addressed. Interim Chancellor Ankerson stated that the budget reduction website will show the reductions across UNL. Hiring of staff and faculty positions in units happen for a variety of reasons and from a variety of funding sources. She pointed out that, as an example, faculty hires may be in departments with increased growth in enrollment that their current teaching capacity could not fill. Reimer asked if there is a cache of funds that have been set aside for these kinds of needs or are we backfilling some of these positions with funds saved from the budget reductions. Interim Chancellor Ankerson stated that there are a number of different funds within colleges, and sometimes a hire is in a unit that has had an open position for some time and has pooled funds. Reimer asked if these kinds of facts are going to be disclosed for clarity's sake because that kind of transparency would go a long way with the understanding of the faculty. Interim Chancellor Ankerson stated that each circumstance is different and there is not a clear way to illustrate each.

EVC Button noted that filling some positions can also relate to some structural changes within a college. He pointed out that while some staff positions may be eliminated, it does not stop a college from realigning some things that could result in the need for some positions to be filled. He reported that any plan for hiring in this context needs to show efficiency. He stated that clarifying these decisions might need to occur at the college level rather than the campus level.

In relation to the question regarding VSIP funds, EVC Button stated that these are permanent university resources are anticipated for future faculty hiring and colleges will have the opportunity to put forward the proposals. The administration is in the process of developing the principles and timeline of the new faculty investment program in coordination with college leaders. He noted that this is a unique chance for colleges to request reinvestment and decisions will be made on a competitive basis, and it will be a multi-year process. He pointed out that we need to be very thoughtful and strategic in how we reinvest these limited funds.

Shrader asked when the campus will see what the strategic priorities will be. Interim Chancellor Ankerson stated that every member of the campus will have a role in defining the strategic priorities, and an email will be coming out soon about opportunities to engage in the process.

2.3 Can you address why some departments are being pressured to hire faculty members that are interdisciplinary rather than specializing in a specific area?

EVC Button reported that across the university there is a standard process for submitting hiring requests. He noted that the requests begin in the units, go up to the deans and then to the Vice Chancellor's office. He stated that the VCs expect to see both focused hiring requests in specific areas that meet clearly defined needs, but they also want to see an

intentional plan to leverage and expand interdisciplinary proposals. He stated that in each hiring round the VCs expect to see examples of both types of hiring requests.

Lewis pointed out that from an interdisciplinary point, her department, Teaching, Learning and Teacher Education, prepares students to be science teachers and we were one of two, maybe three, institutions in Nebraska that prepare earth and space science teachers. She asked how the administration proposes that her department moves forward to satisfy the need for earth and space science teachers when the department of Earth and Atmospheric Sciences is being eliminated. Interim VC Heng-Moss noted that they will be meeting with CASNR, SNR, and CAS to discuss how we can sustain critical teaching and research capabilities in these areas. Lewis pointed out that earth and space science teachers teaching at the secondary level need to have at least a minor's worth, if not a major's worth of earth and atmospheric sciences courses. She noted that these courses are not taught in CEHS but in CAS. Interim VC Heng-Moss stated that the goal is to continue offering selected courses aligned with these competencies and a part of the approved plan is the minor in geology and in meteorology, although there likely needs to be revisions based upon future course offerings.

Lewis stated that she received an email from Dr. Gottner, who is CEHS' Senior Director of Student Services, and she is asking what we are supposed to be doing for these students. She stated that she responded as best as she could and noted that she was asked about a teach-out plan for the current students in this area. She pointed out that this has been an area of growth that the students are interested in because of issues like climate change. Interim VC Heng-Moss asked what the requirement is for the required minimum of credit hours. Lewis stated that the minimum is 24 credit hours in the student's content area, although with our curriculum it is about 28 credit hours and it is mostly in geology but also includes a meteorology course, astronomy, and oceanography course. Interim VC Heng-Moss stated that she would be happy to meet with Lewis and with the School of Natural Resources to see if there are opportunities there for supporting course offerings.

Eklund reported that a problem faculty are experiencing in his college is that changes that are occurring are coming as a complete surprise and there has been no faculty input. He agrees that things need to evolve and change but pointed out that administrators need to speak with the experts in their areas. He pointed out that we have a talented faculty that have great ideas on how to move forward and they would like to be involved in helping the campus move forward. EVC Button stated that he firmly believes that faculty expertise is critical in hiring and thinking about future investments. He stated that he would like to have a conversation about ways that faculty are not being heard and how this can be addressed.

2.4 Many faculty have expressed serious concerns about the recent deletion from EM 40 of the University Gender Identity Policy. These faculty fear that this action may contribute to making UNL into an unwelcoming or even unsafe place for some students, staff, and faculty, especially LGBTQA+ members of

our community. What steps is UNL taking or planning to address these concerns?

Interim Chancellor Ankerson noted that some concerns about EM 40 have been shared with her, and she noted that this is a change that occurred at the system level. She is happy to listen to the concerns this group is hearing and will share them at the system level.

Gorman reported that in a CAS governing committee meeting which was set up to keep an eye on fairness in the classroom, concerns were raised by everyone in attendance about some of the changes that have occurred as a result of the changes to EM 40. He pointed out that the pronoun feature, which was a voluntary feature, has been removed from Canvas, Zoom, MyRed, and in other areas and rather than taking up the time at the meeting, he stated that he would provide additional information on where other changes have been made (see addendum to these minutes). He stated that some faculty members are even afraid to ask in class what someone's preferred pronoun is. He asked how the pronoun identification features in these programs came to be deleted and who made the decision to do so. He pointed out that EM 40 does not include language that forbids pronouns and he asked if the Interim Chancellor would have the faculty's back if they chose to use it. Shrader stated that it is a matter of respect towards students, faculty and staff to address them by their preferred pronoun and further, he noted that many student's names can be either male or female making it difficult for instructors to know how to address them. Gorman pointed out that recruitment is very important but if students don't feel welcome here, they will not come to the university.

Interim Chancellor Ankerson stated that it is her understanding that no one on our campus made the decision and she will investigate the questions being raised. She noted that ITS at the system level may have removed the pronoun identification from particular programs, but she would need to investigate further for specifics.

2.5 Reducing administration by merging colleges.

EVC Button stated that we have a strong commitment to being effective stewards of our limited resources and we will continue to explore activities that can help with our effectiveness. He noted that this could result in changes in leadership within a college, or realigning an organization, to allow us to deliver more efficient administration effectively. He noted that whether it is across two or three colleges, as long as it is the right balance, all kinds of opportunities will be considered. He pointed out that if mergers of colleges are made, it would have to be approved by the Board of Regents.

Gorman noted that in terms of mergers, the upcoming mergers of the IANR departments identified in the budget reduction proposal will affect the Faculty Senate membership. He stated that several of the current Senators' terms are scheduled to end in late April, but the mergers are not going to be approved until after this semester so he questioned whether these departments will still be able to retain representation on the Senate. EVC Button pointed out that for now things still operate as they stand because nothing has been officially settled with the mergers. He stated that this leads to a question he has about representation on certain committees, such as the APC. He noted that the Faculty

Senate's Syllabus for Campus-wide Committees defines disciplines and lists those units that fall under those disciplines. He stated that the Syllabus needs to be updated and he would like to explore with the Senate about whether or not the list of disciplines is the best way to configure representation on this campus.

Shrader asked what the guiding principles regarding unit changes and efficiencies are. Interim Chancellor Ankerson stated that we want to make sure we are looking at things in the most effective and efficient way. She noted that there is a balance between being overstaffed and understaffed and how things may have been done ten years ago, particularly in terms of people, what their remit was within those positions may have changed. She pointed out that, for example, in creating the Business Centers one of the guiding principles was to make sure we had backup and cross-training for people who handle the operational work of departments, as well as professional development and career ladder opportunities. She stated that our guiding principles always keep the goal of how we serve the state, and our teaching and research mission in mind.

Shrader asked what the difference is between effectiveness and efficiency. EVC Button stated that impact, excellence, and prominence are in our thinking of the guiding principles. He noted that efficiency can relate to whether we are doing something in the most cost-effective way. Interim VC Heng-Moss stated that another guiding principle is looking for opportunities for greater synergy and impact, complementing expertise, and leveraging strengths.

2.6 What is happening with interim positions: Interim VC or ORI, Interim VC of IANR, Interim Dean of CAS, Interim Dean of Journalism?

Interim Chancellor Ankerson noted that those serving in the current interim positions are doing admirably well, and it is important for us to stabilize these key positions. She reported that announcements about searches for some of these positions will be coming out in the near future.

2.7 How are the mergers of the IANR departments going and do you have a goal of when the programs will receive approval?

Interim VC Heng-Moss reported that the chair of APC and IANR leadership have been communicating about adhering to the APC's guidelines for creating new schools and mergers. She stated that the four departments involved in mergers have met with the IANR leadership team and they are focusing on the next steps. She noted that APC has set up subcommittees to observe the processes for creating each school, and she appreciates the extra time these APC members are committing to the process.

Interim VC Heng-Moss stated that proposals for the new schools are being developed by the units, and the expectation is to get the proposals to the APC by late April for consideration at the APC's meeting on May 6. Upon approval by the APC, Interim Chancellor Ankerson would forward to President Gold for consideration. If approved, the schools would be launched in the fall semester. The units are also creating opportunities for building community. We appreciate the commitment that the faculty,

staff, students, and unit administrators are investing in shaping and supporting the new schools.

Shrader asked how much of a saving will be realized through the mergers. Interim VC Heng-Moss stated that \$1 million for each of the mergers will be saved.

2.8 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.

Interim EVC Ankerson noted that this was discussed at her last meeting with the Executive Committee. She noted that during the session, she stepped in with regard to the graduate student and President Gold offering to meet with groups. Similarly, within that first week of her new role as the Interim Chancellor, she felt it was important for us to have clarity moving forward and did not feel that the meeting ended with that clarity. She reported that clarity is one of her priorities.

Shrader stated that he thinks, from the comments he has received, that most of the faculty felt after receiving that letter that the listening session didn't really matter. Gorman noted that the faculty needed to hear that the Chancellor really supports the faculty, not that the Chancellor supports the EVC. He stated that the faculty want to know how we are going to trust one another again. Interim Chancellor Ankerson stated that she appreciates hearing these things, so we move forward effectively.

2.9 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?

Interim Heng-Moss reported that she wanted to speak to the Extension leadership team more about this. She shared that UNL and IANR do not have a standardized rate, rates differ among colleges and units. She stated that she will respond to the questions at a later date.

2.10 Comments from Interim Chancellor Ankerson

Interim Chancellor Ankerson stated that the Charter Day Celebration on Friday, February 13th was an opportune time to really examine the whys that drive us as a campus and believes it was an important moment as we move forward together. She stated that an email will be sent out tomorrow that invites members of our campus community to begin providing input on a strategic framework that we call Our Bold Path Forward. She stated that the framework will help shape our future and our initiatives and will align our priorities and goals. She noted that there will be multiple opportunities over the next three months, for people to provide input whether it be through in-person sessions, Zoom, or online opportunities. She reported that there is a website that has the initial work that has been done and the website will be updated as we receive feedback. She invited the

Executive Committee, as leaders on campus, to participate and encourage participation of the faculty in this process.

Interim Chancellor Ankerson stated that she spoke with Interim Provost Jackson, and he has indicated his willingness to work with this group to review the data source for each system metric (including an initial baseline value) and to discuss why, in aggregate, each metric is important to track. She noted that President Gold considers improving metrics as a joint responsibility of each campus chancellor and the system. Each campus will contribute differently to their metrics based on mission applicability. She stated that Interim Provost Jackson stated he is happy to meet with the Executive Committee at a future time. Gorman pointed out that several years ago when the incentive-based budget model was being proposed, there was an extensive process on how it would work. He stated that the Executive Committee will need more than an hour to discuss the complexities of the metrics which will more than likely be used when budget decisions are made.

Vakilzadian asked what is the charge of the AI Institute that was recently announced, what is its' structure, what are the goals, and where it will be housed. Pierobon pointed out that he is from the School of Computing and the faculty of the school were completely kept in the dark about the AI Institute. He noted that the School of Computing is where AI is being heavily researched, yet they have been excluded from the Initiative. Vakilzadian stated that the same is true for Electrical and Computing Engineering. Interim Chancellor Ankerson noted that this is a system-wide institute. Pierobon stated that he does not know what kind of funding is sustaining the institute and from the explanation of the institute, he does not really understand how it matches one of the faculty members who are associated with it.

3.0 Announcements

No announcements were made.

4.0 Approval of February 10, 2026 Minutes

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

5.0 Unfinished Business

5.1 Faculty Senate Elections – Department Being Eliminated in 2027

Gorman noted that Senators' terms are for three years and there are several Senators whose terms are scheduled to end this late April, but their department is either going to be eliminated because of the budget reductions or is being merged with another unit. Griffin suggested that these current members be asked if they would be willing to remain in the Senate until their department is either merged or their contract ends in May 2027. Shrader stated that given the special circumstances we have an unavoidable situation and asked the Executive Committee if it agreed that the current Senators should be asked to continue in the Senate. The Executive Committee agreed. Griffin stated that she would contact the Senators.

5.2 Faculty Senate Subcommittee to Review System's Draft Metrics

Shrader reported that JD Madsen from the Johnny Carson School of Theatre and Film has agreed to serve on the subcommittee in addition to those faculty members who were mentioned in last week's meeting (Professors Lewis, McElravy, de Guzman, Delserone, and Shrader).

6.0 New Business

6.1 EM 46

Baesu stated that the Executive Committee needs to keep an eye on EM 46. She pointed out that EM 46 is a concern for faculty members who are doing research with faculty in other countries, particularly those who are doing research with countries identified by the federal government as countries of concern. She stated that EM 46 states that researchers can be violated if you work with any of these countries and pointed out that politics is the driving force behind this EM. She questioned how much time a researcher would have to disconnect from work they are doing with a colleague in a country that appears on the list.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:49 p.m. The next meeting of the Executive Committee will be on Tuesday, February 24, 2026, at 2:30 pm. The minutes are respectfully submitted by Karen Griffin, Coordinator and Ann Tschetter, Secretary.

ADDENDUM

Besides the disappearance of the option for students to choose the gender of words used to refer to them, the following have followed due to the changes made in EM 40:

- University Housing has changed "Gender Inclusive Housing" to "Dynamic Housing" with language on the web site that renders the program invisible to prospective trans students and their parents who seek this information out.
- Changes were made to the Gender and Sexuality Center without their input
 - Women of Courage, Character, and Commitment Award changed to "Courage, Character, and Commitment Award"
 - Removal of these workshops from their website and which they can no longer offer: LGBTQA+ 101, Pronouns 101, Sexual Health, Men and Masculinities
- Also noteworthy:
 - "Nebraska Conference for Undergraduate Women in Math" was renamed "Wisdom in Math"
 - "Women in Science" which is in its 27th year and is for high school girls was renamed "Wonder in Science"