

## UNL FACULTY SENATE MEETING MINUTES

January 13, 2026

Presidents John Shrader, Rich Leiter, and Pete Eklund, Presiding

### 1.0 Call to Order

President Shrader called the meeting to order at 2:33 p.m.

### 2.0 Announcements

#### 2.1 Board of Regents Meeting – Nebraska Medicine Buyout

President Shrader noted that the Board of Regents will be meeting on Thursday, January 15 at 9:00 in Varner Hall to consider whether the University of Nebraska should buyout Clarkson Hospital's share in Nebraska Medicine for \$800 million. He noted that there are many questions about where the money will be coming from, particularly since the university is running a budget deficit. He stated that the financing of the project should be closely scrutinized and closely watched by all of us and pointed out that this comes at a time when we are eliminating dozens of jobs on the flagship campus, and yet \$1.1 million of discretionary funds from the system level were found to give to Chancellor Bennett who officially resigned from his position.

President Shrader stated that at some point, notices will be going out to faculty and staff in and around the programs that have been eliminated. The elimination of these programs was approved by the Board of Regents based on the former Chancellor's recommendations. He stated that we need to keep an eye on the promises and the statements that were made last fall regarding the separation decisions and when they are made. He stated that we trust that the promises and the statements that were made last fall by the administration will be upheld.

President Shrader stated that some would like to say this matter that he is about to speak on his like comparing apples to oranges but to him, it's two varieties of apples. He pointed out that this fall the Athletics department gave the football coach a two more-year extension on his contract guaranteed at \$25 million. He stated that they have now guaranteed a 19 - 19 football coach close to \$70 million. He stated that this was clearly signed off by the Board but also approved by at least a couple of stops along the way to the Board. He stated that it is about treating both varieties of the apple with fairness and with appropriate fiduciary responsibilities. He noted that our job is to make sure that the apple that we are, the tasty variety that we are, is not left in the wake.

President Shrader stated that he is really concerned about the questions of fiscal management on the inside of the university, and people are increasingly asking him what the hell is going on in Varner Hall. He reported that he is hearing it in the grocery store, from friends, and from faculty members. He stated that hopefully we will get some really good answers to these questions in the coming weeks and months. He thanked the Senate for bearing with him and listening to his opening comments.

### 3.0 Interim Chancellor Ankerson

President Shrader noted that the President has appointed an old colleague and friend of ours, Kathy Ankerson as the Interim Chancellor of UNL. He pointed out that she is on the job just a day and a half, but she has been kind enough to join us, and we welcome her as the Interim Chancellor of UNL. He thanked her and stated that we appreciate her being here.

Interim Chancellor Ankerson thanked President Shrader and thanked each of the Senators both those in person and online and stated that she was really pleased to be here. She noted that we have a future ahead of us that is in our remit to forge and she is looking forward to this. She stated that the Senators have been elected because of their desire to serve and the wisdom of the Senators will help as we tackle the concerns facing us.

Interim Chancellor Ankerson reported that many people probably know her when she was Executive Vice Chancellor, but she joined UNL in 1996 and noted that many of the attributes of the people that were here then are just as valuable now. She stated that generosity, expertise, the environment of learning and research, our partnership with the State is inspiring to the people of the State. She noted that throughout her career she has said yes to opportunities to serve both here at the university and as well as leadership positions with North American and International organizations both educational and accrediting organizations. She stated that in all of these experiences she has been energized by the people that she has served with.

Interim Chancellor Ankerson stated that her education and training in professional work has honed her belief in process and she wants involvement and input early in the process of helping to forge our campus for the future. She stated that the result is stronger when there are varying life experiences, disciplinary approaches, interpretations, and their effects on defining what the issue or problem is that needs to be solved. As a result, an array of possible solutions can be developed and the best solution for the situation can be identified. She stated that there will be a variety of opportunities for the Faculty Senate and faculty to be engaged, sometimes on particular topics or others like being involved in the upcoming listening session with President Gold. She noted that she can envision having various ways to engage, for instance, pop-up engagement stations and she can see opportunities to have cross-unit working groups or scenario-based workshops. She stated that there could be opportunities for online opinion submission.

Interim Chancellor Ankerson pointed out that she wanted to have a trusted relationship where the faculty and administration work together well. She noted that in her role as EVC she had a trusted relationship with the Faculty Senate Executive Committee and together they had great and important conversations, and she expects this to occur again when she meets with the Executive Committee in a couple of weeks. She stated that it would be disingenuous of her to say that she will be a perfect Chancellor, and the faculty may not always agree with decisions that she makes, and there may be times when she will not be able to engage faculty in those decisions, but the decisions will be made in the best interest of UNL and UNL's future. She stated that she will do her very best in leading UNL and will hold herself to the highest integrity. She stated that we will work to strengthen our community, collaborate purposefully and shape our shared future as Nebraska's flagship institution.

Interim Chancellor Ankerson stated that she would be happy to take some questions but noted that this is only her second day on the job and the extent of her knowledge may not allow her to provide specific answers.

Professor Rumann, Educational Administration, stated that those faculty members in departments that are being eliminated heard at one point that they would be receiving separation letters this month, but he believes EVC Button stated that the separation letters would be coming out in May. He noted this makes a huge difference for the faculty in the job search process and he asked if there were any updates. He stated that he just wanted to make the Interim Chancellor aware of this situation for these faculty members. He stated that he appreciated the Interim Chancellor coming and speaking to the Faculty Senate today. Interim Chancellor Ankerson stated that she knows that EVC Button has been working diligently to address this issue, but she does not have that information at this time noting that it would be a good question to ask EVC Button.

Professor McElravy, Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communication, pointed out that the faculty and staff morale on campus is some of the lowest he has ever seen and there has been a lot of damage to the relationship between the faculty and the administration, but he is hopeful that this can be repaired. He stated that there is a lot of pain and hurt right now and he wants to make sure that we acknowledge this and work together through it. Interim Chancellor Ankerson thanked Professor McElravy and stated that this has been an overriding message that she has heard from people. She pointed out that she hasn't been entirely absent from campus and has kept an eye on things occurring here. She noted that morale is one thing, but when there are separations as well,

that sense of grief is something else we have to go through. She stated that we need to bolster morale which she believes comes through trusted relationships from all parties, and involvement, communication, listening and understanding.

Professor Kolbe, Johnny Carson School of Theatre & Film, noted that the Faculty Senate was paramount in helping to create a Staff Senate and he wanted to point out that it is not just the faculty that need healing, but the support staff, particularly those, including some administrators, in the Canfield Administration Building who were berated and mistreated by the person who previously held the position of Chancellor. He suggested that it might be worthwhile for the Interim Chancellor to speak with the Staff Senate as well. Interim Chancellor Ankerson noted that her comments weren't meant to be exclusive of the staff and she plans to meet with the Staff Senate.

Staff Senate President Brophy, and ex-officio of the Faculty Senate, appreciated the comment and stated that the Staff Senate looks forward to working with Interim Chancellor Ankerson and her administration. She noted that the Staff Senate is a young organization established about three years ago and the fact that all the colleagues in the room have been so incredibly supportive of the Staff Senate has meant a great deal. She wanted to take the opportunity to say that the Staff Senate looks forward to building those relationships and to working with Interim Chancellor Ankerson and her team. Interim Chancellor Ankerson stated that she views our university community and how we accomplish the things that we do as a result not of one set of people or another, but it involves all of us working together cohesively.

Staff Senate President Brophy reported that there are 57 Staff Senators but just recently four staff senators have left these past couple of weeks due to the budget reductions or being RIFF'd. She noted that the focus of the Staff Senate the past couple of years has been on staff retention so losing four staff members, who had very powerful positions in the university, is a significant loss. She stated that whatever we can do to work together, the Staff Senate would be supportive of it.

Professor Burton, Textiles Merchandising and Fashion Design, noted that his department is being eliminated and while there is a rehire possibility for some of the faculty members whose departments will be eliminated, the experience of being told that he should apply elsewhere for a Professor of Practice position because it would be good for him is kind of crazy when he is a tenured faculty member who has worked his way up the ranks for the past 22 years. He stated that it has been really painful and he is at the point that he prefers to just be left alone. Interim Chancellor Ankerson thanked Professor Burton for sharing that and pointed out that she needs to hear these things.

Professor PeeksMease, Sociology, stated that he appreciated Interim Chancellor Ankerson meeting with the Senate and asked how she was going to look review the feedback that was provided previously. He noted that faculty and staff provided a great deal of feedback but there is the feeling that it was largely ignored and dismissed. He asked how specifically the Interim Chancellor plans to go back into our recent feedback and review it so it can inform you with your plans to move forward. Interim Chancellor Ankerson stated that she plans on pouring through the feedback that has come through the APC process and other avenues. She pointed out that some of the feedback may have useful suggestions and ideas that should be considered as we move forward.

Professor VanderPlas, Statistics, asked if it means that when going through the APC feedback and reading the solutions that were offered by some of the programs slated for elimination, does that mean that the APC process or any of the decisions made would be reconsidered. Interim Chancellor Ankerson noted that the decisions will not be reconsidered and pointed out that the Board of Regents has voted to approve the budget reduction proposal and we must carry out what they voted on. She stated that there could be useful information in the feedback that could be helpful in the future.

Professor Lewis, Teaching, Learning, and Teacher Education, suggested that if the faculty members whose jobs have been eliminated are not offered an appropriate contract for the remainder of their term here so they have a chance at getting a job elsewhere, that will be against trust building, not only for these faculty members but for the rest of the faculty as well. She strongly encouraged the administration to not put out those termination letters until the end of this academic year. This way the affected faculty members will have a full year to finish their work and be on the job market. Interim Chancellor Ankerson pointed out that altering the timing of the separation notices may not be something that she can do at this point.

Professor Bourke, School of Computing, noted that the Faculty Senate shared a letter from the President of AAUP that was sent to President Gold, Chancellor Bennett, and EVC Button and which outlined potential legal ramifications the University could be facing in the elimination of the academic programs. He asked if Interim Chancellor Ankerson has a response to that letter. Interim Chancellor Ankerson stated that she has not seen the letter. President Shrader stated that he will see that she gets the letter.

President Shrader thanked Interim Chancellor Ankerson for her time and noted that she is planning on staying at the meeting for a little while longer if anyone should want to speak to her directly, they can do so in the back of the room.

President Shrader introduced Interim Chief of Staff Brian Morrison who he said is a very good and cooperative fellow.

#### **4.0 Approval of November 18, 2025 and December 2, 2025 Minutes**

President Shrader asked if there were any revisions to the November 18<sup>th</sup> minutes. Hearing none, he asked for a motion to approve the minutes. Professor Peterson, Agricultural Economics, moved for approval. Motion seconded by Professor Bednarski, Nutrition and Health Sciences, seconded the motion. The Faculty Senate approved the minutes.

President Shrader asked if there were any revisions to the December 2<sup>nd</sup> minutes. Hearing none, he asked for a motion to approve the minutes. Professor Vazansky, History, moved for approval. Motion seconded by Professor VanderPlas seconded the motion. The Faculty Senate approved the minutes.

#### **5.0 Committees**

##### **5.1 Academic Planning Committee (Professor Hanrahan)**

Professor Hanrahan reported that he is chairing the APC. He stated that representatives from the APC served on eight APRs this year, which was a larger number than usual, but the delay was in part to APRs being postponed because of the pandemic. He pointed out that the majority of the APC's time this year was spent dealing with the budget reductions.

President Shrader stated that it has been suggested that some of the APC's procedures need to be reconsidered. Professor Hanrahan stated that at the APC's meeting tomorrow, discussion will begin on reviewing documents that may need to be revised. He pointed out that the APC has guidelines for merging units, but there are no clear guidelines for eliminating programs. He noted that the Board of Regents voted on UNL's budget reduction proposal without knowing things such as what the teach-out plans will be and this information should be provided before the Board considers elimination of a program.

Professor PeeksMease noted that in a previous meeting Professor Kellas asked whether a summary of the feedback to the APC would be available to the faculty. Professor Hanrahan stated that he is not aware of the request and would need to discuss this with the APC.

Professor McElravy stated that his department, which is to be merged with Agricultural Economics, has been told of steps that the unit needs to take for the merger, but they have been given other

information which would require additional steps. He asked to what degree the APC will be involved in the procedures for merging the units. Professor Hanrahan stated that he met with Interim VC Heng-Moss and AVC Bischoff to discuss the merger on the identified IANR programs and informed them that the APC has specific guidelines regarding the merger of programs. He stated that all of the requirements defined in the guidelines need to be met. He pointed out that Interim VC Heng-Moss and AVC Bischoff were not aware of the APC's guidelines which might explain the confusion of why there are additional steps, but they agreed that IANR would follow the guidelines. He reported that he is creating a subcommittee of the APC to participate to observe how the steps to the merger are progressing. He noted that he does not anticipate the steps being completed until sometime in the beginning of May. Professor McElravy recommended that the faculty of the affected units be directed specifically to the [APC's guidelines on mergers](#)

Professor Rumann stated that he hopes the Faculty Senate and APC can have more conversations and input into the budget reduction process. He noted that a lot of responsibility was put on the APC but there was no involvement of faculty members in the formulation of the budget reductions.

Professor VanderPlas pointed out that there has been no effective communication with the students about a teach-out plan, and she knows of students that have transferred to other schools over the winter break. She stated that as the APC reworks the guidelines and procedures, they should consider requiring a teach-out plan and good communication with the students. Professor Hanrahan agreed and stated that a budget reduction proposal, public hearings, and the implementation plan should be developed before the budget recommendations go to the Board of Regents.

President Shrader stated that he has had conversations with some of the administrators who serve on the APC and who explained that the APC rules are that everyone is supposed to vote on APC matters before them. However, he believes that recusing oneself from voting is a personal thing that someone could do pointing out that even members of the U.S. Supreme Court do it.

## **5.2 Intercollegiate Athletics Committee (Professor Baldinelli)**

Professor Baldinelli reported that the IAC's Subcommittee to Assess Academic Support Services conducts an annual review of the Athletics department's academic support services. During the 2024-2025 academic year the committee examined the importance of a measure tracked by NCAA called the Academic Progress Rate (APR). She stated that this measure tracks eligibility and retention on a semester-by-semester basis, but pointed out that the APR is a more volatile measure because it penalizes a university for each student who transfers away from the university regardless of whether the student left in good academic standing.

Professor Baldinelli stated that the IAC has formed a committee to review considerations of potential issues regarding Graduate Student-Athletes as Graduate Assistants or Teaching Assistances and potential conflict-of-interest concerns. She stated that discussion on this topic led to a further discussion about undergraduate student athletes who may also be in Learning Assistant roles. She stated that the purpose of this subcommittee is to be proactive and to understand the changing landscape with the newest roles of student-athletes involved within the classroom setting before any issues may arise. She stated that the committee is expected to complete its project by the end of this semester.

Professor Baldinelli reported that other IAC subcommittees are the Scheduling Oversight Subcommittee which reviews all athletics scheduled for the academic year to ensure that teams are in compliance with the IAC's Missed Class Days Policy. The Transfer Appeals Committee is convened at the request of a student athlete but there were no appeals made during the 2025 calendar year. Athletics Scholarship Appeal Committee did not hear any appeals during 2025. The Student Athletes of the Year committee identifies female and male student athletes for the year. The winners for 2025 were Lexi Rodriguez (Volleyball) and Micaylon Moore (Track and Field). The Student Athlete Advisory Committee coordinates campus and community service activities of

student athletes, addresses issues and concerns and interacts with coaches, administrators, faculty, and other guests.

Professor Baldinelli stated that the IAC reviews a number of academic success metrics including the graduation success rate (GSR) among all student athletes. She noted that the findings for 2024-2025 will be presented to the Faculty Senate next January as the report is not available yet. She pointed out that the GSR for Nebraska during 2023-2024 was posted at 94 percent graduation success rate.

Professor McElravy reported that he had a student athlete who was a learning assistant in his class and his department worked with someone from Athletics to make sure the student was not grading other students' work. He pointed out that his department has a zero-credit option for student athletes who are in any of the assistant roles that were mentioned. He asked whether the IAC's decision on these student roles would impact a department's options. Professor Baldinelli stated that she does not think any IAC decision would replace an existing department option and it might allow for better collection of data about students in these roles. Professor McElravy stated that we should be looking at conflict of interests with any students who are grading other students.

Professor Miekeljohn, School of Biological Sciences, noted that historically the Athletics Department provided funding to UNL for academic services for students. However, that has discontinued. He reported that he teaches large classes and has been asked to provide academic updates for athletes which takes up a considerable amount of time. He asked why faculty should keep doing this work when Athletics is not providing the means for the faculty to do it. President-Elect Leiter pointed out that not only are we not getting the funding anymore, but Athletics is no longer considered part of UNL and the Athletics Director reports directly to the President. He questioned why UNL should provide all these services and suggested that the system office should shoulder the responsibility of supporting Athletics. Professor Gay stated that there is a distinction between helping the Athletics department, but if they are asking for detailed information for compliance issues, the Faculty Senate should say we aren't getting involved in providing the detailed information because of the faculty time that it requires. Professor Marya, English, stated that a Lecturer who has a 4/4 teaching schedule is not paid enough to have to then provide Athletics with detailed information. Professor Stevenson, English, suggested that it would be good to have someone come in and talk about the financial issues with Athletics and how the funds are being allocated.

President Shrader noted that during a time when college athletics is so incredibly popular, at what point do we ask ourselves why we continue to ask student athletes to take 12-15 credit hours a semester when we are running a professional sports program on the backs of these students. He believes that we should have been compensating student athletes for many years and not doing so is immoral. However, the pendulum has now swung in a different direction, and you have some student athletes who are making millions of dollars. He pointed out that this is occurring everywhere in the country. He stated that we want every single person to get the best educational experience possible, but the dynamics of college athletics are changing so rapidly that it is difficult to ensure they do, especially student-athletes who go through the transfer portal several times.

## **6.0 Unfinished Business**

No unfinished business was discussed.

## **7.0 New Business**

### **7.1 Proposed Addition to Faculty Senate Rules- Use of Electronic Voting System**

President Shrader stated that the motion to allow the Faculty Senate to use an electronic voting system comes from the Executive Committee and therefore does not need a second. He stated that the motion will be voted on at the February 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting. There was no discussion on the motion.

### **7.2 Ombuds Report (Professor Franco Cruz)**

Professor Franco Cruz reported that he wants everyone in the units to know about the [Ombuds office](#) and the services they provide. He noted that the Ombuds are there to help faculty members to resolve difficulties that interfere with their work and stated that the Ombuds provide all UNL faculty members access to confidential, informal, independent and impartial assistance in managing conflict and solving work-related problems. He reported that the easiest way to contact the Ombuds is through email.

### **7.3 Open Mic**

Professor Gay stated that he would be flabbergasted if the Faculty Senate could get someone who is knowledgeable about the Athletics department's finances to speak to the Senate. He stated that this would allow us a way of responding so we can have a faculty resolution that states the faculty will not participate in providing academic updates for compliance with NCAA. President-Elect Leiter stated that it would be interesting to know what the Athletics department makes in comparison to the rest of the campus. President Shrader noted that Athletics probably doesn't have as much money as people may think because they have increased their expenditures, particularly for some coaches' salaries. Professor Baesu, Mechanical and Materials Engineering, reported that the Athletics Department budget is publicly available, and she noted that last year they had a meager surplus of about \$7 million.

Professor PeeksMease noted that there are only eight universities that have separate budgets from the university and we are one of them. He noted that our athletics department also has no debt, but it would be worthwhile to have someone come in and speak about athletics' finances.

Professor Miekeljohn stated that the university paid \$15,000 last August to have an assessment conducted of Chancellor Bennett's work, but when a request was made to see the results of the assessment, the answer was that the system office does not have it. President Shrader stated that the President and other leaders have seen the report, but the university does not have a copy of it. He pointed out that the report is not subject to public record law if we do not physically have it.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:04 p.m. The next meeting of the Faculty Senate will be held on Tuesday, February 3, 2026, at 2:30 p.m. in the Nebraska Union, Platte River Room and via Zoom. The minutes are respectfully submitted by Karen Griffin, Coordinator, and Secretary Ann Tschetter.