

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES

Present: Baesu, Bearnese, Eklund, Gorman, Leiter, Lewis, Pierobon, Reimer, Tschetter, Vakilzadian, VanderPlas

Absent: Gruverman, Shrader

Date: Tuesday, March 10, 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.

1.0 Call (*Leiter*)

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

2.0 EVC Button

2.1 We hear so much from Varner Hall and increasingly from the administration on this campus about the Odyssey to the Extraordinary, what makes Our Bold Path Forward distinct?

EVC Button stated that our hope is that Our Bold Path Forward will be anchored by what our campus wants in a strategic framework and it will be distinctly for UNL based on our strengths and will be co-created with the faculty, staff, and students. He pointed out that our plan will be aligned with the system's Odyssey to Excellence and we are structuring the framework around the five pillars identified in the system's plan.

Leiter asked what the process will be for getting input from everyone. EVC Button noted that after Charter Day information was sent out to campus leaders, the deans, department leads, the Faculty Senate Executive Committee, the Academic Planning Committee, ASUN, and GSA asking these leaders to begin engaging with the people in their units. He reported that there is a website <https://chancellor.unl.edu/our-bold-path-forward/> where further information about gathering feedback can be found. He pointed out that he is also speaking with anyone who wants to talk about the strategic plan and noted that it is on the APC's agenda for tomorrow's meeting and he wants to have a meeting with the Executive Committee to specifically discuss what the strategic plan should look like. He stated that activities are already occurring and he has met with the College of Architecture and will soon meet with the College of Law, among others. He reported that opportunities to provide input will be posted soon and there will be round table discussions. He noted that community partners and external stakeholders will be engaged as well as they have an important role to play. Leiter asked if the website will be continually updated. EVC Button stated that the website will be regularly updated.

Leiter asked if the goal is to have the framework developed by summer. EVC Button stated that July 1 is the date when we hope the framework will be completed and then we can spend time discussing the specific targeted goals. He pointed out that we have a lot

of information on things like externally funded research awards, retention and graduation rates and other data that will help us.

Gorman asked if people's suggestions would be available on the website noting that it would be helpful to see what others are thinking which could then help generate ideas. EVC Button stated that it is possible, and if people come to the meetings, they will be able to hear from people directly what their ideas are for a strategic plan. Additionally, we will be providing a summary of feedback received as we develop the strategic framework.

Vakilzadian asked if the new strategic plan will be a modification of the N2025 plan. EVC Button noted that this is our attempt to redefine what we are going to do for the next three years. He pointed out that this will be a three-year plan because of the changes that are occurring with higher education and we want to review annually whether we are hitting the key targets of the plan. Lewis asked what the consequences would be if we didn't meet those targets. EVC Button stated that we would need to reassess parts of the plan to see if there are some strategies that aren't working. He noted that it could be for a variety of reasons such as the need for additional support, or an increase in personnel is needed, or we might need to realign the target. He stated that it would depend on what the metric is that we are looking at and that we are trying to improve.

VanderPlas pointed out that federal research funding at NSF has dropped massively making it more difficult for certain disciplines to get research funding which could result in the research goal for a unit not being realized. EVC Button noted that we received over \$411 million in research expenditures last year, but we need to look at the funding landscape to see what targets are realistically attainable. For instance, the enrollment goal, while we need to be ambitious with our recruitment, we need to be realistic with the demographic trends. Lewis stated that situational awareness across all areas is needed and pointed out that the faculty time and effort to reach some of the goals could take them away from the work they are supposed to be doing. EVC Button noted that the strategic plan will feature goals and core fundamental priorities. He stated that leadership must be held accountable in trying to meet the priorities and he thinks the energy and enthusiasm of the faculty, staff, and students will help us meet our goals.

2.2 How would you as the EVC hope to reorganize units on this campus? Is that philosophical or economical and how? How would any or all reorganization fit into Our Bold Path Forward?

EVC Button stated that any approach to any reorganization would need to be guided by our mission and vision for our campus and our institutional priorities which is to empower generations to lead boldly and courageously with purpose greater than ourselves. He pointed out that reorganization would be anchored by the question of whether it advances our commitment to the institution and to our core pillars.

EVC Button stated that as a public research university, we have a responsibility to address contemporary challenges with the expertise that we have. He noted that we need to lead in the areas of agriculture and bioeconomy, entrepreneurship, community health

and vitality, the fundamental importance of water, AI and among other areas of critical importance. He pointed out that mission drives priorities and priorities drive strategies.

Leiter asked how the faculty and stakeholders are going to be engaged in reorganization decisions. EVC Button stated that some of these ideas are being explored with some units where intellectual and synergistic energies could work and the leadership of the colleges were asked to explore the idea with faculty, staff, students and alumni and would need to tell him what they think of the idea. He noted that the idea of doing some reorganization is not tied to budget reductions.

Gorman stated that political realignment might be a good thing for some departments because it could help strengthen them. He noted that units continually want to improve, but the reality is that this does not always happen. He stated that he could see some units becoming less weak by joining with another department, but you want to make sure that some departments don't feel that they are being left behind. EVC Button stated that if there are reorganization opportunities that could protect a unit whose student credit hour and/or degrees awarded might be low, we should consider reorganizing because it would help sustain our program offerings.

2.3 How do you see UNL fitting into any reorganization of the entire system? How can we on this campus drive the re-imagining or restructuring of the entire system?

EVC Button stated that he firmly believes that UNL must be a leader in any discussion, not only about reorganization within the system, but in discussions about higher education in Nebraska. He pointed out that UNL has the talent to drive reorganization, and many people have been working and advocating in this space for three or four years. He stated that there would be opportunities for the campus to be engaged in discussions regarding the possibilities of the system reorganization and he urged the Executive Committee to seize the opportunity to be involved and to come prepared to engage in discussion. He noted that he would hope that the faculty, staff, and students would be involved too.

EVC Button reported that President Gold has been insistent that joint accreditation with UNMC will not change the structure of our administration, but the discussion in the legislature might have more of an impact on the need to be more efficient in serving the state. He pointed out that the Executive Committee should be ready to be engaged because the opportunity to weigh in on reorganization will be coming.

2.4 Give the current budget climate, has the ELT planned a budget for pre-tenure and tenured faculty who will be applying for promotion this year?

EVC Button reported that even though there were no salary increases last year, the university still is committed to supporting the increases for any promotable faculty. He stated that faculty being promoted to associate professor rank receive a 7% increase or \$4,000 for the academic year, whichever is greater. For those promoted to full professors, they receive 9% increase or \$6,000 per academic year. He pointed out that it is very important to be able to support and to invest in people.

Vakilzadian asked if there were any tools that unit chairs could use to get help in keeping their faculty. EVC Button stated that he anticipates that there will be a merit pool this spring and the university is committed to having a salary program this spring. He noted that when it comes to active retention, there should be a partnership between the unit, college, and EVC office to try to retain faculty and staff. Vakilzadian asked if EVC Button had any idea as to how much would be offered in the merit pool. EVC Button stated that the salary increase would probably be in the 2-3% range.

2.5 Faculty are concerned that the administration is making decisions that affect our ability to teach effectively without explaining the rationale. How will you address the communication problem between faculty and administration?

EVC Button reported that Interim Chancellor Ankerson is meeting with President Gold to discuss EM 40 and to get clarity on it. He pointed out that the administration is seeking clarity on this as well.

Leiter noted that last semester with so much happening with the budget reductions and realignments, it seemed that a lot of decisions were being made at the system level without input from the faculty and Faculty Senators were saying there was no open communications with the administration. VanderPlas pointed out that the EM 40 and EM 46 changes seemed to have been kept in hiding making it harder for faculty to talk about the memorandums and discuss the changes, and the issues of concerns about the changes could possibly have been avoided if the faculty had input. EVC Button agreed that there needs to be greater communication and clarification about the changes to the EMs.

2.6 Do you have a plan to involve faculty in administrative decisions? How?

EVC Button stated that the administration's commitment is to have a clear strategic direction for our campus, but we don't have a plan developed yet. He stated that there is a real desire to have as many people as possible to help co-create our strategic framework utilizing our existing structure and governance committees. Gorman suggested that the administrators can and should bring questions to the Executive Committee. Button agreed and the Executive Committee will have the opportunity to address the framework and specific questions about the draft plan in April.

EVC Button pointed out that he has met numerous times already with the Executive Committee this academic year and attended 21APC meetings between August and October. He asked how we make sure that these bodies are designed to represent the rest of the campus so that the campus community sees and understands what is occurring. He stated that if there is something that is incomplete or breaking down, he would like to know. Tschetter pointed out that there is a lot of confusion about the role of the APC and better communication is needed so people understand what the APC is and what its responsibilities are. EVC Button noted that questions about the current framework of the APC are being considered by a subcommittee of the APC, and existing procedures and documents are being reviewed for possible revisions.

2.7 The last round of budget cuts angered many faculty over the process. Do you think that this anger was/is justified?

EVC Button pointed out that for six years in a row we have had to deal with steep budget reductions and the main reason for these budget reductions is that we are not getting the level of investment that UNL needs. He reported that he is always conveying the incredible value of this campus, but the economics of education is a fundamental factor, and we need to put more energy into improving revenue. He noted that we went through a period of uncertainty and fear, to pain, loss and anger, but we are working on making improvements to the budget reduction process. He pointed out that after every budget reduction process, the Procedures to be Invoked for Significant Budget Reallocation and Reductions have been revised and that will occur again.

Leiter stated that the revenue is absolutely crucial to the university. Tschetter pointed out that the faculty feels a lot of frustration and anger because there are some members of the legislature who seem to be very anti higher education and think that the faculty do not do much work. Gorman noted that the university, and particularly the leaders, need to stand up for the faculty in public. Eklund stated that the faculty are feeling that UNL is not the flagship campus anymore. He stated that the university needs to consider whether we need so many duplicate programs at the satellite campuses. Pierobon stated that faculty morale needs to be addressed. He noted that faculty members feel exhausted because they are having to do so much additional work in addition to not even getting a salary increase this past year. He stated that if these things don't get addressed very good faculty members are going to start leaving the university to go elsewhere.

VanderPlas pointed out that the creation of the AI Institute without any involvement with faculty members from the School of Computing, Mathematics, and Statistics is an example of bypassing faculty input and involvement. EVC Button stated that people will support what they helped build and he believes in the democratic processes and values, he noted that we do have some existing procedures that we do need to follow. VanderPlas stated that faculty not having the agency or the ability to be involved in budget reduction decisions has created a serious problem with morale which needs to be addressed. EVC Button stated that making sure faculty have a voice is important and he pointed out that the faculty members on the APC voiced concerns about the original budget reduction plan this year and as a result, significant changes were made to the plan.

2.8 There has been talk among the faculty to work with the legislature to obtain a faculty seat on the Board of Regents. Do you support this idea?

EVC Button stated that it will take some significant steps to accomplish having a faculty member seat on the Board of Regents because it will require a change in state statute. He pointed out that all members of the campus community should support the university by being engaged in speaking as individual citizens to their state representative.

2.9 Are you concerned about the infringement on faculty academic freedom when the system creates a goal of 100% of gen-ed courses including AI

components by the 2027-2028 academic year? What are you doing to push back on that overreach?

EVC Button reported that in the system's draft metrics there are 155 different indicators and at this time UNL's ELT is trying to know what all these metrics mean and how they could be tracked. He pointed out that having a goal is an aspiration, it is not set in stone. He noted that we recognize that there are great diversity and ranges to teaching and while it may make sense to use AI in one course, it does not mean that it is right for other courses. Gorman pointed out that even if it is a goal to have general education courses using AI by 2027-2028, it is an infringement on courses, and the administration should not have anything to say about curriculum because it belongs to the faculty. EVC Button stated that we need to set our own targets for this campus and there will be a lot of opportunities with the strategic plan we are creating.

EVC Button stated that he would like to have a discussion with the Executive Committee that is focused on Our Bold Path Forward. Griffin noted that the EVC's next meeting with the Committee is April 14th and suggested that it could be the main topic for discussion.

3.0 Announcements

3.1 No Meeting Spring Break

Griffin announced that there would be no meeting next week during spring break.

4.0 Approval of March 3, 2026 Minutes

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

5.0 Unfinished Business

5.1 No Confidence Motion Revisions

Vakilzadian reported that he spoke with colleagues in his college and stated that the faculty were concerned about the motion and were against it. VanderPlas stated that the goal of the no confidence motion was to make the budget reduction process better and to improve communications, but Vakilzadian pointed out that a vote of no confidence is too strong and that there were other ways to accomplish VanderPlas' goal. Leiter stated that his colleagues in the College of Law were also opposed to the motion.

Bearnes stated that she has spoken to people in several of the counties and to stakeholders and the vast majority felt that the motion was too strong. She noted that some people understood the reason behind the motion, but they were surprised it was pushed forward and they were not supportive of the suggested changes to the motion. She questioned why the motion was even put forward given that the legislature is currently working on the budget and there is concern that it could negatively impact the university's budget. She pointed out that whether the motion is defeated in the Senate or withdrawn, it has already done damage to the university's reputation in the state. She stated that the worse thing for the university is not to have the confidence of the people and the legislature.

Baesu noted that the motion put the administration on guard when making decisions about eliminating academic programs. VanderPlas stated that the motion has provoked some interesting action because EVC Button is scheduled to meet with the AAUP President this week. Eklund reported that he went to the Faculty Senate meeting thinking we didn't need the motion but by the end of the meeting he thought we did and faculty members in his department were supportive of the motion.

Gorman noted that nothing has gone forward in the Faculty Senate yet. He pointed out that the Faculty Senate Bylaws state that any Senator can make a motion and then a second would be needed. He stated that a motion has not been approved and the Executive Committee was charged with reviewing the proposed amendments and correcting the last paragraph of the motion. He stated that correcting the language does not mean that the Executive Committee supports the motion as the motion belongs to the Senate. The Executive Committee reviewed the motion as it stood at the end of the March 3rd meeting and Gorman moved that the Executive Committee recommends the rejection of the amendment "and consider appropriate disciplinary actions." VanderPlas seconded the motion. Motion approved by the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee then suggested language to make the paragraph grammatically correct. Gorman then moved that the Executive Committee accepts the revised paragraph. Eklund seconded the motion. Motion carried. Griffin stated that she would send out the proposed revised motion to the Senators so they could consult with their constituents. Gorman stated that the revised motion will be put on the April 7th agenda for the Senate's consideration.

6.0 New Business

6.1 Agenda Items for Interim Chancellor Ankerson

Griffin noted that the Executive Committee would be meeting with Interim Chancellor Ankerson on March 24th and agenda items were needed. The following agenda items were identified:

Interim Chancellor Ankerson met with President Gold about EM 40 and EM 46. What did she learn about the reason for the changes to these Executive Memorandums?

Did Interim Chancellor Ankerson look into the Academic Analytics license to see if faculty can get access to their own data?

Griffin stated that she would send out an email to the Committee to gather additional agenda items for the Interim Chancellor.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:58 p.m. The next meeting of the Executive Committee will be on Tuesday, March 24, 2026, at 2:30 pm. The minutes are respectfully submitted by Karen Griffin, Coordinator and Ann Tschetter, Secretary.