

UNL FACULTY SENATE MEETING MINUTES

March 3, 2026

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

1.0 Call to Order

President Shrader called the meeting to order at 2:31 p.m.

2.0 Announcements

2.1 Letter to President Gold

President Shrader reported that he has sent a letter to President Gold conveying the concerns the Executive Committee has over changes to EM 40, EM 46, and the AI Institute, and he will send a copy of the letter to the Senators. He stated that he has not received a reply from President Gold yet.

2.2 Election of Executive Committee Members

President Shrader noted that Executive Committee elections will take place during the April 28th Senate meeting. He reported that candidates are still needed for the President-Elect, Secretary, two Executive Committee members, and an Extension Educator. He asked the Senators to contact either himself or Coordinator Griffin if they are interested in running for election.

3.0 Senior AVC Goodburn

3.1 Key Initiatives Focusing on Supporting Undergraduate Success

Senior AVC Goodburn noted that once a year she provides an update on undergraduate student performance and she will focus on initiatives we are doing to enable students to be successful. She reported that there are twelve units that support student success and they fall under the categories of advising and career readiness, student support, teaching and learning, and advisory councils and committees. She pointed out that the work that we have been focusing on for the last five to six years for student success falls within the Odyssey to Extraordinary pillars, although there are a few newer metrics that have been included.

Senior AVC Goodburn reported that our first-year student performance shows an 85.7% first-year retention rate for fall 2024, a 95.0% fall to spring retention for fall 2025, and 84.54% of first-year students earned at least 15 credits in fall 2025. She reported that the overall undergraduate performance for fall 2025 showed a 67% six-year graduation rate, 51.9% four-year graduation rate, 3.292 average GPA, 53.15% of students earned 3.5 or above GPA, 14.103 average attempted credits for undergraduates, 13.119 average of earned credits, only a 2.80% course withdrawal rate, and 6.72% were on academic warning level which is a historic low for us. She noted that the graduation rates do include some credits that students came in with from high school, but that the overall undergraduate performance graduation rate is the highest ever, the four-year graduation rate is the second highest and students are performing at the highest level she has seen in the fourteen years she has been in the EVC office. She stated that students are encouraged to take a full load of classes.

Senior AVC Goodburn stated that the principles of the ecological validation framework include serving students equitably on scale, coordinating delivery of programs and services, addressing institutional barriers, collaborating for efficiencies, tailoring actionable communications, sharing data for insights and decision-making, and monitoring progress and celebrating wins. She reported that areas for student success are new student transitions and Husker POWER, proactive advising and well-being support, academic and curricular design and planning, affordable courses and experiences, career connections and post-graduate success. She stated that an example of where improvements are trying to be made is with math placement. She reported that work is being done with the department of Mathematics, New Student Enrollment, and Undergraduate Analytics to remove math placement barriers. She stated that high school math scores and self-inventory would

be used to place first-year students. She stated that these efforts reduced advising time by 33% while students' math grades remained consistent.

Senior AVC Goodburn noted that another area of improvement is with new transfer students. She stated that a "Building Bridges" transfer initiative with Southeast Community College is being enacted as well as coordinated training, exchanges, and professional development for advisors, and an infrastructure to house and update all curricular pathways to UNL is being developed. In addition, a transfer guide for SCC students interested in UNL is being created and the CAST transfer success series is being launched. She noted that the Stellic degree plan and scheduling tool tracks degree and major completion and provides advisors with customized filters and reports while also enabling students to build multi-semester plans and allows them to explore alternative UNL and transfer path equivalences. She pointed out that the Explore Center has been working with UNMC for a long time now and we have had numerous pre-health workshops and conversations are already occurring with nursing students who want a dual program.

Senior AVC Goodburn reported that a group is looking at the Husker Student Power Framework and how it can be used for upper class students as well as under class students. She stated that the HSP survey can be used for outreach and benchmarking institutional efforts and can identify upper-class co-curricular opportunities to promote HSP.

Senior AVC Goodburn stated that the Center for Transformative Teaching has a course design to help enhance student learning and the Century Club, for professors who teach classes of 100 or more students has been relaunched. The CTT also provides enhanced pedagogical training and the University Libraries, through the use of the Successful Teaching with Affordable Resources (STAR) program, have saved students over \$3 million since the initiative began in 2019.

Senior AVC Goodburn reported that career readiness efforts have been occurring with the colleges and Career Fairs had 6,351 students meeting with 794 employers. There were also 8,094 coaching appointments for students and there are new, free Coursera courses for employer-valued credentials. In addition, Senior AVC Goodburn pointed out that 230 student researchers were involved with UCARE and FYRE, there have been 44 interns in Honors/Foundry collaboration and 9 summer interns across Nebraska on mental health. She noted that 8.5% of UNL undergraduates engaged in research/creative activity in 2024 and which is the highest across the NU campuses. She stated that the first destination survey will allow colleges to see their own data on student success and noted that this is a brand-new pilot with our spring class.

Senior AVC Goodburn wanted to thank all the faculty and staff that have participated in the last three years in the forums that have been held to focus on identifying barriers for student success.

Professor Bourke, School of Computing, asked if Stellic connects with existing degree audits so when somebody plans something, that it automatically validates in the degree audit. Senior AVC Goodburn noted that UACHIEVE will be phased out with the move to Stellic next year and when Stellic is in place it will automatically validate any new plans in the degree audit.

4.0 Interim Chancellor Ankerson

Interim Chancellor Ankerson reported that at the most recent Faculty Senate Executive Committee meeting, the subject of the AI Institute came up. She recalled from serving as EVC, the formation of the AI Task Force and reported that the task force was formed around August 2024, was system-wide and included six UNL members: Dr. Mohammed Hasan; Dr. Scout Calvery; Sydney Brown; Dr. Santos Pitla; Ben Lennander; and Dr. Adrian Wisnicki. She noted that faculty may recall a survey the group conducted and there were multiple messages in November 2024 regarding the AI Task Force, both from the system level and from Nebraska Today. She pointed out that President Gold referenced the AI Task Force in the September 2025 State of the University address and the final report of the AI Task

Force was linked to the February 9 news release from the University of Nebraska System and can be found on the NU System website. She stated that the AI Institute has grown out of the IA Task Force work and is co-led by two UNL faculty members who were on the Task Force: Dr. Santos Pitla and Dr. Adrian Wisnicki.

Interim Chancellor Ankerson noted we celebrated Charter Day with an event on Friday, February 13 where she invited leaders to share their unit's "why" - the purpose that guides our academic programs, research and creative activities, extension efforts, and student life - as we look toward the future. She reported that we followed up with a campus-wide email on Charter Day, Sunday February 15, containing links to videos of the messages, exploration of our original charter, and more to commemorate our 157 years.

Interim Chancellor Ankerson stated that on February 18, she, with the members of the Executive Leadership Team, sent a message to campus leaders, including all members of the Faculty Senate Executive Committee, requesting their help in developing *Our Bold Path Forward: UNL's Strategic Framework*, a framework that will define UNL's vision and priorities and provide guidance for colleges, units and departments as they set actionable goals and strategic priorities through the 2028 – 29 academic year.

Interim Chancellor Ankerson stated that they called upon all campus leaders to create open opportunities for students, faculty, staff and community partners to help give shape to *Our Bold Path Forward*; asking that they share the strategic framework website with everyone in their community and encourage their participation. Through this process, during this Spring, every member of our community will have meaningful opportunities to contribute ideas, provide input and help design actions that reflect the aspirations, expertise and lived experiences of our campus; in other words, contributing ideas, participating in unit-level planning and helping align our daily efforts with the goals that define UNL's next chapter. She noted that throughout the process, the website will be updated periodically as we gain input. She pointed out that this work aligns with the 5 pillars of our University of Nebraska System's *Odyssey to the Extraordinary*.

Interim Chancellor Ankerson stated that she is grateful for campus participation (over 375 faculty contributed) over the past several months to define a research identity framework for UNL. That framework is a meaningful articulation of UNL's research distinction that will be leveraged for guiding *Our Bold Path Forward* as a research university.

Interim Chancellor Ankerson noted that during these 7 weeks that she has been serving in this office, she has met with many legislators, alumni, donors, and groups ranging from the Nebraska Association of County Extension Boards to Ag Builders of Nebraska, to the Nebraska Chamber of Commerce; highlighting the amazing work being done at UNL in research and scholarship that affects our state and world, and in the academic excellence in preparing our students for their next step.

Enrollment

Interim Chancellor Ankerson stated that while it is still early in the final cycle of our Fall 2026 enrollment outlook; it is reasonable (barring unforeseen circumstances) that we will be above our Fall 2025 outcome of 4,734 first time freshmen. She noted that the next major event is Admitted Student Day – March 28, which coincides with the Spring Game. (Enrollment deposit deadline is May 1).

External Honors and Awards

Interim Chancellor Ankerson pointed out that we have much to be proud of – in the past 10 years we have increased external honors and awards UNL faculty have received from 63 to 105; and our NSF Career Awards from 4 to 9. She noted that we have been in the Top 100 Worldwide National Academy of Inventors for 8 consecutive years, and recently, out of the total of 230 senior members selected this year, 5 are UNL innovators! She stated that we have experienced growth from 100 to 106 invention disclosures from 2015 – 2020; and from that 106 five years ago to 144 invention disclosures in 2025.

Research

Interim Chancellor Ankerson stated that research expenditures totaled \$289 million in 2015; \$320.5 million in 2020; and reached nearly \$412 million for 2025.

Interim Chancellor Ankerson pointed out that as Dr. Goodburn outlined, intentional and strategic student success efforts have resulted in increases in retention and graduation rates. She stated that this is incredible momentum that we must continue.

Interim Chancellor Ankerson stated that all of us want a university that we can be proud of, one that boldly shapes a future of limitless promises and lasting impact through our student success, scholarship and research. Each of the members of our Executive Leadership Team play an essential role in creating that future. She noted that EVC Mark Button, Harlan VC of IANR Tiffany Heng-Moss and Interim VC of Research & Innovation Jennifer Nelson have her total confidence and respect.

Interim Chancellor Ankerson noted that since assuming the role as Interim Chancellor, she has spoken with many university supporters and stakeholders including faculty and staff. They recognize the difficult choices our university faced, and they share my view that our institution's best days are in front of us. We will not fulfill that potential, however, until all of our faculty partners collaborate on solutions-based, forward-looking actions. I invite you to join me in working toward that future together.

5.0 Approval of February 3, 2026 Minutes

President Shrader asked if there were any revisions to the minutes. Hearing none, he asked for a motion to approve the minutes. Professor Reimer, Glenn Korff School of Music, moved to approval. Motion was seconded by Secretary Tschetter and then approved by the Faculty Senate.

6.0 Committees

6.1 University Undergraduate Curriculum Committee (Professor Kirk)

Professor Kirk, Chair of the UUCC, reported that the bulk of the work of the Committee has been focused on course changes. She noted that there is a subcommittee that oversees ACE courses and this year's work have been on recertifying ACE 4 courses. She noted that next year (2026-2027) only ACE 5 courses will be under review. No questions were asked.

6.2 Parking Advisory Committee (Director Carpenter)

Director Carpenter reported that the Parking Advisory Committee had no chair this year because none of the members were willing to serve as chair. He noted that the PAC has the responsibility for reviewing and making recommendations on policies and regulations pertaining to Parking and Transit Services. He stated that recommendations from the Committee are given to the VC of Business and Finance and he reported that the PAC conducts an annual review of the existing parking policy and considers any new recommendations, which would include fees. He stated that a review of capital improvement projects is reviewed to see what impacts they would have on the operating and revenue expenses for Parking & Transit Services. He pointed out that the

Committee serves as an advisory capacity.

Director Carpenter happily reported that there will be no increase in parking fees this year. He noted that an increase was proposed but a fees memo including the proposal was submitted too late for consideration.

Director Carpenter stated that the Committee received three suggestions from the campus. The first one was about having a refund policy on occasional use of daily scratch permits. He pointed out that a 10-pack of Occasional Daily Scratch Permits has expiration dates and the suggestion was made to provide a refund if the purchaser does not use all 10 of the permits. He noted that under the current policy, refunds are not permitted. He stated that the PAC emphasized the need to improve communication about expiration dates at the time of purchase.

Director Carpenter reported that another suggestion was to allow permit holders to rent out their parking permits to others when they are not on campus. He stated that the Committee decided not to allow this because any parking permit citations are tied to the permit account, not the vehicle, which means the original permit holder could be given a citation for a violation that was committed by the person renting the permit. He stated a staff member contacted Parking Services to say their vehicle did not have a license plate bracket so they were putting their license plate on their dashboard, but he stated that the current method of identifying those with permits requires that the license plate be visible on the outside of the vehicle so it can be efficiently scanned.

7.0 Unfinished Business

7.1 Approve Ballot for Election to Academic Planning Committee, Academic Rights and Responsibilities Committee, and Academic Rights and Responsibilities Panel

President Shrader noted that the ballot was presented last month and since then several additional faculty members have volunteered to run for election and their names have been included on the ballot. He asked if there was any discussion. Hearing none he asked for a vote to approve the ballot. The Faculty Senate approved the ballot and President Shrader stated that the ballot will be sent out electronically to the faculty.

7.2 Report from Special Committee Reviewing Draft System Metrics

President Shrader reported that the Faculty Senate's special committee to review the draft system metrics has met three times. Professor Lewis, Teaching, Learning and Teacher Education, and chair of the special committee thanked the members of the committee for their work. She stated that the special committee has generated two sets of questions for the administration which were sent to Interim Provost Jackson and he was invited to speak with the special committee and he has agreed to meet with them. She felt that some progress was being made and she is happy to receive input from faculty members about their concerns with the metrics.

President Shrader asked how much of the conversation with Interim Provost Jackson the committee will be able to share. Professor Lewis stated that pretty much all of the conversation should be available. She noted that she did convey the concerns the committee has with how the metrics were used in the past. She stated that the meeting with Interim Provost Jackson can be used as an opportunity to rebuild some trust in how the administration will use the metrics.

8.0 New Business

8.1 Motion for a Vote of No Confidence in EVC Button, VC Heng-Moss, and Interim VC Nelson

Professor VanderPlas, Statistics, stated that she was presenting a motion for a vote of no confidence in the three administrators because they were the architects of the budget reduction proposal which eliminates four departments, resulting in the elimination of tenured faculty positions while millions of dollars are being found through the VSIP that could be used to save these departments. She pointed out that these eliminations have done damage to the faculty morale, will make recruiting faculty in other departments more difficult, will impact donations to the university, and will impact

our ability to recruit students. The motion was seconded by Professor Vazansky, History.

Professor Bourke asked if the motion was approved would the identified administrators resign or be dismissed, and if dismissed, would they be given a golden parachute like Rodney Bennett received when he resigned as Chancellor.

Professor Broderick, Plant Pathology, pointed out that the faculty are angry and the budget reduction process was done very poorly, but he believes the anger is directed at the wrong people, some of whom have been at UNL for many years, and questioned why this was not a motion for a vote of no confidence in President Gold.

Professor Harris, Biochemistry, stated that he would like to know more about how EVC Button, VC Heng-Moss, and Interim Nelson impacted the budget reduction process. He asked what the follow up plan would be if the motion was passed.

Professor Zuckerman, Educational Administration who was sitting in for Professor Rumann who was unable to attend the meeting, stated that President Gold is ultimately responsible for what happened at UNL and reported that the AAUP is working with the other campuses to address the concerns that have been raised with the budget reduction process and for future budget reductions. She noted that the students in her department, which is to be eliminated, still do not know about the teach-out plan despite repeated emails being sent to EVC Button and she pointed out that the information on the budget reduction website is incorrect.

Professor McElravy, Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Administration stated that he understands the frustration that the faculty are feeling and he was very disappointed in the way the metrics were used. He recalled that he asked Chancellor Bennett if he still had confidence in the budget reduction process and his response was yes because he had confidence in EVC Button and VC Heng-Moss because they were handling the budget. He pointed out that he does not think a vote of no confidence is helpful because we do not know exactly what happened with the process and instead a formal review of what occurred in the recent budget reduction process should be conducted. He noted that he was very disappointed that the Interim Chancellor did not take questions today.

Professor VanderPlas stated that the original version of the motion was much longer and explained a lot of the goals of the motion. She was not looking for vengeance, but it is problematic that they want the campus to just move on while no one admits that there were mistakes made in the process. She pointed out that the way the budget reduction happened showed a failure of leadership.

Professor Bednarski, Nutrition and Health Sciences, noted that this is a very emotional time and the faculty are hardly happy with our administration and how unaccountable they are to the faculty. He pointed out that we already had a vote of no confidence in the Chancellor who resigned with a golden parachute and the Interim Chancellor doesn't want to answer questions. He stated that we will eventually be hiring a new Chancellor but questioned what messages we are sending with this vote of no confidence. He pointed out that his department is searching for a new chair, but it has been a very hard process due to the candidate pool being very small. He stated that he thinks we deserve much better administrators but questioned whether we are helping ourselves by having another vote of no confidence.

Professor Menon, Teaching, Learning, and Teacher Education, stated that she is not certain of the vote but believes it will serve as a strong and meaningful statement and shows the faculty stand united, even if the outcomes are uncertain. She pointed out that the Office of Research and Innovation's research identify framework and research agenda is a joke, reporting that she provided feedback and explained how teacher education was not presented well in the framework and yet when she provided input a second time noting that STEM teaching and learning in the schools could represent the university well, no changes were made to the research framework even though

Interim VC Nelson said it would. She stated that she supports the motion of no confidence.

Professor Gay, Physics and Astronomy, noted that he is a member of the APC and sat through the budget reduction process. He pointed out that he did not think the Chancellor had anything to do with the budget reduction process because he delegated the work to the ELT, who came under the thrall of the metrics, but he noted that it was repeatedly pointed out that the metrics were incorrect. He stated that there were some vague administrative cuts with no real specifics identified, but very specific department cuts were easily identified. He noted that if you look at the changes in the employees of the university from 1977 to 2024 and normalize that to student growth, the faculty numbers have increased by 4%, the staff have decreased by 35%, and the administration has increased by 55%. He repeatedly pointed out during the APC budget reduction that reductions can easily be made in administration in order to prevent elimination of academic departments, but this is foreign to administrators. He stated that he has mixed emotions about the motion but agreed that we need to make an angry statement to show that the faculty stand together. He agreed that the real problem seems to lie with President Gold and the motion should be for him, not the three ELT members. He pointed out that giving Chancellor Bennett the \$1 million golden parachute was akin to giving the faculty the middle finger. He stated that the listening session with President Gold and Interim Chancellor Ankerson was very patronizing.

President-Elect Leiter agreed that the motion of no confidence should be for the President. He noted that the faculty do not have a representative on the Board of Regents, although work is beginning to try to get this changed. He stated that there is a problem with communications because the faculty do not have an effective way to communicate with the Chancellor, administrators, the Board of Regents, and the citizens of the state. He pointed out that Interim Chancellor Ankerson stated that we should work together, and he believes we should employ every opportunity to open up that line of communication.

Professor Marya, English, stated that it is unfortunate that this situation makes us look like we are in a battle. She noted that while she does not know whether the vote of no confidence will do anything besides going to battle with the administration, she believes we have to find a way that we as a faculty stand in solidarity. She stated that amending the motion so it is a vote of no confidence in President Gold speaks to a level of solidarity and would show the administrators that they need to understand the faculty's anger, and they need to work with us and answer our emails. She stated that she would support the motion.

Professor Krehbiel, 4-H Youth Development, stated that the question is how we hold the administration accountable and how the faculty is heard. She noted that it is like the faculty must act like a toddler kicking and screaming to get attention. She pointed out that the appointment of Tiffany Heng-Moss from Interim VC of IANR to VC of IANR did not follow the established procedures in the Regents Bylaws and the faculty were not asked about her performance before she was appointed as VC, which she noted is a scary precedent. She questioned what would happen with the upcoming Chancellor search. President Shrader noted that he shared the faculty's concerns about the appointment of VC Heng-Moss with the Interim Chancellor.

Professor Timmerman, Extension Education, asked how many faculty members have conversations with the citizens of the state and explain to them what we do as faculty members or whether people have spoken with legislators. She noted that she must do this all the time with her work. She stated that the question is how we come together as a Faculty Senate and combine with the administrative units to show the people of Nebraska the value of the university. She pointed out that this is something we need to spend time doing as well as speaking with the administrators.

Professor McElravy noted that after reviewing the APC's Procedures to be Invoked for Significant Budget Reallocation and Reduction, he stated that there was a conflict of interest with the administrators, who are members of the APC, in being able to vote on the proposed budget reductions. He pointed out that they should have recused themselves from the voting. Professor

Gay stated that even if there is not a legal impropriety, there is an apparent impropriety in not recusing themselves from the voting. He noted that if the Chancellor had been doing his job, things would have been different, but as it was the APC had an undue burden placed upon them.

Professor Stevenson, English, said she was struck by those not wanting to support the motion and asked if there are any indications that things have improved. She asked if there are indicators out there that communication is better and noted that we need a solution, but she does not know what tools the Faculty Senate could use to not only improve communication with the administrators and vice versa, but also to control the narrative about the value of the faculty and university with the Nebraska voters.

Professor VanderPlas offered an amendment to the motion in the last paragraph to include “of their ability to communicate substantively with the faculty and create a trusting work environment for all faculty, staff, and administration” and to delete the language “of their continued fitness to serve, and that the Faculty Senate urges the Board of Regents and the President to initiate proceedings under Board policy for removal or negotiated resignation.” She then said she would like to revise her amendment to state “an immediate review of their recent job performance, particularly with regard to their ability to communicate substantively with the faculty, and create a trusting work environment for all faculty, staff, and administrators.” Professor Peterson, Agricultural Economics, seconded the motion.

Professor Baesu, Mechanical and Materials Engineering, thought that the new revision to the amendment made the motion too lame. She suggested language such as “their continued ability to serve under these circumstances given the grievances expressed by the faculty.” Professor VanderPlas seconded the motion. President Shrader noted that the amendment now reads “following immediate review of their ability to serve in light of these faculty grievances, as well as communicate substantively with the faculty, and create a trusting work environment for all faculty, staff, and administration.

Professor Rose, Food Science and Technology, pointed out that there was previously language about removing the administrators from their position, but then it was removed and now we are essentially putting it back into the motion. He suggested instead of including language “appropriate disciplinary action” rather than saying they either stay or go.

Professor Barrett, Psychology, stated that he was less concerned about the final clause and was more concerned about who was being held accountable and by whom. He stated that he is not convinced that sending a message to President Gold and the Board of Regents would do much since they approved the budget reduction plan and in fact promoted two of the ELT members from interim to permanent. He felt that the message needs to be more forcible and needs to be directed at President Gold and or the Board of Regents to hold them accountable.

Professor McElravy moved that the Executive Committee review the motion to correct it for minor revisions and have it ready for the April 7th meeting. Professor Vazansky seconded the motion. Motion was approved.

Professor Miekkeljohn, School of Biological Sciences, asked if he could discuss the motion with his faculty. President Shrader stated that after the Executive Committee corrects the grammar in the motion, it will be sent to the Senators so they can discuss it with the faculty in their department.

8.2 Open Mic

Professor Kolbe, Johnny Carson School of Theatre and Film, reported that students have to produce a portfolio of their accomplishments in order to be accepted into the department’s program and he is seeing a massive amount of grade inflation from the high schools. He stated that the university needs to reconsider requiring the ACT scores again for admittance. He noted that he is seeing ACT scores below 19 but yet some of the students have a 3.8 or 3.9 high school GPA.

Professor Gatti, Teaching, Learning and Teacher Education, presented data showing faculty reductions and lost research funding, while expressing frustration that no one at the university pushed back against budget cuts. She pointed out that the faculty are being asked to do more with zero pay increase and as a result we are losing faculty members to other universities and through VSIP. She wanted to address the metrics and pointed out that last year, due to the President's agenda, all of the large federal grants in certain categories have been eliminated. She stated that we need people to fight for our faculty or we will continue to be weakened by others. She noted that faculty are demoralized and exhausted and stated that there is a very real feeling that no one is fighting for the faculty and the students. President Shrader pointed out that the narrative that is occurring is that some people believe that the faculty are the problem and there is no pushback on this from President Gold, the Chancellor or the Board of Regents and it is demoralizing. He said make no mistakes; the shots are being called by Varner Hall.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:54 p.m. The next meeting of the Faculty Senate will be held on Tuesday, April 7, 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 Ann Tschetter, Secretary.