

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES

Present: Bradford, Fech, Hachtmann, Jackson, McCollough, Prochaska-Cue, LaCost, Ledder, Lindquist, Rapkin, Zimmers

Absent: Franti, Schubert

Date: Wednesday, July 16, 2008

Location: Faculty Senate Office, 420 University Terrace

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 to Order

Prochaska-Cue called the meeting to order at 2:31 p.m.

2.0 Vice Chancellor Owens

2.1 Faculty Pay for Summer Session Courses

Prochaska-Cue reported that faculty members have approached her about how they are paid for summer session courses. She pointed out that the concern is that if an instructor prepares for a course and not enough students register for it the instructor will have to undergo a reduction in their pay. She asked if this is fair and pointed out that it does not seem like a good idea if the effort is to try and increase enrollment for summer session courses.

Vice Chancellor Owens noted that most of the faculty on east campus are 12-month appointments so he does not have a lot of familiarity with the subject at UNL. He stated that he is sure that SVC Couture will take a look at the situation.

2.2 Distance Education

Prochaska-Cue stated that a recent article in the Atlantic Monthly generated discussion on distance education and whether some of the students enrolled in these courses are academically able to handle them. She noted that the Committee wants to discuss the issue with SVC Couture but they also welcomed any ideas VC Owens may have on the topic. She stated that she understands that there is an effort to increase distance education and the profit potential it has for the university. She asked if there was a way to screen distance education students better.

VC Owens stated that it ultimately ties into the admissions process. He noted that with the distance delivered masters program in entomology and they do not have this same problem. He suggested that the Committee invite Associate VC Batemen to talk about this issue.

Ledder asked how students get admitted to distance education courses if they are not regular students. LaCost stated that they sign up for the courses. She noted that she has masters' students from other states and they are not admitted to her department's program. She stated that her overall sense is that over the years some of the distance education students do not track the same as regular students and she does not think they see themselves as part of the student body. She pointed out that distance education students do not have the socialization that regular students have.

VC Owens noted that several months ago President Milliken engaged a consulting firm to look at distance education for all of the campuses to see if there were ways to make it better and more comprehensive. He stated that there should be opportunities for each of the four campuses to find a special niche in distance education.

LaCost pointed out that teaching distance education can be a lot more time consuming for instructors. She noted that an instructor may have to increase their learning curve with Blackboard. She stated that more people are needed who specialize in computer assistance who can help train the instructor to use Blackboard or other technology for distance education courses.

Hachtmann pointed out that another thing that needs to be improved is the technological equipment that is being used to deliver the courses. She noted that in some synchronous distance courses she has had problems with Breeze when more than five distance students are participating in class.

LaCost noted that distance education students pay a fee but she is not sure of the particulars on the pay.

Prochaska-Cue stated that the Committee will discuss these concerns with SVC Couture when they meet with her on August 27th.

2.3 Upcoming Issues

VC Owens reported that the state fair petition did not get enough signatures to put it on the ballot.

VC Owens reported that state revenue is up and any impacts this might have on the university's Legislative funding in the upcoming session are unknown at this time.

VC Owens reported that he was recently in China at the Zhejiang University in Hangzhou, and graduate students from there will be coming to UNL to earn their masters degrees in agriculture, natural resources, and related areas. He stated that Zhejiang University has invited UNL to join with them to create the first Sino-United States extension and experiment agricultural station in China.

McCullough asked if we have any involvement with programs in the Mideast. VC Owens stated that we do and there are a number of people who have been involved in Jordan as well as some possibilities in Pakistan.

Jackson asked what VC Owens thinks the impact will be on agricultural programs and research, particularly in regards to the land around 84th street, when the transition associated with the state fair grounds takes place and a horse track is built. He stated that he thinks if the 391-acre Agronomy and Horticulture Research Facility there were to be sold, there should be enough money available to replace the research property and to develop the 84th street property for other uses. He stated that he thinks the research could be relocated to another suitable location assuming sufficient funds were available from the sale to purchase new property. He pointed out that there are some major regulatory problems with having large animals outside on east campus that are not confined under cover because of the possibility of water pollution from run-off in that area. He stated that there will probably be some inconveniences to faculty and staff members if the 84th street property were to be sold, but nothing that can't be dealt with if the Agronomy and Horticulture Research Facility is replaced. He noted that the University has been at this location since the 1940s.

VC Owens stated that the state fair plans and the 84th street property are complicated because there are multiple partners and possibilities involved. He noted that the plans include the possibility of moving the horse racing out to the 84th street property. He pointed out that racing takes place for a short period of time during the year and the rest of the time the buildings will not be used for horse racing and those buildings could be used for academic programs involving horses and other livestock as well as for the UNL rodeo program. This could solve the run-off water pollution situation on east campus.

Lindquist asked what kind of lead time will be given to the researchers if the land is sold. VC Owens stated that he does not think anything will happen too fast. He pointed out that the value of the land must be considered and when might be the best time to sell it if the decision were made to explore selling the property. He noted that a date of 2012 was mentioned in the newspaper as a possible time when things will take place. He stated that this will be a complicated process and a large amount of money is needed for the transactions to happen but the university and students will benefit in the long run. He noted that there might be some inconveniences for agronomists who have had research plots in the area for a long time and that with proper planning and sufficient lead time these inconveniences could be minimized.

3.0 Announcements

3.1 Chancellor's Commission on Environmental Sustainability (CCES)

Prochaska-Cue reported that the Chancellor is asking for a list of eight faculty members who are interested in serving on the CCES. The Committee suggested sending a message to all faculty members asking for volunteers.

4.0 Approval of 6/4/08 and 7/2/08 Minutes

Zimmers moved and McCollough seconded approval of the minutes as amended. Motion approved.

5.0 Unfinished Business

5.1 Charge for Academic Honesty Committee

Prochaska-Cue stated that the Committee needed to get a charge together so the Academic Honesty Committee can get going. She asked for a recommendation. Ledder suggested “review, publicize, and recommend changes to the student honor code.”

Jackson asked if the charge is recommending a new document or revisions to the current student honor code. Bradford stated that there should be a distinction between a student and campus honor code. Ledder stated that it would be nice to have a statement for faculty members that would match the student honor code.

Rapkin stated that it would be very difficult to combine the two honor codes. The result would likely be unwieldy, but what is needed is a concise document. He stated that he can understand wanting an overarching document but there are legal ramifications that need to be considered. He asked whether any new document would supersede documents that have been previously approved by the Board. He stated that he would like the first charge to state that the committee reviews the existing student honor code. The second charge would be to develop a statement of understanding.

Ledder stated that the idea is to have the committee focus on best practices rather than cheating. Jackson stated that he agreed with Rapkin in that we should have a concise document. Lindquist stated that we want to make sure everything is consistent. We want an honesty statement but also want to know if there are any policies in place that need to be fixed.

Jackson noted that the Student Judicial Board deals with enforcement. He stated that the process is very good if Dean Hecker gets a case of academic dishonesty when it first arises but there are many times when he does not learn about the case. He asked whether faculty should automatically be expected to report cases of academic dishonesty. McCollough stated that it seems like many times it is done on a case-by-case basis.

Jackson stated that there are several issues associated with academic dishonesty. He noted that a faculty member can give a student the grade of F but the rules become unclear if the Student Judicial Board finds in favor of a student in a case of academic dishonesty. Ledder stated that she does not know if administration can over rule a grade. He wondered if a grade change can be made over the protest of a faculty member.

Jackson suggested including in the charge “review and recommend changes on sanctions.” Rapkin pointed out that faculty members should still have some latitude on what to do. Jackson agreed and proposed including in the charge that the committee clarify latitude faculty members have in dealing with cases of academic dishonesty.

Griffin noted that faculty members often don’t report cases of academic dishonesty because it is such a lengthy and time consuming process. Lindquist stated that one way to change this is to put a policy in place that a grade can’t be changed unless a report of cheating is filed. Ledder pointed out that there was some discussion previously about

incorporating an X grade. This grade, which is in use by some universities, would indicate that the student failed because of academic dishonesty. It serves to notify the administration that a student has been flagged for cheating. If no other incidents of cheating are reported the grade would eventually revert to an F.

Bradford asked if faculty members have an obligation to report cases of academic dishonesty. Ledder and Jackson both stated that the instructors are supposed to report incidents of cheating.

Rapkin stated that consistency is needed as well. He stated that there needs to be some measure of consistency because currently there are wildly disparate responses to academic dishonesty.

Ledder stated that it should be made clear in the honor code that the rules on academic dishonesty are not fixed. He stated that the rules are somewhat context sensitive. He noted that it is the instructor's responsibility to make things clear in the beginning of the course as to what is and is not tolerated and it is the students' responsibility to adhere to the rules set by the faculty member.

Jackson pointed out that the student code of conduct deals with more than just academic honesty issues. Ledder noted that the charge should indicate that the committee should review just the academic honesty portion of the honor code.

The Committee will review a draft of the charge for the Academic Honesty Committee at the July 30th meeting.

6.0 New Business

6.1 Possible Candidates for Special Academic Rights & Responsibilities Committee (ARRC) Election

Griffin noted that one of the members of the ARRC has had to resign and a special election will need to be held in September to replace him. The Committee worked on identifying possible candidates to run for election.

6.2 New Student Enrollment

Fech reported that New Student Enrollment is holding a session called Power-up in mid-July which is a 3 day session for new students. The purpose is to acquaint students with more with the university and to provide them with the opportunity to meet faculty, staff, and make new friends. Fech stated that he hopes that academic honesty is discussed during the event.

Ledder stated that the biggest problem he runs into with teaching freshmen students is that they do not know the difference between college and high school. He pointed out that incoming students do not appreciate that they have fewer contact hours with a faculty member but yet they expect more feedback with the instructor. He noted that incoming students have a tendency to expect faculty members to provide a personal level of service that may have been provided to them by their high school teachers. He pointed out that

new students need to appreciate that the environment at a university is different than the environment at a high school. Rapkin stated that freshmen have a hard time coping with courses that afford them a lot of freedom. Ledder stated that the amount of freedom can vary from course to course and students need to understand that there are much bigger differences in courses across the university.

The Committee suggested meeting with the coordinator of New Student Enrollment.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:57 p.m. The next meeting of the Executive Committee will be on Wednesday, July 30th at 2:30 pm. The meeting will be held in the Faculty Senate Office, 420 University Terrace. The minutes are respectfully submitted by Karen Griffin, Coordinator and David Rapkin, Secretary.