

UNL FACULTY SENATE MEETING MINUTES
City Campus Union, Auditorium
December 3, 2013
Presidents Guevara and Nickerson, Presiding

1.0 Call to Order

President Guevara called the meeting to order at 2:35 p.m.

2.0 Announcements

2.1 Faculty Senate Inclement Weather Policy

President Guevara reminded the Senators that the Faculty Senate rules state that Senate meetings can be cancelled for the following reasons: cancellation of regularly scheduled classes; the President of the Faculty Senate gives 24 hour notice of the cancellation; and declaration of a campus emergency. For the complete description of cancellations Senators should look at the Faculty Senate Rules available on the web <http://unlcms.unl.edu/facultysenate/rulesofsenate.pdf>.

3.0 President Milliken

President Milliken reported that he had a pleasant luncheon with the campus Senate Presidents the other day and discussed issues such as MOOCs, faculty salaries, the tuition freeze, and freedom of speech for faculty members.

President Milliken reported that he was quite interested to see the results of the Chronicle of Higher Education's survey of university presidents and faculty members on innovation and technology issues facing universities. He stated that the survey showed that the presidents and faculty members agreed on blended learning and interactive technology and both were skeptical that innovations such as MOOCs and competency-based degrees would threaten traditional higher education degrees. He pointed out that the survey showed that both groups agreed that the faculty should drive the curriculum of a university. He reported that only 1/3 of the faculty agreed that U.S. higher education degrees are a good value which contrasts with the opinions of the presidents. He noted that the survey indicated that on the whole the presidents are optimistic about the direction of higher education but the faculty members were more pessimistic.

President Milliken reported that for the third year in a row UNL's speech and debate team won the Big Ten championship. He noted that the campus has shifted its timelines for enrollment goals and he is still highly supportive of these goals. He stated that people around the state often ask where he thinks enrollment growth for both UNL and UNO is going to come from given that the high school rates in Nebraska are flat. He pointed out that one source for potential enrollment growth is underrepresented students in Nebraska who are currently not going to college. He noted that when he became President at the university 9 ½ years ago, Nebraska was ranked 17th in the country in terms of the college-going rate of high school students. The state now ranks 7th in the country and he reported that the Governor has embraced the plan to get more Nebraska students into higher education and has made this a key strategy for the state. President Milliken noted that another strategy for increasing enrollment is growing online education. He stated that UNL alone had a 27% increase in online credit hour production last year. UNL also had a 14% increase in credit hours produced by distance-only students, who are an important group to target for enrollment growth.

President Milliken reported that one of the university's goals is to double our enrollment of international students by 2020. He noted that this year there are approximately 3,600 international students university-wide, a record high. He stated that 10 years ago the Legislature adopted the belief that the university should attract more students from out of state in order to increase the talent pool in the state. He pointed out that we could do significantly better in this area. Most of UNL's out-of-state students are from South Dakota. He noted that 25% of the University of Iowa's out-of-state students come from two states, Illinois and Minnesota. He pointed out that the movement of UNL to the Big Ten provides us with the opportunity to recruit students from other Big Ten states.

President Milliken stated that a question that has been raised is how MOOCs will impact our enrollment plans. He stated that he felt that the university needed to explore this strategy, particularly as it relates to the university's mission to expand access to education to more students, and he wanted the faculty to be at the table when we joined Coursera so the faculty can have the opportunity to offer these courses if they are interested. He noted that one NU campus – not UNL – is developing a MOOC for Coursera which he expects

to be released next spring. He pointed out that the opportunities are there for faculty members to do a MOOC, but it needs to be a faculty member's decision.

President Milliken stated that in terms of the Campaign for Nebraska, about \$240 million in private donations was raised last year alone, a record for the Foundation. To date the Campaign for Nebraska has raised more than \$1.5 billion, with about half of those funds going to UNL. He reported that there are a number of important projects and initiatives that still need to be funded. He noted that 75 new endowed professorships have been created at UNL through the capital campaign along with 1,000 new student scholarships and more than 900 academic program funds.

President Milliken stated that the legislative environment has been a positive one recently and although we had flat state appropriations for general operations for the last few years, that was positive compared to many other state universities that have taken a double-digit budget cut. He noted that due to the flat budget each campus has reallocated some funds. He pointed out that in the current biennium, the state agreed to provide a 4% annual increase in appropriations to the university, which is allowing the university to freeze resident tuition for two years. He stated that after five years of essentially flat funding for operations from the state, he wanted to jump-start the idea that there is a compact between the state and the university, with the university growing and doing more for the state.

President Milliken stated that there have been successes with initiatives such as Building a Healthier Nebraska due to support from the state, but consideration needs to be given to faculty salaries. He noted that faculty salaries are a high priority for the Board of Regents. UNL faculty salaries are 7% behind the peers and UNMC is also behind its peers. He stated that the university has some work to do in providing the Legislature with analysis that will help support the needs of the university.

President Milliken stated that some campus initiatives that are receiving international recognition are Professor Molfese's work in the new Center for Brain, Biology and Behavior, Professor Cassman's work on achieving high-crop yields with efficient use of water, nutrients and energy, and Professor Swearer's work with Lady Gaga's Born This Way Foundation to stop bullying. He stated that he is also pleased to see the great recognition of UNL faculty members at national and international conferences.

President Milliken reported that the Legislature will be going through an interesting period as the Tax Modernization Committee looks at income, sales, and property taxes. He noted that the university is watching the situation closely but will not take a stand on proposed changes to the tax base. He stated that Medicaid expansion is back on the table and UNMC will be taking an active look at the issue and will provide expertise and knowledge to assist in these discussions. He pointed out that Governor Heineman's term will be ending and one-third of the Legislature will be replaced due to term limits. He noted that this provides some risks but also some opportunities for the university.

President Milliken stated that the university is interested in looking at other innovations in regards to tuition, and block tuition has been mentioned as a possibility along with other innovations such as differential tuition rates for some colleges. He noted that block tuition, which allows a student to pay for 15 credit hours a semester no matter how many credit hours she or he takes, has some appeal with regard to increasing graduation rates and provides some certainties in terms of budgeting. He stated that some universities claim that they are seeing some improvement in graduation rates with the use of block tuition, but we need to carefully look at other universities to see if they also have had graduation rate increases. He pointed out that at universities with block tuition, students tend to take the full 15 credit hours of classes since they are paying for that amount and some may opt to take even additional credit hours. He reported that the university has a task force looking into the possibility of block tuition and he welcomes faculty input on the idea.

President Milliken reported that the Board of Regents has hired some outside consultants to look at the university's Strategic Framework to see if we have the right overarching ideas in place. He stated that affordable access to higher education remains an important goal as does building sustainable, high-impact programs. He noted that the Strategic Framework can be found at <http://www.nebraska.edu/docs/StrategicFramework.pdf> and the Board would like both internal and external feedback from stakeholders about the framework. He noted that faculty are welcome to send their comments to president@nebraska.edu.

Professor Bender, College of Journalism and Mass Communications, noted President Milliken's mention of the Chronicle of Higher Education survey and the split opinions regarding the future of higher education. He asked why President Milliken is optimistic about the future. President Milliken noted that periodically the

university conducts a survey of Nebraskans to understand their views about the university and its importance to and impact on the state. He reported that the percentage of Nebraskans who think that the University of Nebraska is essential or very important to the future of the state has decreased by about 10% since 2007, even though the facts clearly demonstrate that having a college degree is beneficial in terms of individual earnings and in other aspects.

President Milliken stated that we are in a great place for a 21st-century land-grant university because by 2018 Nebraska is projected to be 7th in the nation in terms of the percentage of jobs that will require education beyond high school, with almost two-thirds of all jobs in Nebraska requiring college education by then. He pointed out that NU is in a strong position because Nebraska weathered the recession better than many other states and our capital campaign has exceeded its original \$1.2 billion goal with a year still to go in the campaign.

President Milliken stated that technology can present an existential threat to higher education with things like MOOCs, but a land-grant university offers great values beyond just the one metric of the cost to deliver education. He noted that he talks to people every day about the university and there is no doubt that it is the most important institution in the state that is tied to the well-being of the citizens and the competitiveness of the state.

President Milliken asked why the faculty is pessimistic. President Elect Nickerson noted that getting grants funded is becoming more difficult and professors are facing the likelihood of a decrease of 6 -10% in research funding from the government. He asked if Central Administration is considering these decreases. President Milliken stated that in looking at the national picture there are several things not to be optimistic about. He noted that many university presidents are greatly troubled about the trends in federal research funding as well as federal financial aid, as even Pell grants may not be protected in the future. He stated that he believes we have given up too easily on the public debate about the value of higher education and he believes the social value of higher education is an essential case that needs to be made. He reported that in discussing this issue with the head of the higher education lobby in D.C. he was told that we have already lost the case, but if you go around the world one thing that is of value and priority is higher education. He pointed out that the university is benefitting from Brazil's initiative to send students abroad to receive a higher education and other countries are modeling their universities on U.S. schools. He stated that investing in higher education is one of the things that distinguish us from the rest of the world and he believes that this is an issue that cannot be ignored for very long.

Professor Hay, Southeast Research & Extension Center, asked if the continual restructuring of the Legislature has a negative impact on the university. President Milliken stated that term limits do cause a change in the Legislature and create many additional opportunities for him and others to establish relationships with new legislators. He noted that there are people in place who can make a strong case for the university to the Legislature and that he has seen new legislators who initially did not support the university all the time but who later come to realize that the university is vitally important to the health of the state.

4.0 Approval of November 5, 2013 Minutes

Professor Peterson, Agricultural Economics, moved for approval of the minutes. The motion was seconded by Professor Rinkevich, Classics & Religious Studies. The motion was approved.

5.0 Committee Reports

5.1 Academic Planning Committee (Professor Lahey)

Professor Lahey stated that the past year has been a quiet one for APC. He reported that the APC has streamlined the academic program review (APR) process and there will now be a monitor for each APR. He stated that the APC has compiled a guideline on how best to use the APR monitor which should lead to more regularity across the university.

Professor Lahey reported that the APC has had extensive discussion on the physical changes occurring on campus, most recently with the changes to the Libraries. He noted that the APC raised similar concerns that the Senate raised.

Professor Lahey noted that SVCAA Weissinger has provided updates on the hiring initiative on campus and how it is slowing down due to the changed timetable for increasing student enrollment. He pointed out that the SVCAA has assured the APC that hiring will take place, although he is unsure of when it will occur.

Professor Lahey stated that one of the most important initiatives is what the Senate Executive Committee and the APC discussed on November 20 and that is to increase representation of non-tenure track faculty members in faculty governance. He noted that the Executive Committee has changed its membership to pursue having a permanent non-tenure track seat, if possible, but to change the APC membership requires approval from the Chancellor and eventually the Board of Regents because the APC is defined in the UNL Bylaws.

Professor Lahey stated that for the year ahead the APC is planning to have a forum for non-tenure track faculty members at the end of January on a Wednesday and Friday afternoon at 3:00 to provide these faculty members with an opportunity to have them meet other non-tenure track faculty members and to provide them with the opportunity to have some kind of movement towards organization. He stated that the idea is to have a representative from the Faculty Senate, the Academic Rights & Responsibilities Committee, and the Academic Freedom Coalition of Nebraska, speak at the forum and he invited SVCAA Weissinger to speak, but she declined. He noted that former Associate Vice Chancellor Jacobson, who helped to create the Professors of Practice positions, has agreed to speak.

5.2 University Appeals and Judicial Board (Dean Hecker)

Dean Hecker was unable to attend the meeting but will be rescheduled to present the report in January.

6.0 Unfinished Business

6.1 Update on ACE Ad Hoc Committee

President Elect Nickerson reported that after taking over the ad hoc committee he met with Professor Peterson and attended a recent meeting of the University Curriculum Committee (UCC) where they discussed possible changes to the ACE recertification procedures. He noted that he found out that the UCC is reconsidering all of the material that is currently needed to meet recertification and he thinks the UCC is leaning towards not asking faculty members to collect large samples that need to be uploaded to the UCC. He believes that the changes will be satisfactory and a move in the right direction. He pointed out that any changes that are proposed will need to get approval from the eight colleges and will need to go back to the Senate which will give the Senate the opportunity to negotiate with the UCC should there be any further concerns. He stated that he and other members of the Senate Executive Committee hope to minimize faculty time for recertification. He stated that he is optimistic in that the revisions will be presented sometime within the next couple of weeks.

Professor Purdum, Animal Science, stated that it is extremely important to set a timeline for making these changes otherwise it can be dragged out for an extended period of time. She stated that the UCC should be given a timeline of when the Senate can expect the changes to go to the deans and to the Senate. She suggested that an update be provided at the next Senate meeting. President Elect Nickerson stated that the UCC only had one more revision to the procedures to vote on and he believes that the revisions could be finalized later this month but he will report back to the Senate on the progress of the revisions.

7.0 New Business

7.1 Questions Faculty Members Want Addressed during the Review of Blackboard and whether it should be Renewed

President Guevara introduced CIO Askren, Heath Tuttle and Jeremy Van Iof, from the Office of Information Technology. CIO Askren noted that he suggested to the Information Technologies and Services Committee (ITSC) that the campus consider looking at other comprehensive online education platform products as we are coming up for renewal of Blackboard. He pointed out that Information Services (IS) is fully aware that there could be difficulty with changing the system and we would want to make sure that another program would address our needs. He stated that the idea is to have some sessions with a couple of these other software companies to talk strategically about the value of their products and how they compare to their competitors. He pointed out that the real issue is whether we have the best product for the faculty.

CIO Askren stated that questions that need to be considered are how much time it would take to change to another product, what the disruption would be like, and how easily information could be transferred to a different product. He stated that IS wants to make sure that they get to listen to the faculty's feedback, and should this go forward IS needs to know what questions should be asked of the companies. He noted that IS would also talk to other universities who are using other products to see what their experiences have been.

CIO Askren stated that the companies who are invited to make presentations would be involved in meeting with the ITSC members and would have another session with interested faculty members. He stated that results from a recent survey of Blackboard users depicted a somewhat bell shape curve in terms of most users being generally satisfied overall with the program, but about 20% are not satisfied. He noted that questions such as why an update to a newer version has to be made each year and what the company is doing that is

innovative for the faculty and students could be asked. He stated that the companies also should be asked what three or four amazing things their program can do that cannot be done in Blackboard.

CIO Askren noted that Blackboard is a system-wide program and there is tremendous value in having a standardized program across the university and a change could only be made if the other campuses agreed. He pointed out that there is a similar balance of people who are satisfied versus those who are not on our sister campuses.

Professor Eccarius, Special Education and Communication Disorders, noted that her department has the largest percentage of online programs and courses in the college and on campus and a large preponderance of the faculty use Blackboard. She stated that there is a smaller group of faculty members who are totally dependent on the learning platforms so something that is foundational is needed. She asked how IS will make sure that the concerns of the heaviest users of Blackboard will be heard. She stated that she wants to make sure that the voices of faculty members involved with distance education courses are heard loudly and clearly. CIO Askren stated that if the effort to change programs is significant there could be an ad hoc committee of faculty members who could investigate a new program further. He pointed out that it is a good idea to look at other products occasionally and it is the right time to do this since Blackboard's renewal period is approaching.

Professor Woodman, School of Biological Sciences and chair of the ITSC, noted that the first step in this process would be to decide whether or not we should go forward with considering other programs. He stated that the presentations would be limited to an hour and the ITSC would have the opportunity to have an individual session where more probing questions could be asked. He noted that a group of faculty members could test some of the products more extensively and report back on what they think of a different program. He stated that the biggest issue is how easily the systems could be changed over. CIO Askren stated that the faculty concerns would be heard in these different scenarios.

CIO Askren reported that he has talked to his peers at other universities and some have stayed with Blackboard while others have decided to move to a different program. He noted that the move is not a trend, but each university said it would not consider moving to a different program if there wasn't strong faculty support. He stated that there are some universities using different systems within their own campuses and this is an approach that could be used. He stated that in the end we want to ensure that the faculty has the best technology. He noted that having a faculty forum to review a different program could provide important feedback.

Professor Zlotnik, Earth & Atmospheric Sciences, stated that the technical details: the cost, time, and labor that would be required to transition to a different system needs to be considered before any further discussions continue. CIO Askren stated that the transition is one of the key questions that need to be answered and he plans to get references from other universities on how their transition worked. He pointed out that while we do not know the cost, time and labor involved for a transition, we do know the cost of Blackboard. He pointed out that different Blackboard products are used, some of which are paid through student technology fees. He noted that the Learn and Mobile Blackboard product costs over \$600,000 a year for all of the campuses. He noted that at the campus level databases are run off local servers and the cost to run the Blackboard environment is getting to be \$800,000-\$900,000 a year. He pointed out that UNL pays a third of this cost. He stated that the Canvas education platform is open source code which may require more technical staff. He stated that he thinks the Blackboard cost issue can be handled through better negotiations, but the real issues is whether Blackboard is still the best product since the market is changing so rapidly. He noted that his sense is that Blackboard is still the gold standard but he wants to get the faculty opinion about whether or not we should switch to a different program.

Professor Weissling, Special Education and Communication Disorders, asked what Blackboard is doing that is innovative and new and what is their plan to incorporate social media. She asked how Blackboard can help us to negotiate new social technologies that students use so faculty members don't need numerous programs to communicate with the students. CIO Askren noted that this is a great point. He stated that students today are technologically savvy and are consumed with social media. He pointed out that this could be a distinguishing characteristic for a different program.

Professor Eccarius pointed out that captioning on Blackboard is a nightmare and there are many deaf students and other students that need accessibility. She stated that this needs to be taken into consideration when reviewing other programs.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:58 p.m. The next meeting of the Faculty Senate will be held on Tuesday, January 14, 2014, 2:30 p.m. in the East Campus Union, Arbor Suite. The minutes are respectfully submitted by Karen Griffin, Coordinator, and Toni Anaya, Secretary.