EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES

Present: Bender, Joeckel, Guevara, Nickerson, Reisbig, Rinkevich, Ruchala, Sollars, Woodman, Zoubek

Absent: Anaya, Schubert, Wysocki

Date: Wednesday, January 8, 2014

Location: Faculty Senate Office

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
Guevara called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m.

2.0 Announcements
2.1 Report on Travel to Jacksonville with UNL Official Party
Guevara reported that the trip to the Gator Bowl was a great trip and he believes that the university was well represented. He noted that the Chancellor was a very good host and overall it was an enjoyable experience (despite the rain).

3.0 Approval of December 3, 2013 Minutes
Nickerson moved for approval of the minutes as revised. The motion was seconded by Joeckel and approved by the Executive Committee.

4.0 Unfinished Business
4.1 Report on Conversations with Chancellor Perlman Regarding Tolerance Policy
Guevara reported that he spoke with the Chancellor regarding the Tolerance Policy that the Chancellor mentioned in his email message to the campus at the end of last semester. Guevara stated that the Chancellor said that the policy is a coherent policy but nothing radical and that the Executive Committee will be consulted about it.

Reisbig asked if the Policy will be specific to racial tolerance or if it would address others as well. Guevara stated that he believes the policy will apply to all groups.

Nickerson wondered if this is a policy that needs to be incorporated into the Student Code of Conduct. Guevara noted that he suggested to Student Body President, Erick Reznicek, that this might need to be included into the Code. He pointed out that this is a complex issue that applies to all groups of people.

4.2 Report on Conversations with Associate Dean Bellows Regarding Graduate Recruiting Awards and Notifying Faculty Members
Guevara reported that he spoke with Associate Dean Bellows about notifying faculty members when an award is given or denied. He stated that Associate Dean Bellows said that she has been following the protocols done for a number of years now notifying those faculty members who receive an award, but those that do not receive an award are not notified. He stated that Associate Dean Bellows has now put a policy in place to make sure the communications are done efficiently and everyone is notified. He reported that the faculty (mainly all Graduate Advisors or Graduate Chairs) who receive awards associated with traveling and recruitment are being notified today. He explained that Associate Dean Bellows could not give notice back in December because the funds come from several different sources and she has to make sure that she receives all the funding before the awards can be distributed.

Nickerson pointed out that the difficulty with the awards can be that a student may not come even if they receive an award. Guevara stated that the money will then go to the next graduate student in line to enter a program (for Othmers and Chancellors). Nickerson asked if this means that the money would stay in the department. Guevara stated that it is his understanding that it remains with the department.

Guevara stated that Associate Dean Bellows is willing to communicate with the faculty about these awards. He noted that the form to apply for the awards is simple but they must be filled out by the Graduate Chair or Graduate Advisor.

4.3 Forum for Non-Tenure Track Faculty Members
Guevara reported that he spoke with Professor Lahey, Chair of the Academic Planning Committee, who agreed that the forum will be a joint effort between the Faculty Senate and APC. He noted that Woodman will be working with APC on the forum.

4.4 Policy on Acceptable Use of Software Systems Management & Deployment Tools
Woodman reported that a policy is now up on the web (http://its.unl.edu/desktop/policies-governing-client-management-tool-use) which basically instructs the IT staff as to what they can do in terms of installing software systems management and deployment tools on faculty computers. He noted that there is an opt-in form that faculty members will need to complete in order to have the software systems management and deployment tools installed on their computers. He pointed out that it is simple form. He noted that the issue will be to get department chairs to adhere to a faculty member’s right to choose to opt in or not.

Woodman stated that the software systems management and deployment tool being used is not KACE and will only allow the IT staff to update software. He stated that faculty members will have the option to schedule updates during computer off times so as not to interfere with schedules and experiments. He noted that the Office of Information Technology Services has been very agreeable to the concerns of the faculty.
Nickerson asked who wrote the frequently asked questions section on the policy that the Senate will be presented with at the January meeting noting that it was very good. Woodman stated that the Committee on Information Technologies and Services wrote it. Zoubek asked if the policy along with the FAQs will be posted on the Senate web page. Woodman stated that it will be posted on the Senate web page after the Senate approves the policy at the February 4 meeting. Griffin suggested that the policy be linked to the IT web page.

4.5 Update on Revisions to ACE
Guevara stated that he sent Professor DeFusco an email message regarding when the University Curriculum Committee will be completing the revisions to the ACE recertification procedures but has not received a response.

5.0 New Business
5.1 Academic Freedom Issue at University of Kansas
Guevara stated that the University of Kansas’ Board of Regents recently made changes to their university personnel policies on what they consider “improper use of social media” which could be grounds for discipline action including termination. He noted that the changes were made due to a case involving a Journalism professor who tweeted offensive remarks about the NRA and was subsequently suspended. Guevara reported that he read the changes and pointed out that in some areas the wording is very broad but in other areas it is very specific. He noted that the policy gives college authority over “any facility for online publications and commentary” and is not just restricted to social media. He stated that this is very disconcerting for academic freedom.

Bender pointed out that there are issues of free speech involved as well and that the Kansas Board of Regents is now reviewing the policy. He stated that the policy allows the head administrator to determine whether the online speech is contrary to the best interest of the institution. Guevara pointed out that he has been following this issue and noted that this kind of policy risks destroying the university systems in this country. He stated that UNL needs to stay on top of this issue.

Nickerson asked if anyone knew what the AAUP plans to do about this. Ruchala stated that the AAUP has a draft report out on the issue. Sollars noted that the AAUP has called this policy “a gross violation of academic principles and freedoms.” Nickerson wondered whether the AAUP will censure the University of Kansas. Ruchala stated that this has not been done yet. Woodman noted that the AAUP is urging caution on the part of the University of Kansas faculty. Guevara pointed out that this kind of regulation could happen in any state university where the Boards are heavily populated by similar views.

5.2 Report on Conversation with Regent Clare
Guevara stated that he had a lengthy conversation with Regent Clare and asked his position on academic freedom. He noted that Regent Clare stated that he will always protect unbiased academic freedom of the faculty as long as it is in line with their duties as educators at the university. He stated that it is great concern when the Board of a
university wants to limit academic freedom based on who is judging what is “unbiased” and that all faculty members are perceived to be liberal.

Ruchala pointed out that the Executive Committee has been discussing a couple of academic freedom issues: the California case where the Regents are developing safeguards for academic freedom and the University of Kansas case where it is under assault. She suggested that the Executive Committee should bring up the past history of why academic freedom was established at UNL, state the principles that are considered important, and develop a draft policy on protecting academic freedom. Nickerson noted that a paragraph explaining why we want to make the issue and the Committee’s desire to address the current topics before things develop into a crisis should be included in the policy.

Zoubek asked if Regent Clare has other information to support his claim that there are biased faculty members who will grade unfairly if students don’t agree with them and that the majority of faculty members are liberals. Guevara noted that there have been other students who have had similar complaints. Ruchala pointed out that recent news articles on higher education show that conservative and liberal faculty members are discipline specific. She noted that in the Business College the bias is towards conservative views and on the whole the faculty has moved more to the right than the left in business colleges. Joeckel pointed out that one of the main purposes of higher education is for students to hear viewpoints that might be different from their own. Ruchala agreed and stated that higher education is an environment where you get to discuss the different viewpoints. Guevara pointed out that it is important to have a debate where both sides of an issue are presented.

The Executive Committee agreed to discuss the issue with the Chancellor to get his opinion.

Bender asked if Guevara ever heard back from UNO regarding the proposed policy to protect faculty members from backlash should they speak critically of the administration. Guevara noted that UNO stated that they would take a back-up role and would support UNL in this issue. Ruchala pointed out that it seems appropriate as a leading research campus that we take the lead on this issue because it may affect the faculty at UNL more. She stated that her sense is that the Chancellor would be a supporter of the policy because as a law faculty member he understands academic freedom.

5.3 January Faculty Senate Meeting
Griffin reported that VC Paul will be speaking at the January Senate meeting instead of Dan Duncan. She noted that Duncan will be speaking to the Senate in February.

5.4 Update on Presentations on Virtual Learning Environments and Course Management Systems
Woodman reported that several companies will be making presentations to the campus regarding their virtual learning environments and course management systems. He noted that Canvas, Desire2Learn, and Blackboard will all be making public presentations.
Griffin suggested sending a notice to the faculty about these presentations ahead of time so they can put it on their calendars. Zoubek asked if the presentations will be streamed. Woodman stated that he believes they will be streamed but he will check on this.

5.5 Follow Up on CIC Academic Leadership Program
Nickerson reported that he spoke with SVCAA Weissinger regarding sending someone from Senate Executive Committee or the President-Elect to the CIC ALP. He noted that she was reluctant to send the President Elect because this is a program for faculty members who want to pursue an administrative career. He pointed out that she did state that the Senate could nominate someone from either the Senate or the Executive Committee and they would be considered. Guevara pointed out that more than one person can be nominated; a CV and brief description need to be sent along with the nomination. Nickerson suggested that the Executive Committee needs to discuss what it hopes to get out of having someone attend this program. He stated that nominations must be made by April 1 to Associate VC Perez.

5.6 Procedure for Proposing a MOOC
Reisbig asked if there was a formal procedure for proposing a MOOC. Guevara stated that he does not know of any procedure and noted that SVCAA Weissinger stated in a previous meeting that UNL was waiting to see the impacts of the MOOCs before pushing for them here. Sollars reported that after attending a meeting of the Midwestern Higher Education Compact regarding the “The Rise of the MOOCs: Foreshadowing the Coming Transformation of Higher Education” she asked Interim Executive Vice President Fritz about this issue and was told that she should contact SVCAA Weissinger or VC Green. Sollars noted that there is nothing in place that prohibits someone from looking into creating a MOOC from sources other than Coursera.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:50 p.m. The next meeting of the Executive Committee will be on Wednesday, January 15 at 3:00 pm. The meeting will be held in the Faculty Senate Office. The minutes are respectfully submitted by Karen Griffin, Coordinator and Toni Anaya, Secretary.