

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES

Present: Bender, Guevara, Joeckel, Nickerson, Purcell, Rinkevich, Ruchala, Rudy, Sollars, Steffen, Woodman, Wysocki

Absent: Konecky

Date: Wednesday, October 1, 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

Nickerson called the meeting to order at 3:02 p.m.

2.0 Announcements

2.1 President's Newsletter

Nickerson reported that the next issue of the President's newsletter will be out shortly and will focus on the recent CIC Faculty Governance Leadership conference. He noted that faculty members can suggest topics of discussion for upcoming newsletters by contacting himself, any member of the Senate Executive Committee, or the Faculty Senate Office.

2.2 New Senators

Nickerson stated that there has been some success in filling some of the empty seats on the Faculty Senate and he will announce the new faculty members at the October 7 Senate meeting.

2.3 Electrical and Computing Engineering Department

Wysocki reported that the merging of the Computer and Electronics Engineering department with the Electrical Engineering department is now complete.

2.4 Tips Prevention Meeting

Guevara reported that there will be a meeting on November 20 to review the Tips Prevention program and he will report on it at the following Executive Committee meeting. Purcell pointed out that the Tips Prevention is on every UNL webpage, including all 83 County Extension webpages. Nickerson wondered whether it was spread too publicly and Sollars noted that it is global, anyone anywhere with web access can make a report. Guevara stated that to keep it more restrictive faculty, staff, or students would have to sign into the system. Joeckel asked if the program is open at other universities. Guevara stated that it is open at other institutions, and there is a way to restrict access, but doing this would not provide open access to reporting. Woodman noted that it is also on the Extension webpages as well. Guevara reported that any websites associated with UNL will have the drop down box on it.

2.5 Meeting with Dean Cerveney

Griffin reported that the Executive Committee will be meeting with Dean Cerveney on October 8.

3.0 Approval of 9/17/14 Minutes

Purcell moved for approval of the minutes as revised. Guevara seconded the motion. The motion was approved.

4.0 Unfinished Business

4.1 Update on Survey for Non-tenure Track Faculty Members

Woodman reported that a few additional questions are being considered for the survey. Nickerson stated that he would like to have a question included regarding whether the non-tenure track faculty members are in a unit or department where they have a Senate representative. He also wondered how long their contracts are for. He noted that at the Ohio State University they have expanded and lengthened the contracts for non-tenure track faculty members giving the faculty members and units more stability. He stated that he will try to get the details from OSU.

Woodman noted that professors of practice have standard contracts with assistant and associate professors of practice having three-year contracts and full professors getting a five-year contract. He noted that lecturers have a one year contract.

Joeckel asked if there is any evidence of complaints regarding the terms of the contracts. Woodman stated that he believes that most people feel that it is a mutually beneficial system. Wysocki wondered why lecturers and senior lecturers who have been employed for many years are not changed to a professor of practice position. Woodman pointed out that the focus was to change these positions to professors of practice, but this did not happen in all departments. He stated that it is difficult for departments to project its needs from semester to semester and the money used to fund the positions is temporary. Steffen noted that there are some departments where the non-tenure track faculty members seem to have three year rolling contracts. Woodman pointed out that the Regents took action to prevent rolling contracts.

Woodman stated that he hopes to give further updates to the Executive Committee on the survey at the next meeting.

4.2 Report on Enrollment Management Council Meeting (Sollars)

Sollars reported that there are two parallel committees: the Enrollment Management Council (EMC) and the Academic Planning and Scheduling Advisory Group (APSAG). She reported that in the most recent APSAG meeting they discussed Blackboard analytics and a request from Dr. Guest of the University Health Center (UHC) regarding students' requests for a medical note for class absences when they have not gone to the Health Center to be treated. She pointed out that the APSAG feels that this is a Faculty Senate matter. It was noted that when students come in after the fact to only get a note, the UHC can only state that the student says they have been ill. She reported that the UHC does not want to generate these notes for several reasons, one of which is that when a student

is too ill to go to class but doesn't really need to see a doctor, the ill student is coming into the UHC simply to get a note and exposing more people to their illness. She stated that this is not a unique situation at UNL and the University of Iowa has a form that addresses the problem. She said that this form requires someone to verify the illness, but it does not involve the UHC. She suggested that a policy might need to be established to deal with absences requiring a note. She stated that it might make some sense to send out some information to the faculty about this issue.

Steffen stated that the UHC should just quit providing absence notes for students. Nickerson wondered if there was a standard policy that requires students to provide a note for absences. Guevara pointed out that it is a faculty member's right to establish her/his attendance requirements for a course. Joeckel noted that there are some faculty members that have strict policies and he prefers the idea of the UHC saying they will not provide a note. Steffen stated that the faculty members who demand a note will have to come up with a different way to deal with absences.

Steffen stated that having a form, similar to that being used by Iowa, sounds like a good idea. Nickerson suggested that it could be put on the Student Affairs website. Sollars noted that the form could also be put on the Senate website. Woodman asked if having a standard form means that professors have to excuse the students. He noted that if students are required to have an official form it might keep the number of absences in check. Guevara pointed out that the problem arises with those students who have strategic absences, i.e. being absent on days of exams, etc.

Joeckel suggested that a message should be conveyed to Student Affairs about the need for a form. Ruchala pointed out that rather than putting a form on Student Affairs website that the form be put on the UHC website. Sollars noted that there needs to be follow-up with Dr. Guest about the issue. Nickerson stated that the Executive Committee should consider this issue further next week. He stated that he is open to the idea of having a form of this sort put on an UNL website. Sollars pointed out that a system could be set up that could track how many times a student uses the form and it could be part of the student's health record.

Sollars reported that the EMC reviewed what they have been working on for the past year and that are still in process. She stated that they are considering a program that would provide rapid feedback to potential students if they stand a good chance of being accepted at UNL, but it will also provide clear repercussions if they are lying about their high school grades. She reported that consideration is being given to having a payment plan and a task force has been assembled to look at this idea and the possibility of it being managed by Nelnet.

Sollars stated that the EMC has a task force on course scheduling and it found that the greatest cluster of courses are offered during 9:00 – 2:00. She stated that this task force is looking at implementing best practices for course scheduling and a presentation on this will be made to the Deans Council and it will also come to the Executive Committee.

Sollars reported that there is also a task force looking at the campus climate for students of color and efforts are underway to make the campus more welcoming to students.

Sollars stated that there was discussion about the principles of using registration holds and updates on tuition and distance education.

Woodman asked if there was any discussion about waiving the minimum ACT requirements for admission or how often that was done. Sollars noted that there was talk about the increase in the ACT scores.

4.3 Update on Centers (Griffin)

Griffin reported that she checked the Academic Affairs website for information on the various academic centers on campus and preliminary research shows that the majority of the faculty associated with the centers have appointments with a department. She noted that the information on the website shows that there are approximately 15 – 20 faculty members who have appointments only with a center.

Steffen pointed out that it would be difficult to get the faculty members in centers to participate more because they are not actively attending the department meetings in some units. Nickerson suggested that the Executive Committee wait to see what information comes back from the non-tenure track faculty survey before moving further on whether or not there should be a Senate district for centers.

5.0 New Business

5.1 Report on CIC Faculty Governance Leadership Conference

Nickerson reported that he and Bender had a very good experience at the conference and met all of the Senate representatives from each of the Big Ten schools except for the University of Michigan and the University of Chicago. He noted that The Ohio State University, the hosts for the conference, conducted a very impressive and well organized conference.

Nickerson stated that OSU provided information and flow charts on the organization of its Faculty Senate which can be used for future reference. He reported that at the meeting there was discussion about the term length of the Senate President and how a two year term would be more appropriate. He noted that some of the Big Ten schools have faculty representation on their Board of Regents. He pointed out that OSU was adamant that having a relationship with the Board was very beneficial and that some of the Senate members had a monthly luncheon with at least one of the Board members.

Joeckel asked if Nickerson and Bender had a sense that faculty governance is more effective at OSU. Bender and Nickerson emphatically said yes. Guevara noted that he also had this sense when he attended the conference last year and that this was a common denominator found at the other Big Ten schools. Bender pointed out that committees are much more active at OSU and Penn State and all proposals have to go to one or more standing committees of the Senate. He noted that our committees are much more detached from the Senate. They give reports but most of them are not actively involved

with the Senate. He suggested that this needs to be looked at to engage more people in faculty governance rather than just having these committees meet with the Senate just once a year. Nickerson pointed out that OSU's Senate system is much different and incorporates the student governing body as well. Joeckel noted that our culture at UNL was inherited long before we joined the Big Ten.

Nickerson stated that in terms of what can be done immediately he said that we might want to have more interaction with Athletics. He suggested that the Executive Committee might want to meet with Professor Potuto, UNL's faculty representative to the Big Ten, and Professor Hawks, chair of the Intercollegiate Athletics Committee. Woodman asked what the concerns are with Athletics. Nickerson stated that it is more about knowing what is going on with Athletics in regards to the student athletes. Bender pointed out that there are some concerns coming up due to two changes. One is that the big five conferences are pushing for changes with sports revenue which could affect a number of things and result in higher costs for the sports, particularly football. The results could be that the higher costs would cut into money going towards non-revenue sports which could limit the opportunities for these sports. He stated that the one good side is that there is an idea that coaches' salaries may have to be capped in order to preserve the other sports. He noted that there could be impacts on academics because the opportunities for the student athletes could diminish which could change the mix of the student body. Steffen pointed out that the major concern is making sure that student athletes get an education because most of them will not go on to play sports professionally.

The Executive Committee agreed to invite Professor Potuto to an Executive Committee meeting to discuss what is occurring nationally with sports and how UNL would be impacted. Rudy noted that the Senate's concern should be academic integrity and suggested inviting Dennis Leblanc, Senior Associate Athletic Director, because he oversees most of the academic issues relating to student athletes. Woodman stated that it would be good to ask Leblanc about the tutoring program for athletes. Rudy stated that Leblanc could also answer questions regarding team schedules and traveling and whether student athletes are missing more classes. Woodman stated that team travel schedules affect more than just the team members, but also affect students from the athletic training program who travel along with the teams.

5.2 Report on Board of Regents Meeting

Item postponed due to lack of time.

5.3 2016 Steering Committee Appointments for HLC Reaffirmation of Accreditation

Nickerson stated that he has been asked to suggest faculty members to serve on the five criteria working groups for the reaccreditation process and asked if any of the Executive Committee members were interested in serving on one of the working groups. Sollars, Joeckel, Purcell, Rudy, and Bender all volunteered to serve.

5.4 VSIP 2014

Nickerson asked the Executive Committee what they think of the newly unveiled retirement package for tenured faculty members. Rudy asked if this is strictly for UNL faculty members or whether it is coming from the Board of Regents. Nickerson noted that the last time the VSIP was offered in 2010 it was just UNL.

Guevara stated that his biggest concern is that this could negatively affect some departments. He pointed out that replacing faculty members from the 2010 VSIP has not been consistent and losing more faculty members could mean the end of some programs in some departments. Nickerson wondered if the VSIP isn't a way to redistribute faculty lines. Steffen noted that IANR has already redistributed some faculty lines with the recent hires that have been made. He pointed out that redistributing the lines is a way to change the direction of the campus strategically. He questioned what the driving reason is for offering the VSIP again. He noted that tenured faculty members who retired earlier this year would be upset that the offer was just being made now. Joeckel stated that it would be helpful to have more information about it. He wondered if this program could be made permanent. Woodman pointed out that it would be too costly for the university.

Nickerson noted that the budgetary benefits would not occur next year, but the following year. He stated that redirecting the emphasis of the university makes sense, but he has concerns whether these positions will be replaced with a tenure track faculty member. Rudy questioned how many of the faculty lines were replaced with tenure track faculty and whether departments and colleges retained their lines.

Joeckel stated that this brings up the issue that the campus needs to do a better job mentoring senior faculty members. He noted that multiple options for the remaining-career trajectories of senior faculty approaching retirement need to be formulated for the mutual benefit of those faculty and the University. Along with University administration, the Senate and the Exec Committee should actively encourage and promote the exploration of such options as an agenda item. Senior faculty should be viewed as a valuable, but flexible, asset and never strictly as a financial liability. It is as important to effectively mentor senior faculty as it is to do so with pre-tenure faculty.

The Executive Committee agreed to discuss the issue further at its next meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:01 p.m. The next meeting of the Executive Committee will be on Wednesday, October 8 at 3:00 pm. The meeting will be held in the Faculty Senate Office. The minutes are respectfully submitted by Karen Griffin, Coordinator and Tad Wysocki, Secretary.