EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES

Present: **Bender, Dawes, Konecky, Lee, Nickerson, Reisbig, Rudy, Sollars, Steffen, Woodman**

Absent: **Joeckel, Purcell, Vakilzadian**

Date: **Wednesday, December 9, 2015**

Location: **203 Alexander Building**

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

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

2.0 Professor Gwendolyn Combs, Chair of the Faculty Council, Chancellor's Commission on the Status of People of Color and Professor Michael Combs, Political Science and Senator, Faculty Senate

Gwendolyn Combs reported that in addition to being chair of the Faculty Council of the Chancellor's Commission on the Status of People of Color (CCSPC) she has been a part of another group of African American faculty and staff members that have been meeting for the last couple of years. This group discusses issues pertaining to African American faculty, students, and staff. She noted that the members of the CCSPC are appointed by the Chancellor and serve at his discretion, but the Chancellor has given the Commission a considerable range of things that it can explore to enhance the experience of people of color at UNL. She reported that the CCSPC is looking at the issues that students raised at the recent Black Lives Matter rally and at the climate and culture of the university for people of color. Lee asked if there was interest in only the faculty perspective. Gwendolyn Combs stated that the CCPSC wants to address issues for faculty, staff, and students.

Gwendolyn Combs reported that the need to have an educational process occur on campus was identified by several groups on campus. The educational process would give individuals the opportunity to learn about people of color, racism, and biases. She noted that leaders in student affairs have indicated that there is an opportunity for the educational process to occur, the new student orientation provides some information, but Dr. Combs did not have the details.

Gwendolyn Combs stated that one of the issues in terms of recruiting and retention of faculty members is that we have very few people of color in administrative positions and incoming faculty members want to know that there is the opportunity for advancement. She said that staff members have similar concerns and have pointed out some staff have left because they do not see that the university provides opportunities for advancement.

Rudy asked if Combs thinks that students see the difficulties in hiring and promoting faculty of color. Gwendolyn Combs stated that she is unsure, but in many instances there is a connection between a diverse faculty and a diverse student body. Lee asked if it is the culture of the university or the culture of the city of Lincoln that is fairly small. Gwendolyn Combs stated that it was both and there are elements of the Lincoln community that could help in the effort to retain faculty, staff, and students of color. She acknowledged that faculty candidates come from a national pool and one of the issues in recruiting is the Nebraska factor.

Lee asked if the hiring of Dean Francisco has made a difference. Gwendolyn Combs stated that she is not aware of conversations centered on that topic. Michael Combs pointed out that Arts & Sciences is a huge college and it can be difficult to feel any impact at times, but it does make you think the university is serious about diversity when it hired Dean Francisco. Nickerson stated that the Executive Committee was hopeful that this hiring would help us to recruit more individuals of color. Gwendolyn Combs noted that this will take time, but the faculty council of the CCSPC brought up strongly the lack of diversity and representation of people of color on search committees. She noted that search committees are obligated to have some representation of persons of color, but that person might not be able to exercise much weight.

Gwendolyn Combs pointed out that there appears to be a void in terms of campus or unit policies and procedures regarding diversity and inclusion. An example that some faculty members of color have concerns about is how student evaluations are interpreted and incorporated into faculty evaluations. When you look at the results of the evaluations they don't make sense. Many times faculty of color will get glowing marks on the student evaluations until the question when the student is asked how the instructor compares with others. Faculty of color question what definitive assessments of the responses are made to adjust for the possible disparities experienced by faculty of color on the evaluations.

Lee noted that the ACE program has a requirement for multi-culturalism and diversity and asked if this would satisfy the need for education. Gwendolyn Combs stated that the request for education from student, staff, and faculty is different. The education would present opportunities for people to be touched with specific information on racism that happens on a recurring basis to people of color. Discussions would focus on people's belief system and how each individual interacts with other people and what happens when people come to the campus and interact with different racial and ethnic groups. She said that there needs to be discussion on how well we are able to create an environment that people can identify with and feel good about.

Steffen noted that oftentimes the first days on campus are when people will begin friendships and there needs to be exposure to the many different groups of people on campus. He said that the Gaughan Center will have multi-cultural events, but usually the events are associated with just one particular group. He wondered how the events can be broadened to make them more attractive to all groups of people.

Gwendolyn Combs pointed out that some faculty members of color have raised the concern about a campus focus on internationalization with very little connection with domestic people of color. Michael Combs stated that this leaves people to assume that the campus is not interested in domestic people of color and that they don't matter here. Rudy noted that one of the frustrations raised during the Black Life Matters rally is that the students feel that they are just a quota that the university uses. Lee reported that we used to have connections with Grambling University, New Mexico Highlands University, and other schools but he didn't think these connections still existed. He stated that with the connections we were able to bring students here and our students could go to their campus. Gwendolyn Combs noted that it was invigorating to interact with these students and having them here brought vibrancy to the campus and provided diversity experiences for our students and faculty.

Lee stated that all of the African American graduate students he has interacted with here have all had some kind of interactions with the police. Gwendolyn Combs stated that relations have not been the best between the police and people of color (not specifically graduate students) and some feel that they are targeted. Lee asked if we could do something about this problem. Michael Combs stated that the Lincoln Police Department needs to be challenged in regards to its race relations and there needs to be interworking between the university and the community to address the problem.

Woodman asked if the university does anything to foster relationships between new and incoming minority students and faculty of color. He noted that a fellow student from Notre Dame University informed him that the university used to sponsor a get together between students and faculty from India (or other minority groups) which was said to be very helpful. Gwendolyn Combs reported that last fall and this fall there was a meet and greet reception for all people of color on campus including faculty, staff, and students. The turnout for the event was great and people were able to make connections. She noted that requests have been made to do the same thing in the spring semester. Woodman said he assumed (incorrectly clearly) the event was just for African-American faculty. Gwendolyn Combs noted that there were people of color from many different groups such as Native Americans, Hispanic, Asian, and African Americans.

Rudy asked if Lincoln is a safe place for people of color and whether our students feel safe. He noted that it is difficult to feel safe if you don't feel like you can trust the police. Gwendolyn Combs pointed out that Lincoln is a city and people need to be cautious. She wouldn't say that they feel unsafe, but it is disconcerting if you don't know what could happen in terms of law enforcement. Sollars noted that there is a difference between someone feeling physically safe or culturally safe. Gwendolyn Combs stated that she thinks that people of color feel that they cannot fully express themselves without there being reprisals.

Reisbig stated that her department has been conducting its own intercultural exploration to see if different voices and perspectives are being considered. The department has determined that people from the minority cultures are not expressing themselves as much

as the majority culture. She asked if this is consistent in other departments. Gwendolyn Combs suggested that people of color are very watchful of what they say.

Michael Combs pointed out that in our culture we don't seem to accept that a person has the right to say something if we disagree with them. He noted that he tells students that although he might disagree with them, they have the right to speak, and no one should be devalued for doing so as long as people are being civil. He stated that we don't maximize opportunities for dialogue at the university. Reisbig pointed out that the Executive Committee has been helpful to her in this regard because everyone has a strong voice and can speak up and she is glad that her department is trying to make improvements. Steffen suggested that her department share what they are doing with others. Reisbig asked if it is feasible for each department to do their own assessment. Gwendolyn Combs said that it is feasible and believes that it is something that should be done. She pointed out that this is making individual units accountable for what happens in their departments and on campus. She applauds the department of Child, Youth, and Family Studies for doing the assessment.

Nickerson asked if the CCPSC has recommendations or best practices in how to find potential faculty of color. The question was in reference to an example in Nickerson's department. Gwendolyn Combs asked if his department seeks these candidates out or waits for them to come to them. Nickerson said that he suspects that the departments probably wait for people to come to them. Gwendolyn Combs pointed out that departments have to seek out candidates and need to make the case for your department and the university in order to attract faculty members of color. She said that if departments are lucky enough to get someone they need to be honest about what the environment is like here. She stated that the departments need to be visible on campuses that have a large population of people of color in order to be able to attract them. She suggested that for this specific case establishing a relationship with a faculty member of color in the discipline could be a valuable resource and that it is everyone's responsibility to embrace the philosophy of having a diverse faculty and work to make it happen.

Steffen noted that the former Equity, Access & Diversity Programs Office has been restructured and asked if it is a resource for people of color. Gwendolyn Combs pointed out that the office mostly deals with compliance and Title IX. Steffen stated that if we really want to promote diversity there needs to be a separate office that specifically addresses the concerns of faculty, staff and students of color.

Lee asked if the CCPSC has discussed what occurred at the University of Missouri. Gwendolyn Combs noted Black Lives Matter rallies were supposed to happen at universities across the country. She pointed out that the issues raised at the rally at UNL are very similar at most universities. Michael Combs noted that a cultural change needs to occur in order to address many of the problems that exist and if we don't have that change there will continue to be problems. He stated that what he found troubling at the rally was hearing the young man who spoke about how he was treated by the police, but more importantly that there was no place where the young man felt he could go to report the racial discrimination that he had experienced. Gwendolyn Combs stated that a

missing part to changing the culture is having the community of the campus as part of the discussion.

Lee asked if there is any collection of data on the experiences of African American students on campus. Gwendolyn Combs noted that there is discussion of having a campus-wide audit conducted. Rudy pointed out that the Chancellor reported to the Faculty Senate that a campus-wide audit would not formally take place until 2017 because the company that will conduct the audit will not be available until then, but a smaller survey will be done in 2016.

Nickerson asked if the CCPSC has made recommendations to the Chancellor. Gwendolyn Combs stated that each of the councils of the CCPSC has their own list of recommendations that have been compiled and presented to the Chancellor. She noted that she would have to check with the Chancellor about whether or not he would want her to share the recommendations with the Senate Executive Committee since the CCPSC is an advisory committee to the Chancellor. Sollars suggested that the Executive Committee ask the Chancellor about the recommendations when it meets with him on January 26.

Lee stated that he is trying to figure out who the Executive Committee should speak to regarding problems students have had with campus police. Whether the Committee should speak directly to Police Chief Owens or to student groups. Gwendolyn Combs asked if the Senate has a committee that deals with inclusion and diversity. Bender stated that there is no committee that directly deals with these issues. Gwendolyn Combs suggested that it would be good for the Senate to have such a committee.

Rudy asked if any of the recommendations to the Chancellor were centered on faculty salaries and benefits. Gwendolyn Combs noted that nothing relating to salaries was included in the list of recommendations. Woodman noted out that the chair of the Faculty Compensation Advisory Committee can request data on faculty of color regarding salaries and can compare it to the rest of the faculty. Nickerson stated that this information has been provided before and no disparities were indicated.

Gwendolyn Combs stated that she is glad to see the Senate's interest in examining and helping the campus with these diversity and inclusion issues and concerns. It will take everyone working together for the campus to be successful.

3.0 Announcements

3.1 Board of Regents Meeting

Bender reported that at the Regents meeting President Bounds presented the capital plans to raise money for renovation and maintenance of buildings on campus and Associate VC Jackson presented the food for health initiative.

Bender stated that he spoke with the other three Faculty Senate Presidents about the gun resolution approved by the UNL Faculty Senate on December 1. He noted that they were basically appreciative that UNL was taking the lead on the issue.

3.2 Dean Hecker to Meet with Senate Executive Committee

Griffin reported that Dean Hecker will meet with the Executive Committee on January 5 to discuss the increasing problem of academic dishonesty on campus.

3.3 Meeting with Academic Rights & Responsibilities Committee (ARRC)

Bender reported that he recently met with the ARRC to discuss a special hearing committee case that has been pending for three years which is an unusual situation. He stated that there was discussion on a number of things including the creation of a manual of best practices that can be used by special hearing committee chairs.

4.0 Approval of November 18, 2015 and December 1, 2015 Minutes

Steffen moved for approval of the revised November 18, 2015 minutes. Motion seconded by Woodman and approved by the Executive Committee.

Konecky moved for approval of the revised December 1, 2015 Executive Committee minutes. Motion seconded by Steffen and approved by the Executive Committee.

5.0 Unfinished Business

No unfinished business was discussed.

6.0 New Business

6.1 Revisions to UNL Bylaws Update

Woodman reported that the Academic Planning Committee has created a subcommittee to review the proposed changes to the UNL Bylaws and will work with the Executive Committee's subcommittee on the revisions.

6.2 Academic Rights & Responsibilities Committee Membership Criteria

Woodman noted that the current membership of the ARRC and the Academic Rights and Responsibilities Panel only consists of tenured faculty members and the only representation of non-tenure track faculty members is with Associate and full Extension Educators. He stated that he would like to see the membership criteria modified to include fully promoted and Associate non-tenure track faculty members.

Bender pointed out that one of the rationales for having only tenured faculty members is because the ARRC deals with cases of academic freedom and tenure and only tenured faculty members can decide on whether someone's tenure can be revoked. If there was a question of revocation of tenure the Extension Educators could not serve on the special hearing committee. Woodman stated that he did not see the difference in the pressure that an untenured or not fully-promoted tenured professor could face if they made a decision to revoke tenure. Lee pointed out that the issue is that those hearing the case must be in the tenure system to make such a decision.

Bender stated that a problem with the ARRC is that there is little institutional memory associated with the Committee and no record is available about cases. He stated that he believes it would be beneficial if there was at least a summary on every case, although it

would have to be carefully edited to protect confidentiality. He stated that having some information that could create a sense of precedent would help the whole process.

Woodman stated that there needs to be peers on special hearing committees. Not allowing non-tenure track faculty members to serve on a special hearing committee limits fairness. Reisbig stated that including non-tenure track faculty members on the ARRC could make them feel more included as faculty members.

Bender stated that he will ask the ARRC to consider adding non-tenure track faculty members. Griffin pointed out that a number of issues need to be considered. For instance, there needs to be enough tenured faculty members on the Panel to choose from for those cases of Academic Freedom and Tenure because sometimes Panel members need to recuse themselves from a particular case.

Bender stated that he will invite Professor Bernthal, current chair of the ARRC, to meet with the Executive Committee sometime in February to discuss the issue.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:04 p.m. The next meeting of the Executive Committee will be on Tuesday, January 5, 2016 at 2:30 pm. The meeting will be held in 203 Alexander Building. The minutes are respectfully submitted by Karen Griffin, Coordinator and Allison Reisbig, Secretary.