

MINUTES
April 17, 2024

University of Nebraska – Lincoln
Academic Planning Committee

Members Present: Ankerson, Bloom, Boehm, Button, Cressler, Davis, Doll, Heng-Moss, Jones, Latta Konecky, Minter, Mowat, Ourada, Russo, Theiss-Morse, Tschetter, Vuran, Gonzales

Members Absent: Clarke, Haake

Note: These are not verbatim minutes. This is a summary of the discussions at the Academic Planning Committee meeting as corrected by those participating.

1.0 Call

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

2.0 Chancellor Bennett

Chancellor Bennett noted that it is a great time to check in with the APC as we celebrate the homestretch of the spring semester. He stated that he is happy to be as responsive as he can be, and he knows that the APC has had some good conversations about how we can be more collaborative with our colleagues. He stated that he is interested and willing to create a good working environment, so we do not have a repeat of the fall budget reduction process.

Chancellor Bennett reported that he does not have further information on the President’s search but officially the vetting process is to be no less than 30 days so it is possible the vetting period will be extended. He stated that the priority candidate, Dr. Gold, is scheduled to be in western Nebraska next week. He noted that he was happy to see the participation that occurred at the UNL forums with Dr. Gold.

Chancellor Bennett stated that when you have a Big Ten athletics program it has considerable impact on the campus, and he is pleased that we have a new Athletics Director Troy Dannen. He reported that he met with AD Dannen, and he is very excited about the relationship he hopes to form with him. He pointed out that AD Dannen has an appreciation for the role academics plays and he wants to be an engaged member of the campus.

Chancellor Bennett noted that he spoke with AD Dannen about the stadium renovation telling him that it will have significant impacts on many of our programs and centers. He reported that there will be two items on the Board of Regents agenda about the renovation project and whether it will be moving forward.

Chancellor Bennett reported that he is thoroughly enjoying visiting some of the colleges where there have been some remarkable, lengthy discussions. He noted that has now met with about half of the colleges and while the idea was to limit the number of participants to about 20 to have a more manageable group, most of the colleges requested a larger group and those requests were granted. He noted that he will be meeting with approximately 45 people in the College of Arts

and Sciences on May 2nd. He stated that he has learned a great deal from the visits, and he is thinking about what he does with the richness of the information he has received. He noted that discussions included refreshing our strategic plan and what priorities are needed for us to move forward. He stated that it is not clear whether we need to recreate a new strategic plan or rather we need to just tweak it in some areas.

Vuran thanked the Chancellor for meeting with the APC. He stated that there are still comments being made that we must go through another budget reduction. He asked what the APC can expect in the coming months or the fall semester and how does the Chancellor think the APC can be an active part of the budget reduction process. Chancellor Bennett stated that there may need to be some clarification between the Procedures and the Board of Regents Bylaws, UNL Bylaws, and the APC's operating procedures. He stated that he is flexible in working with whatever the interpretation is of the documents but suggested that the clearer the procedures can be, the better for all of us. He noted that we are carrying a budget shortfall that we will need to deal with.

Chancellor Bennett noted that with the transition of a new President it is uncertain what will happen with the budget and therefore he felt it would be inappropriate to initiate any reduction scenario until we have more definitive answers so there will be no budget reductions this spring or over the summer. He reported that in discussions with Dr. Gold he pointed out that if we truly want to try to rejoin the AAU, we will need the resources to do so. He stated that he has heard across the campus concerns about whether rejoining the AAU should even be a priority for us and whether we should be reinvesting in other areas of the campus instead.

Bloom stated that he appreciates the uncertainties that we are facing but if we are serious about rejoining the AAU it can't be done if there are any further budget reductions. He asked what the Chancellor's process is for revising the strategic plan and how he would structure the effort to revise the plan including engaging the stakeholders. Chancellor Bennett stated that he doesn't want to get ahead of his meetings with the colleges but some of the faculty members that were involved in developing the N2025 plan have said they still have the energy and would be happy to help revise it. He stated that he is thinking of getting nominations from the colleges for people to work on the strategic plan and thinks a significant amount of the work can be done electronically. He noted that he wants it so people can participate without having to be physically present. He suggested that we could review some of the matrixes that are in the current plan and then consider whether we want to continue with them or maybe look at other matrixes.

Button noted that there needs to be consideration about a system-wide strategic plan since there could be structural administrative changes across the system. Chancellor Bennett reported that he said to Dr. Gold and others that he believes UNL must be set aside from the other campuses. He pointed out that while the idea of one University is great in concept, it doesn't allow us to stay at the table with the Big Ten universities. He stated that we need to be treated for who we are, the flagship, comprehensive R1 university. He noted that there are significant conversations occurring about whether a comprehensive education is needed, but we must change the narratives about why the arts and humanities are important for students.

Chancellor Bennett noted that he recently spoke with Henry Cordes of the Omaha World Herald and discussed the structure of the University noting that UNMC should be part of the UNL campus. He stated that he talked about funding and academic programs that should be offered exclusively at UNL pointing out that having four separate campuses is not sustainable in a state with only 1.9 million people. He stated that he is not sure whether students want one University or whether they want to identify with a specific campus. He stated that we want to be in an environment that is supported by the state and the university. Bloom reported that when he was speaking with the priority candidate, Dr. Gold stated that the University can't be everything to everyone, but Bloom pointed out that if any of the campuses can do that, it would be UNL. Chancellor Bennett stated that the more we can think of ways we can collaborate and have more open dialogue, the more it will help us figure out where we want UNL to go. He pointed out that he believes we could help shape the future for the university.

Chancellor Bennett noted that this is the best time of the year with commencements coming up because it is the coming together of what we do, and it helps us as a university to recruit and retain people. He pointed out that the College of Law will have its commencement on May 3 and the undergraduate ceremony is on May 18.

Chancellor Bennett thanked the APC members for all that they do.

3.0 Approval of April 3, 2024 Minutes

Vuran asked if there were any revisions to the minutes. Hearing none he asked for a motion to approve the minutes. Tschetter moved and Pechous seconded approval of the minutes. Motion approved with one abstention.

4.0 Proposal to Create Wildlife Habitat Management Undergraduate Certificate

Vuran noted that the APC previously discussed trying to approve certificates quickly and he asked whether the Committee felt that the proposals on the agenda needed to be reviewed by two APC members before it would vote on the proposal. Doll stated that while she understands that many of the certificate proposals are fairly routine, she still thinks an analysis of the proposal is required. Bloom agreed. Vuran asked for two members to review the proposal. Cressler and Russo volunteered to review the proposal.

5.0 Proposal to Create Esports Undergraduate Certificate

Vuran asked for volunteers to review the proposal to create the Esports Undergraduate Certificate. Doll and Minter volunteered.

6.0 Reports from EVC Ankerson, VC Boehm, Interim VC Jones

Ankerson

Ankerson stated that she wanted to highlight the excellent feature on student success authored by Troy Feddersen of UCOMM and asked everyone to read it if you haven't already, to learn about the integral and broad array of ways we meet students where they are, remove barriers, and support excellence.

Ankerson stated that she wants to focus her remarks on leadership. Each of you in this room, on this committee, is a leader – a person who is willing to engage in the difficult and sometimes wicked problems facing us as a university and in a broader context. Ankerson lifted up those who are peer mentors and exhibit their leadership in that way – or those who lead organizations of one sort or another, and those who are administrators and making decisions that affect each of us in some way.

Ankerson stated that this committee has the potential and the wherewithal to affect the future of Nebraska's Big10 Research University – through how we view the academic array that defines our identity and belief in the education of citizens and leaders of our state and affecting the world. Our future may indeed look different in terms of the degrees we offer or the departmental or college structure we embrace. We will each ask ourselves if it is a degree that defines us, or the core areas of knowledge, skill, and ensuing wisdom that shape our students, each of our students, as they progress through graduation and on to the next phase of their life. Is it a degree, or is it a body of knowledge, literacy, judgement, foundation, critical and creative thinking that shapes our scientists, engineers, humanists, designers, futurists, teachers, farmers, researchers, writers, and more?

At its core, and in the face of generative AI, constant information and news, the allure of social media and the results we see now and in the future from the amount of screen time our children engage in, we need to think toward the future.

Ankerson asked what is at the core of an education at Nebraska's Big10 Research University? We certainly embraced that discussion when the Achievement Centered Education (ACE) general education approach was taken. A robust discussion with representatives from each of the colleges, where decisions were required to be unanimous. That work happened in large part in 2006 – 2008. Seventeen years ago. So much has changed, and at an increasingly rapid pace, in our world. How do we deliver, engage, ensure the knowledge and application is relevant to our students now and into the future. Do we need to embrace a broader appreciation of a system where we have 3 credit hour courses divided into 2 hours of core content and 1 hour of discipline-specific application? She noted that she and Boehm have talked about that, and he mentioned it at a previous meeting. These are the sorts of proactive thought exercises that Ankerson encouraged this group to engage in.

Ankerson asked if a group could come together and determine what a course as described in the N2025 plan might entail to introduce students to a wide array of critical and creative thinking approaches? Can a group come together and determine what aspects of literacy, and how we define it, and for what areas – information, media, visual, computational, other and how to be informed in a way that prepares our students and differentiates us? Soon, Ankerson will be asking a group of forward-thinking faculty members to begin considering how we think about these opportunities.

Vuran stated that there was a news article about the NU system partnering with Google to create certificates and noted that there is already a web page about it. He pointed out that some of the areas that are being taught are data science, business analytics, and cyber security. He stated that it came as a surprise because the certificate was adopted without going through the APC process. Ankerson reported that this is a system program and noted that a Google representative spoke at a CAO meeting and answered questions. Heng-Moss noted that it is a non-credit bearing program and Boehm pointed out that the program is like receiving a badge. Ankerson stated that

there are programs for credit badges and non-credit badges. Doll stated that she is concerned with the perception of quality with the Google program and Vuran stated that these badges may overlap with the education that the university is providing. Ankerson noted that some of what Google would be teaching is more focused on skills. Mowat asked where the revenue from the course(s) would go. Minter pointed out that this is being framed as an academic enterprise and she noted that there are bylaws and procedures in place yet the process for considering new courses or programs was not adhered to. Heng-Moss stated that Food Science and Technology has been looking at creating digital badges but noted that UNL faculty have been involved with this process. She pointed out that UNL does have a partnership with Coursera and wondered if the Google program would co-mingle with it.

Jones

Jones reported that in the [April 7th Nebraska Today story](#) there is an article on the progress in research that UNL has made which provided her with an opportunity to highlight the great work that is being done here. She noted that in the last decade the university's total research expenditures have grown by 37% from \$266.5 million in 2013 to \$366 million in 2023. She noted that we have also experienced tremendous growth in externally sponsored federal funding increasing from \$115 million in 2021 to \$163 million in 2023. She pointed out that while we still have things we can improve on, we are not at the bottom of the AAU in several metrics, we are making great progress, and we are in a position to propel ourselves forward. She noted that rejoining the AAU is just one thing of many others that we can do to elevate our stature.

Jones noted that Professor Sue Sheridan, Educational Psychology, was recently named a fellow of the National Academy of Education and she is the first UNL professor to receive this prestigious award. She pointed out that one of the things we need to do is to promote our faculty members for awards. She stated that ORED is thinking carefully of how we can nominate faculty members and consideration is being given to what we can do for mid-career faculty members, such as providing them with a start-up package and providing year-long sabbaticals. She stated that the conversations have been worthy, and she is excited with some of the ideas that have been generated. She stated that the Research Leaders Program for more senior faculty members is absolutely incredible, and she wants to get this group of faculty members in front of more people.

Jones announced that the Joel Sartore exhibit at Morrill Hall is opening April 19th. Jones also announced that she does not plan to return as Dean of CEHS when she is done with being Interim VC of ORED. Ankerson noted that she has begun to pull a search committee together to find a new Dean.

Boehm

Boehm reported that leadership transitions in IANR include Professor Kate Brooks becoming Head of Agricultural Economics, the announcement tomorrow of a new Head for Statistics, the retirement of Dr. Terry Hejny from the Nebraska LEAD program which will require a search for a new director, and there will be a new Head for Food Science & Technology and the Food Processing Center.

Boehm stated that the year-long journey to update the IANR Strategic Direction has been completed and is now available on the [IANR website](#). He reported that many people from the

campus, and leaders across agriculture and rural resources from industry, and organizations were involved.

Boehm noted that IANR is carefully watching the news about the H5N1 virus which is a perennial issue. He pointed out that this is a very complicated virus and when it gets into an animal it can create new variants. He stated that migratory birds spread it and it was detected before the sandhill cranes arrived. He noted that it jumped to lactating cows first in Texas and it has now occurred in seven other states. He stated that of real concern is that it jumped to a human in Texas and noted that the virus in animals can have a high mortality rate.

Boehm reported that May 6th is the official groundbreaking day on NIC for the new USDA Nation Center for Resilient and Regenerative Precision Agriculture.

7.0 Other Business

Mowat reported that the inauguration of the new ASUN President, Elizabeth Herbin, is this evening and the inauguration of the new GSA President will be held on May 7th which begins at 7:00 in the Nebraska Union, Regency Suite.

Pechous wanted to thank everyone since this is his last meeting. He stated that serving on the APC was a great learning experience. He reported that Elizabeth Herbin will be serving as the ASUN representative next year. Ankerson noted that Pechous has been an exemplary representative for ASUN and the same is true for Mowat for representing GSA.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:28 p.m. The next meeting of the APC will be on Wednesday, May 1, 2024. The minutes are respectfully submitted by Karen Griffin, Coordinator.