

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES

Present: Alloway, Bradford, Fech, Flowers, Hachtmann, LaCost, Ledder, Lindquist, Prochaska-Cue, Rapkin, Zimmers

Absent: Bolin, Moeller

Date: Wednesday, April 9, 2008

Location: Faculty Senate Office, 420 University Terrace

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

Bradford called the meeting to order at 3:05 p.m.

2.0 Announcements

No announcements were made.

3.0 Approval of 4/2/08 Minutes

The minutes were approved as amended.

4.0 Unfinished Business

4.1 Motion on Diversity Committee Report

Fech stated that he wanted to present an alternative motion to the one Rapkin made at the Senate meeting. He stated that he wanted to thank the Diversity Committee for their effort and state that the Senate will continue working on the issue. Bradford suggested that the motion should be written to thank the original eight members of the committee so people do not think that just the remaining three members are being thanked.

Ledder suggested that the motion be dealt with at the April 22nd meeting so that it is not left hanging over the summer. Bradford stated that the motion can be presented as a substitute motion since it is dealing with the same subject matter.

Rapkin asked if Lindquist's concern of the report not coming from the entire committee should be incorporated into the substitute motion. Alloway pointed out that the report also doesn't adequately address the charge. Flowers stated that the report does not constitute a plan and is only from three members of the committee. He suggested that the motion raise the two problematical areas of the report.

Lindquist noted that the motion does not really call for any action. Ledder pointed out that the Executive Committee could make creating a diversity plan a goal for next year.

Rapkin noted that the college and department strategic plans included a section on diversity. He wondered whether these had been looked at by the Diversity Committee. Bradford stated that these should be available and Hachtmann stated that she thinks the first strategic plans were still on the web. Ledder stated that he doubted whether there would anything very useful in these. If a department is losing diversity they aren't going to write down why and other departments would probably state that they are doing the best that they can.

Prochaska-Cue stated that there is the option of tabling the motion until we get a chance to review the report from the Advisory Board. Bradford noted that this would carry the motion over the summer.

Rapkin pointed out that the issue of diversity and affirmative action will be discussed again this fall because of the affirmative action referendum that will more than likely be on the ballot in November.

Ledder stated that it would be worth discussing what would happen if the referendum is approved. He offered the opinion that the referendum would not prevent the university taking measures to improve retention. Bradford stated that at a Board of Regents meeting someone from Central Administration stated that it is at least a possible construction that not a dime could be spent if it is directed specifically at a minority. Ledder pointed out that there are other ways to support diversity. For example, there is a program to retain students in calculus courses. This program was started at another institution for the purpose of improving retention for minority students. At UNL, we encourage any at-risk students, minority or not, to enroll in the program. Bradford stated that he did not agree with everything Central Administration's representative said would be prohibited if the referendum is approved.

The Committee decided to work on the motion further at next week's meeting.

4.2 Faculty Salary Histogram

Bradford noted that one faculty member received a 61% increase in salary. He noted that the histogram does not include those faculty members who received an increase due to promotions. It included people who had no change in FTE, were tenure track, and kept the same position. He stated that the total faculty members involved was 900+.

5.0 New Business

5.1 Nancy Myers, Director, Organization Development and Tim Alvarez, Assistant Vice Chancellor, Student Affairs

Myers reported that she has been working with the program serving students the Big Red Way and have now completed about six seminars on issues such as retaining multi cultural and international students. She stated that another part of the program was the "Get to Know Me" brochure which was designed to help retain students.

Myers stated that some funding is available to sponsor another set of seminars or some other activity and she wanted to include the faculty. She noted that sometimes she thinks

the Faculty Senate is overlooked and she wanted to make sure they were included in this effort.

Bradford asked how many faculty members went to the previous seminars. Myers stated that not a huge number of faculty members attended but those who did said that they really enjoyed it and asked for more seminars for the faculty.

Ledder suggested starting with something general such as what features of the campus help to promote retention of students. Alvarez pointed out that they do not have all of the answers but he thinks he has information that faculty members would want to know and suggested a collaborative effort could be done.

Myers distributed a synopsis of the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) for UNL. She noted that this is a random survey that is given to students and it provides interesting data for the campus. She stated that there are a couple of different dynamics in the synopsis that she thinks faculty will be interested in. She noted that one of the questions asks about relationships students have with faculty members. She pointed out that we are seeing changes in the student body and population and these students are coming with different dynamics and challenges. She stated that she knows that there are a lot of good things that faculty members are doing to meet some of these challenges but the question is where to find out about them. Other questions are how you deal with some of the students and how do you engage them in academics. She stated that the idea is to have some discussion and dialogue with faculty members who are interested.

Alvarez noted that he can get comparative data from the Big 12 schools on the NSSE survey to get some benchmarks. He noted that a difference can be seen in the responses from when students first come to campus and when they leave. He reported that comparative data can also be obtained on AAU schools and our peer institutions. Bradford stated that having comparative data would be helpful to determine if we are behind in some areas and where we stand.

Ledder stated that a concern he has is that there seems to be only half the data that is needed to form an opinion on a question. He noted that for some of the questions the choices for an answer were limited and what was listed we would not have any control over. He stated that he would love to improve student's motivation but he is not sure how to do this. It would be more helpful to know how many students think that frustration with their coursework is the main reason why they might not stay in school, but that wasn't on the list of choices. Myers stated that some of the gaps will be filled in when the complete data is viewed. She suggested asking students who leave the university some of these questions. Bradford asked if this has ever been done. Myers stated that the big issue is following up with those students who don't come back. She noted that if they leave the university for a year or longer they have to reapply. She stated that having discussions about some of these things might help the university to develop policies that might be beneficial.

Ledder stated that one thing UNL has that is helpful to students is the academic bankruptcy option. He stated that he would like to know how many students use this and come back successfully. He noted that he knows of a student who used it and not only came back but wound up getting a Ph.D. Bradford asked if a student can use this after they get his/her results for a semester. Alvarez pointed out that they cannot be freshmen and need to satisfy some other criteria.

Rapkin pointed out that it might be useful to have different categories of things that faculty members as individuals can do and things that the university can do. He noted that there are very broad causes of stress that students face that might contribute to their working below an optimal level. Myers agreed and stated that in comparison to the other Big 12 schools our students work more. She stated that there are some students working more than two jobs. Alvarez pointed out that when they work over 20 hours a week their grades typically suffer. Alloway noted that there is some evidence that shows that those who did work some hours actually do better than those who don't work at all.

Alvarez stated that Jessica Johnson from Institutional Research and Planning is very interested in finding out if more information should be collected. Alloway stated that efforts should be made to find out why students leave the university before completing their degree. Alvarez pointed out that sometimes students will not give the real reason why they quit. Ledder stated that cases where they didn't come back even though they were passing are especially important. Myers stated that Dean Kean has done some work in this area and has some data on why students don't return to the university. She stated that some reasons are financial others academics or the student doesn't feel like they fit here or they have family problems.

Bradford noted that Professor Tom Workman, who used to work at UNL, has come back to do presentations on some of these topics and he stated that finances was one of the top reasons students didn't return. He noted that it was a very valuable presentation. He stated that he likes the idea of getting the faculty members together to talk about what challenges instructors face with students and what people are doing that is successful. He pointed out that there is not a lot of interaction across the disciplines about these issues and having a seminar or workshop would be helpful.

Ledder stated that he would like to know how common it is for students to transfer from UNL to other 4-year institutions. If this is common, then it might be helpful to see if there is some pattern in the reasons why people are transferring to other schools. Myers stated that Dean Kean has some information on this. Alvarez stated that there is a national data warehouse where some of this information can be obtained. Myers stated that she does not believe it is a large number of students transferring to other schools. Alvarez stated that an issue that has not been addressed yet is out-of-state students who cannot afford to come back.

Prochaska-Cue pointed out that if students opted out of the consumer consumption model (wanting nice vehicles, clothes, etc.) they might find that finances are not so difficult. She stated that students need to define what their goals are while they are in school. She

stated that she does not think some of them can afford the lifestyle extras. She noted that it is a matter of prioritizing what is important. Bradford stated that room, board, and tuition are substantial. Alvarez stated that he has had four staff members working with students on financial consumption and he believes it is a factor for retention. Prochaska-Cue noted that she is not denying that financial issues can be tough for some people. Fech stated that it is a wants versus needs issue.

Bradford stated that making the NU card a credit card does not help with some students' financial situation. Ledder wondered if there was any data on how many students are carrying credit card debt. Alvarez stated that it would probably be difficult to get that information.

Alvarez asked if there are other areas where we can make an impact. He noted that they want to concentrate on the classroom and interactions with faculty if they do seminars. Flowers suggested looking at some other demographics such as how many hours a student works. Ledder stated that he thinks more questions are needed. Fech stated that it would be interesting to see what effect boredom in the introductory courses has to do with retention. He pointed out that students can be frustrated with having to take only introductory classes in their freshmen year because they are so broad and don't get into the depth of a discipline. Ledder stated that he wonders whether it is the level of the courses or how impersonal they can be because of the size of the class. Bradford pointed out that requirement for taking survey courses before taking upper level courses is discipline specific. Ledder stated that not all introductory courses are survey. He suggested that perhaps some curriculum changes could be done to help address this concern.

LaCost stated that she has a graduate student who is working with staff members who deal with students and one of the big questions is a student's persistence. She stated that they are trying to work with students to help them develop this ability.

Ledder stated that something that would be hard to get information on from students is what their attitude is towards their educational experience. He stated that those who come with the attitude that they are paying to learn things, rather than to get credentials, are usually be more successful.

Rapkin pointed out that many students today expect to be entertained in the classroom. He noted that this is not part of the package. He stated that many students are not prepared for the degree of freedom they have at a university.

Bradford suggested that Myers and Alvarez contact faculty members who have won awards for their teaching. He noted that these people clearly do a good job of interacting with students and it might be helpful to meet with them in a small group to discuss their methods.

Ledder suggested that it might be nice if incoming students had small group discussions with senior students at New Student Enrollment to learn how college is different than high school life.

Flowers stated that one thing that has been done well is increasing participation of faculty members in recruiting perspective students and with new student enrollment. He stated that he has spoken to students who told him that talking to a professor who is in the field they are interested in made a difference in their decision to come here. Ledder asked how faculty members get involved with this. He stated that he has never been asked to get involved. Myers stated that interested faculty members should contact the Admissions office. Ledder noted that the number of applicants for graduate school increases when faculty members play a role in recruiting. Flowers pointed out that students can only get some answers from faculty members and you can tell when you meet with some students that you have made a difference.

Myers asked if there was anyone on the Executive Committee that she could work with about developing a possible forum or seminar. LaCost stated that she would be interested.

Ledder noted that CASNR has a reputation for doing a really good job of getting students to feel like they are a part of an academic community. He suggested contacting someone from CASNR to see what they do. Alvarez noted that they have a smaller group of students and can build cohorts quickly.

Myers stated that she would like to get something together quickly. Ledder suggested that whatever they do they make it clear to the faculty that it is about how to get students more engaged. Bradford stated that it might be helpful to have someone who is a reputable researcher and teacher lead the seminar.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:15 p.m. The next meeting of the Executive Committee will be on Wednesday, April 16th at 3:00 pm. The meeting will be held in 201 Canfield Administration. The minutes are respectfully submitted by Karen Griffin, Coordinator and Rick Alloway, Secretary.