

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES

Present: Fech, Flowers, Franti, Konecky, LaCost, Lindquist, Prochaska-Cue

Absent: Bolin, McCollough, Rapkin, Schubert, Shea, Stock

Date: January 6, 2010

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

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

2.0 Professor Scalora and Chief Yardley – Threat Assessment Team

Fech stated that the Committee is interested in how the Threat Assessment Team operates, whether faculty members should be involved, and, if so, how much. Chief Yardley reported that the Team deals with a wide range of threats that come into the campus. Slightly under half of these threats are made by people who are not on campus and are not part of the campus community, the rest of the threats are made by faculty/staff/and students.

Chief Yardley stated that when information is received on a threat people on the Team will work in conjunction with the person who reported the threat to try and de-escalate the situation. He noted that Professor Scalora is involved with these discussions. Chief Yardley stated that several units on campus can be used to assist with the situation, the Employee Assistance Program, CAP Center for Students, and Human Resources to name a few.

Professor Scalora stated that an example of a threat would be a disgruntled student who applied to a graduate program and was denied entrance. Afterwards the student starts writing letters to the university that generate a concern for safety. He stated that when this kind of thing occurs the Team will work directly with the person receiving the threats and will check into the individual making the threats. He stated that the initial efforts are to de-escalate the situation but if the threats get more menacing the police might be contacted.

Franti asked how the Team receives information on threats. Professor Scalora stated that notification to the Team often comes from an administrator, such as a department chair or a dean, although the information can come from a variety of sources. He noted that he would like to see faculty members come to the Team more directly rather than going through an administrator. Chief Yardley pointed out that hearing directly from the person who received the threat allows the Team to act more quickly.

Professor Scalora stated that people can contact the police department and a plain clothes officer will respond. He noted that faculty members can be reluctant to contact the police or the Team because they do not want the situation to reflect negatively back on them or bring unwanted attention. He pointed out that some of the cases he worries the most about are when a person appears suicidal but then turns violent putting others at risk. He stated that the Team tries to bring in tangible assets like the EAP or Victim Protection Program to help with a situation but if an emergency situation occurs, the police will be brought in.

Professor Scalora pointed out that the earlier the Team hears about a problem the better because the person receiving the threat can be educated about behavior to look for to determine if the threat is escalating. He noted that the Team can also help if a person does not feel comfortable in dealing with the situation at all. He stated that the goal of the Team is to be as advisory as possible, but the more imminent a situation, the more direct action is needed.

Chief Yardley stated that the second part of the Threat Assessment Team is an advisory committee that reviews the various reports of threats. He stated that members of the advisory committee include representatives from both east and city campuses, Human Resources, Graduate Office, Housing, Undergraduate Studies, and Judicial Affairs. He noted that each month the committee meets and reviews procedures and follows up on reported threats. He reported that typically threat situations usually affect several units on campus.

Chief Yardley stated that the third component of the Threat Assessment Team is to educate the campus. He noted that this is an ongoing process that the Team has actively been engaged in for a couple of years. He reported that some campaigns have been conducted to get the information out and the more people who know what the Team is about and how it functions, the better.

Fech noted that Chief Yardley and Professor Scalora will be speaking to the Senate at the January 12th Senate meeting. He pointed out that this is a good approach to get the information out to the campus. He stated that he was not aware that established protocols exist for dealing with threats. He asked where faculty members can be involved and be more helpful.

Lindquist asked if faculty members are on the advisory committee. Chief Yardley noted that Professor Scalora is a member and there are representatives from Graduate Studies and Undergraduate Studies. Professor Scalora pointed out that people on the advisory committee represent programs that have a vested interest in many threats. He stated that it is important to have various units represented in the review process because they are often the decision makers for the units they represent. He pointed out that faculty members are involved in the initial process when complaints are filed. He stated that typically faculty members are not at the review process because it is much more of a policy making process.

Lindquist asked if it would be possible to put a representative from the Senate on the advisory committee in order to have a direct conduit to the Senate. Chief Yardley stated that the Team works directly from where the threat originated. He noted that other campus units have requested representation but the position of the advisory committee is to target campus safety. If there are members on the committee with other objectives than campus safety issues there could be a conflict. Lindquist pointed out that policies are valuable and stated that the Team should be sure not to leave faculty members out of the loop. Professor Scalora acknowledged this and stated that if there are concerns that the faculty are feeling left out the Executive Committee should let him know. He stated that it would be invaluable to have faculty members help disseminate information and be part of the process of creating a policy.

Professor Scalora reported that the Team understands the concerns of some units feeling left out but the Team's responsibility is to look at the bigger picture in terms of safety issues. He noted that sometimes there are more complex issues that need to be addressed. He pointed out that at Virginia Tech during the shooting there was initial ambiguity about what was taking place. He noted that perceptions can be distorted more easily during times of crisis.

Professor Scalora pointed out that Virginia Tech is similar in size and layout to the UNL campus and that there are a lot of varied buildings. He noted that the uniqueness of the buildings makes it difficult to develop a one size fits all safety policy. He stated that the question is how to have faculty and colleges create plans of actions for each building in times of crisis. He asked how the Team could discuss safety measures on campus and how to facilitate discussion with the faculty on how we can deal with safety issues.

Konecky stated that this is the reasoning for the Executive Committee's request to have Professor Scalora and Chief Yardley speak at the Senate meeting. She pointed out that she does not think information on the Team is being provided at new faculty orientation. She stated that the Senate hopes to get the word out about the Team.

Lindquist stated that it would be helpful for people to know who is on the Team in case they just want to ask some questions and get information. Professor Scalora pointed out that even though the Team is housed in the police department reports of threats are not considered a police matter. He stated that consultation can be provided without an incident becoming a police matter. He stated that the team is housed with the police because it helps with safety and if things become escalated the police can be quickly brought into the loop. He stated that basically the police office provides a conduit to house the activity.

Professor Scalora asked how the threat assessment entity could outreach better about the work it does. Fech suggested asking if a presentation could be made to various units on campus. Konecky stated that usually the Senators transmit minutes of the Executive Committee meeting and Senate meetings to the faculty in their departments and this would provide some information to the faculty.

Professor Scalora asked if electronic strategies are effective. Griffin suggested having a website and perhaps a video that people can look at.

Franti noted that every classroom has a media kiosk and suggested putting a label on each kiosk that would provide information on safety, including an emergency contact number. This way the information would be right in front of them during each class.

Chief Yardley stated that the Team would like to develop some safety information for classrooms and wondered whether instructors would be willing to review this information in the beginning of each semester. Konecky suggested that a document could also be included in the Blackboard pages and syllabus for courses.

Konecky noted that in the Libraries there are often non-affiliates occupying various areas of the building. She stated that the staff often struggle with feeling uncomfortable with some of the non-affiliates but are unsure whether they should contact the police. She noted that anytime you feel uncomfortable staff members should have someone from the police just walk through the building.

Professor Scalora stated that whenever someone is in doubt about their safety they should have the police check it out. He requested that if anyone has a concern they should please call. He stated that the Team prefers people deal with their concerns rather than worry about whether the police should come. He pointed out that if people have a feeling of being uncomfortable they should call. He noted that there is a service to escort people to their car at night and no one would second guess it if someone calls to have the police come and check out a situation that makes someone feel uncomfortable about their safety.

Konecky asked if there have been any brown bag series on classroom safety tips. Chief Yardley stated that last spring and fall there were some forums but they were not well attended.

Franti asked what the Virginia Tech and Illinois schools are doing to educate their faculty since the tragedies there. He asked if post events have dramatically changed the environment. Professor Scalora stated that these universities are having some of the same difficulties as us in getting information out to the campus regarding safety. He noted that UNL's Threat Assessment Team has done some training at these universities. Chief Yardley stated that the same question arises at each institution, how you get the whole campus engaged without hindering operations.

Professor Scalora pointed out that UNL has been one of the earliest campuses to create a Threat Assessment Team and one of the first to work with University Communications to develop materials and help get information out to the campus community. He noted that the Team is constantly viewing what other institutions are doing as well. He pointed out that interacting with faculty is always a challenge because they are very independent and are often hesitant to contact the police.

Griffin asked how many incidents occur a year. Chief Yardley stated that approximately 35 – 50 incidents occur yearly. He pointed out that the campus police website reports crimes that occur on a weekly, monthly and yearly basis.

Professor Scalora reported that if a threat occurs that involves a legal issue than two separate files will be created, one to deal with the threat and the other to deal with the legal issue. He stated that if a police report is written and an investigation takes place it needs to be determined if the incident is actionable; with threat assessments there is no legal threshold. He stated that the Team looks at the patterns of behavior and this determines the level of concern. He stated that threat assessment is very different from a police report. He pointed out that in some cases of threat assessment a person could be worried about the welfare of a colleague or a student. He stated that police reports and threat assessments are separate files because of the sensitive nature of the files. Chief Yardley stated that confidentiality is important and only those involved with a threat assessment know what is going on.

Franti asked if there has been any discussion on having mandatory training on safety. He pointed out that there is mandatory training for driving a university vehicle and for being on search committees. Chief Yardley stated that he does not think mandatory training will happen. He pointed out that the idea is not to make training an imposition. He stated that making training mandatory can leave a bad taste in a person's mouth. Konecky suggested having on-line training similar to the sexual harassment training.

3.0 Announcements

3.1 Kudos Awards

Fech reported that nominations for the Kudos awards are due January 11th. He noted that this is recognition by the Board of Regents for a person who has been a great asset to a department. Awards come with recognition in the Scarlet and a monetary award.

3.2 Empowerment Forum

Fech reported that there will be a diversity empowerment forum on February 26th in the new Multi Cultural Center. This forum focuses on understanding the "I" in diversity and the "We" in empowerment.

3.3 Meeting with Deans

Fech reported that he will be meeting with two more deans to discuss their college having a protocol for dealing with the cancellation of a guest speaker.

3.4 Spring Brown Bag Luncheons

Fech reported that a series of brown bag luncheons on ethics will be held on campus. Announcements about these brown bag luncheons will be forthcoming.

3.5 Academic Honesty Committee

Flowers reported that the Academic Honesty Committee will be meeting on January 15th to discuss potential policy revisions and recommendations.

4.0 Unfinished Business

4.1 BRRRC Committee

Prochaska-Cue stated that the BRRRC Committee met and produced the report. She asked what the Executive Committee wants to do with it. Does it want to accept the report and take it to the full Senate? She pointed out that she does not think the members of the BRRRC want to meet again to do any further revisions.

Fech asked if there was anything in the proposed changes that the Committee objected to. The Committee stated no. Fech asked if the Committee felt that the changes did not go far enough. Franti stated that the Committee needs to see the other proposed changes before it could pursue any course of action.

The Committee agreed to continue working on the issue.

4.2 NU Online Worldwide

LaCost reported that she reviewed the material that was put together on NU Online Worldwide. She stated that most of the material addresses a survey that was conducted on distance education. She stated that the catch phrase for the distance education program is storming, norming, and performing. Fech noted that UNO and UNMC are definitely in the norming stage.

LaCost reported that in May 2008 efforts to coordinate distance education really began moving forward. She stated that a business plan was developed for distance education. Shortly afterwards the Board of Regents repealed the requirement that tuition rates be the same for distance education.

LaCost stated that the basic purpose of the distance education program is to provide access to all Nebraska residents to university courses. She pointed out that there are four campuses that sometimes operate individually and a plan was needed to coordinate distance education on all of the campuses. She stated that the big problem is that each campus charges a different tuition rate for its courses. She stated that the plan also proposed that 3% of the tuition income from these courses be taken off of the top by Central Administration to coordinate the distance education courses. She noted that one concern is that the Chancellors may also want to put a tax on the revenue generated by these courses and in the end the amount of revenue coming to the department that actually provides the courses will dwindle significantly.

LaCost stated that duplication of courses is a problem that needs to be addressed if a system-wide program is created. She stated that higher tuition rates on one campus could hurt enrollment for another campus. She pointed out that a student would earn a degree from the University of Nebraska, not from one of the four campuses.

Konecky asked if there is a potential for coordination of overlapping courses. She noted that the College of Nursing has different satellite campuses but there is coordination that the courses are all being taught the same. Fech stated that another question would be who decides what department gets to teach a course.

LaCost stated that this is one of the questions that need to be answered. She stated that there is a question whether the State Department of Education will be involved with the initiative. Other questions are what group of people are currently not being served under the current system and where is the need for creating this program.

LaCost stated that she tried to get an update from the steering committee but was told that not much is going on right now. She state that she does not know if the university's financial situation is having an impact on the progress of NU Online Worldwide.

5.0 New Business

5.1 Senate Meeting

The Senate reviewed the agenda for the upcoming Senate meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:37 p.m. The next meeting of the Executive Committee will be on Wednesday, January 13 at 3:00 pm. The meeting will be held in the Faculty Senate Office, 420 University Terrace. The minutes are respectfully submitted by Karen Griffin, Coordinator and David Rapkin, Secretary.