

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES

Present: Anaya, Guevara, Irmak, LaCost, Nickerson, Purdum, Rinkevich, Shea

Absent: Lindquist, Schubert, Struthers, Varner, Wysocki

Date: Wednesday, December 14, 2011

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

LaCost called the meeting to order at 3:08 p.m.

2.0 Kelly Bartling and Troy Fedderson, University Communications

Bartling reported that in a previous communications with Griffin it was established that the Faculty Senate has some special needs in being able to communicate to the faculty. She stated that University Communications can be helpful in raising the Senate's visibility throughout the campus. She noted that Fedderson has interest in making sure the Scarlet is a vehicle for advancing the Faculty Senate meetings and for sharing the outcomes of the meetings to the campus. She noted that UNL Today can be used to notify the campus of a special speaker that will be addressing the Faculty Senate.

Shea asked about the effectiveness of various modes of communication used by University Communications. Bartling stated that they can determine the number of people who are reading specific stories on UNL Today. Fedderson stated that the number of people reading an article is obtained when the person clicks on the story. He pointed out that University Communications does not know who is looking at particular stories, only the number of times a story has been viewed. Shea asked what the average number of clicks are for stories, what is the maximum number of clicks, and if there is a comparison on how many staff or faculty members are reading a particular story. Fedderson reported that the average daily hit is 700 – 800 with the largest hit being 1200. He stated that the most popular stories are usually about faculty members who are in the news. Shea asked if there is any way of knowing whether it is faculty or staff reading the stories. Fedderson stated that this kind of information is not available.

Shea stated that he does not often look at UNL Today unless he is looking for something specific and that other faculty members have expressed the same to him. Purdum and Guevara stated that they look at it every day. Fedderson noted that UNL Today is designed as a quick hit of information.

Griffin stated that she placed the call for nominations for the Pound-Howard award in the November 3 UNL Today, but did not receive any applications of nominations by the deadline date this year. She stated that typically four or five nominations are received

each year. As a result, the deadline date has now been extended to January 27 and an email message has been sent out to the academic faculty about the extended deadline date. Nickerson pointed out that recently the topic of the number of applicants sent in for honorary degrees was discussed with the Chancellor and it was noted that there were very few applicants this year. He noted that in the past faculty members used to receive an email message about submitting honorary degrees but this year it was posted in the online newsletter.

Fedderson acknowledged that many people on campus still consider their email as the primary source for receiving information. He noted that having an email list serve is important in conveying some messages. Bartling stated that the faculty is often looking for specific information and they are used to getting faculty news through email. She stated that UNL Today tries to use subject lines that would attract attention and the stories that are published are considered to be the most current.

Purdum noted that she likes the events calendar. Bartling stated that people and departments can nominate an event for the university wide events calendar. She stated that an average of seven or eight events are usually posted each day and suggested that announcements of the Faculty Senate meetings could be posted on it. Griffin stated that she submitted events but it was not posted. Bartling noted that an events calendar can be established just for the Faculty Senate and it can be made private.

Bartling asked if the minutes of the Faculty Senate meetings are posted on the web. Griffin stated that the minutes from the Faculty Senate meetings and the Executive Committee meetings are posted on the web and sent out to the Senators through email. Bartling suggested that a write up could be done on the Senate meetings or the minutes could be published. Nickerson stated that he did not think the minutes should be published but excerpts would be appropriate. Anaya suggested that the agenda could be published with online hyperlinks to the section of the minutes pertaining to the agenda item. This would allow people to choose which agenda items they want to get more information on. Fedderson noted that he started running briefs in the Scarlet on the Senate meetings but pointed out that the Scarlet is published only once a month.

Bartling reported that University Communications will be conducting a survey of the faculty, staff, and students to see if and what kinds of stories they read. She stated that the idea is to create a destination where the university community and others can find information.

Irmak asked how University Communications gets its news. He noted that some faculty members who have received significant grants do not get mentioned in UNL Today or in other news publications, yet people who receive lesser grants become a news item. Bartling stated that her office receives notice of stories in a variety of ways. She reported that the campus has hundreds of communicators in departments and colleges who frequently submit stories to her office. Fedderson noted that University Communications generates its own stories too. He pointed out that even though University Communications has feelers out there to find stories, the Office might not hear about it.

Bartling reported that the Office of Research and Economic Development might call a story in if they want to celebrate some grants. She stated that it is all a part of the Office of Research and Economic Development strategic plan. She pointed out that if the research that is being conducted can make changes in the lives of people it will receive attention and a write up will be done on it. Fedderson stated that if any faculty member knows of a story they should contact either himself or Bartling. Anaya noted that sometimes faculty members have to create their own press about their work, especially if they do not have a public relations person in their department or college who can assist in getting stories published.

Griffin noted that Bartling has mentioned the possibility of a Faculty Senate quarterly newsletter. Fedderson stated that it is possible for the Faculty Senate to create its own newsletter which could be sent to the faculty. Bartling pointed out that it could be sent to the entire faculty or just to subscribers and it could feature items that the Senate deems as newsworthy. She suggested that minutes could be delivered that way or a Senator could be highlighted in the quarterly newsletter. It would be up to the Senate as to how it wants its newsletter to look. Fedderson pointed out that presenters at the Senate meetings could be recorded and put on line. Nickerson suggested that a Senate newsletter would be a good thing to discuss at next year's Executive Committee retreat.

Fedderson asked what kind of stories the Executive Committee members like to read. Anaya stated that she likes to read about awards faculty and staff members have received; Purdum stated that she likes to see features on the Great Plains Lecture Series and announcements on seminars which give her a sense of being in an academic community. Purdum stated that she thinks the Scarlet is more staff oriented. Bartling stated that the Scarlet continues to be printed because some people do not like reading electronically and there are still a significant number of people on campus who don't have access to email or a computer.

Bartling thanked the committee and stated that they would be willing to come back to speak with the Executive Committee again. Fedderson asked that anyone with questions to please feel free to contact him.

3.0 Announcements

3.1 President Milliken to Speak at Senate Meeting

Griffin reported that President Milliken is tentatively scheduled to speak to the Senate at the January 10 meeting. The Executive Committee discussed possible topics of discussion for President Milliken.

4.0 Approval of 12/7/11 Minutes

Anaya moved for approval of the revised minutes. The motion was seconded by Rinkevich. The motion was approved.

5.0 Unfinished Business

5.1 Honorary Degrees Guidelines

Griffin reported that she contacted the Chancellor's Office to obtain a copy of the message that used to be sent out calling for nominations for Honorary Degrees. She noted that the current nomination form provides the following guidelines for selecting honorary degree recipients: 1) persons who have rendered distinguished service to the University; 2) persons who have rendered distinguished service to the State of Nebraska; 3) Graduates, former students, or former employees who have achieved distinction; 4) persons of high distinction, from this country or abroad, who are not necessarily associated with the University or the State.

Anaya reported that she spoke with Professor Boudreau who develops a brief, but thorough biography of the nominees that are presented to the Honorary Degrees Committee and the Faculty Senate. She stated that Professor Boudreau would like to get feedback from the Executive Committee to see what the biographies are lacking. She stated that she thinks the nominations don't provide enough rationale as to why the person would be a good candidate for an honorary degree. She reported that she informed Professor Boudreau that the biographies presented to the Faculty Senate for voting this year did not provide a clear indication as to why the people were worthy of receiving an honorary degree. She pointed out that it should be evident in the biographies why a distinguished person should get an honorary degree. She pointed out that it would be more helpful to the Honorary Degrees Committee and to the Senate to have more information on the nominee.

Nickerson stated that his understanding is that in years past there was a shortage of nominees because the process of nominating someone was too laborious. He stated that he felt that the biographies this year were too short and did not provide adequate information.

Guevara pointed out that the Chancellor feels that honorary degrees should not be given to people who do not have a clear connection with the university. He suggested that the fourth guideline might be eliminated if the Chancellor feels that the nominee needs to have some connection to the university or the state.

LaCost wondered if each campus has an Honorary Degree Committee that provides nominees to Central Administration. She suggested that the Executive Committee discuss guideline number four with the Chancellor to see if he has suggestions for other language that could be used. Nickerson stated that he likes having four categories of guidelines. He stated that he believes part of the problem is that we do not get enough publicity when seeking nominations from the faculty.

Shea stated that another issue related to the honorary degrees is that the Faculty Senate does not have enough time to review the biographies of the nominees because the biographies are provided at a Senate meeting and then voted on at that meeting. He noted that he usually votes to approve the nominee because he does not feel he has enough information to make an informed decision and he feels uncomfortable rejecting someone

based on a lack of information. He stated that the Senate should be allowed more time to review the nominees. He pointed out that the Senate's role in the process of identifying qualified people for an honorary degree needs to be meaningful.

Nickerson suggested that changes could be made in how nominations are solicited from the faculty. He pointed out that the qualifications for being a candidate for receiving an honorary degree need to be stressed in the nomination. He suggested requiring a persuasive paragraph as to why a person is deserving of receiving an honorary degree. He pointed out that Professor Boudreau can look through the biographical information but cannot state why the person is being nominated. Anaya agreed and stated that more information needs to be provided on the nominee.

Nickerson noted that the University is currently operating on a single deadline date for nominations for honorary degrees. He recommended that there be two deadline dates, one in the spring and one in the fall. Purdum pointed out that this makes sense since honorary degrees are given out at the summer and winter commencement ceremonies.

Purdum suggested that, based on guideline number three, many people coming in for Master's Week would more than likely qualify for an honorary degree. She suggested that the Honorary Degrees Committee could review this list of people to seek possible nominees. LaCost stated that the college should approve nominations for honorary degrees.

Purdum suggested inviting members of the Honorary Degrees Committee to meet with the Executive Committee to discuss the issue further. LaCost noted that Associate to the Chancellor Nunez is on the Honorary Degrees Committee and it would be helpful if he had good information from the Chancellor on what he is looking for in honorary degree nominees.

Anaya stated that she will contact Associate to the Chancellor Nunez to discuss the issue.

5.2 Update on Ad Hoc Committee for Student Bereavement Policy

LaCost reported that she contacted ASUN President Carr about setting up an ad hoc committee to work on the policy. She noted that the ad hoc committee will not begin its work until after the holiday break. Griffin reported that Professor Woodward, chair of the Grading and Examinations Committee, has agreed to serve on the ad hoc committee.

5.3 Update on University Curriculum Committee Revisions

LaCost reported that she met with Nancy Mitchell, Director of Undergraduate Education and Brian Moore, Chair of the University Curriculum Committee, to discuss the changes being recommended by the UCC. She noted that the recommended changes are to allow the ACE Committee, a subcommittee of the UCC, to make non-substantive changes. Purdum asked if the proposed changes make the policy worse or better because it seems that the proposed changes are adding more administrative duties.

Shea stated that he would be hesitant to make an exception to any committee that they can go ahead and make changes without going through the Senate approval process. He pointed out that non-substantive changes would be quickly approved by the Senate. He stated that adhering to the current procedures allows other people to review proposed changes. He noted that what people consider substantive is subjective. He stated that he thinks there needs to be broader involvement with the Senate if changes are to be made.

Griffin stated that she will research the history of the documents to which the proposed changes would apply.

6.0 New Business

6.1 January 4 Executive Committee Meeting

The Executive Committee agreed to have a meeting on Wednesday, January 4.

6.2 Report on Board of Regents Meeting

LaCost stated that the Board was informed the UNMC has invested millions of dollars to develop public health initiatives for Nebraska. She stated that Chancellor Perlman reported that UNL will begin working on its campus master plan in the spring. The Chancellor informed the Board that UNL was ahead of schedule in accomplishing the goals of its current master plan, hence the reason for developing a new master plan this year.

LaCost reported that the Exercise Science program at UNO was approved and the department of Industrial and Management Systems Engineering at UNL has been eliminated.

6.3 Benefits for Single Employees

Anaya stated that a faculty member asked her to raise the issue about how most of the university benefits are exclusionary of single people and geared towards married employees, employees with families, or employees who have a partner. She noted that sick leave can be used by an employee to take an immediate family member to a medical appointment but the same cannot be done for people with no family members but who have close friends that need assistance. Anaya pointed out that there is a large group on campus that does not get much consideration with benefits.

Purdum wondered whether soft benefits can be given to help alleviate the differences for these employees. She pointed out that single people are disenfranchised most of the time because of the way our society is.

LaCost suggested that the Executive Committee wait to see what happens with the employee plus one benefit before looking into the issue of single employees and their benefits.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:09 p.m. The next meeting of the Executive Committee will be on Wednesday, January 4 at 3:00 pm. The meeting will be held in the Faculty Senate Office. The minutes are respectfully submitted by Karen Griffin, Coordinator and Pat Shea, Secretary.

