

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES

Present: Anaya, LaCost, Lindquist, Nickerson, Purdum, Rinkevich, Schubert, Shea, Varner

Absent: Irmak, Struthers, Wysocki

Date: Wednesday, September 7, 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 3:03 p.m.

2.0 Announcements

2.1 Meeting with Professor Bryant, Chair of the Academic Planning Committee

LaCost reported that Professor Bryant wants to meet with the Executive Committee to speak about faculty governance. Griffin stated that she will contact Professor Bryant to arrange a meeting.

3.0 Approval of 8/31/11 Minutes

Griffin reported that she just received changes from Professor Mitchell and Assistant to the Vice Chancellor Major but they were just sent out to the Executive Committee shortly before the meeting and many probably have not had an opportunity to read them. The Executive Committee agreed to approve the minutes by email.

4.0 Unfinished Business

4.1 Suspension of Pay

LaCost reported that she spoke briefly with Professor Peterson, Chair of the Academic Rights & Responsibilities Committee, about writing a procedure dealing with suspension of pay into the ARRC procedures. She noted that she will be meeting with Professor Peterson to discuss the issue further.

5.0 New Business

5.1 Faculty Senate President's Designee to the Academic Planning Committee

LaCost stated that she needs to appoint someone to the Academic Planning Committee and asked for suggestions. Griffin noted that Professor Sollars, Veterinary & Biomedical Sciences, volunteered to serve on the APC last year. She pointed out that there are no faculty members from east campus currently on the APC. The Executive Committee agreed that Professor Sollars should be contacted to see if she would be willing to serve for the year.

5.2 Chancellor's State of the University Address

Nickerson noted that he was elated to hear that there will be 1300 tenured track faculty members at UNL, although there was some ambiguity about this in the newspapers.

Lindquist noted that his department has already been asked to adjust its credit hours to 120. He stated that there are a number of faculty members who are upset about this in his department.

LaCost reported that a motion is being presented to the Board of Regents this Friday to create a new Regents Policy to standardize University of Nebraska baccalaureate degrees at 120 credit hours, yet Regents Bylaw 2.9 states that colleges shall determine requirements for graduation. Shea stated that establishing requirements for graduation is clearly in the faculty realm and faculty should be making this decision. He reported that the Chancellor stated in his address that one college has already approved the 120 credit hour requirements, but he questioned what process is being used to get faculty agreement on this change. He stated that the Executive Committee should tell the Chancellor of its concerns.

LaCost reported that she spoke with a member of her college's curriculum committee to see if they have addressed the issue but they have not heard anything about it. Schubert stated that he checked as well and reported that, to his knowledge, Engineering has not had discussions about changing the requirements for graduation.

Varner asked what current college requirements are for graduation. Schubert stated that it was 126 in Engineering. Rinkevich stated that it was 125 in Arts & Sciences but if the student did not have previous foreign language courses it was 130. Purdum pointed out that with the ACE requirements and other specializations needed in departments she can understand why the credit hours are above 120 hours.

Lindquist stated that as a parent with a child in school here he thinks it is appropriate to change the requirement to 120 credit hours. He pointed out that the University ought to be able to deliver an excellent education within the 120 credit hour limit. He noted that in some departments there is substantial overlap in the content of courses and effective curriculum review would result in no loss in the overall content covered.

Nickerson stated that he would have been happier if the Chancellor said he recommends that the faculty consider reducing the amount of required credit hours. He pointed out that it seems as if it is a done deal considering the motion that will be going to the Board of Regents. He noted that the motivation for the change is to improve our retention and graduation rates so that we are more in align with the other Big Ten schools.

LaCost asked if other members have had conversations in their departments about the change in the required credit hours. Shea stated that he has heard some things about it but wondered if the Chancellor could make this decision for everyone. He asked why all the colleges haven't approved it if there are no concerns. LaCost wondered if the deans have agreed to it. Shea asked what the right process is for handling the situation.

Schubert stated that the issue could have been discussed with the faculty. Shea suggested that LaCost check with each dean to see what process they are using to deal with this issue.

Lindquist stated that the concerns of the faculty should be brought to the Board of Regents' attention. He stated that he supports the 120 credit hour but he does think it is appropriate for the Executive Committee to express the concern that the faculty have been largely left out of the decision making process. Nickerson noted that his department chair has not heard anything at the college level about changing the credit hour requirements.

Varner stated that he is curious to know what is happening at the other campuses since the motion addresses graduation requirement for the University as a whole. LaCost stated that she will try to visit with the other Senate Presidents before the Board of Regents meeting.

5.3 Professors of Practice

Shea reported that he has heard of some professors of practice being put into unrealistic situations and some are being evaluated on the same criteria as tenure track faculty members – and are underpaid. This suggests a problem in how colleges and units are dealing with professors of practice. He noted that the Chancellor and SVCAA pointed out that these people sign a contract and are aware of the duties they will be assigned, but in each case the person in these positions should have it spelled out exactly what they are expected to do.

Lindquist noted that professors of practice are regular faculty members that do mostly teaching. He stated that it was his impression that IANR wanted these positions so that they could pay these faculty members at a level that is more equivalent to that of tenure track faculty. He pointed out that lecturers are the faculty who are most likely to be taken advantage of. Shea stated that the case he heard about is a professor of practice and he is hearing concerns that we will have more professors of practice in the near future. He stated that we need to make sure that the university is not unfairly taking advantage of these people.

Purdum pointed out that there are ranks within the professor of practice positions and in order for people to be promoted within these ranks they have to show scholarly activity. She noted that lecturers do not have ranks, and therefore are not evaluated on the same criteria.

Nickerson reported that his department established specific criteria for the professor of practice position. Purdum noted that in some departments that are research dominated the criteria for these positions might include research work. She stated that it is the departments that need to evaluate the criteria which are required for achievement in these ranks.

Nickerson asked if the Senate body wants to try to get some uniformity across the campus for these positions. He stated that in some units the professor of practice are exploited, but in his department they are valued and do useful teaching.

Purdum wondered if there was any kind of advisory group or resources where these people could go for help when they are negotiating their contracts. Shea stated that colleges are supposed to have a committee that deals with apportionment and he would think that a person could go to this committee for assistance. Griffin stated that she believes that an apportionment committee is only formed when there is a conflict in apportionment of duties with a faculty member. Lindquist stated that most colleges have a promotion and tenure committee that would address apportionment issues. He stated that he does not think a special apportionment committee was ever formed in IANR and disagreements over apportionment of duties would go to the Dean's Council. Shea pointed out that these cases would be decided by administrators if the issue goes to the Dean's Council.

Shea suggested that this topic be discussed at a Senate meeting so the Executive Committee can hear what people have to say about these positions.

Purdum noted that the Chancellor stated in his address that there was going to be an increase in tenured faculty members. Anaya stated that the Chancellor reported that the plan was to increase tenured faculty members to 1300, an increase of 160. Varner asked where the money was coming from for these positions. Nickerson stated that he would like to know how many faculty members are currently tenured. Griffin stated that she will check with Institutional Research and Planning for this information.

5.4 Faculty Governance

President LaCost indicated that Professor Bryant would like to meet with the Executive Committee to discuss issues related to faculty governance. Since Professor Bryant is Chair of the APC, Lindquist suggested that the Executive Committee should also ask what the APC is working on and whether or not there are opportunities to collaborate. Shea pointed out that we need to discuss how we feel about faculty governance now and what we are looking for. He noted that most committees are just advisory and come up with recommendations but it is the administration that makes the final decision. He stated that the Executive Committee should want to hear what the faculty thinks on issues pertaining to the faculty. He stated that some committees should be empowered not only to make recommendations, but to make decisions and create policies as well. He noted that if the Executive Committee is going to discuss faculty governance then we need to be focused. He stated that he thinks the Senate should be more empowered in some areas and pointed out that at some other institutions the Faculty Senate is more powerful. He stated that we should have structured discussions at the Senate meetings on issues that affect the faculty. Purdum stated that she would like to know what the Chancellor's, SVCAA's, and VC's expectations and role are of the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee agreed that this should be a topic of discussion when they next meet with the administrators.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:45 p.m. The next meeting of the Executive Committee will be on Wednesday, September 14, 2011 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.