

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES

Present: Bender, Dawes, Joeckel, Konecky, Lee, Nickerson, Reisbig, Rudy, Sollars, Steffen, Woodman

Absent: Purcell, Vakilzadian

Date: Tuesday, January 5, 2016

Location: 203 Alexander Building

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

Bender called the meeting to order at 2:33 p.m.

2.0 Dean Hecker

2.1 Increase in the Number of Incidents of Academic Dishonesty

Dean Hecker reported that last year his office has seen an incredible growth in the number of cases of academic dishonesty on campus, both simple cases of plagiarism and cheating, but also complicated incidents where multiple parties have been involved in academic dishonesty. He stated that he wanted to engage the faculty on how we can deal with the issue and felt that the Faculty Senate would be the governing body that can act on the issue.

Dean Hecker noted that the issue of academic dishonesty can be multi-faceted, in some cases there is a cultural context to it, particularly with international students, in other cases the student is unaware that they have to cite references when copying and pasting text into a paper, and then there are some students who are actually purchasing papers or computer code written by others. He reported that some countries have a very different understanding of the rules regarding academic integrity and international students often do not understand our definition of academic integrity. He noted that one of the challenges with the cultural differences is that in some cultures there is a deference to age or gender and a student may feel obligated to do things for another student based on their cultural norms, but these are not accepted here.

Dean Hecker stated that domestic students pose a lot of challenges too. He pointed out that technology has changed the equation greatly. For instance some students will take pictures of exams and send it to their friends on their phones. He stated that the problem of academic dishonesty has become quite problematic and the faculty need to be enlisted to determine how best to address the problem.

Lee noted that at some institutions, such as West Point, students cannot even ask a friend for help on an assignment. He asked if Dean Hecker knew of any universities that are handling the problem of academic dishonesty well. Dean Hecker stated that there are

some universities that are having some success, but he pointed out that we need to recognize that the definition of plagiarism across the campus can vary because the expectations within disciplines are different.

Woodman asked if any presentations or training are given to international students on what is considered acceptable academic behavior when they first arrive on campus. Dean Hecker stated that an integrative brochure is given to help train the students. Sollars suggested that there be an online training manual, something like the Title IX training. She pointed out that this may be a more dynamic and engaging way to address the issue. Nickerson asked if the pamphlet is only in English. He noted that some students' English skills are lacking.

Woodman stated that he thinks the training is a somewhat passive response to the issue and he prefers to address the issue actively by doing things such as having six versions of an exam for his large lecture classes and assigning seats for examinations. He stated that he does everything he can to pre-emptively stop cheating, although he realizes that there are still some students who will find a way to cheat. Joeckel commended Woodman on his efforts to restrict cheating and noted that desire and opportunity are the two components in academic dishonesty. Lee pointed out that students will keep old assignments and may show a friend what an A report looks like but the problem is when the other student submits the same report. He noted that his department has a statement on course syllabi that specifically states that if they turn in an assignment that was used in another class it is considered plagiarism.

Dawes reported that some libraries have addressed the issue through modules. She noted that there is cheating to intentionally plagiarize in some cases. She noted that she has taught sessions on plagiarism to International Students and First Year Experience and Transition Programs with the Writing Center and has also presented workshops on academic integrity and she believes that part of the issue is the language problem. However, local students will also plagiarize by electronically cutting and pasting when they don't understand the subject content. She pointed out that the students don't seem to understand the consequences of what can happen to them if they are caught. She noted that she does not think we even find most of the students who are plagiarizing and when students continue to get away with it, it becomes a habit. She stated that a lot of students don't know how not to plagiarize and it takes a differential approach to correct this but some things can be taught to the students. She pointed out that the Libraries need to be involved to design some core modules that the departments can send to the students so they can look at a wide range of academic dishonesty issues. She stated that the issue needs to be addressed early in the student's college career.

Joeckel stated that he liked the idea of cooperating with the Libraries regarding the plagiarism issue, but pointed out that this is not just an undergraduate issue and the problem may not arise until the very end of a graduate program when it can do the most harm. Woodman asked if the Libraries automatically check a dissertation through Safe Assignment when it arrives. Dawes and Konecky both stated that it is the responsibility of the graduate committee to check the dissertation.

Rudy pointed out that the Student Code of Conduct only has one page regarding academic dishonesty. He asked how the campus can focus back on the academic aspect and the principle of getting an honest education at the university. Reisbig suggested that there needs to be focus on what the problems are associated with plagiarism. Rudy pointed out that it is stealing someone else's idea without giving them credit. Dawes noted that plagiarism can depend on the faculty member's view of it and subjective judgements can be made. Reisbig suggested that there needs to be emphasis on how plagiarism is damaging, not only to the person whose ideas are being stolen, but to the person conducting the plagiarism. Konecky stated that people need to think of academic honesty as their own integrity and the need to protect your own morality. Lee pointed out that academic dishonesty interferes with intellectual growth.

Joeckel stated that he does not want to see the control of academic dishonesty issues taken away from the faculty, but suggested that there be a campaign that could be widely publicized around campus about it. Woodman suggested a firmer response on the part of the university like indicating on a transcript, for a period of time, that a person failed a class because they cheated. He believes for a certain period of time a student's grade should reflect that they failed due to academic dishonesty. He pointed out that students seem to think that cheating is a victimless crime, but in reality someone could get into a program or position based on their dishonest performance perhaps preventing an honest student from doing so. Konecky stated that students need to understand the real consequences of plagiarizing.

Dean Hecker stated that academic dishonesty undermines the academic system. He pointed out that we are in the teaching and learning business and we have to have a way to measure that equation and need to know how well we are teaching when we have an assessment of a student's honest work. He pointed out that academic dishonesty is akin to counterfeiting. He stated that the academic system falls apart if the notion of trust and being able to believe that what a student learns is the representation of their skill level. He pointed out that one of the most important things to consider is the digital divide between the faculty and the students. Students see the internet as a source for their information and believe that sites like Wikipedia are gospel.

Dean Hecker further stated that there needs to be a three-pronged strategy to dealing with the academic dishonesty issue. First there needs to be an education strategy. People need to be educated about what the University of Nebraska's expectations are and what is considered academic integrity. Another prong is working with the faculty to equip them better to help them with their job. More resources such as Safe Assignment and alerts as to what students are doing are needed. He stated that one possibility is to have a grade of XF indicating that a student failed due to academic dishonesty, with the provision that the student would have the opportunity to redeem themselves by retaking a course.

Rudy asked if universities are getting to a point where they have to disclose honor code violations or else be held liable. He asked if someone fails because of academic dishonesty does it have to be disclosed on a transcript. Joeckel pointed out that this could

be a civil matter. Konecky stated that currently plagiarism is not a civil crime. Dean Hecker pointed out that with increasing federal regulations it could be a problem in the future.

Nickerson asked what the Senate could do to help address the problem. He pointed out that one thing is to have the Libraries assist departments in developing modules that they can use. Dean Hecker stated that he would like to have the Senate put together an ad hoc task force to conduct a more thoughtful study and report to the Executive Committee and to the full Senate so the Senate can decide what to do and act on it since it is the faculty who control the curriculum.

Joeckel asked if Dean Hecker had data on how many acts of academic dishonesty are a result of actual cheating (copying someone's exam, purchasing a paper or computer codes) and how many cases are a result of ignorance of how to properly cite references. Dean Hecker stated that the overwhelming majority of the cases are lower level common mistakes, although he has seen widespread growth in the paper mills writing papers and computer code.

Reisbig asked if there is a reporting system that students can use if they are aware that another person is involved in academic dishonesty. Dean Hecker stated that there is a system, but typically it is not used unless a student does not get the promised paper or exam from another that they paid for. Reisbig suggested the notion of having a victim panel where students can see the negative impacts that occur with academic violations. Woodman suggested that there be a student judicial affairs report that more publically reports the numbers of cheating cases, while not revealing the identity for obvious reasons. Dawes noted that students will respond to that. She stated that it is important to show that plagiarizing can become habitual, but the consequences of it when caught can follow them throughout their life. She said that when students see what the consequences are later on in life it can have an impact.

Steffen suggested a slogan is needed. Academic honesty is about who you are and being involved in academic dishonesty hurts you, your integrity, and can hurt you forever. He pointed out that when someone lies to you, you will never be able to fully trust them again. Cheating of any kind is plain fraud and dishonesty.

Joeckel asked if it would be possible to post the statistics about academic dishonesty. Dean Hecker stated that he would be happy to work with the Senate but noted that there could be a downside to posting the statistics, depending on how they are presented.

Konecky reported that she has had conversations with faculty members who said that the online form for reporting cases of academic dishonesty is so complicated that they don't want to bother reporting it. She noted that she does not think that all faculty members are committed at the same level. Dean Hecker stated that he would be happy to review the online form to revise it to make it easier for faculty members.

Bender stated that in the broader context the discussion raises the issues of what is learning and teaching today. He noted that definitions have changed from discipline to discipline, particularly with the use of technology.

Lee pointed out the issue is not exclusively a university issue but relates to students coming out of high school and not knowing how to properly write papers. He suggested that the attack to the problem might need to focus on the secondary schools as well. Bender noted that it will be important to have people from all across the campus, some of whom are involved with secondary education teaching, on the task force. Lee stated that the Libraries should be involved. Joeckel suggested that initially the task force should focus on some short term goals, perhaps focusing on a year of no academic dishonesty.

Bender stated that he will draft a charge for the task force and how it should be composed. The Executive Committee said that members of the task force should include interested faculty members on campus. Dean Hecker stated that he will be happy to participate with the task force. He stated that we need to create a standard of integrity expectations that the University requires of our students and he believes this can then be taken to the K-12 schools.

3.0 Announcements

3.1 Attendance at Bowl Game

Bender reported as President of the Faculty Senate he and his wife were able to attend the bowl game in San Francisco. He noted that they were nicely accommodated and he had the opportunity to interact with various people from the University including Regents Schroeder and Clare.

3.2 Meeting with Academic Rights & Responsibilities Chair Professor Bernthal

Bender reported that Professor Bernthal, Chair of the Academic Rights & Responsibilities Committee, will be meeting with the Executive Committee on February 16 to discuss the ARRC's opinion on whether non-tenured faculty members should be able to serve on the Academic Rights & Responsibilities Panel.

4.0 Approval of December 9, 2015 Minutes

Rudy moved for approval of the minutes as revised. Steffen seconded the motion. Motion approved with one abstention.

5.0 Unfinished Business

5.1 Professional Ethics Statement

The Executive Committee reviewed some suggestions that were made to the Statement after discussions with the English department. Lee noted that a footnote has been added regarding proprietary research and classified research which essentially states that if there are restrictions on publishing the research then it must be approved by the University. He stated that another paragraph was added to the teaching section which included information on Extension Educators and their teaching environment.

Steffen moved to adopt the Statement and forward it to the Senate at the January 12 meeting. Nickerson seconded the motion. The motion was approved.

6.0 New Business

6.1 Senate Redistricting

Griffin noted that the Senate conducts a redistricting audit every other year to see if there are changes in the number of representatives for each department/unit, but the last audit was postponed because of the possible merger of the Colleges of Fine and Performing Arts and Architecture. She reported that she received information that the Southeast Research & Extension Center and the Northeast Research & Extension Center will be combined into the Eastern Research & Extension Center and asked if the audit should be postponed until after the merger because it will impact the number of Senators. The Executive Committee agreed to postpone the audit until the merger is completed.

6.2 Faculty Senate Committee on Diversity and Inclusiveness

Bender stated that he wants to move forward on creating a Senate Committee on Diversity and Inclusiveness. He stated he is willing to draft a charge and wants people to consider people who could serve on the task force. He noted that he would like to get this accomplished by the end of the semester.

6.3 January Meeting

Griffin reported that Associate VC Goodburn and Director Williams will be speaking to the Senate regarding UNL's recruitment and retention efforts.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:40 p.m. The next meeting of the Executive Committee will be on Tuesday, January 12, 2016 immediately following the Faculty Senate meeting in the City Campus Union, Auditorium. The minutes are respectfully submitted by Karen Griffin, Coordinator and Allison Reisbig, Secretary.