EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES

Present: Belli, Dawes, Fech, Hanrahan, Latta Konecky, Lee, Leiter, Peterson, Purcell, Rudy, Vakilzadian, Woodman

Absent: Adenwalla, Dawes

Date: Tuesday, October 10, 2017

Location: 201 Canfield Administration

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 (Purcell)
Purcell called the meeting to order at 2:30 p.m.

2.0 Announcements
2.1 UNMC Concerns over Proposed Changes to Vacation Accrual Policy
Purcell reported that UNMC, and the other campuses, have serious concerns over the proposed changes to the vacation accrual policy and the negative impacts these changes would have on employees and for recruiting new faculty and staff. She pointed out that there is also significant concern regarding the implementation of these possible changes.

Purcell asked Woodman if other faculty members were on the Budget Reduction Steering Committee. Woodman reported that the Dean of CEHS Marjorie Kostelnik and Dr. Jeffery Gold of UNMC were on the Committee. There were five other members including Regent Bob Whitehouse, James Blackledge from Mutual of Omaha, James Linder, the Chief Strategist from the Office of the President, Susan Fritz, the Executive VP and Provost of the NU System, and Spencer Hartman, the student Regent from UNL. He noted that the Steering Committee, which he served on, reviewed the recommendations from the Budget Reduction Task Forces, but the Committee was only given about 45 minutes to meet with each of the task forces and about ten minutes to discuss their very extensive recommendations. Purcell pointed out that lack of faculty input relates to UNO’s resolution and concerns with there not being shared governance during the BRT process.

Fech asked if the sick leave accrual policy has also changed. He noted that if employees can no longer accrue sick leave time it could impact their choice for disability insurance coverage. He pointed out that enrollment into NUFLEX annual benefits begins on October 30 and employees need to be aware if there will be any changes with the sick leave policy so they can change their option for disability insurance if they choose to.

Purcell stated that anyone who has concerns with the proposed changes should send Central Administration a letter stating their concerns and the reasons for them. She
understands that Central Administration is counting each letter and it would be best if employees individually send a letter rather than sending a group letter.

Woodman reported that the Information Technologies and Services Committee is meeting with Procurement Services soon to learn of how the Procurement BRT process will be implemented.

2.2 Ad Hoc Committee on Faculty Rights
Woodman reported that Professor Deb Minter, English, will also be serving on the Ad Hoc Committee.

2.3 Update on Manter Hall Situation with Alarm System
Purcell reported that she sent a message to UNL Policy Chief Owen Yardley about the fact that no alarms in Manter Hall were activated when there was a recent gas leak in the building. She stated that Chief Yardley explained that during these hazmat situations Lincoln Fire and Rescue (LFR) is in charge of the response and the scene. LFR had requested the building be evacuated, but advised that UNL alert would be sufficient to do this. She noted that Chief Yardley reported that UNL Police began reviewing the situation immediately after the call was resolved. She stated that Chief Yardley said in his response that UNL determined that this was not the correct procedure and this has been reviewed with Police personnel. In the future, in similar situations, should a building be evacuated it will follow UNL protocol and the alarms will be activated. The decision to evacuate will remain with LFR, but when the evacuation is to occur, the procedure for effecting the evacuation will include the alarms. She pointed out that UNLalert is intended as a notification tool and not intended as a sole communication for evacuations. She pointed out that Chief Yardley will also have follow-up meetings with LFR and UNL Facilities so everyone is following the same procedures.

2.4 Mileage Rate Reimbursement Concerns
Hanrahan reported that the change in the mileage rate is really having a negative impact on graduate students who are required to travel to different high schools as part of their graduate program. Woodman stated that everyone with concerns over the budget impacts should go to the Budget Reduction Task Force website: https://nebraska.edu/brt/contact-and-feedback to submit feedback and concerns. He pointed out that many of the budget recommendations have not been implemented yet and it is important for Central Administration to hear the concerns. Purcell added that the reduction in mileage did go into effect September 1.

3.0 Approval of October 3, 2017 Minutes
Peterson moved for approval of the minutes. Motion seconded by Belli and approved by the Executive Committee.

4.0 Chancellor Green/EVC Plowman
4.1 Free Speech
Chancellor Green noted that at the October 3 Faculty Senate meeting he stated that he would be meeting individually with the people involved in the August 25th incident so
they have a full understanding of the situation. He stated that the reassignment of the Lecturer involved in the incident was due to safety concerns because of threats that were received. He noted that UNL Police Chief Owen Yardley was involved and knew of all of the threats that were made. He pointed out that the administration is charged with protecting the UNL community and it was believed that actions needed to be taken to ensure the safety of people involved.

Belli reported that an AAUP letter about the matter, which had been linked to an article published in The Chronicle of Higher Education, stated that EVC Plowman’s letter to the Lecturer had a statement which can be perceived as being punitive. Chancellor Green pointed out that the Lecturer released this information to AAUP. He stated that the University would never release personnel information.

Belli stated that another concern is whether there was faculty input into the decision to reassign duties. He stated that there should be some consistent policies and procedures in place whereby faculty are involved in decisions impacting a faculty member’s reassignment of duties. Chancellor Green pointed out that there is a process through the Academic Rights and Responsibilities Committee. EVC Plowman stated that other faculty members were consulted in the decision to reassign the Lecturer. Lee asked who will make the decision whether the Lecturer can teach again in the spring semester. Chancellor Green stated that determination needs to be made as to whether there is still a safety risk. If there is no safety risk then the decision will be made by the department, EVC Plowman, and himself.

Belli asked if anything can be done to mitigate threats to ensure that academic freedom is not jeopardized. EVC Plowman stated that she has put together a group, including faculty members, to create a workshop to educate ourselves about free speech, academic freedom, and political speech. She stated that she and other members of the group are willing to go to the colleges to speak about the issue.

Draft of Freedom of Speech Document
Chancellor Green stated that around Labor Day work began on drafting a document on free speech. He noted that the University of Chicago’s statement on free speech was used as a base and we have adapted it to fit our University. He reported that the Central Administration asked that there be discussion amongst the campuses regarding campus policy on free speech and outside groups having access to the campus. He stated that the draft document will be presented to the Faculty Senate and ASUN for feedback. EVC Plowman stated that our policies regarding free speech are out-of-date and need to be updated. Purcell pointed out that a few years ago the Senate created a statement relating to similar issues of free speech which the Senate hoped would get approval by the Board of Regents, but the lawyers did not approve it.

Belli pointed out that the public and State elected officials need to be educated that the free expression of ideas and values are the core rights of members of a university community and essential aspects of the search for truth. Chancellor Green noted that there has been a lot of conversations recently with State Legislators about the issue.
Peterson pointed out that academic freedom and free speech are distinct and this needs to be explained as well. Chancellor Green stated that the faculty should be able to do their work without incrimination from any belief system.

How Can Faculty Manage Political Issues
Chancellor Green stated that if political issues pertain to the University budget, it would be best if faculty members let the upper administration deal with this political matter. He stated that with broader politics, any employee has the right to be involved in anything they want outside of their responsibilities at the University, as long as they do not carry their university connection into the mix.

5.2 Update on Dean of Students Position
EVC Plowman reported that former Dean of Students Matt Hecker resigned. She stated that she is currently working with Interim VC of Students Affairs Laurie Bellows on restructuring the Office of Student Affairs and there will no longer be a Dean of Students. She indicated a desire to move away from using the title “dean” for non-academic administrative appointments. She stated that instead there will be someone to work on community standards and conduct. She pointed out that we need improved guideline procedures for dealing with student conduct issues and she now has Professor John Lenich, Law, working part-time in the Office of Student Affairs to help create a clear set of procedures to handle cases of student misconduct. She stated that in six months we should have clearer guidelines.

Peterson pointed out that the idea from the Ad Hoc Committee on Academic Integrity was to have Hecker’s office handle issues of academic integrity. He asked if this would still happen. EVC Plowman stated that this will still happen, and that this is a great time to think of how the Office of Student Affairs will be reorganized to help address academic integrity. She noted that there has been some discussion about the Office of Student Affairs having stronger liaisons with the colleges to deal with issues of academic conduct. She pointed out that sometimes academic conduct issues can alert faculty and staff to mental health issues that a student might be experiencing.

Woodman noted that University Registrar Rich Morrell recently resigned. EVC Plowman stated that this is correct and former Assistant University Registrar Steve Boonton is serving as Interim. She noted that Assistant VC for Enrollment Management Amber Williams is really working to revitalize Academic Services and she is optimistic that the Registrar’s Office will be moving forward. She noted that a search for a new University Registrar will start right away.

5.3 Budget/Salary Plans
Chancellor Green stated that we are looking at the salary plans to see if some of the funds for salary increases in FY19 can be used to help offset the budget cuts, but no decisions have been made. He pointed out that salary increases for UNL is approximately $6 million. He stated that if increases were given only for promotion and tenure, and some money is held off the table for retention, it could take $4 or $5 million off the budget cuts. He noted that there would need to be consideration if the alternative is to cut
programs versus not getting a salary increase. He pointed out that the Academic Planning Committee would need to consider any such proposal.

Vakilzadian asked if any of the salary increase pool would be used to cover the shortfall from Nebraska Innovation Campus. Chancellor Green stated that no salary money would be used for NIC.

5.4 Reorganization of life sciences task force and possible changes to Computer Engineering programs

Chancellor Green stated that the life sciences task force has now been drafted and he will soon be giving the task force its charge. He reported that eight or nine faculty members will be appointed very soon and he has taken the suggestions from the campus that it is to be a faculty-led task force. Belli asked what the timeline will be for the task force. Chancellor Green stated that he will leave the timeline broad since there is currently a lot of things occurring across the campus. Purcell asked if someone from the Senate can be on the task force. Chancellor Green stated that he believes there will be some Senators on the task forces.

Vakilzadian noted that there are two programs dealing with computer science: Computer Science and Engineering in the College of Arts & Sciences and Electrical and Computer Engineering in the Engineering College and asked if there is a task force working on combining these programs. Chancellor Green stated that the issue is separate from the life sciences task force and EVC Plowman is currently in talks with the deans of the two colleges. He noted that when he served as Interim SVCAA he thought our computer science programs would be best if it was in one college. He stated that he thinks the department feels the same way, but the question is what college would a combined program be in, or perhaps a School for Computing needs to be created. He pointed out that the academic leaders need to have discussion about these ideas, but he does not think it is advantageous for the program to be spread out between two colleges and units.

5.5 Initiatives to Address Risky Behaviors in Greek Houses

Chancellor Green stated that risky behavior associated with some of the Greek houses continues to be a challenge. He noted that some members of Greek houses are now renting homes in the North Bottoms where frequent parties are being held and incidences occurred which involved the LPD. He believes the Greek Vitality Initiative started by EVC Plowman is making some progress on campus, but the issue of the party houses is a real concern. Belli noted that underage drinking is a broad problem affecting the campus, not just the Greek Houses.

Chancellor Green stated that we have had in place for some time a task force that addressed underage drinking, but recently there have been some people who have acted as Good Samaritans to get assistance for someone who has had too much to drink and the Good Samaritan has been penalized. He noted that the Greek Vitality Initiative is putting the responsibility and accountability of student conduct on the houses and the national organizations.
Woodman noted that the fraternities and sororities are independent units and asked why the university continues to get involved when things happen at the houses. Chancellor Green pointed out that it is a complicated situation and the houses are RSOs. Woodman pointed out that houses will often makes changes if there are financial consequences for misconduct.

5.6 Vacation Carryover Reduction Plan
Chancellor Green stated that a memo will be coming from Senior Associate to the President Marjorie Kostelnik regarding the proposals to change vacation accrual and sick leave payout. He noted that the proposed changes are being held until 2019. He stated that a human resources consultant is being hired to review the proposed changes. Hanrahan asked if the pause is until the 2019 fiscal year or academic year. Chancellor Green stated that it is the fiscal year which would start next July. He noted that a lot of staff would be impacted by the change because many of them count on the vacation accrual for their retirement. Purcell noted that UNMC faculty members, Extension faculty, and 12-month appointment faculty members are impacted by the proposed changes as well.

5.7 Contract with Adidas - does it include personal service clauses for individual coaches?
Chancellor Green reported that there is nothing in our contracts that provides personal service clauses for individual coaches. He pointed out that the University has spoken with all of the coaches and found that we have no concerns within our system.

Belli noted that the firing of Athletics Director Shawn Eichorst appeared abrupt. Chancellor Green pointed out that these kinds of decisions might appear to be hastily made, but the decisions are made based on a long term accumulation of information. He stated that Shawn Eichorst was fabulous in many respects, particularly with academics, life skills, and finances, but if you look at the Directors’ Cup Standings, which includes all sports, we have declined for a period of time.

Lee stated that he doesn’t recall any previous University President being so involved with Athletics. Chancellor Green noted that former President Milliken chose not to be involved in athletics on any of the campuses, but President Bounds has a different view and perspective given the major importance of athletics at UNL. He also indicated that he believes that this is only positive for the University.

5.8 Issues on the Horizon
Per Diem Rates for Travel
Fech asked if there has been a budget recommendation to have a more streamline per diem approach for travel. Chancellor Green stated that there is some desire on the part of the University to go to a per diem rate, but this will require the State to enact legislation to allow this change. He noted that several years ago there was discussion in the Legislature about the issue and at the time the University did not think it was in our best interest.
6.0 Unfinished Business
6.1 Dealing with Threats on Campus
Belli stated that he still has concerns regarding due process with dealing with threats on campus. He stated that a process should be put in place so faculty rights are considered from a faculty perspective in a systematic way. Peterson questioned whether there was an academic presence on the Threat Assessment Team. Lee wondered if the recent threats that have been made are under a legal investigation.

The Executive Committee recommended getting a report on the TIPS Prevention program.

7.0 New Business
7.1 2019 Commencement Concerns
Rudy reported that in 2019 the University will outgrow the Pinnacle Bank Arena for May undergraduate commencement. He stated that one suggestion was to use the stadium for the graduation ceremony, but the cost would be several hundred thousand dollars. He stated that another suggestion was to have the Law College graduation on Friday night and to have two undergraduate ceremonies on Saturday. He stated that possibilities being discussed include having the Graduate College and a portion of the undergraduate colleges participate in one ceremony and the remaining undergraduate colleges in the other or dividing the Graduate College between the ceremonies with their corresponding undergraduate colleges. Lee suggested that the graduate ceremony should remain on Friday afternoon. Purcell asked who will make the decision about the changes to commencement. Rudy stated that the Commencement and Honors Convocations Committee would decide, but the Chancellor will have input.

Rudy stated that a problem with going to two commencement ceremonies in one day will be to have enough marshals present to assist with the ceremonies.

Peterson noted that he recently met with some ASUN students who are concerned with the proposed changes to the final exam scheduled and he asked them whether it was important for them to get a diploma at commencement. He pointed out that most of the students in attendance said they did not care whether they received their diploma at the ceremony. He noted that not handing out diplomas could solve a lot of problems. Purcell pointed out that if there were changes to the final exam schedule they would not be enacted until the fall 2018 semester.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:40 p.m. The next meeting of the Executive Committee will be on Tuesday, October 17, 2017 at 2:30 pm. The meeting will be held in 203 Alexander Building. The minutes are respectfully submitted by Karen Griffin, Coordinator and Joan Latta Konecky, Secretary.