EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES

Present: Adenwalla, Belli, Dawes, Hanrahan, Latta Konecky, Lee, Leiter, Peterson, Purcell, Woodman

Absent: Fech, Rudy, Vakilzadian

Date: Tuesday, February 20, 2018

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

2.0 Proposal to Have Designated Undergraduate Research Courses (Patty Sollars, Director of Undergraduate Education and Justina Clark, Director of Undergraduate Research)
   Sollars noted that an argument made by some of the Executive Committee members when they previously met to discuss the proposal of having designated undergraduate research-intensive courses that we already have these kinds of courses as indicated by course number or title. She stated that 66 courses have “research” in the course title, but when she excluded those courses for which the course description indicated that students were learning research methods, 41 courses were identified that are designated research, both by having “research” in the course title and having a course description that some kind of research is being done by the students. She pointed out that even with the course descriptions, it is difficult to tell exactly what is being done in the course. She also noted that courses with a 91 or 92 in the course number are supposed to be special topics/seminars/tours, yet some of those are titled and described as research. Courses with 96 are independent study, and courses with 99 (other than 499) are not defined, yet we have courses with that numbering that are also identified as “research”. She pointed out that current course numbering does not necessarily, or consistently, identify those that involve the student in research. She stated that it is known that there are instructors who have research-intensive courses and the goal is to recognize these courses by having the R designation for the course.

   Woodman noted that changing a 399H course to a 399R course would not make the course more descriptive. Sollars stated that the course description would need to be more clearly defined that the course is research intensive. Woodman pointed out that research is defined so differently in the various disciplines and noted that Sollars and Clark are seeking to differentiate between those courses that use research in its title. He noted that the research intensive course would be reflected on the transcript. He asked how an R designated course would differentiate between a 399H course. Clark stated that the R designation would extend to classes that do not end in 99. Sollars pointed out that the 99

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designated courses involve many different subjects and course matters. She stated that the ultimate end of the proposal is to have an advisory group which would have representation on the many different types of research. She noted that the advisory group would identify certain criteria and standards that a course would need in order to receive an R designation. She pointed out that some departments will use the 498 course as a catchall, and the course may not truly provide a research experience. She stated that the idea for an R course is for the student to conduct independent research that has an end product.

Adenwalla asked if an undergraduate thesis plays the same role because it is an independent project that a student finishes to completion. Sollars stated that a research course project generally is generally different from an undergraduate thesis. Adenwalla asked if the student would be required to give a presentation of the research project. Clark stated that, in looking at other universities that have research designated courses, the standard is for the student to give a presentation on their research project. She noted that the UNL Research Fair would count as giving a presentation. Adenwalla pointed out that there is no funding to support undergraduate students who might want to give a presentation of their work at a conference.

Lee stated that for some courses, such as those in the humanities, a proposal may be developed, but no research is involved and in other courses students write rhetorical criticisms. He noted that it is unclear whether these kinds of courses would be considered a methods course. Sollars pointed out that the advisory committee helps to make clear what would be acceptable. She noted that while some departments have clear delineation of what are research courses, others do not, and the proposal is trying to provide a uniform system for identifying undergraduate research courses.

Woodman pointed out that in Biology, research can be an essential part of a course, but it does not produce an end product. However, the student can gain excellent crucial research experience. He stated that the R designation could be viewed as a glorified status. He stated that those students that take a course that provides research experience, but is not considered a research designated course, would not be able to get the research distinction. Clark stated that students involved in UCARE may not have a final product, but this does not mean that they cannot make a presentation showing that they have been involved in research. Woodman asked if a student chose not to put a poster up in the Research Fair if they would not get credit for being involved in UCARE. He noted that most students cannot afford the cost of getting their research published. Clark stated that the idea is for the students to have the opportunity to show what they have learned, and the research could be presented in the department, at the Research Fair, or at a conference.

Woodman asked if a student would fail if they had done very good research but did not end up with a final product. Adenwalla asked how faculty members would grade the research. Clark asked how faculty members grade these courses now. Adenwalla stated that typically these kinds of courses are pass/no pass. She pointed out that she always has
students involved in UCARE, but she does not necessarily ask them to take certain courses involving significant research because these could be more costly for the student.

Adenwalla asked what the point is of having an R designation. Clark stated that there would be criteria of what is considered research and the designation would determine how many students are involved in research courses. Adenwalla asked why we would need to provide this information. Clark stated that the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Analytics is asking for this data.

Peterson noted that R designated courses would indicate to employers that a student has had some research experience. Clark stated that the R designation could add value on a course which graduate schools might consider when looking at admissions. Woodman stated that he thinks this is unfair, and is concerned with people outside of disciplines evaluating whether a course is considered a research course.

Sollars stated that the proposal is trying to establish a baseline for what defines a research course. She reported that the Office of the Executive Vice Chancellor wants to move ahead with the proposal and she is attempting to get greater participation with the faculty when the advisory group is formed. She stated that the idea is to ensure that undergraduate students involved in research courses understand the question that is initially asked and that the student conducts the research to form their conclusion. Adenwalla stated that she thinks it is intrusive because it is the instructor who defines what is considered research in a particular course. Sollars pointed out that instructors could decide whether they want their course to have the R designation. Woodman asked if the faculty member or the department would request the R designation. He asked how this would be different from what is being used now. Clark noted that students would receive recognition for taking a research intensive course.

Belli asked what is perceived as being a necessary aspect of a research course. He asked why an independent idea of conducting research, as opposed to a student working in a lab with an expert who is involved in enhancing knowledge, should receive an R designation. Sollars stated that the advisory group would discuss this issue first, and would need to decide whether the R designation would work across the disciplines. She stated that it would be mandatory that a student participates within a project that the student has interest in. Belli stated that he thinks there would be some limits.

Woodman noted that faculty in his department have had numerous undergraduate students who produced many different forms of research, some who went on to graduate school and were really good, and they didn’t necessarily produce a research product, but they had a very valuable research experience in their courses. He stated that the proposal seems like a redundancy and would require faculty members to make changes to their courses which would need department and college level approval.

Peterson asked if it is common in the Big Ten schools to have research designated undergraduate courses. Clark reported that the effort began several years ago when her office began looking at how much undergraduate research was occurring on campus. She
stated that the other Big Ten schools were looked at, but no one has the designation yet, although there are schools such as George Mason and Florida Atlantic that have it.

Sollars noted that the concerns being expressed seem to put too much weight on the product needing to be published or presented at a conference. She pointed out that the project could simply be presented at the UCARE or it could be a class presentation. Clark reported that the proposal is just in the development stage and she and Sollars are just asking for feedback. She noted that the advisory group could determine whether a classroom presentation meets the research criteria.

Belli asked if student’s working in a faculty member’s lab working on research would be considered sufficient to deserve the R designation. Sollars stated that this is very much along the lines of what is being considered. Woodman pointed out that the instructor needs to be the person that makes the determination whether a student should receive the R distinction. He noted that this is what is done with the Honors courses. If a student does not meet the standard than they don’t receive the H distinction for the course, but they could still pass the course. Sollars stated that she believes that this is what the R designation could develop into.

Clark stated that the idea is to have a five-year assessment to ensure that the research course still meets the criteria for the R designation. Peterson pointed out that he thinks the new director for the Honors Program may be interested in the honors contracts to see if the student’s work is meeting the required criteria for the Honors distinction. He stated that if there are contracts for the R designation there could be certain guidelines that would exist. He noted that instructors would not be required to do this and it could be similar to applying for a course to be considered an ACE course. Sollars stated that this is correct. She noted that a five-year assessment is to see how students are developing their research skills and to see if the course is still being taught as it was developed by the instructor. Woodman asked who would write the report. Adenwalla asked if a report would be written for each student. Clark stated that the advisory group would probably conduct the five-year assessment and it would only be on the course, not for individual students. Peterson pointed out that there could also be an option where a student has an individual contract which would not have to be assessed.

Purcell noted that we are in the process of hiring a new Vice Chancellor for Research and Economic Development and we are in the bottom of the Big Ten in research. She asked why the other Big Ten schools do not have the R designation and asked Sollars and Clark to look into this.

Sollars stated that the proposal and the formation of an advisory group is in the process of being developed and she wanted to have faculty involvement in its early stages. She reiterated that she is trying to foster the idea of having Faculty Senate participation to help shape the proposal.
3.0  **Campus Climate**  
The Executive Committee discussed campus climate issues regarding campus safety, what could be done to make the campus a more welcoming environment, and how members of the campus community need to treat everyone with courtesy and respect.

4.0  **Announcements**

4.1  **Meeting with Maggie Witt, Director of Procurement Services**  
Purcell reported that she and Witt are still trying to find a time to meet to discuss the walk-throughs that will be conducted in colleges to assess desktop printer use.

4.2  **Committee to Develop Student Evaluation Forms**  
Purcell reported that she has asked Woodman to serve on a committee formed by the Office of Executive Vice Chancellor to develop student evaluation forms of professors.

4.3  **Meeting with President Bounds**  
Purcell stated that President Bounds is interested in meeting with the Executive Committee, but he will first meet with the four Faculty Senate Presidents, which she stated will occur around the Board of Regents Meeting in March.

4.4  **Regent Schafer**  
Purcell reported that she has contacted Regent Schafer to see if he can speak to the Faculty Senate at one of the three remaining Senate meetings.

4.5  **Efforts to Build a Coalition on Climate Change**  
Peterson reported that former graduate student Prabhakar Shrestha, Sustainability Officer for UNL, is working with a student group that is trying to build a collation on climate change at UNL. He noted that there is an active RSO on campus and they are seeking support and would like to speak to the Executive Committee.

4.6  **ASUN Bill to Require a Course on Diversity**  
Adenwalla stated that ASUN is trying to pass a bill that would require all incoming students to take a diversity course. She noted that she was asked if the Senate would support such an effort, but she did not receive any details about the course yet.

5.0  **Approval of February 13, 2018 Minutes**  
Adenwalla moved to approve the revised minutes. Motion seconded by Lee and approved by the Executive Committee.

6.0  **Unfinished Business**

7.0  **New Business**

7.1  **Agenda Items for Chancellor Green and VC Boehm**  
The Executive Committee identified the following agenda items:

- Budget Update
- Update on the Vice Chancellor for Research and Economic Development
- Vice Chancellor for Diversity and Inclusion
- Question on procedures for including the Faculty Senate when hiring an administrator who is involved with faculty decision making
- Update on Plans for 150th Anniversary

The meeting was adjourned at 4:44 p.m. The next meeting of the Executive Committee will be on Tuesday, February 27, 2018 at 2:30 pm. The meeting will be held in 201 Canfield Administration Building. The minutes are respectfully submitted by Karen Griffin, Coordinator and Joan Latta Konecky, Secretary.