EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES

Present: Adenwalla, Belli, Franco Cruz, Dawes, Fech, Hanrahan, Peterson, Purcell, Rudy, Vakilzadian

Absent: Buan, Leiter, Renaud

Date: Tuesday, June 12, 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 (Rudy)
Rudy called the meeting to order at 2:30 p.m.

2.0 EVC Plowman/VC Boehm
2.1 What are your plans to raise UNL’s reputation and how would you improve our academic strengths? What are your long-term and short-term plans and how do you propose to implement them?
EVC Plowman stated that the long-term plan is to hire excellent faculty members and retain them while effectively using our available resources. She stated that the campus will need to determine our priorities and leverage our strengths, noting that the N150 Commission is looking at themes and “grand challenges” which could help the campus determine what our priorities should be.

EVC Plowman stated that in regards to the short-term plan, we have made great gains in recent hires and we are looking hard at which rankings we do well in and how we can do better in rankings such as the U.S. News & World Report ranking. She reported that a new director, Jason Casey, has been hired for Institutional Effectiveness and Analytics, which is a critical position because this office is responsible for turning in the data that goes into the rankings of universities. She suggested that it would be good for Casey to speak to the Faculty Senate. Factors such as class sizes, alumni giving, high school counselors’ perceptions of the campus, and others, are ones we can affect in the rankings and we want to work on those. Jason’s team is now monitoring very carefully the data we submit to the rankings to make sure it is always accurate. A slight error, as has happened in the past, can have a huge impact. She said it is exciting to have leadership in this area actively working on this.

Adenwalla asked EVC Plowman how she was going to attract good faculty members. EVC Plowman stated that this is really up to the departments. Adenwalla noted that departments’ hands are tied when it comes to funding, and our reputation is often out of our control. Purcell pointed out that one problem in the U.S. News & World Report ranking is that high school counselors in various parts of the State think of the smaller colleges, from which many of them have received their degrees, when advising high
school students. EVC Plowman noted that this is one part of the problem, but some counselors do not always fill out the forms that are sent to them regarding what schools they advise their students to go to. VC Boehm pointed out that the U.S. News & World Report gathers information from high schools all over the U.S., not just Nebraska.

Rudy noted that the EVC’s plan is for faculty lines to be turned back into her office if they become vacant. He asked if there is a method as to how these lines will then be distributed. He pointed out that there is some distrust in that the lines will go back to favored programs. EVC Plowman stated that after one year, vacated faculty lines will roll back up to her office. She stated that each dean submits a ranked list of positions that need to be filled in their college and she is reviewing the list with each dean. She noted that some criteria being considered are student FTE and major FTE. She pointed out that this plan is not much different than what has been in practice because each department had to get approval for a search from her office. Belli asked if the funds from the vacated lines could be used for temporary positions. EVC Plowman stated that the funds can still be used for temporary instruction.

Vakilzadian noted that our graduate student support and stipends are behind our peers and he asked if there was any way that improvements could be made. EVC Plowman stated that raising graduate student stipends is a decision made by the colleges and departments. She pointed out that one way to raise stipends is to admit less graduate students and to use the funds to boost up the remaining stipends. Peterson noted that grant money could help with supporting graduate students as well. EVC Plowman reported that, although there are allocations for graduate student assistantships, we need to be more strategic with these lines and if faculty members are getting grants we want them to help support graduate students with their grants. She noted that there are some departments that do not get grants and these departments need help with their graduate student funding.

VC Boehm stated that administrators are still looking at Graduate Council reports and data shows that only about 50% of at large graduate students, comprehensive universities wish to go into tenure track teaching positions at Research I institutions. He said that questions that need to be considered are: Where are graduate students going career wise? How can we fund these students? He pointed out that our graduate remission is high which creates a revenue loss for us and consideration needs to be given on our current funding model. He stated that getting more grants would be helpful, but obtaining grants is more competitive and harder these days. He noted that possible alternative funding mechanisms to provide opportunities for graduate students might include having assistantships through donors or industry.

2.2 Who decides what is considered civility in the classroom and how is this decision made?

Rudy noted that the Regent’s Freedom of Expression policy calls for civility in the classroom, but he asked who decides what is considered civil. EVC Plowman pointed out that what “civility” means has not been specified. She noted the recent University of Michigan case where the Justice Department said that Michigan’s policy prohibiting
harassment and bullying on campus was unconstitutional because “it offers no clear, objective definitions of the violations for bullying or harassing.” Rudy questioned whether our Regents’ policy was setting us up for failure. VC Boehm noted that the policy will need to continue to evolve, and EVC Plowman stated that the campuses will need to provide input.

2.3 Review of meeting with Regent Schafer in Beatrice?
VC Boehm stated that he met with Regent Schafer, chair of the Board of Regents, to ensure that Regent Schafer had correct information after comments were made at the February 14, 2018 State Appropriations Committee hearings regarding the university budget.

2.4 Future opportunities for Haskell Agricultural Laboratory
VC Boehm noted that the Haskell Agricultural Laboratory was put forward as a potential closure if the cuts to IANR were more than $1 million. He stated that it would have been a tragedy if there were no citizen-based conversations about a closure. He noted that three of four comments made by people about the Laboratory indicated that there needs to be some changes and that the Lab needs to evolve. He reported that in July he will have 3-day road trips to have listening sessions about what is and isn’t working in the northeast section of the State. He noted that in the State, almost half of the residents have at least an Associate’s degree, but for the northeast section of the state the rate is much lower. He pointed out that we need to do a better job with partnering with the community colleges and from kindergarten on up. He stated that another problem in the area is the water which is heavily loaded with nitrogen. He stated that we need to take a critical look at how we are doing with ARD and Extension programming and he hopes the university and the people in the area can have a common shared vision on where we want to go with the Laboratory.

Rudy asked if there are measures or markers that Haskell Agricultural Laboratory has been given to ensure that they will not be considered for closure again. VC Boehm stated that his thinking is that a unit should not be put through such a trying situation again. He pointed out that we need to hear from the citizens in the state about what is needed with the Laboratory and we need to identify resources to get the Laboratory where it needs to be. However, he noted that if the university should have a catastrophic budget cut, all things would have to be on the table.

2.5 Status of Rural Futures Initiative
VC Boehm pointed out that the Rural Futures Institute’s budget has been taken back to the level it was in 2010. He noted that funds had been provided for certain expectations, but these expectations were not met which resulted in some available funding. He reported that with Director Chuck Schroeder retiring there is consideration of dovetailing RFI with the Community and Vitalities Initiative.

2.6 Status of Ombudspeople
VC Boehm reported that Associate VC Walker and Associate VC Bischoff are working on moving forward with having an ombudsperson, one on each campus. He noted that
they are working on the details regarding the positions and the hope was to have a search
launched before the summer break began, but this will now have to wait until the fall
semester begins. He pointed out that people will have the option of going to either
ombudsperson.

Purcell asked if there was still consideration for having a female and a male
ombudsperson. EVC Plowman stated that this would be determined once the pool of
candidates is identified.

2.7 Issues on the Horizon
EVC Plowman reported that Professor Gwendolyn Combs, Management, has been
selected to serve as the Director of Faculty Diversity.

EVC Plowman stated that she would like to have an off the record meeting between the
Executive Committee, herself, VC Boehm, and Chancellor Green to envision how we can
work together and how we can make the meetings with the Senate Executive Committee
more meaningful. She noted that she asked other Big Ten universities if they send out
the minutes from meetings of the Senate Executive Committee and administrators and
was informed that they do not do this and suggested that there be a conversation about
this. Purcell pointed out that the Senate President and Executive Committee members get
asked numerous questions and having the minutes is helpful to disperse the information
being requested. Rudy suggested having a once a month luncheon meeting with the
administrators where there is no agenda and no minutes.

3.0 Announcements
3.1 Chancellor Green’s Support of Ad Hoc Committee to Review Policies and
Procedures in Place and Executed Following the Suspension of Courtney
Lawton
Rudy reported that Chancellor Green has contacted him and said that he promised to give
his full support and cooperation with the Ad Hoc Committee and will participate as much
as needed.

4.0 Approval of May 29, 2018 Minutes
Peterson moved for approval of the minutes. Motion seconded by Adenwalla and
approved by the Executive Committee. Two abstentions were recorded.

5.0 Draft Syllabus of Ad Hoc Committee to Review Policies and Procedures in Place
and Executed Following the Suspension of Courtney Lawton
The Executive Committee worked on refining the syllabus for the Ad Hoc Committee.

5.2 Proposed Revisions to Academic Rights & Responsibilities Committee
Peterson noted that the Ad Hoc Committee may be proposing some further revisions to
the ARRC procedures, but he suggested that the housecleaning type of revisions should
be reviewed by the Executive Committee this summer and be presented to the Senate in
the fall with the understanding that further revisions may be proposed at a later date.
Rudy pointed out that the ARRC member serving on the Ad Hoc Committee could report
back to the ARRC. He stated that the procedures for the special committees of the
ARRC will need some minor changes, but the bulk of the revisions are in the ARRC
procedures.

The Executive Committee agreed to review the proposed revisions so they can be
discussed at a future meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:30 p.m. The next meeting of the Executive Committee
will be on Tuesday, June 26, 2018 at 2:30 pm. The meeting will be held in 203
Alexander Building. The minutes are respectfully submitted by Karen Griffin,
Coordinator and Lorna Dawes, Secretary.