

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES

Present: Billesbach, Buan, Eklund, Gay, Herstein, Kolbe, Krehbiel, Minter, Weissling, Woodman, Zuckerman

Absent: Baesu, Bearnese

Date: Tuesday, December 21, 2021

Location: 201 Canfield Administration 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 (*Kolbe*)

Kolbe called the meeting to order at 2:35 p.m.

2.0 University Undergraduate Curriculum Committee (UCC) Proposed Revisions to Faculty Senate Syllabus Policy (Professor Sollars)

Kolbe reported that he asked Sollars to the meeting to address concerns raised at a recent UCC meeting about the Senate's newly revised syllabus policy and syllabus template.

Sollars noted that the UCC members take the Faculty Senate's policies very seriously and Committee members noticed on the syllabus template there is a requirement that the course description must be listed as stated in the catalog, however this is not a requirement in the syllabus policy. She suggested removing the "as stated in the catalog" from the syllabus template. Woodman pointed out that there should be some connection with the course description on the syllabus with what has been approved for the course catalog. He stated that he has concerns of a new faculty member providing a new or updated description which has not been approved.

Kolbe reported that the UCC needs to have the ability to check at will whether a course currently matches the description that was originally approved for the course, but currently the Committee does not have this ability. Sollars noted that this is due to the constraints for course descriptions in the catalog. She stated that the idea with the course catalog is to make a standard voice for everyone, but the descriptions often do not engage the students, and this is where the course syllabus can provide more detailed information of what the course is about.

Weissling pointed out that students sign up for a course based on the course catalog description and therefore the syllabus should mimic the description in the catalog. Zuckerman suggested requiring the catalog course description and allowing the instructor to provide more detailed information on what the course is about. Billesbach noted that allowing the instructor to elaborate the course description would be good for independent study courses. Woodman asked what would happen if the course catalog description was used but the instructor's elaboration of the course conflicts with the catalog description.

Sollars pointed out that if an instructor uses the template syllabus the UUCC would not know if an instructor is providing a different description other than the catalog description. She stated that the UUCC checks to make sure everything in a new or revised course proposal aligns properly, but conflicts may occur if an instructor provides a more elaborate description of the course which does not match the course catalog description. Herstein noted that the syllabus template was to tell instructors what the bare minimum information is required on a course syllabus and the goal of both the template and the revised syllabus policy was to eliminate syllabus bloat. She noted that the template is just a tool to assist instructors in developing their course syllabus and it is not required for instructors to use.

Weissling stated that the template should not include course description at all because the syllabus policy does not state that it is required. Woodman suggested that the course catalog description could be optional information. Buan suggested that the syllabus template should only include the required information as outlined in the syllabus policy, otherwise it becomes confusing as to what is required and what is optional.

Sollars noted that at the December 7 Faculty Senate meeting clarification was provided on the syllabus policy about what information is required on a course syllabus, but further clarification is needed so the policy clearly identifies the four things that must be included on a syllabus. She stated that she will provide the Executive Committee with further revisions to clarify the requirements.

3.0 Chancellor Green/VC Boehm/VC and Interim EVC Wilhelm

3.1 Consultation

3.1.A. Personnel Transitions – EVC, VCBF, IEC Director

Chancellor Green noted that the interviews for the EVC position were conducted last week and the deadline for submitting feedback about the candidates will be open through December 31. He reported that he has met with the Deans and received their feedback, and he hopes to make a decision in early January. He stated that the plan is to have the position filled sometime in January but pointed out that we will then need to fill the position being vacated by whoever is appointed EVC.

Chancellor Green reported that Bill Nunez, Vice Chancellor of Business and Finance, will be leaving the University after next week and Mary LaGrange, Associate Vice Chancellor of Business and Finance, who was scheduled to retire at the end of December, has agreed to stay on as Interim VC until the position is filled. He noted that a national search will be conducted this spring to fill the position.

Chancellor Green stated that Professor Marc Pearce has done a very good job of serving as Interim IEC Director. He noted that a national search will be initiated in January for the position.

3.1.B. Next Steps in Commitment to Action on Racial Equity

Chancellor Green reported that we will be taking slow steps to ensure that people understand why we are committed to the action on racial equity plan before the plan is implemented.

3.2 Academic Calendar Changes – 14-week semester

Chancellor Green stated that there are some early conversations at the system level amongst the Chief Academic Officers about what a unified system calendar would look like and if there were any changes, they would not occur until spring 2023. Interim EVC Wilhelm stressed that the key phrase is very early discussions and noted that the idea was raised by system EVP and provost Gold. He stated that the original discussion was about aligning the summer terms and what the alignment would be for fall and spring semesters. He stated that no action has occurred at this point.

Kolbe stated that an email to UNO faculty was sent by the UNO Faculty Senate indicating that the change to a 14-week semester had already been made. Chancellor Green reported that there was an initial conversation in November at the President's Council meeting and the subject was broached at how the campuses could have a unified calendar. He noted that former EVC Spiller brought up the idea of a 14-week semester, but it was just raised as an idea and no changes have been made. Herstein reported that she received the email from the UNO Senate and shared it with the Executive Committee. She stated that it would be good for getting faculty feedback on the idea. VC Boehm stated that he was at the meeting where the idea was discussed and the CAOs left it as an idea that needed to be vetted. Herstein thanked the administrators for looking into the issue of unifying the campuses' calendar because it is a major issue for those faculty who teach on two different campuses.

Buan asked if other Big Ten universities are on a 14-week semester. Chancellor Green stated that many of the Big Ten schools are on a 14-week semester, but we would need to figure out how to make this work at UNL. Buan suggested pointing out schools on a 14-week semester have a higher graduation rate.

Gay asked what is driving the idea of a 14-week term. Chancellor Green stated that the idea of having a unified schedule is being driven by having a winter interim term while not losing the structure of summer school. Woodman asked if the winter interim session would be for two or three weeks. Associate to the Chancellor Zeleny stated that it would be a three-week session. Chancellor Green noted that the spring semester would start later and would finish in mid-May.

Buan stated that some faculty raised concerns about the possibility of graduate students being exploited to teach during the winter interim session. She noted that it is important to ensure that the person who is really teaching the class is paid for it, not an instructor of record who gets a GTA to teach the course. Interim EVC Wilhelm stated that it is his understanding that whoever is teaching the course gets paid for it. Associate to the Chancellor Zeleny stated that he does not know of any problem of a GTA being forced to teach one of the interim courses. Krehbiel noted that she taught during an interim session when she as a Ph.D. student and it really helped her financially. Billesbach pointed out

that there should be consideration of burnout because having a winter interim is basically adding another pre-session into the annual schedule. Eklund noted that some universities have a summer pre-term session, but many don't have two five-week sessions and suggested replacing the two five-week sessions with an eight-week session.

Woodman pointed out that the fall break and Thanksgiving break creates difficulties for lab courses because they are multi-sectional and repeated every day of the week, and with the split breaks the lab classes wind up being cancelled for the weeks when the fall break and Thanksgiving break occur. This would result in courses losing two weeks out of the proposed 14-week semester rather than two weeks out of a 15-week semester. Kolbe suggested having the whole week of Thanksgiving off rather than splitting the breaks.

3.3 How has the transition to the new Graduate Dean been going and how are we assessing success in moving forward with some of the needs of graduate faculty?

Interim EVC Wilhelm reported that Dean Hope is doing some outreach work and is looking at new approaches to recruiting graduate students who did not receive an assistantship. He stated that that Husker Horizon scholarship has been created to attract some of these students. He noted that there have been some discussions across the campus about rethinking who could attain graduate faculty status but noted that this will probably be a long process, however expanding who can attain graduate faculty status would provide some departments with more flexibility.

Interim EVC Wilhelm stated that Dean Hope has been very focused on the Office of Graduate Studies being service orientated and serving students, and that a new strategic plan is being developed for diversity inclusion in the staff of Graduate Studies. He stated that she is working independently on taking some different roles and her yearly evaluation will look at how she is doing and what she is achieving.

Kolbe pointed out that the faculty haven't been fully aware of what Dean Hope is undertaking and there have been complaints that getting proposals for graduate certificates processed was taking a long time. Interim EVC Wilhelm noted that there was a backlog of proposals when she took office, but she is working through them. Herstein reported that the graduate chair of her department previously worked with Dean Carr on two proposals, but these have been sent back for trivial revisions. She noted that one of the proposals is tied with funding from the federal infrastructure package and Kiewit would provide many students for the program, but if the proposal is not approved the students would have to wait another year. Interim EVC Wilhelm stated that there may be different reasons for the need for some of the revisions.

3.4 What is the progress on implementation of the additional resources for the CARES office?

Chancellor Green noted that a search will be underway in January to add two more advocates to the CARE office. He noted the plan is to hire a director of education to deal with sexual misconduct and this position will be connected to the Title IX office, but we need to first examine how the Director will interface with the Title IX office. He stated

that we are working on getting things implemented in the spring and the two advocates would get hired first.

3.5 University Protocol for Notification of the Death of an Employee

Kolbe asked if there was any university protocol to inform people of the passing of an employee. Krehbiel noted that recently there was some miscommunication of the death of an Extension Educator and the news got out before Extension administrators had a chance to inform everyone.

Associate to the Chancellor Zeleny reported that sometimes the university is the first to know but other times the last to know. He pointed out that before any announcement is made the university first consults with the family, then ideally, the unit leader would notify the people in their unit. He stated that the university tries to link funeral arrangements with the announcement of the person's passing. Chancellor Green noted that in reality someone learns of a person's passing and the information gets passed through email. He stated that an official announcement would go up through the chain before the university would say anything publicly. Associate to the Chancellor Zeleny stated that the university tries to give recognition through Nebraska Today and Chancellor Green stated that this is always done in consultation with the family and the same is true for when we have student deaths.

3.6 Other Issues

Chancellor Green reported that the Board of Regents approved a plan for developing a new entrance and addition to the Lied Center for the Performing Arts. He noted that the Lied Center is now 31 years old and there is a potential for a grant through stimulus funding that would allow us to move faster on the development. He stated that there is a stipulation that we need to raise the remaining needed funds by the end of the year to apply for the grant, but we are close to achieving this goal.

Gay stated that faculty have asked if there have been any discussions about health care costs for employees who have had Covid. Chancellor Green reported that there have not been specific discussions related to Covid and the university just went through the approval for next year's health care cost and noted that our health plan looks good. He pointed out that the graduate student fees for health care continues to be a difficulty. He stated that our health care increase is under the average nationally although dental may be increasing.

Buan stated that there are some concerns with mental health care coverage in that some providers are no longer taking the UMR coverage. Chancellor Green stated that he knew there were initial concerns about this issue, but they were worked out by AVC Currin, and he is not aware of any recent problems.

4.0 Announcements

4.1 Covid Updates

Associate to the Chancellor Zeleny reported that he checked with Student Affairs to get information for the Executive Committee's question about the number of reports of non-

compliance with mask wearing. He noted that Student Affairs did not track the specific number of non-compliance complaints, but they did know there were less than 10 referrals made to their office, most of them coming from students rather than faculty members.

Associate to the Chancellor Zeleny reported that there were about 10 reports of people being belligerent to wellness attendants and most of those being difficult were faculty members. He stated that the most egregious issue was a faculty member yelling at a wellness attendant who stormed past the wellness attendant followed by a number of students.

Woodman asked if there will be a mask requirement next semester. Associate to the Chancellor Zeleny stated that the administration will communicate in early January whether the university will require masks in classes. He stated that the university continues to work closely with the Lincoln/Lancaster County Health Department about what protocols we need to take.

Billesbach received an email message from a faculty member regarding confusion about the spring semester Covid guidelines and how faculty members should handle things such as mask compliance. Kolbe stated that the university is still policing violations and has a mask requirement in place. Woodman stated that the university should have a mask policy that is universal. Eklund pointed out that the size of the room can vary greatly for some classes and stated that there needs to be some flexibility with the mask requirement for some classes.

Herstein asked if UNL is experiencing problems with testing supplies. Associate to the Chancellor Zeleny stated that we are keeping about a 3-month supply and our Diagnostic Lab has been keeping on top of our supplies. Kolbe noted that UNL conducted over 100,000 Covid tests this semester. Associate to the Chancellor Zeleny reported that the hours for the campus testing sites are being re-opened for the next few days and testing will still be available at the Health Center except for New Year's Eve and New Year's Day. He pointed out that we conduct PCR tests, and we are doing it quickly since the testing is done on campus.

5.0 Approval of December 7, 2021 Minutes

Kolbe asked if there were any revisions for the minutes. Hearing none he asked for approval. Billesbach moved for approval of the minutes and Minter seconded the motion. The Executive Committee approved the minutes.

6.0 Unfinished Business

No unfinished business was discussed.

7.0 New Business

7.1 Discussion on EVC Candidates

The Executive Committee went into closed session to discuss the interviews with the three candidates for Executive Vice Chancellor.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:08 p.m. The next meeting of the Executive Committee will be on Tuesday, January 18, 2022, at 2:30 pm. The meeting will be held in the Nebraska Union, Platte River Room North. The minutes are respectfully submitted by Karen Griffin, Coordinator and Kelli Herstein, Secretary.