

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES

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

Absent:

Date: Tuesday, December 7, 2021

Location: Meeting was conducted by Zoom

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 4:12 p.m.

2.0 Announcements

2.1 Three Finalists for EVC

Kolbe reported that Dean Kathy Ankerson, Associate Dean Will Thomas, and Vice Chancellor Mike Boehm are the three finalists for EVC. He noted that interviews will be held December 13, December 14, and December 16.

2.2 COVID Vaccine Clinics

Kolbe encouraged the Executive Committee members to let their colleagues know about the University's COVID vaccine clinics being held on December 8th at the City and East campus unions.

3.0 Approval of November 30, 2021 Minutes

Kolbe asked if there were any revisions to the minutes. Hearing none he asked for a motion to approve the minutes. Billesbach moved for approval, motion seconded by Weissling and approved by the Executive Committee.

4.0 Unfinished Business

4.1 Questions for EVC Candidates

The Executive Committee finalized the questions for the EVC candidates.

5.0 New Business

5.1 Report on Board of Regents Meeting

Kolbe reported that most of the people speaking during the public session discussed agenda items relating to university divestments, the Safer Community app, and the mask policy.

Kolbe stated that guest speaker Bryan Sloane of the Nebraska Chamber of Commerce and Industry spoke about the worker shortage in the state and how the university is poised to help solve the problem. He stated that Sloan pointed out in his presentation that

in order for the university to help solve the state's worker shortage problem the university will need to grow in order to train people in various fields such as agriculture, technology, business, and biochemistry. He noted that Sloane also stated that we will need people from outside the state to alleviate the worker shortage problem.

Kolbe reported that he, and several students, each spoke in favor of the Chancellor and the Commitment to Action Plan at the meeting.

5.2 Covid Concerns for Spring Semester

Baesu asked if consideration will be given to moving large section classes to Zoom if Covid numbers are high in the spring semester. Kolbe reported that this is a possibility and if the Executive Committee wants to write a statement in support of this option, he will deliver it to the Covid taskforce.

Woodman asked if the random mitigation testing must be done on campus or whether faculty and staff can submit an at-home test. He pointed out that with the removal of building access through the Safer Community app that students do not face any penalties if they do not get tested. Kolbe stated that penalties for students not complying with the testing mandate are being discussed. He stated that everything is still fluid at this point and is subject to change depending on what happens with the Covid numbers.

Associate to the Chancellor Zeleny joined the meeting to answer questions about Covid protocols. He noted that he was in a briefing with the Lincoln/Lancaster County Health Department (LLCHD) this morning where the Omicron variant was discussed. He stated that preliminary evidence is indicating that there are less concerns with this variant than with the Delta variant. He pointed out that faculty and students could encourage the use of masks, particularly in classes where students are in close proximity during the spring semester if the county is no longer in a mask mandate. He reported that LLCHD is asking the university to look at the large classes for safety considerations.

Woodman asked if at-home testing can be used for the random mitigation testing. Zeleny stated that an in-home test can be used but only if it is a PCR test.

Baesu asked if there is any thought to moving the large classes to an online format. Zeleny stated that the goal is to give students an in-person class experience, but to have as safe an environment as possible. He noted that large classes may need to be looked at individually to see what the best option would be. Baesu asked if large classes could be broken into smaller classes. Zeleny stated that it could be a possibility but in large classes masks would more than likely be recommended. Billesbach asked if an instructor can put in their course syllabus that if a student refuses to wear a mask for the third time that their grade will be lowered. He noted that having a penalty may help to ensure compliance. Zeleny pointed out that this would need to be discussed with Academic Affairs. He noted that there are some students who have an exemption for not wearing a mask. Baesu stated that instructors should tell the student to leave the class if they refuse to wear a mask. Woodman pointed out that the instructor had the option of cancelling a class this semester if a student was not in compliance. Herstein reported that she knows

an instructor who contacted Student Affairs about a student who would not comply with the mask mandate and the only thing that happened was that the student received an email stating that they should not ignore the mask mandate.

Weissling asked if there is any data on how many students were reported for not complying with the mask mandate. Zeleny stated that this information would need to be obtained from Student Affairs. He noted that Academic Affairs addressed issues with people being belligerent or rude to the wellness attendants, although he believes the number of cases was small. He reported that an employee was fired for falsifying vaccination information.

Buan asked if the random mitigation testing will be of the same density as it was previously in the year. Zeleny stated that LLCHD recommended that the university change our approach to testing because of breakthrough cases occurring. Buan pointed out that the Covid dashboards for the state are no longer available due to a decision made by the Governor. Zeleny pointed out the both the university and LLCHD are still maintaining a dashboard. Buan suggested that the campus community be notified that the university is still maintaining a dashboard.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:17 p.m. The next meeting of the Executive Committee will be on Tuesday, December 21, 2021, at 2:30 pm. The meeting will be held in 201 Canfield Administration Building. The minutes are respectfully submitted by Karen Griffin, Coordinator and Kelli Herstein, Secretary.