

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES

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

Absent: Krehbiel

Date: Tuesday, January 18, 2022

Location: Zoom meeting

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 2:33 p.m.

2.0 Syllabus Policy Proposed Revisions and University Undergraduate Curriculum Committee's Ability to Identify Duplicate Courses (Professor Sollars)

Sollars reported that UUCC member Professor Kevin Hanrahan made some proposals for the college curriculum committees to check for duplicate courses before sending a proposal for a new course to the UUCC. She noted that currently some college advisors are asked to review new course proposals since they are more knowledgeable about courses that are offered across the university and could more easily identify similarities in courses, but this does not consistently catch duplications.

Sollars stated that, for example, it would be good for the UUCC to have the ability to search beyond the course description of all courses but there is currently not a system that has the capacity to do this. She noted that if there was a complete searchable repository of syllabi or learning outcomes, the UUCC could check it to see if there is a course duplication. She stated that a decision such as this should come from the Faculty Senate and not top-down from the administration. Kolbe noted that with the new budget model there could be a proliferation of new course proposals with some courses being duplicates of existing courses and the UUCC needs the ability to be able to determine this in an efficient manner. Sollars pointed out that it is easier to check for duplication within a college, but the problem is greater when checking for duplications across colleges. She said that there could be required documentation that people affirmed that they checked for duplication across the colleges before a proposal is submitted to the UUCC.

Herstein noted that she was recently in CIM and noticed that there were quite a few inactive courses listed for her department. She asked if there was a syllabi repository would a syllabus need to be collected for inactive courses. Sollars noted that reactivating a course requires approval and a syllabus would need to be submitted for the UUCC to reactivate the course. Kolbe pointed out that if a course has not been taught for a decade it should be deleted. Billesbach stated that if a repository is created there needs to be an outline of the process of how the UUCC would use it and there should be an appeals

process. Woodman noted that for some courses there are multiple sections taught by different instructors which would require multiple syllabi. He cautioned on giving the UUCC huge tasks because it might deter people from volunteering to serve on the committee.

Buan suggested that the UUCC needs to first determine how they want to check for duplicate courses and then engage with the EVC office to help enforce the process. She pointed out that there needs to be a mechanism for dealing with interdisciplinary programs, but it needs to be streamlined so these programs do not have to do more work to get a course approved. Kolbe noted that many departments already collect the syllabus for each course. He stated, and Zuckerman agreed, that in their department a copy of the syllabus for each course being taught that semester must be submitted to the department office. Buan pointed out that she thinks faculty would be hesitant to submit their syllabus to a repository and suggested a compromise would be to validate key description words that could be used in a search for duplicative courses. She stated that an appeals process could require a copy of the syllabus so it can be looked at in detail to see if there is duplication with an existing course. Woodman pointed out that the problem with using key words is that people could use alternate words to avoid detection of duplication.

Minter stated that she thinks the idea of asking the proposers of a new course if they know there is a similar course is good. She pointed out that we want to ensure that students don't feel like they are taking the same course twice and she thinks the more interdisciplinary we get, the more the boundaries of courses will get blurry. She noted that the syllabus is really the intellectual property of the instructor which could be a reason for resistance to submit a syllabus.

Sollars stated that the UUCC has a policy about course descriptions that appear in the catalog but there could be separate documentation that provides information on how the course is taught without infringing on intellectual property rights. She stated that these descriptions could be searchable by advisors and could be used as the sort of sales pitch sometimes used on course flyers, in which case the faculty might be more amenable to it. Buan stated that this is a good idea, and the department curriculum committee could be engaged to help makes the courses more attractive to students.

Kolbe stated that the UUCC should establish what they want to achieve and get back to the Executive Committee. Sollars stated that she would have the Committee do that and would run it by Associate Vice Chancellor Goodburn but pointed out that the UUCC would need the approval of the Faculty Senate.

The Executive Committee reviewed the proposed revisions to the Syllabus Policy. Griffin suggested revising the policy so that it clearly states which of the policies are required to be on the syllabus, whether through the provided weblink or written in the syllabus, and then separate the policies that are on the website but are not required in the syllabus. The Executive Committee agreed, and Kolbe stated that the proposed changes would be presented to the Senate at the February 1 meeting.

3.0 COVID-19 Protocol Update (Associate to the Chancellor Zeleny)

Zeleny reported that originally the Lincoln/Lancaster County Health Department (LLCHD) requested that UNL not observe exemptions for mask wearing and the Chancellor communicated this at the Town Hall meeting last week. However, there were last minute negotiations with the LLCHD, and they asked us to still require a mask but if an instructor is six feet away from students and wants to forgo wearing a mask they can. Kolbe noted that the Chancellor's office was receiving pushback from faculty members who did not want to wear a mask while teaching.

Woodman asked how often will updates on the protocols be received. He pointed out that the changes are causing confusion. Zeleny stated that he does not believe there will be any further changes until February 11th when the latest mask mandate is scheduled to expire although this is a fluid situation, and with the high number of Covid cases things could still change.

Zeleny stated that if someone tests positive, they should be isolating and not going to class. Buan pointed out that without having building wellness attendants, students who are positive can still come to class and there is no one to remind students to put a mask on. Kolbe noted that not every building had wellness attendants in the fall semester. Woodman stated that students do not have to get tested until January 21 so some of them could be asymptomatic and coming to class. Zeleny stated that the university is relying on people to be vigilant and get tested as soon as they can.

Buan stated that there is a lot of faculty, staff, and students who feel that the administration is not looking at the data carefully and taking it seriously. She reported that some people have recently applied for exemptions but are being denied. Kolbe pointed out that the exemptions first need to be approved by the Dean.

Baesu asked why larger classes cannot be moved to remote learning until the peak of the virus is over. Buan stated that with the high positivity rate on campus and with high density classes it would be advisable to move these classes to online format and if faculty want to teach online to protect their health, they should be allowed to do so.

Zeleny stated that the university is regularly discussing with the LLCHD, and task force the data that is available, and we make efforts to do our best to manage things based on who we are geographically and density wise. He stated that efforts are being made to be as transparent as possible with the data and trying to keep as much information available as possible, but the constantly changing dynamics of the virus is making it very difficult.

Woodman reported that the School of Biological Sciences made a request for dense classes or those with a certain number of students be allowed to go to online teaching, but the request was not forwarded to the to the EVC by the college. Zeleny reported that the university did talk to LLCHD about large classes but with the vaccine and booster shot opportunities it was determined that large classes are not a high risk. He stated that the

LLCHD's advice to schools is that wearing a mask is more of a contributing factor to decreasing the spread of the virus than social distancing.

Zuckerman asked if faculty, staff, and students are going to receive high quality masks since the ones first distributed were just material masks and not good for preventing the spread of the omicron variant. Zeleny reported that some KN95 masks are being made available for those individuals who have contact with many people. He stated that they can be obtained through the Academic Affairs office.

Bearnes asked if there was any thought to providing KN95 masks to those in Extension who are often meeting with large groups of people across the state. Kolbe pointed out that some of the areas that Extension personnel are in have low vaccination rates. Zeleny stated that he thinks Extension has some masks, but he will check on this.

Woodman noted that the Chancellor's recent statement referred to face coverings and asked if this could be changed to surgical or KN95 masks as cloth face coverings do little to stop the transmission of the omicron variant. Zeleny stated that he would check to see if this could be changed. Woodman asked if we could follow UNMC's guidelines rather than LLCHD's guidelines. Zeleny stated that since the campus falls under the LLCHD's coverage area it is probably best to take the Health Department's lead. Herstein noted that UNMC is recommending that classes go to online only for the time being.

Weissling stated that there has been discussion about the great resignation, and she is worried that if we don't get a handle on the way faculty members are being treated right now, we might be having more faculty retiring. Zeleny noted that this is a very important topic and pointed out that the entire workforce is being impacted. Woodman reported that the College of Arts & Sciences conducted a survey of the staff members and there was a very high response rate. He suggested that the upper administration take note of the survey and pay attention to the opinions expressed therein.

Baesu asked what would need to happen for classes to go back to online teaching. Zeleny stated that if the hospitals move into crisis mode and the ICUs are filled to capacity that would probably trigger the need to go completely online.

4.0 Information Technology Services (CIO Tuttle)

Minter noted that last semester there were outages with Eduroam which caused problems across the campus. She asked if ITS knows what was causing the outages and whether the problem has been fixed. Tuttle stated that there were some wireless space problems which also occurred, but we have moved to Unified Edge Network which is a new network and things are going well and seem stable, although it is hard to anticipate how people will use the system and it is difficult to conduct load tests on the system. He pointed out that other Big Ten schools also had problems with Eduroam and we worked with them to resolve the issue.

Buan reported that she just experienced problems today in the Beadle Center, and although it is not a consistent problem, it can take several attempts to get access which is

problematic if you need materials for a class that is being taught. Tuttle pointed out that it is important for people to report any problem they may have because it can't get fixed if ITS is not aware of it. He noted that sometimes a problem could be localized to a building. He said that there are some problems with hard-wired port connections for some make and models of computers, especially for Macs and stated that ITS is working with Mac and some other suppliers to address the problem.

Woodman reported that there has recently been an increase rate for data ports and asked if the Information Technology and Services Committee (ITSC) approved the cost increase. Tuttle stated that the ITSC was notified of the rate increase, but it was a business decision that was made by the university. He noted that he recently spoke with Interim Vice Chancellor LaGrange about removing costs for data ports and phone lines for individual units because the cost of billing and receiving payments is high. He stated that data is being gathered from each college and departments which will be used to determine a rate that would be assessed to the college or supervising unit. Woodman stated that he went to a Google voice account, and he would support removing the phone lines and using a voice account instead. Kolbe noted some faculty need to have a port because of the computer system required for them to teach their courses, and these people should not be penalized for it. Tuttle stated that the goal would be to balance out those that need the ports and those that don't.

Buan stated that since ITS was centralized at the Central Administration level the ITSC, and especially the faculty, have not been engaged and no input is being provided by the faculty. She pointed out that the faculty understand that some of the changes are a result of changes to contracts, but with UNL being a tier-one research institution our needs are different than our sister campuses. She stated that there is a real concern with the pattern in the lack of consultation with the UNL faculty and ITSC. Tuttle reported that no one from the ITSC has directly raised these concerns to him. He noted that some of the recent changes had to be made for financial and legal issues. Griffin pointed out that at the December 7th Faculty Senate meeting a couple of faculty members expressed frustration and anger over the change to SharePoint from Box and the difficulties it was causing, especially for centers that have to work with external organizations. She stated that SharePoint is not at all user friendly and there is no training to help people navigate this complex software program. Tuttle reported that some of the IT support tech people will be receiving training soon on SharePoint so they can begin providing more help to the campus.

Tuttle stated that VidGrid will be changing their contractual legal agreement about data breach and as a result, the State will not allow the university to renew its contract. Zuckerman stated that this is the first she has heard of this and noted that her department is a heavy user of VidGrid. Tuttle stated that an RFP is being conducted to look for different vendors and there has been communication with ITSC about the upcoming change. He noted that VidGrid was chosen because it worked well with Canvas but so far, ITS has not seen any other programs that would work as well with Canvas. He stated that part of the agreement would be to move everything from VidGrid over to the new program. Zuckerman stated that this is very concerning because when we switched to

Canvas, she had to update hundreds of links for videos she uses for teaching. Buan urged Tuttle to be very careful of vendors who promise but can't deliver. She noted the switch from Box to OneDrive was painful and many people were not happy with the transfer between the programs. Kolbe asked when the announcement would be made about the removal of VidGrid and how long would faculty still be able to use it. Tuttle stated that we need to be off VidGrid by June 2023. He stated that it would be helpful for large users of VidGrid to participate in a pilot study of a new program and pointed out that VidGrid would still be available as backup during the pilot.

Bearnes noted that Extension is still struggling with the switch from Box and stated that the IT person in her area of the state is due to retire soon. She asked if this position is going to be refilled and asked if there are any Extension members on the ITSC. Tuttle reported that there are two Extension Educators on the ITSC: Jenny Nixon and Brent Plugge. He stated that ITS is actively working to get the IT position Bearnes mentioned filled and the goal is to have the person living in the area.

Kolbe asked if there has been any consideration to changing computers in classrooms, so they don't go to default when someone logs off. He noted that each time you are back in the classroom you have to conduct a search because the computer does not retain the web addresses. Tuttle suggested identifying specific computers that an instructor heavily uses. He pointed out that most public computers work on something called deep freeze which reverts the computer back to the default status and this is done for security purposes. He noted that the restrictions on university-owned computers will probably be tightened due to the high number of people getting hacked each day.

Bearnes reported that Extension Educators use a lot of Ipads for data collection at county fairs and noted that these computers are paid through county funds but must be turned back into the university. She asked why they would not be returned to the county. Tuttle stated that he does not know the exact answer to the question but said it could be an issue with procurement services or an agreement between IANR and the counties. He suggested that Assistant Vice Chancellor Jeff Bashford might know more about it.

Tuttle stated that ITS relies on the ITSC to get the faculty perspective but said to let him know if there are other ways to get feedback. Also, if the Executive Committee has any ideas on how to better communicate with the faculty and staff, to let him know. Billesbach asked if ITS has a social media presence. Tuttle stated that a lot of information is pushed out through Twitter (@NebraskaITS) and status incidents are posted on Twitter @StatusNebraska. He stated that incident history is available at <https://status.nebraska.edu/history>.

5.0 Announcements

5.1 Covid Update

Kolbe reported that the first week back to campus we had a 20.8% positivity rate but that dropped to 10% the second week. He noted that the positivity rate for this week would not be known until after Saturday. He stated that there are currently 140 people isolating on campus and there are 300 isolation rooms available. He reported that there are 19

clusters of the virus in the housing facilities. He noted the current positivity rate for students is 11.45%, 6.99% for staff, and 5.66% for faculty.

Baesu asked if there is a threshold number of student absences for a course to be moved to an online format. Kolbe recommended that faculty notify their department chair to tell them there is a high number of students absent from a class. He stated that he asked AVC Goodburn about classes going to remote teaching and she said the process for being allowed to do this is the same as last semester, but she noted that it will be allowed sparingly, and it requires the chair's approval.

6.0 Approval of December 21, 2022 Minutes

Kolbe asked for further revisions. Hearing none he asked for approval of the minutes. Billesbach moved and Bearnese seconded approval of the minutes which the Executive Committee then approved.

7.0 Unfinished Business

No finished business was discussed.

8.0 New Business

8.1 Spring Faculty Senate Meetings

Griffin asked if the Faculty Senate meetings should be moved to Zoom meetings due to the surge in Covid numbers. Kolbe stated that he would like to reserve the last Senate meeting of the year to meet in person if it is safe enough to do so. Woodman moved for approval of conducting the first three Senate meetings by Zoom only and the last meeting in person. Buan seconded the motion. Motion approved by the Executive Committee.

The Executive Committee agreed to have its meetings conducted by Zoom through February and then will reassess the Covid situation for whether to have meetings by Zoom or in person for the rest of the semester.

8.2 Agenda Items for Chancellor Green, VC Boehm, and EVC Ankersen

Kolbe asked that Executive Committee members send their suggestions of agenda items by email.

8.3 15th Week Policy Issue

Kolbe reported that an email message was received from a faculty member suggesting a change to the 15th week policy stating that students should bring up issues with class assignments in a timely manner, particularly when they are written in the class syllabus. The Executive Committee discussed the issue and felt that no change was warranted to the policy because it adequately addresses the issue. Buan moved and Kolbe seconded not changing the 15th week policy. Motion approved by the Executive Committee.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:13 p.m. The next meeting of the Executive Committee will be on Tuesday, January 25, 2022, at 2:30 pm. The meeting will be held via Zoom. The minutes are respectfully submitted by Karen Griffin, Coordinator and Kelli Herstein, Secretary.