

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES

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

Absent:

Date: Tuesday, January 25, 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 2:42 p.m.

2.0 Chancellor Green/VC Boehm

2.1 Information Items

2.1.A. Plan for N2025 Discussions During the Spring Semester

Chancellor Green reported that this spring, beginning on Charter Day (February 15th) a series of video conversations regarding our progress on the N2025 plan will be communicated and shared across all of the UNL community. He noted that this will start with a conversation with the four faculty co-chairs who led the task force that developed the N2025 plan, and with him and EVC Ankerson. This will be followed in March and April with additional 30-minute conversation videos of the executive leadership team and academic deans on each of the N2025 aims. He pointed out that the Status of the University address will be presented in September rather than in February, in part due to the conversations that will be held during the spring semester on N2025, and also due to the Covid pandemic.

2.1.B. Commencement Plans for May 2022

Chancellor Green reported that plans are to hold the May undergraduate commencement in Memorial Stadium, as will be the case annually moving forward. There will be one undergraduate ceremony this year, assuming that pandemic restrictions do not require differently.

2.1.C. Update on NU-Wide Gallup Survey

Chancellor Green stated that the results of the Gallup survey conducted across the entire university system in October are being prepared for release to the university system and should be available in late February or March. He reported that he did see a summary of the results and said that it was much more positive than expected given the pandemic and the challenges we have faced. He stated that the initial results will come from President Carter and the Chancellors at the system level, with results for the individual campuses made available to the Chancellors.

2.2 Why was a national holiday (MLK Day) designated as the day that the faculty Activity Insight Annual Reports were due?

VC Boehm pointed out that the use of the Activity Insight reporting program can be used differently across the campus, but many of the colleges use it as an annual reporting tool for use in annual faculty evaluations. He noted that in IANR AVC Bischoff began having meetings with the promotion and tenure committees in the departments and colleges about Activity Insight and unit leaders were asked to begin working on faculty evaluations between January 15 and early March. However, January 15th fell on a Saturday so the deadline for submitting the Activity Insight report was changed to Monday, January 17th. Kolbe asked if the due dates are determined by the colleges. Billesbach stated that the deadline date for submitting the Activity Insight report can vary by departments and college.

2.3 Problems with online Activity Insight form and accessibility. What is the possibility of faculty members being able to add their information monthly rather than waiting until mid-December to receive instructions?

VC Boehm reported that he asked for an ad hoc committee of faculty members from all ranks to see how Activity Insight was being used and whether there were any problems with it. He noted the committee worked with the Activity Insight designers to make it easier to input information but there was some miscoding that made it troublesome when reports were run because some data was missing in different fields. Since then, AVC Bischoff has worked with the designers to fix the problems and continues to work to make this a useful tool.

Bearnes noted that she has been on Extension promotion committees for several years and pointed out that Extension Educators going up for promotion begin working on their Activity Insight information in the spring but when AVC Bischoff notified Extension that there were changes to Activity Insight some information previously entered was lost. She asked if this problem can be corrected so that people do not have to reenter their information multiple times. She also asked if the instructions for using Activity Insight could be sent out in the spring rather than December so people could enter their information earlier. VC Boehm pointed out that Activity Insight does allow people to enter their information at any time. He noted that the ad hoc committee recommended IANR continue to work with the Activity Insight designers to make further improvements rather than scraping the program.

Billesbach stated that Activity Insight does not work well in the academic world, and he knows people have had problems with it on various levels. He stated that he thinks people would prefer a program that is more free-form and flexible. Buan stated that she is glad to hear that VC Boehm is aware of the problems that have been raised. She noted that Activity Insight is a nice idea but very clunky to use. She pointed out that there was a problem with data not being imported into the report from different fields in the program, but the problem varied from person to person. She noted that many people like the two-page summary and used this the most.

VC Boehm stated that he is committed to streamlining the process in IANR and he wants to keep the focus of the Activity Insight on teaching, research, and extension. He stated that he will pass along the information he heard today to AVC Bischoff to see if further improvements can be made.

2.4 The State has raised the mileage rate allocation again. Since faculty are considered state employees, what is the university doing to match the state's mileage rate?

Chancellor Green reported that no changes have been made to the university's mileage reimbursement rate although there have been conversations about whether we should revisit the rate, but each time the issue is raised the decision has been to leave it as it is. He noted that the change was made to deal with the budget cuts in 2017, and during this time a statement was made by the legislature that the university's mileage rate does not need to match the state's rate.

Billesbach stated that research projects that receive funding from the federal government are impacted because faculty members working on these projects cannot claim the federal mileage rate. VC Boehm noted that the Chancellor indicated a few months ago that there might be some room for an adjustment in the mileage rate if a unit could cover the expense. He stated that Dean of Extension Stoltenow is looking to see if the Extension travel rate can be moved to the IRS travel rate. He noted that he wants Dean Stoltenow to have full knowledge of the recent budget cuts before any proposal is presented to the Chancellor.

Bearnes stated that Extension personnel would appreciate anything that can be done to move forward with improving the mileage rate. She noted that most Extension Educators use their own vehicle to do multi-programming for the university and they travel considerable distances.

2.5 What are the plans to attract and encourage minority candidates for leadership positions at UNL?

Chancellor Green noted that the Commitment to Diversity plan has a key component that would implement steps to enhance our ability to recruit and hire candidates from under-represented groups. He pointed out that we have been recruiting minorities in all leadership searches that we have had limited success outside of DEI. He stated that the recent search for the EVC was an internal search, so it was more restrictive in terms of the applicant pool, and he is very pleased that EVC Ankerson has been appointed to the position.

2.6 Will the data on how much money has been spent on consultants by UNL ever be coming to the Executive Committee?

Associate to the Chancellor Zeleny gave his apologies for taking so long to get this information to the Executive Committee. He pointed out that there is a broad category of units, from facilities to academic units, that use consultants. He stated that an overall summary will be provided to the Executive Committee before the spring break. Chancellor Green noted that there are some major categories where consultants are used

such as in searches, the master plan for the university, and over the last four years there have been considerable use of consultants for strategic planning.

Gay asked if there is any overlap between hiring diversity consultants and using search firms owned and operated by under-represented minorities. Chancellor Green stated that it is possible but there is generally a lack of search firms like this. He noted that VC Barker and his staff help us to focus on the search process.

Buan pointed out that the impetus for the request was related to the budget discussions and expressed in a Faculty Senate meeting when it was asked why we do not use the talented expertise that we have at the university. She stated that while it makes sense to have outside consultants sometimes, we don't incentivize service within the university. Chancellor Green stated that a current example of where we did use internal people was in the area of sexual misconduct. He noted that the Collaboration on Sexual Misconduct used experts here at UNL. He stated that he is currently in the process of forming a task force to look at the future of work and he is appointing and asking leaders across the campus and of all sectors to be on the task force.

3.0 EVC Ankerson

3.1 Discussion of Faculty Senate Executive Committee 2021-2022 Goals

Chancellor Green stated that he is very pleased to have EVC Ankerson in the role and thinks she will bring a tremendous amount of leadership to the campus. EVC Ankerson thanked the Chancellor and stated that she has received a copy of the Executive Committee goals and is looking forward to having a conversation with the Executive Committee to see how she can help the Committee to achieve some of its goals.

EVC Ankerson stated that a primary goal for her is to build a positive working relationship with the Executive Committee and she wants to work on building the trust between the faculty and the administration. She pointed out that we have the same purposes in mind, and we want to make UNL a great and equitable place to work. She stated that we need to listen well to each other, and she plans on doing this as EVC. She also thanked the Executive Committee members for their commitment, passion, and desire for shared governance and for their service on the Faculty Senate and Executive Committee.

Chancellor Green noted the passing of Professor Anna Shavers of the Law College and stated what a great loss this was to the university. He also noted that passing Regent Bob Whitehouse who served as Regent for two terms and was a highly respected teacher and coach in Omaha.

4.0 Announcements

4.1 Monthly Meetings with EVC

Kolbe announced that he is trying to set up a monthly meeting between the Senate President and the EVC in addition to the already established monthly meeting with the Chancellor. He noted that he has also had discussion with AVC Walker about including her in the meetings with the EVC. Woodman asked if the Executive Committee would

get disclosure of what is discussed at the meetings. Kolbe stated that he expects to do so, particularly if the discussions impact our specific goals.

3.0 Approval of January 18, 2022 Minutes

Kolbe asked if there were any further revisions to the minutes, hearing none he asked for approval of the minutes. Billesbach moved and Minter seconded a motion to approve the minutes. The Executive Committee then approved the minutes.

4.0 Unfinished Business

5.0 New Business

5.1 Concerns over University's Protocols with the Current Surge in Covid Cases

The Executive Committee discussed the very high positivity rate of Covid in the community and the lack of flexibility on the part of the university in allowing faculty members to temporarily adjust their method of delivery of their courses during the current surge of Covid cases. Kolbe noted that currently instructors need to get approval from the department chair to teach a class remotely. It was pointed out that faculty members should be trusted to make the decision to teach remotely for the safety of their students and themselves and should only need to inform the chair. Woodman pointed out that some instructors, particularly temporary instructors, may not feel comfortable in making the request and there are some department chairs who would not accommodate a faculty member's request for fear of repercussions from the dean. It was noted that in a previous discussion with Associate to the Chancellor Zeleny he stated that building access was not being used this semester and instead the administration was trusting people to get vaccinated and to stay home if they have Covid or may have been exposed to it.

Woodman moved, and Buan seconded, the Executive Committee writing a letter to the Chancellor expressing its concern over the university's inflexibility and calling for the administration to allow instructors to teach remotely, if they choose by notifying the department chair. A copy of the letter would be sent to the Executive Committee members. The motion was approved. After the meeting Kolbe crafted a letter which was then shared and edited by members of the Executive Committee. The final letter was sent to the Chancellor and copied to the Executive Committee.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:16 p.m. The next meeting of the Executive Committee will be on Tuesday, February 1, 2022, immediately following the Faculty Senate meeting. The meeting will be held via Zoom. The minutes are respectfully submitted by Karen Griffin, Coordinator and Kelli Herstein, Secretary.