

## EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES

**Present:** Bearnes, Boudreau, Dawes, Eklund, Kopocis, Lott, Minter, Shrader, Tschetter, Vakilzadian, Zuckerman

**Absent:** Baesu

**Date:** Tuesday, December 12, 2023

**Location:** Zoom

**Note:** These are not verbatim minutes. They are a summary of the discussions at the Executive Committee meeting as corrected by those participating.

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### 1.0 Call (*Kopocis*)

Kopocis called the meeting to order at 2:30 p.m.

### 2.0 Parental Leave Policy (Professor Ann Powers and Professor Jenny Dauer)

Kopocis noted that the Parental Leave Policy was presented to the Board of Regents at its October meeting but was pulled for consideration from the December agenda. She stated that the email that she received about this action gave the explanation that the policy had not been vetted by the Faculty Senates and the email also stated that there would be a follow-up providing guidance, however, she has not received any further communication from Central Administration nor a copy of the policy that can be distributed to the Faculty Senates.

Powers reported that she has been working on the Parental Leave Policy since 2016 and she would like to see the policy continue as a priority for the university system. She noted that work on drafting a policy, began when she was serving on the Chancellor's Commission on the Status of Women. She reported that the CCSW worked with groups from the other campuses and other diversity commissions pointing out that there are inconsistencies in the current policy and noting that it is applied differently for office/service, managerial/professorial staff, and for faculty members.

Powers stated that in 2021 a recommended policy was sent to all Chancellors and Vice Chancellors in the university system. She noted that then AVC Currin brought the draft document to Central Administration for review by the Vice President for Business and Finance and General Counsel, but she had not heard any news about it until UNK's collective bargaining unit was in negotiations with Central Administration. She stated that she was excited to learn that it was put on the October Board of Regents agenda but was obviously disappointed when it was pulled for consideration by the Board for the December meeting.

Powers reported that the policy presented to the Board in October had some changes from the policy that was originally drafted. She stated that the original version of the proposed policy followed the Federal Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) which allows for 12

weeks of parental leave for faculty and staff, and she noted that post docs were included in the policy. However, the version presented to the Board provided only 8 weeks of parental leave, fathers were only allowed 5 days of parental leave, and it did not include post docs. She noted that they asked for foster parents to be included in the policy pointing out that foster care can often lead to adoption which is covered in the Federal Family and Medical Leave Act. She stated that she would send the original draft policy to the Executive Committee for review.

Dauer stated that graduate students are not covered in the policy and pointed out that they are in a difficult category because they are not really considered employees although they are employed part-time by the university. She reported that some departments could possibly provide family leave for graduate students if PI funds aren't available to cover the leave of a graduate student, or she suggested having a pool of funds from the university or campus that could be used to cover the graduate student's leave. She stated that it would be good for the Executive Committee to review the recommendations the CCSW developed a few years ago and to consider what could be done to support graduate students.

Powers reported that another issue that the CCSW's proposed Parental Leave Policy would have addressed would be to eliminate using the FMLA as a penalty for married employees. The marriage penalty only allows a total of 12 weeks of FMLA for married employees rather than 12 weeks per employee. She noted that while UNL does not apply FMLA this way, some of our other campuses do.

Vakilzadian asked if the other Faculty Senates have seen the proposed policy. Powers stated that she is only aware of UNK seeing it. She stated that she does not understand the delay. Kopocis pointed out that Central Administration stated that the Faculty Senates did not review the proposed policy, but she noted that none of the four campus Faculty Senates have made any complaints about the proposed policy that went to the Board in October.

Kopocis stated that the proposed policy states that an employee must first use any sick leave time for FMLA use but faculty members do not get sick leave. Powers pointed out that short term disability plans don't start until after 3 or 6 months, and if a person wants or needs to take 12 weeks off for parental leave, they must use all of their sick leave first and then use vacation leave, crisis leave, or unpaid leave. She noted that if an employee takes unpaid leave, they must pay the university for the cost of their benefits.

Schrader wondered if the delay with the policy is due to philosophical reasons or financial. Dauer stated that she does not know how the system would be affected. She stated that the policy would make for good workplace practice. The current existing policy is gendered, and also results in different leaves for different types of positions in the university, which could be read as discriminatory. Powers stated that no data was provided as to how many people are taking parental leave each year. She noted that the greatest impact would be for the office/service employees because their paid time off is

based on time worked and not as generous as managerial/professional employees nor as flexible as faculty.

Eklund asked if we have any information on the parental leave policy our Big Ten peers offer. Powers stated that as of 2021 10 out of 14 universities provided paid leave and one of the schools (Rutgers) relies on state paid FMLA. She reported that 9 out of the 14 schools do not discriminate between the birthing and non-birthing parent and stated that 6 of the 14 schools have explicit language granting equal leave to same-sex partners, and 5 of 14 allow leave to be intermittent or provide a reduced schedule to allow the employee to come back to work slowly. She pointed out that our state employees as well as county and city employees get paid parental leave. Lott pointed out that having comparisons to our Big Ten peers would be helpful and could impact recruiting efforts. Dauer stated that she believes that some comparisons have been made by Professor Hassler.

Dauer asked if there was any way that the policy could be pushed forward for consideration by the Board. She noted that she is concerned that it will be delayed until a new President is in place. The Executive Committee then discussed whether a letter should be written to Central Administration urging the consideration of the policy by the Board and what else could be done to press for a decision to be made on the policy.

Kopocis thanked Powers and Dauer for all of the work that they have done to draft a proposed policy that would benefit the employees of the university system.

### **3.0 Announcements**

#### **3.1 Next Executive Committee Meeting**

Griffin noted that the Executive Committee will not be meeting the week of December 18<sup>th</sup>.

### **3.0 Approval of December 5, 2023 Minutes**

Kopocis asked if there were any revisions to the minutes. Hearing none she asked for a motion to approve the minutes. Minter moved and Vakilzadian seconded approving the minutes. Motion approved by the Executive Committee.

### **4.0 Unfinished Business**

#### **4.1 Follow-up on ASUN's Proposed Changes to the Syllabus Policy**

Kopocis reported that she contacted ASUN President Pechous to let him know that the Executive Committee declined the proposed revisions to the Syllabus Policy but noted that she has not had any response from him.

### **5.0 New Business**

#### **5.1 Degree Grades**

Kopocis reported that there are a growing number of faculty members that are turning Fs in for the entire class for the degree grades. She noted that this is sometimes being done because the instructor has not entered actual grades into Canvas thus putting increased pressure on the Office of the Registrar to get in touch with a faculty member for those students who are graduating. Tschetter noted that there is a time when the degree grades

are to be turned in but instructors should also be entering grades into Canvas so students can keep see how they are performing in the class. She stated that she advises students to talk to their instructor to see what their standing is in the course. She pointed out that not notifying students what their grade is in a class causes a great deal of panic for the students.

Minter stated that she thought that a college dean's office has a responsibility when there are procedural problems occurring within their college. Kopocis pointed out that the problem is occurring in various colleges and the Faculty Senate does not make any decisions about degree grades. Griffin suggested that AVC Goodburn be notified of the problem so she can raise the issue with the Academic Solutions Council.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:25 p.m. The next meeting of the Executive Committee has tentatively been set for Tuesday, January 16, 2024, at 2:30 pm. The meeting will be held in 203 Alexander Building. The minutes are respectfully submitted by Karen Griffin, Coordinator and Signe Boudreau, Secretary.