

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES

Present: Baesu, Bearnese, Boudreau, Bouma, Dawes, Eklund, Lott, Minter, Shrader, Tschetter, Vakilzadian

Absent: Kopocis, Zuckerman

Date: Tuesday, February 13, 2024

Location: 203 Alexander 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 (*Eklund*)

Eklund called the meeting to order at 2:34 p.m. He noted that Kopocis was attending the hearing of LB 1064 regarding tenure at the Legislature's Education Committee meeting.

2.0 Announcements

2.1 Board of Regents Meeting

Eklund reported that he attended the Board of Regents meeting this past Friday and afterwards there was an information meeting with the other Faculty Senate Presidents and Provost Gold. He stated that there was an interesting discussion about what is going on with the State Legislature and noted that Provost Gold was very informative and helpful. He stated that Provost Gold pointed out that a major criterion for being admitted to the AAU is the four and six-year graduation rates for Pell grant students. He reported that current AAU members have an 85% graduation rate while we are at 65%. He noted that we need to look at what we can do to assist students to be successful.

Eklund reported that there were a number of speakers who spoke on behalf of supporting UNK's Theater Department which was on the agenda for elimination. He pointed out that all the Big Ten universities have very good performing arts programs with the exception of Purdue University which does not have any performing arts degrees.

Vakilzadian wondered if our lower graduation rates were because we accept lower ACT scores for students. Minter noted that we are less selective with our students, but we really don't have the data available to address this question. Bouma pointed out that some of the students being admitted are less prepared than some of the students at our peer institutions. Minter stated that some of the Pell grant students may be working more than other students. Bouma noted that she has found that some of the Pell grant students have many other responsibilities, sometimes they are the sole English-speaking person in their family and get called upon often to help the family.

Vakilzadian questioned whether UNL should raise its standards for admitting students. Minter pointed out that it would be valuable to look at the data to see how much additional financial support is provided to Pell grant students at other Big Ten

universities. Bouma noted that sometimes the issue isn't more money, but the need for more time to devote to their coursework.

Minter suggested that the Executive Committee might want to ask the Chancellor what other metrics are considered for entrance into the AAU and where do we stand in comparison. Lott noted that Dean Heng-Moss shared graduation rates for CASNR which showed that the rates are increasing. He suggested asking the Chancellor if he has a plan to increase our graduation rates. Shrader stated that 24% of UNL students are on Pell grants. Minter noted that the UNL Fact Book does show that our graduation rates are steadily increasing. Eklund pointed out that our metrics need to improve for us to regain entry into the AAU and it could take as long as ten years.

3.0 Approval of February 6, 2024 Minutes

Eklund asked if there were any further revisions to the minutes. Hearing none he asked for a motion to approve the minutes. Minter moved and Bouma seconded approving the minutes. Motion approved by the Executive Committee.

4.0 Unfinished Business

4.1 Faculty Senate Meeting Format

Eklund stated that the reaction from a few Senators to Kopocis' announcement during the Senate meeting that attendance will be required in person for the meetings beginning in the fall semester was discerning. He pointed out that the Senate needs engaged faculty members, especially during these challenging times. Bouma noted that there are only nine Senate meetings during the academic year and Lott stated that the Faculty Senate is a place where faculty members can be engaged and give intelligent input and feedback. He stated that UNL needs people who are committed to shared governance.

The Executive Committee discussed whether the Senate Bylaws should be revised to include language that attendance must be in person unless the Senator lives 50 miles or greater outside of Lincoln or has ADA accommodation. It was noted that of the approximately 50 people on Zoom during the February 5th meeting, only four Senators had their camera on throughout the meeting. The Executive Committee was in agreement that if members attend the Senate meetings by Zoom, they must have their camera on during the meeting. The Committee discussed possibly putting language in the Faculty Senate Handbook to address the issue. Eklund drafted a statement which he stated that he would share with the Committee for editing. Minter made the motion to include language in the Faculty Senate Handbook. Motion seconded by Tschetter. Motion tabled until next week to allow the Committee to review and edit the language that would go into the Handbook.

The Executive Committee then discussed whether the room setup could be different so that everyone could view the screen and see those that are on Zoom. It was pointed out that this is particularly important when the Chancellor or other guests are speaking to the Senate. Griffin stated that she would work with Assistant Director Carrie Jackson, Nebraska Unions, to see how the meeting room could be arranged. She wondered

whether OWL technology could be used to ensure better audio/visual quality during the meeting.

Minter noted that these are very difficult times that the University is facing with the budget situation, changes in leadership, and State Legislators introducing legislative bills against tenure and diversity, equity and inclusion. She stated that we need to coalesce as a Faculty Senate and suggested surveying the Senators to see what things could be done at the meetings to make it worth their presence. Dawes pointed out that most faculty members are not aware of what the Faculty Senate does if they don't read the Executive Committee and Faculty Senate meeting minutes. She stated that the Executive Committee needs to get a newsletter out periodically, perhaps twice a semester to the faculty to keep them informed of the Senate's work. Griffin suggested a subcommittee to write the newsletter and said that she would volunteer to work on it with a couple of the other members.

5.0 New Business

No new business was discussed.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:53 p.m. The next meeting of the Executive Committee will be on Tuesday, February 20, 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.