UNL FACULTY SENATE MEETING MINUTES
East Campus Union, Arbor Suite
December 2, 2014
Presidents Nickerson and Bender, Presiding

1.0 Call to Order
President Nickerson called the meeting to order at 2:36 p.m.

2.0 Announcements
President Nickerson reported that the Chancellor will be unable to attend a meeting due to a change in his travel arrangements.

2.1 Faculty Members Needed for Academic Planning Committee, Academic Rights & Responsibilities Committee, and the Academic Rights & Responsibilities Panel
President Nickerson noted that in his recent newsletter he reported that there are three faculty positions on the Academic Planning Committee that need to be filled: two from the Business, Education, and Social Sciences disciplines and one from the Physical disciplines.

For the Academic Rights and Responsibilities Committee, two tenured faculty members are needed. They can be from the following colleges: Architecture; Journalism; CASNR; Business, and Law.

President Nickerson stated that 12 positions on the Academic Rights & Responsibilities Panel need to be filled. The individuals can be from any college but must be tenured or an extension educator. He pointed out that while the term is for three years, it is entirely possible that a member of the panel may never be called on to serve on a special hearing committee.

2.2 Student Absence Form Available
President Nickerson noted that he mentioned in the recent newsletter that there is a new student absence form that is optional for faculty members to use. He stated that the Executive Committee negotiated with the University Health Center to develop the form since the Health Center is no longer providing students with a class absence note when they do not seek treatment. He pointed out that the form does not supplement or override the faculty’s attendance policy. The form can be found on the Health Center’s website at http://health.unl.edu/forms/StudentAbsenceForm.pdf.

2.3 Presidential Candidates on Campus
President Nickerson reported that three more candidates for the President of the University of Nebraska are scheduled to give presentations to the campus. He encouraged the Senators and other faculty members to attend the presentations and to provide feedback on each of the candidates.

3.0 Approval of November 4, 2014 Minutes
Professor Vakilzadian, Electrical Engineering, moved for approval of the minutes. The motion was seconded by Professor Joeckel, School of Natural Resources. The motion was approved.

4.0 Committee Reports
4.1 University Appeals and Judicial Board (Dean Hecker)
Dean Hecker reported that only two cases required the assistance of the University Judicial Board this past year and both dealt with academic dishonesty cases. He noted that both cases were lengthy and difficult. He stated that the Office of Student Affairs has moved quickly with incorporating the new Student Code of Conduct and a web page pertaining to academic dishonesty will be established. He reported that there is a very good academic honesty seminar available on the web and if the faculty think the course would be useful for students they could have students take the course. He noted that students would pay the Student Affairs Office to gain access to the online course. Professor Schleck, English, asked if the course is available to instructors and if the information could be passed on to the student in a more informal way. Dean Hecker reported that the course has required readings that the students must write and reflect on. The course requires about ten hours of time and the students obtain direct feedback on their reflections. He stated that the course was designed by the University of Delaware. Professor Reisbig, Children, Youth, and Family Studies, asked what the cost is for the course. Dean Hecker stated that it is $100, but the fee can be waived if there are financial difficulties for the student. He noted that the instructor can request that the fee be waived. Professor Adams,
Plant Pathology, asked what happens if the student’s response to the readings indicates that the student does not understand academic honesty. Dean Hecker pointed out that each response is read and feedback provided to the student. If done poorly the student would need to write the response again.

4.2 Academic Planning Committee (Professor Hoffman)
Professor Hoffman noted that the APC is a very important committee that discusses unit mergers, reviews the master planning as it is being generated, conducts academic program reviews, and deals with budget reductions and reallocations when they occur. He encouraged the senators to nominate colleagues who would be good on the committee. He noted that the APC is a very interesting committee which provides a different aspect to the university.

Professor Hoffman stated that the APC would like to work in conjunction with the Senate to investigate requiring an operations and maintenance funding component to any Project Initiation Request. He pointed out that while donors fund the construction of a new building, maintenance and the operation of the building is not considered. He reported that $500,000 - $600,000 came out of the faculty/staff salary pool to cover the cost of operating these buildings. He stated that codifying and making operations and maintenance funding a component of each Project Initiation Request could avoid this money being taken from salaries.

Professor Hoffman reported that the APC began reviewing the merger of the College of Architecture and the Hixson-Lied College of Fine and Performing Arts. He noted that is it important to have good guidelines in place when there is a proposal to merge academic units. He stated that the APC felt that there seems to be the desire to accelerate this process, but the Committee does not feel this is wise and that the time to review the mergers needs to be expanded so all parties involved have the ability to discuss it. He noted that two APC members are on a committee working on the merger. He pointed out that it is important for the APC to look at proposals and that there be meetings with faculty members and alums to express their feelings concerning the proposed merger. He stated that if an outside consultant is used, the consultant should also speak to the APC as well as the units involved. He stated that timelines also need to be developed for mergers because it is important that we take the time to go through the process carefully.

Professor Hoffman reported that the APC met with the Senate Executive Committee to discuss the possibility of having a professor of practice and a research professor added to its membership. He stated that he believes the idea crystalized during the discussions and that two more members should be added to the committee. He stated that he thinks it is important for these professional positions to have a voice on the APC. Professor Stevenson, English, asked if other non-tenure track positions would be potential candidates for an APC member even if they do not have a three year contract. Professor Hoffman noted that the position could be defined in the APC’s syllabus.

Professor Hoffman noted that the Director of Institutional Research and Planning serves as the secretary of the APC and Dr. Nunez does an excellent job at his duties, but since 2010 he has also been serving as the Associate to the Chancellor. He stated that he has the utmost respect for Dr. Nunez and believes that he does an excellent job at all of his duties, but having the dual roles puts the person in a difficult position and is an enormous workload. He suggested that the Senate should discuss who should serve as secretary for the APC.

President Nickerson noted that the APC report mentions working with the Senate to streamline the tenure and evaluation process. He asked when this was done. Professor Hoffman stated that he believed that it occurred when Professor Lahey chaired the APC. President Nickerson asked about the discussion on social media and wondered whether this was at all related to the Senate’s open mic discussion concerning the use of technology in the classroom. He asked if the APC has had any follow up reports on this issue. Professor Hoffman stated that only general discussions occurred.

Professor Purcell, Southeast Research and Extension Center, asked if the academic program reviews (APR) can be found online. Professor Hoffman stated that he believes they are online. Associate to the Chancellor Nunez stated that the APR monitor reports are available, not the entire report. Professor Hoffman noted that members for APRs include three external faculty members and one internal faculty member, plus the APR monitor who reports on the process.

Professor Schleck asked for an update on the campus master plan and where we are in the process of it. Professor Hoffman noted that last year consultants came to campus and gave presentations, but it is not a finished plan. He noted that the Board of Regents approved the general concept of a plan with one exception. Professor Schleck asked if there is a website about the campus master plan. Associate to the Chancellor Nunez stated that Assistant Institutional Research and Planning Director Dam is the campus master planner and there
is still a lot of work going on with the plan because it is for a 10-15 year period. He noted that the campus master plan can be found at [http://irp.unl.edu/campus-planning-and-space-management/campus-and-landscape-master-plans](http://irp.unl.edu/campus-planning-and-space-management/campus-and-landscape-master-plans).

4.3 Chancellor’s Commission on the Status of Women (Professor Simpson)
Professor Simpson noted that the Chancellor’s Commission on the Status of Women (CCSW) is comprised of three councils: the faculty council, staff council, and student council and she chairs the faculty council. She noted that the full Commission has 25 members and meets once a month and each council meets once a month. She reported that the Commission’s responsibility is to advise the Chancellor about issues affecting women on campus. She stated that each year the CCSW provides the Chancellor’s Award for Outstanding Contributions to the State of Women and this year it was presented to Professor Beth Berkstrand-Reid and to the student organization Engineers Without Borders.

Professor Simpson stated that Associate to the Chancellor Nunez has worked extensively with the Council to maintain UNL’s compliance with federal regulations regarding lactation rooms. She pointed out that this issue primarily affects students and staff who do not have an office to themselves. She reported that there have been some changes in federal regulations that UNL needs to comply with. She stated that the staff council is working to bring “in her shoes” issues to deans and directors to show them how staff members and students are affected by accumulative policies such as the cost of parking fees.

Professor Simpson reported that the student council has addressed several issues such as the elimination of the emergency blue lights on campus. She noted that there are now applications available that can be used for this purpose. Another issue is the removal of tampon dispensers on campus. She noted that this is a women’s hygiene issue and there have been ongoing discussions with VC Jackson about it.

Professor Simpson stated that one of the main issues for the faculty council has been partnering with NSF grants and how to advance the climate for faculty members on campus, particularly in respect to dual career hiring. She noted that the faculty council investigated dual career policies and practices among the Big Ten schools and many of them have transparent policies and pages on their websites dedicated to dual career issues. She stated that the faculty council is writing a recommendation to the Chancellor suggesting that there be a non-administrative person who could be the point person for dual career hires, someone to whom a possible candidate can express that they are a dual career hire without making it a part of the search process. She noted that the Chancellor has challenged why the point person cannot be an administrator. She stated that the faculty council is responding to him. She stated that the dual career policies should be transparent to incoming faculty members, the search committee, and the hiring administrator.

Professor Simpson reported that the CCSW has followed the Senate’s recommendation to work with Associate to the Chancellor Nunez to see if there are differences across ranks in regards to faculty salaries. She stated that the council has made a couple of recommendations in the past year and is working to determine what effective metrics could be used. She noted that salaries can vary widely throughout the departments and colleges and length of service and rank can make it difficult to evaluate the salaries.

Professor Simpson stated that another ongoing issue the CCSW has been involved with is the issue of campus-wide faculty development. She noted that an NSF grant found that faculty development based on gender was not so much an issue at the assistant professor level, but there were greater challenges at the full professor level and faculty development at the associate professor level was consistently missing. She stated that the CCSW would like to influence university-wide development practices and people have been identified to serve on a committee that will work on this issue. She noted that efforts are currently stalled due to the search for a new Senior Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs. She pointed out that the CCSW is open to suggestions about faculty development. She reported that in some colleges and departments there is significant support, but others are not doing that well. She pointed out that faculty development is known to make a difference in the success of faculty members.

Professor Woodman, School of Biological Sciences, asked if metrics were developed for evaluating professors of practice. He noted that there seems to be a universal approach when the university says it is evaluating these faculty members. Professor Simpson pointed out that this stems from a salary document that compared salaries across ranks in departments and colleges, but professors of practice were not reviewed to see if there were gender equity issues within these ranks of faculty members. She noted that there is not an obvious way to evaluate these faculty members.
Professor Schleck asked if there are any perceived advantages for the CCSW to be the power broker for dual career hires rather than having a policy posted on a website. Professor Simpson stated that the ideal best practice that is widely accepted among advanced schools and participants in the ADVANCE grant is to have someone who is not affiliated with the search committee be the point person for dual career hires. She stated that it is important for potential faculty members to know that there are start-up funds available. She pointed out that the CCSW has been trying to advocate this idea, but if the Chancellor doesn’t designate a specific person then the situation needs to be reconsidered. Professor Schleck asked why the Chancellor objects to having a non-administrator in the position. Professor Simpson stated that the Chancellor has indicated that it is primarily a financial consideration because he feels that there could be an administrator within his staff who could handle the task.

Professor Simpson noted that there are three faculty positions open on the CCSW and she asked the Senate for assistance in finding faculty members to serve on the Commission. She noted that two of the open positions are due to the fact that the members were recruited to be a chair or associate dean. Professor Woodman asked if there are any professors of practice on the Commission. Professor Simpson stated that currently there are none, but there have been some in the past.

6.0 New Business
6.1 Open Mic Discussion – Travel Reimbursement (Assistant VC of Business and Finance Marc Chauche and Director of Business Operations Jo Bialis)

President Nickerson reported that the topic of travel reimbursement and the role of the business centers in how they function was suggested by several faculty members as an open mic discussion. He pointed out that he wants to protect faculty time so they can focus on teaching and research, but faculty members increasingly have to spend more time to get reimbursed for travel expenses, particularly for those faculty members who travel overseas and have to get the receipts translated, sometimes having to pay for the translation which can make the reimbursement moot.

President Nickerson stated that State Auditor Foley’s comments have caused the university to require further documentation for reimbursement than is necessary resulting in greater work for faculty members. He stated that the issue was raised with former President Milliken, who was sympathetic to the concerns of the faculty, but did not feel the timing was right with the legislature to try and ease some of the excessive regulations in regards to travel reimbursement.

Assistant VC Chauche, Business & Finance, stated that the Business and Finance Office agrees with the faculty that the excessive regulations are time consuming, and noted that there is a cost/benefit trade off with how much money is saved versus how much it costs administratively to ensure that every nickel and dime is accountable. However, state statute 81-1174 says that any expense for travel has to be received in accounting within 60 days of the last day of incurred expenses and detailed receipts must be submitted if there is an expense of $5 or more. He noted that this legislation occurred because there was a report in the news on how slowly people were getting reimbursed for expenses and how some people were not submitting their expense vouchers for nearly a year. He pointed out that the 60 day requirement is firm and cannot be waived.

Assistant VC Chauche reported that there is a tedious amount of work involved in an employee justifying what their expenses are, particularly if from overseas where in some locations the receipts do not identify the location of the purchase. Faculty members must identify where the purchase was made, again this is a state statute. He noted that the state does not allow a per diem like most of the Big Ten schools do.

Assistant VC Chauche pointed out that Nebraska is a fiscally conservative state and the motivation for having the state statute is not necessarily negative because we need to be responsible for the taxpayers’ money. However, sometimes good intentions can create unintended consequences. He wondered how efficient it is to spend thousands of dollars to pay state auditors to review employee reimbursement expense vouchers only to find a small amount of errors, but, he pointed out, we must abide by the rules of the legislature.

Assistant VC Chauche stated that getting a pre-trip authorization can help with the reimbursement process. He reported that a lot of universities are looking at tracking systems for export control and international travel. He noted that the tracking systems can alert university travelers of dangerous areas for travel, such as the countries where the ebola crisis is occurring, and to make sure that these travelers have medical insurance.

Assistant VC Chauche stated that the vendors typically used for travel are Travel & Transport, Hotels.com, Southwest Airlines, National Car Rental, and UNL transportation services. He stated that he understands that Travel & Transport are not always the most economical vendor to use. He reported that information on all
travel policies and procedures can be found at http://travel.unl.edu.

Assistant VC Chauche stated that he would like to hear the faculty’s ideas concerning travel reimbursement. The question was asked how the state statute could be changed. Assistant VC Chauche pointed out that the only way the state’s travel requirements can be changed is if the legislature revises it. Professor Steffen, Veterinary & Biomedical Sciences, asked if anyone has looked at what the real costs are in terms of the amount of time that is spent submitting expense vouchers, reviewing the vouchers, and auditors examining them. He pointed out that the university needs to demonstrate that it is costing more money to process and audit the vouchers. Assistant VC Chauche stated that this is exactly the point. He reported that Business and Finance estimated that the cost in response to the administrative bill has been in the $100,000s. He stated that the university has challenged the Nebraska Auditor of Public Accounts on the cost/benefit ratio. He noted that it was pointed out when the state statute on travel was changed the university was told that we don’t have any authority to make any changes to how reimbursement vouchers are handled.

Assistant VC Chauche stated that the travel reimbursement process has been automated so faculty members can scan in their receipts and submit the vouchers electronically. He noted that 50% of the vouchers come in manually and two full-time positions and one half-time position are needed to process the vouchers.

Professor Ladunga, Statistics, asked if using google to translate receipts would be acceptable. Director Bialis suggested that faculty members write down on the receipt what was purchased at that time and it would be acceptable.

Professor Simpson, Biochemistry, pointed out that many faculty members attend conferences on grant dollars which are not subject to state statutes, yet they have to follow all of the expense voucher rules. Assistant VC Chauche stated that if the money comes into the university it is subject to review.

Professor Handa, Architecture, noted that when she traveled overseas she was told to write down on the receipts what she ate. While in New York City recently she ate cheaply and she was turned down for only $7. She asked how consistent the accounting office is in terms of its practice. Assistant VC Chauche stated that this is an inconsistency of the part of the accounting office and said that if this occurs faculty members should contact either himself or Director Bialis.

President Nickerson stated that it appears that there are different policies in place at different business centers across campus. Assistant VC Chauche stated that the policies should all be the same. He noted that different colleges or departments might request some additional information. He pointed out that the university is getting a lot of pressure from the Board, the legislature, and others to bring down our administrative costs and one way to do this is through centralization. He noted that the faculty members might want to consider where the business centers should be located.

Professor Vakilzadian noted that a service charge can be added when exchanging money. He asked how this fee should be included on the expense voucher. Assistant VC Chauche stated that if there is a fee it should be included in the exchange rate or just add it into the amount of money. Professor Borck, West Central Research & Extension Center, noted that the amount of the fee needs to be included and she finds it easier to use a credit card when traveling overseas.

Professor Farrell asked how far the Business & Finance Office will go to fight to change these regulations. Assistant VC Chauche stated as far as VC Jackson and the Chancellor will allow him. Professor Farrell asked if there is legal help and how far the university is willing to stand up to the legislature with regard to this matter. President Nickerson pointed out that he asked this question to former President Milliken when he was here and was told that the university would not fight to change these regulations at that time. Assistant VC Chauche stated that the university needs to decide how far it wants to go with this issue. He noted that the university’s reputation, and the reputation in the eyes of the taxpayers needs to be considered. He pointed out that in some cases the ADA’s office put out erroneous information regarding the university’s accounting. President Nickerson asked who would generate a suggested change in the state law and what would be a rational group of changes that the university would find beneficial. Assistant VC Chauche stated that a group from the Senate could work on proposing changes and someone from his office could be invited to help make recommendations, but where the suggestions would go after the Senate would be difficult.

Professor Adams noted that he works with the Forest Service and they provide employees with a per diem. He stated that because of the difficulties with having to provide so much documentation for the state of Nebraska the Forest Service has decided to directly send the employee a check for their travel expenses, yet he has to
notify the university that he is traveling. As a result he continually gets messages informing him of the 60 day deadline, but he doesn’t submit any receipts because he has already been reimbursed by the Forest Service. He asked if there is any way to prevent the continual notices. Assistant VC Chauche stated that Professor Adams just needs to send a response back explaining the situation.

Professor Purcell, Southeast Research & Extension Center, asked where the policy is that a conference agenda must be submitted along with the expense voucher. Professor Borck stated that she was told that any conference where food is provided must be accompanied by an agenda. Assistant VC Chauche stated that this is in the state accounting manual. Professor Borck pointed out that she was quoted a state statute, but when she checked it out it didn’t apply to some situations. Assistant VC Chauche noted that the state of Nebraska is being hyper sensitive and they are trying to watch things so tightly that it sometimes causes some unintended consequences.

Professor Fech, Southeast Research & Extension Center, stated that most employees are under the assumption that we have to use Travel & Transport for making travel arrangements, but he has heard that Southwest Airlines is equally acceptable. Director Bialis stated that the Southwest link is also on the Business & Finance’s travel webpage. Professor Wacker, Special Education & Communication Disorders, reported that her department has been told that they have to use Travel & Transport if a faculty member wants university funds to pay the travel expense, or the faculty member can pay independently and get reimbursed afterwards. Director Bialis noted that some departments have more strict rules that they want employees to follow. President Nickerson stated that this is one of the reasons for having Assistant VC Chauche and Director Bialis meet with the Senate because there seem to be extra restrictions in some units which does not seem right. Assistant VC Chauche stated that the university’s policy is to require the minimum amount of documentation, but colleges and departments have the authority to request more documentation. President Nickerson stated that the faculty should look into this matter further.

Professor Hancock, Panhandle Research & Extension Center, stated that she can come to campus for a meeting and get her meal paid for, but when she has a true work meeting off campus she cannot get paid. Director Bialis stated that generally the state does not allow reimbursement of an employee’s meal if they are not in travel mode. However, if they get prior written approval from their VC they can get reimbursed. She noted that if someone outside of the university came in to speak to UNL employees, their lunch could be paid for by the campus. Professor Vakilzadian asked how group meals can be taken care of for reimbursement. Director Bialis stated that some people will pay for the meal and the next time someone else pays. She said that you must submit a receipt to get reimbursed.

Professor Farrell, Agricultural Leadership, Education & Communication, asked if accounting uses Google maps to figure the miles on trips. He noted that when doing field work the actual miles may differ from a Google map and then the accounting office will only allow a certain amount of miles to be reimbursed. He pointed out that the university needs to trust the employee on the number of miles they are traveling when doing field research work. Director Biais stated that the Google maps are just used to get a range of the miles. Professor Farrell reported that he has had his expense voucher returned and was informed he couldn’t claim the miles. Assistant VC Chauche suggested that faculty members in these situations should send the expense voucher to him or to Director Bialis. Director Bialis noted that the state statute says that faculty members can only be reimbursed for the most direct route. Professor Farrell pointed out that this does not work for field research.

Professor Hancock asked who faculty members should go to if they get multiple interpretations on travel expenses from the business centers. President Nickerson pointed out that this is one of the general questions he hopes will be answered today. Assistant VC Chauche stated that typically the accounting office will not insert itself into colleges’ and units’ business centers, although they could provide an opinion on what is necessary unless it is the dean who has dictated what the requirements are for reimbursement. Professor Wacker asked what could be done if it is someone in the business center that is making these requirements, not the dean or the department chair. Assistant VC Chauche stated that the Senate needs to remember how decentralized the campus is and noted that it is hard to get things done consistently. President Nickerson pointed out that if someone approached the Assistant VC and asked what is appropriate for the situation he could hopefully provide a simpler solution. Assistant VC Chauche stated that he would call the business center(s) first and would want to see what is going on and why there is a difference in the requirements for getting reimbursed.

Professor Shea, School of Natural Resources, noted that the bottom line is that if the faculty want any major changes it has to be done politically which means that it is unlikely to get changed in this state, at least given
the current political direction of the state. He pointed out that people need to keep this in mind when we go to the polls.

Professor Sollars, Veterinary & Biomedical Sciences, noted that she is often paid through the federal government because of the work she does yet she has to adhere to the university’s regulations. She asked who makes the decision requiring that the university’s policies must be followed rather than the federal policies. Assistant VC Chauche stated that the business centers would interpret the regulations.

Assistant VC Chauche stated that faculty members with concerns should email him and said that he would be happy to assist if the Senate decides to put a group together to look into gathering data to support a case to the legislature proposing a change in the state statute.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:13 p.m. The next meeting of the Faculty Senate will be held on Tuesday, January 13, 2015, at 2:30 p.m. in the City Campus Union, Auditorium. The minutes are respectfully submitted by Karen Griffin, Coordinator, and Tad Wysocki, Secretary.