

**UNL FACULTY SENATE MEETING MINUTES**  
**East Campus Union, Arbor Suite**  
**October 7, 2014**  
**Presidents Nickerson, Bender, and Guevara Presiding**

**1.0 Call to Order**

President Nickerson called the meeting to order at 2:33 p.m.

**2.0 Announcements**

**2.1 New Senators**

President Nickerson reported that efforts to get more senators have resulted in six new senators: Steve Swidler, Teaching, Learning & Teacher Education; Heather Borck, West Central Research & Extension Center; Ron Cerny, Chemistry; Hank Van Den Berg, Economics; Michael Farrell, Agricultural Leadership, Education & Communications; and Shripat Kamble, Entomology.

**2.2 President's Newsletter**

President Nickerson noted that he and President Elect Bender initiated the President's newsletter in September and have received very positive feedback about it. He stated that if anyone has suggestions for further topics they should contact either himself, President Elect Bender, or Senate Coordinator Griffin.

**2.3 November 4 Senate Meeting**

President Nickerson reported that Director Greg Clayton from Benefits will be speaking at the November 4 Senate meeting. He stated that there will also be an open topic discussion during the meeting. He noted that a specific topic has not been identified yet, but if anyone would like a discussion on a particular topic they should let the Executive Committee or Senate Coordinator Griffin know about it.

**3.0 Approval of September 9, 2014 Minutes**

Professor Joeckel, School of Natural Resources, moved for approval of the minutes. Professor Vakilzadian, Electrical Engineering seconded the motion. The motion was approved.

**4.0 Associate Vice President for Distance Education and Director of University of Nebraska Online Worldwide Mary Niemiec**

Associate Vice President Niemiec stated that online education is a mode of instruction that uses technology to provide educational opportunities for students who cannot be on campus. She noted that online education students are primarily working adults, although students on campus can take online courses which provides flexibility to their schedules. She reported that in 2010 the University of Nebraska established a central collaborative online education initiative to pull together the collective strength of the four UN campuses. She stated that the key components of the online education program was to advance the brand of the university, to increase enrollment, and to support the sharing of resources efficiently deliver these courses. Associate VP Niemiec pointed out that Marie Barber is the Executive Director for Online Education at UNL and she also serves on the Executive Committee and Steering Committee of Online Worldwide.

Associate VP Niemiec reported that the Online Worldwide website has a received a significant increase in the number of inquiries and has extended the reach of the individual campus websites. She noted that over 16,000 website visits initially came into the Online Worldwide website and then dispersed to the other UN campus websites. She reported that 7% of the inquiries went on to Admission Office websites.

Associate VP Niemiec stated that what courses and programs are being offered by the campuses' Online Worldwide is relevant. She stated that the reason why the university is collaborating the online education courses is because we need to offer these courses and programs in strategic ways in order to be competitive and help students succeed. She noted that while UN is small compared to some schools, together we can get outside of our local region to get more national and international attention for our courses. She pointed out that a distance education learner takes only online classes and the average age is 34, 63% of them are women, and most of them are taking the courses part-time. She stated that the online student has a lot going on in their lives, but online education allows them to continue working on their degrees whether they are in rural Nebraska or a student in the military who gets transferred to different locations frequently.

Associate VP Niemiec reported that collectively we offer 101 programs online, 20 undergraduate programs

and 81 graduate programs. She stated that these students have options available to them that provides them with credentials that can assist them in the job market. For example, she noted that a student can be enrolled at UNO, but can get a minor in business from UNL through Online Worldwide. She pointed out that working with colleagues at the other UN campuses opens up possibilities for students.

Associate VP Niemiec stated that in 2010 a metric for success for Online Worldwide was set with the goal of having a 10% growth in student credit hours. She noted that she makes a report about this every year to the Board of Regents, and for the past two years we have exceeded the metric and exceeded the norm nationally. She pointed out that while nationally the typical growth in credit hours is 8%, we had a 13% increase. She reported that we grew 11% with non-resident students. She stated that while it is unlikely that we can sustain this increase forever, other universities want to know what we are doing to increase these numbers. She stated that over 67,000 credit hours have been generated by strictly distance education students. She noted that 68% of these students are from Nebraska and they are primarily in undergraduate programs, but our reputation is very strong at the graduate level and these programs are being looked at nationally. She reported that in Nebraska there are approximately 300,000 people who have some higher education but no degree. She stated that degree programs are being looked at to see how we can offer programs to these people so they can complete their degree online.

Associate VP Niemiec reported that last year 174,432 student credit hours were generated through online courses and UNL has more online credit hours than the other campuses. She noted that 75% of the generated undergraduate student credit hours were from blended students (they took both on campus courses and online courses). At the graduate level 77% were blended students, but 23% were distance education only students. She stated that the number of distance only students increased by 13%. She reported that 28,000 students across the campuses took an online course and 49% are taking at least one online course.

Associate VP Niemiec reported that the first MOOC course, a health literacy and communication for health professionals course being taught by Professor Denise Britigan of UNMC, will be launched in December on Coursera. She noted that almost 7,400 students are enrolled from 169 countries, 33% of which are emerging countries. She pointed out that this course is listed in the signature track of Coursera. Students will pay \$50 and if they complete the course successfully they will receive a certificate. She stated that the reasoning for this course is because there was a large number of students who were interested in continuing medication education credit. She reported that Dr. Britigan was considering submitting an IRB request so she could research global issues in health literacy. She stated that she can report back next year on how many students have taken the course.

Associate VP Niemiec stated that Director Kech, Director of the Jeffrey Raikes School of Computer Science and Management, is using Coursera in two unique ways. As part of Director Kech's Principles of Finance course he is incorporating two Coursera MOOCs. He has an agreement with Yale University to use various modules of an existing Yale MOOC and students can access the MOOC via a private Coursera website where Dr. Keck will use the MOOC to supplement his course instruction. The students in Dr. Keck's course will enroll in the Signature Track of Corporate Finance Essentials, a MOOC course at the University of Navarra in Pamplona, Spain and they will complete six different modules as a supplement to Dr. Keck's curriculum.

Associate VP Niemiec reported that a university-wide symposium, Innovations in Pedagogy and Technology, will be held in May 2015 and will focus on teaching with technology. She noted that campus conversations have taken place regarding faculty development and on November 4 there will be an event called Collaborative Learning Technologies, also called Campus Conversations, at UNL and will be webcast to the other campuses. Each campus will host an event and those will also be webcast. She stated that she was asked what resources are available at UNL and pointed out that Executive Director Barber and her office are available to help instructors and there are instructional technology design specialists in each of the colleges. She stated that UNL not only has some of the best resource systems available in Nebraska, but also nationally. She reported that there are very talented people who can help and these individuals are very knowledgeable with Adobe and Blackboard.

Professor Archer, School of Natural Resources, asked if students who are enrolled at UNO or UNK take an online course at UNL and if they are counted as a mixed student or an online distance education student. He pointed out that there might be opportunities for the campuses to offer broader sets of courses that individually the campuses might not be able to offer. Associate VP Niemiec responded that all students have an administrative home which is the campus where they applied to and were admitted. She noted that the counted distance education students are those who only take online courses. She stated that students from another campus who take an online course through another campus are seen as a visiting student. The

campus they were admitted to gets the degree head count. Professor Archer asked what proportion of these online courses might fall into this category. Associate VP Niemiec stated that the number is not as significant as you would think, but it has been increasing. Executive Director Barber stated that she does not have the percentage figures with her but she can get them. She stated that there are two groups of students that are involved; some of them fall into a joint category and then there is a group that takes one course at another campus. VP Niemiec pointed out that this spring the Online Worldwide website will allow students to see if there are available seats in an online course from any of the four campuses. She noted that this will allow the student to see if they can take a course through one of the other UN campuses rather than leaving the university to find the course they need.

Professor Joeckel asked what the failure rate for students in online courses. Associate VP Niemiec reported that there is an 80% success rate. Executive Director Barber stated that UNL has looked at the online course completion success rate and it averages at 95-98%. She noted that comparing the grade distribution of online courses with campus courses shows that the grades match pretty well.

Professor Adams, Plant Pathology, pointed out that some faculty members want to do work that will last once they retire, but if a faculty member who has created an online course retires that course is taken off line and cannot be found anywhere making it difficult for someone to recreate the course at a later date. He suggested that the online courses should be stored through the Libraries archives so there is some record of it. Associate VP Niemiec stated that if there is a way to protect curriculum the Libraries will figure this out. She noted that it could be a departmental decision to remove a course.

Professor Farrell, Agricultural Leadership, Education & Communications, asked who decides what would be a good course to develop. Associate VP Niemiec stated that while there are rubrics and standards for distance education courses, it is a campus decision on what courses should be offered. She noted that the courses have to be designed so the students can interact with the faculty member. She pointed out that there needs to be investment into the team development of online courses because teaching is only one part of online courses. She stated that it is important for instructors to work with people who understand the tools that are needed to make an online course successful.

Professor Woodman, School of Biological Sciences, stated that he read that it cost \$170,000 for UNO to offer the first course through Coursera. He asked if this is correct. Associate VP Niemiec reported that the first MOOC on Coursera is from UNMC and cost \$48,000.

Professor Woodman noted that 77% of the UNL online students were blended students. He pointed out that there is going to be a reduction in the number of online courses offered in the spring because of the change in the distribution of the online course revenue at UNL. He asked what the projected enrollment is for the online courses given the reduction in the curriculum. Executive Director Barber stated that the fall enrollment is up 13% for the distance education students only for this fall semester. She reported that for blended students the increase was 20%. She stated that we will have to see what happens with the spring semester. She stated that there will need to be discussions in the colleges and at the campus level if there is a significant reduction in online course enrollment. She noted that part of the goal of UNL is to increase the distance education only students.

Professor Joeckel asked how expectations will unfold in the future. Associate VP Niemiec stated that she does not think we can maintain our high rate of growth in online enrollment. Professor Joeckel asked if the Regents understand that our enrollment rate for online courses will not continue. Associate VP Niemiec stated that she will be speaking to the Regents again in December. She noted that the Regents have asked what the growth metric should be and she informed them that she has met with each campus to ask what their goals are, where they want to go with online education, and to set a metric of where they want to be in five years. Professor Joeckel asked if a quality metric is to be included. VP Niemiec stated that the quality metric is always there.

Professor Vakilzadian asked if the online course from a different campus shows on a student's transcript as a transfer course. Executive Director Barber stated that it shows up like any other course credit, and if it is a University course it is transferred with a grade. She pointed out that it is up to departments to decide whether to accept an online course from another university.

Professor Farrell asked if the Educational Media Unit is used to produce online courses at UNL. Associate VP Niemiec replied that the Unit has been used as a resource for high quality video production. She stated that it is her understanding that the video component of Ed Media will remain, otherwise the services it

provides will have be outsourced.

Associate VP Niemiec thanked the Senate for inviting her to speak. She noted that the one guiding principle that drives her goals, and she hopes others, is what is in the best interest for the students so that they receive a great education.

## **5.0 Committee Reports**

### **5.1 Grading & Examinations Committee Report**

Professor Lee, Chair of the Grading & Examinations Committee, reported that the primary work of the Committee is to serve students with grade option appeals. He noted that the process is handled by each college with a faculty member and college officer, usually an advisor, overseeing the appeals process.

Professor Hay, Southeast Research & Extension Center, pointed out that looking at the data provided in the report it appears that the grades being given are higher than they used to be. Professor Lee stated that this may, in part, be due to the appeals process being handled directly by the colleges which essentially now have a triage program to help students who are having difficulties. He stated that this could be tested at the colleges and the Grading & Examinations Committee could provide the Senate with feedback to see if there is an increase if the Senate wants this information.

Professor Peterson noted that previous reports included data on grade distribution of courses which he found interesting and he would like to see them included again in future reports. Professor Lee stated that he will ask Director of Student Information Services Hawkey to run the distribution figures for next year's report.

Past President Guevara asked what happens with students who want to change their grade option once the semester has ended. Professor Lee stated that students can ask to change their grade option any time after the deadline date. Past President Guevara pointed out that some students may try to change their grading option to try and see if they are going to get a grade better than a C. Professor Lee stated that this does happen, but the appeals officer will examine why the student wants to change from a pass/no pass to a letter grade. He pointed out that some students need a grade to maintain scholarships or to get into graduate school. He noted that each college has a subcommittee that will review the appeal to assess whether they meet the criteria for changing the grading option and whether the student is presenting evidence that meets the criteria.

Professor Rudy, Nutrition & Health Sciences, asked if a student appeals to withdraw from only a single course or whether they seek to withdraw from an entire schedule, especially if there are health issues. Professor Lee responded that both situations happen. He reported that each college appeal committee makes its decision on a case-by-case basis.

### **5.2 Academic Standards Committee**

Associate Director Kerr, Exploratory and Pre-Professional Advising Center, noted that she provides coordination for the Academic Standards Committee which met 27 times this past year to review appeals. She stated that three faculty members attend each time the Committee meets. She reported that 15% of students that were dismissed for academic reasons were reinstated for one additional term. During this term they must meet a certain GPA. She stated that 146 dismissed students made an appeal, 62% of the students were reinstated but 38% were denied. She reported that students can make a second appeal which is reviewed by Associate Vice Chancellor Goodburn who only approved one student for reinstatement. She noted that there was a lot of agreement this past year between the colleges and the Committee regarding the appeals.

### **5.3 Academic Rights and Responsibilities Committee**

President Elect Bender noted that the Senators received the report in their packet and asked for questions. He stated that last semester was an unusually busy semester with several issues that led the ARRC to form special hearing committees. He reported that other issues were resolved informally. He pointed out that the work of the ARRC is confidential.

## **6.0 Unfinished Business**

No unfinished business was discussed.

## **7.0 New Business**

### **7.1 Higher Learning Commission Reaffirmation of Accreditation**

Associate Dean Bellows reported that she, along with Associate Vice Chancellor Goodburn, and Assistant Vice Chancellor Batman, are serving as the accreditation coordinators and wanted to provide the Senate with an overview of the reaffirmation plan and how it will be implemented this fall. She noted that the Higher

Learning Commission (HLC) is our accrediting body. She stated that accreditation is important because it affirms that UNL is providing a quality education, provides valuable feedback on how well we are meeting our goals for student learning, and creates an opportunity to assess, evaluate, and improve our programs and practices.

Associate Dean Bellows stated that UNL's goals for accreditation are: Continuous Improvement, Engagement, Reaffirmation, and Transparency. She stated that the campus community will be kept informed at each stage of the process. She noted that because we have been accredited for the last ten years and have not required any Commission monitoring we will be able to participate in an open pathway model. She pointed out that this process will provide us with a great opportunity to show our strengths. The process falls into three components: (1) the Quality Initiative; (2) a comprehensive evaluation known as the Assurance Review; and (3) the peer-review team report and recommendations. She pointed out that the peer-review team will conduct an on-campus visit in 2016-17. She noted that the last time the accreditation was done was in 2006-07 and the process is significantly different now.

Associate Dean Bellows stated that for the Quality Initiative we have many continuing improvement projects such as implementing the ACE 10 outcomes and the UCARE fair which now involves 40 faculty members and advisors. She stated that the Comprehensive Evaluation component includes an Assurance Filing documenting the extent to which UNL meets Criteria for Accreditation and other expectations such as Federal Compliance requirements and Title IX program responsibilities. There will be a site visit by a peer review team that will conduct a preliminary analysis of UNL's Assurance Filing and the results of the Student Opinion Survey. She stated that there will be a link to evidentiary material which will be submitted online. She noted that the Open Pathway model is designed to reduce the burden of writing a 350 page document. She pointed out that the Assurance Review is specific and focused and we will have to be able to document evidence of student work for it. She reported that the Student Opinion Survey is new. It will ask students fifteen questions. The students will receive an email message with a link for them to take the survey and the Associate Deans, Academic Advisors, and Student Advisors will all work to encourage students to respond to the survey. She stated that the site visit is scheduled for the fall of 2016 and will span three working days. She noted that the peer review team will write a report after its visit and we will have the opportunity to provide comments on the report. She noted that the evaluation component of the Reaffirmation Process is the component that is the most significantly different from our previous accreditation process.

Associate Dean Bellows reported that there are five Higher Learning Commission Criteria that need to be addressed: (1) Mission; (2) Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct; (3) Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources, and Support; (4) Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement; (5) Resources, Planning, and Institutional Effectiveness. She stated that there will be five working groups and she is working with the Steering Committee, which includes Senate President Nickerson, and the Dean's Council to identify people to serve on the working groups. She stated that the final assignments to the working groups will be made soon.

Associate Dean Bellows noted that much has been accomplished already to get us to the point we are now thanks to Academic Affairs Coordinator Joan Giesecke, who mapped the Higher Learning Commission criteria and has collected institutional examples that will be needed for the process.

Associate Dean Bellows reported that key dates of the process will be to convene the working groups this fall, next spring the assurance arguments will be drafted, during the summer and fall next year the assurance arguments will be reviewed and revised, and in the spring of 2016 the campus and community will have the opportunity to review and comment on the arguments.

Associate Dean Bellows noted that everyone on campus might be asked to contribute in some way to the process and it is important to engage the campus early to prepare everyone. She stated that she is meeting with various committees and councils to introduce the process and a focused group discussion will be conducted this fall. She stated that there is a website <http://www.reaffirm2016.unl.edu> about the process and it will be updated regularly to keep the campus informed of the process.

Professor Vakilzadian asked how this process is different from a program accreditation. Associate Bellows pointed out that this process is a campus-wide national accreditation process. Associate VC Goodburn noted that there are approximately 42 different accrediting agencies for the various colleges and departments, but the Higher Learning Commission provides accreditation for the entire campus. She pointed out that if we do not get this accreditation we would lose federal funding. Professor Adams asked if these accrediting agencies are federal agencies. Associate Dean Bellows reported that they are non-profit agencies.

Professor Adams asked how faculty members would indicate their participation in the accreditation process in their yearly evaluation. Associate VC Goodburn pointed out that each college and department has its own evaluation process and can handle it differently. Some might see participation as administrative work while others might consider it as service work. She stated that this would need to be negotiated with department chairs. President Nickerson said that he thinks most departments would count the work as service. He pointed out that the threat of losing all federal funding should make people want to contribute their efforts in the reaccreditation process.

Professor Joeckel asked if there is any idea of how effective or representative the student survey is since it is a new component of the process. He pointed out that all faculty members are aware of how evaluation questions need to be carefully worded so there are no misinterpretations. Associate Dean Bellows reported that she has seen a copy of what the questions might look like, but we will not know for sure what the questions will be until four weeks before the survey is distributed. She stated that the best thing will be to get the word out to the students and explain the importance of filling out the survey. Professor Joeckel suggested that the survey be sent to the faculty as well so they can encourage students to participate. Associate VC Goodburn noted that a national student evaluation is distributed every three years and there will be a distribution of the results in the spring of 2016 that will contain some data about the survey.

Professor Farrell asked to what degree non-tenure track faculty members are involved in the process. Associate Dean Bellows stated that broad representation of the campus will be needed for the reaffirmation process which includes non-tenure track faculty members, staff assistants, and others.

## **7.2 Motion to the Academic Planning Committee from the Faculty of the Architecture Program**

Professor Krug, Architecture, reported that the faculty of the Architecture program drafted a motion after seeing the draft report of the merger of the Architecture College and the College of Fine Arts. He stated it is his understanding that the report will be sent to the Academic Planning Committee next week. The motion reads: "The Architecture Program Faculty has deep concerns regarding the document being forwarded to the Academic Planning Committee for their consideration. We ask that this proposal be tabled until such time, if ever, a more positive proposal can be developed that reflects the spirit, joining of the two colleges was intended to germinate."

The meeting was adjourned at 4:07 p.m. The next meeting of the Faculty Senate will be held on Tuesday, November 4, 2014, at 2:30 p.m. in the City Campus Union, Auditorium. The minutes are respectfully submitted by Karen Griffin, Coordinator, and Tad Wysocki, Secretary.