

MINUTES
November 15, 2023

University of Nebraska – Lincoln
Academic Planning Committee

Members Present: Ankerson, Bloom, Boehm, Button, Cressler, Davis, Doll, Heng-Moss, Hiatt, Hole, Jones, Latta Konecky, Mowat, Theiss-Morse, Tschetter, Vuran, Haake, Gonzales

Members Absent: Clarke, Ourada

Note: These are not verbatim minutes. This is a summary of the discussions at the Academic Planning Committee meeting as corrected by those participating.

1.0 Call

Tschetter called the meeting to order at 3:01 p.m.

2.0 VC Barker – Proposed Reductions to the Office of Diversity and Inclusion

VC Barker provided the APC with the history of how the Office of Diversity and Inclusion was formed based on recommendations made by Halualani and Associates to coordinate UNL’s efforts on diversity and inclusion. He then described the current structure of the Office and how it provides support for the institution. He stated that one of the major focuses of ODI is to address climate issues on the campus and to ensure that everyone’s voice is heard on campus.

VC Barker noted that over the last two years ODI has had some budget reductions. He reported that with the proposed reductions some of the programs currently in the ODI will be moved to the Office of Student Affairs and the ODI will not be able to do things such as conducting exit surveys of faculty and mentoring of faculty members. He stated that the Office has focused on UNL being more visible in community events, but these efforts will need to be considerably reduced. VC Barker reported that cross-community communication, capacity building, and campus climate are still important for campus morale and the Office will continue to focus on these efforts. VC Barker also noted the current budget reduction model is based on a decentralized DEI model where DEI efforts at the unit level would need to be primarily supported and managed at the unit level. ODI’s support would be limited and focused at university-wide enterprise projects/efforts.

Button asked what percentage of ODI’s budget would be lost with the proposed reductions. VC Barker reported that the proposed reductions would be a 50% reduction of ODI’s budget. He pointed out that the Office is trying to get more external funding to help with its work. There are also efforts to mitigate the impact of the reduction by relocating student-focused efforts onto alternative funds in Student Affairs, along with some support from ODI transferring.

Vuran asked how the ODI budget reductions would affect UNL’s ability to get back into the AAU. VC Barker stated that we need to think about, as an institution, how ODI is prioritized across the campus. He noted that we need diverse faculty that will bring a wealth of scholarship across the institution and if we have a decentralized model for diversity and inclusion, we need

to make sure that we have good strategies in place across the campus to ensure that our efforts (i.e., recruitment and retention) continue. He pointed out that if we are not careful, the budget reductions could negatively affect our chances of once again becoming an AAU member.

Bloom noted that of the proposed budget reductions that were recently made public, the most identifiable one has been the reductions to the Office of Diversity and Inclusion. Theiss-Morse stated that reducing ODI's budget gives the appearance that we do not care about diversity and inclusion and is so counterproductive to what we have been doing in recent years. Hole stated that students are most concerned about the reductions to ODI.

Ankerson asked if there is a way the ODI can strategize how it can capitalize on the work that is currently being done across the campus and to be able to enhance these activities after the proposed budget reductions have been made. VC Barker stated that he has thought about how we will need to have more opportunities for people across the campus to come together, centrally, to get more information about diversity and inclusion efforts. He suggested that there could be a symposium that would be attended by those people in the college that are working on diversity and inclusion. He noted that ODI has had some extensive engagement with some of the colleges, but the Office will no longer be able to provide the extensive support it had in the past. He stated that with the change of decentralizing diversity and inclusion efforts, he could end up positioned at a disadvantage in having to be more accessible to the campus and less available to the upper leadership for the strategic planning visioning needed to help us get into the AAU. He stated that ODI is trying to figure out what are the services that are expected from the Office and the Office is trying to create a mechanism that is available for people to convey these expectations.

In response to Ankerson's question about ODI suggesting a fee-for-service model, Barker responded that ODI will have to create a mechanism to carve out time to work specifically with units, which is outside to the suggested decentralized model. Ankerson noted this would be a new model at UNL; Barker agreed and stated a new model is needed as a result of the reduction. Jones stated that she appreciates how VC Barker is thinking about how ODI can work differently and pointed out that the whole campus needs to do this and think about what our key strategies and goals are and how we can reach these goals differently.

3.0 Approval of November 8, 2023 Minutes

Tschetter asked if there were any revisions to the minutes. Hearing none she asked for approval of the minutes. Ankerson moved and Doll seconded approval of the minutes. Motion approved by the APC.

4.0 Budget Reduction Process

Vuran reported that he has summarized the campus feedback that has been received as of the morning of November 13. He stated that there was a substantial amount of feedback that has already been received from faculty, staff, and students. He noted that one student in particular stated that even though they are graduating from UNL, they are no longer considering going to graduate school here because of the reductions. He pointed out that the APC needs to think carefully about the impacts these budget reductions are having on the students and their choices.

Vuran stated that most of the feedback was complaining about the lack of detail that was provided when the proposals were announced by the Chancellor. Many people felt that it was impossible to provide meaningful feedback when it was not clear what was being proposed for reduction. He stated that there were also complaints about the short timeline for the APC to do its work. Ankerson noted that each of the college deans are having a meeting and have communicated to their people about what they have submitted as their proposed reductions for the college. Doll pointed out that many of the campus community will want to ultimately see what all of the proposed cuts will be, not just in their own units. Hole noted that some people are housed in units that don't have access to the proposed documents. Mowat reported that graduate students are not hearing the details of the cuts.

Davis stated that he is hearing the request of the APC members and will see if another approach can be taken to provide information, but he is concerned with the impact of providing this information on the timeline for the APC to give its recommendations. Theiss Morse pointed out that the kind of detail that was provided last spring seemed sufficient. She noted that the lack of detail is causing a lot of distrust with people. Vuran stated that we need more public documents. He stated that he has been receiving questions from reporters and even other APC members about the lack of detail. He pointed out that the distrust is falling on the APC as well and he believes we owe it to the APC members to present a more detailed proposal so the Committee can get more meaningful feedback from the campus community.

Bloom asked why the APC needs to move so quickly on the proposed reductions. VC Zeleny stated that it is a bottom-line financial issue and specifically a cash-based decision. Bloom noted that a lot of these reductions will occur later in the year. He asked what fraction of the proposed reductions is needed to get us through the remainder of the academic year. VC Zeleny reported that the open pool of lines from unfilled positions would help us more quickly than the longer-term reductions.

The APC then went into closed session to address further questions about the proposed reductions and to get more detail from the administrators.

The meeting adjourned at 4:54 p.m. The next meeting of the APC will be on Wednesday, November 22, 2023. The minutes are respectfully submitted by Karen Griffin, Coordinator.