

MINUTES

University of Nebraska – Lincoln Academic Planning Committee

Members Present: Ankerson, Bloom, Button, Clarke, Combs, Cressler, Davis, Gay, Herbin, Heng-Moss, Jemkur, Kopocis, Nelson, Ourada, Russo, Thomas, Tschetter

Members Absent: Boehm, Mueller

Guests: Dean Lance Perez, Professor Witty Sris-an

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

Clarke called the meeting to order at 3:05 p.m.

2.0 Approval of November 6, 2024 and November 20, 2024 Minutes

Clarke asked if there was unanimous approval of the November 6th minutes. The APC approved the minutes.

Clarke asked if there was unanimous approval of the November 20th minutes. The APC approved the minutes.

3.0 Review of the Masters in Artificial Intelligence Proposal (Clarke and Cressler)

Clarke reported that the Masters in Artificial Intelligence program would be purely an online program that is being proposed by the School of Computing. She stated that the program is designed to provide graduate level education and training in AI and the program would fill a need in the state's workforce. She noted that the strength of the program is that it would be available to working, non-traditional students and it would equip aspiring professionals.

Clarke stated that the proposal nicely lays out two different paths, one for incoming students that do not have a computing background and those that already have computing courses. She noted that for students who have prior computing courses, the program would be for five semesters. For those students without computing backgrounds the program would be for six semesters as they would have to take computer courses. She pointed out that the proposal outlines the learning outcomes, identifies eight specific courses and identifies additional electives which would combine for a 30-hour master program.

Clarke stated that she and Cressler had some questions about some of the courses that would be offered since they were previously taught as special topics, but Sris-an stated that these courses would be modified for the program. Clarke reported that there was also some concern about the structure of the comprehensive exam but that was clarified and the issues of whether there is a potential overlap with the master's in data science were addressed.

Clarke asked Sris-an to talk about instructional resources and how the teaching would be managed with each course. Sris-an pointed out that the way the courses were set up was done so students can take them in any order and they can start the program in any semester, including summer. He stated that there is not a prerequisite chain of courses that students must take before taking other courses and it is conceivable that the program can be completed in a little less than two years. He noted that every student can catch one of the core courses because they will be offered more frequently to allow students enrolling in the program at different times to complete the program without delays. He reported that there will be a faculty member who will act as a coordinator and will make sure that everything is moving on schedule. He pointed out that the proposers talked with AVC Shriner to see how he envisioned the program working.

Cressler noted that every one of the courses being taught online, which will be for half a semester, will also be taught in person for a full semester and he asked how these courses will compare with each other. Sris-an pointed out that the department will maintain the normal sequence of in-person courses because these are popular courses with other students and they have good enrollment. He stated that the main AI courses will be offered once a year. He reported that there are 13 pre-tenured professors who will teach some of the online courses which will help fill the teaching needs.

Clarke asked how the program could potentially evolve to include AI training for other disciplines that are foundational to AI such as mathematics and statistics. She noted that different disciplines on campus are also engaged in AI. Sris-an noted that the data science degree is already in progress and will be co-authored by mathematics and computing and these programs would have precedent in the degree. He stated that the School of Computing is planning to expand the program as it progresses if there is the demand. He pointed out that there is a plan to review the curriculum each year and that it is important for SoC to keep up with the data because the program will continue to evolve. He stated that there is a desire to get the program up and running to attract students which will help keep the program fundable and viable.

Clarke asked if there would be opportunities for other master's programs outside of the computing professional space to be able to have AI programs in their discipline but without duplication of SoC's program. Sris-an pointed out that any program that deals with statistics or math would have their own path.

Heng-Moss stated that she views this proposal as an opportunity to capture this program, and there is the ability to offer options or tracks at graduate levels for other specializations pointing out that the data science program established how we can work with multiple units from across the campus. Perez stated that he appreciates this and noted that AI is a rapidly expanding field and that there will be a number of programs coming forward in this area and he hopes that there will be more interdisciplinary collaboration.

Ankerson stated that she expresses her strong support for the program. Heng-Moss moved for approval. Motion seconded by Tschetter and approved by the APC.

4.0 Review of the Proposal to Create the Artificial Intelligence Graduate Certificate (Clarke and Cressler)

Cressler reported that the graduate certificate is intended to be an extension of the master's in computer science for existing students. However, the program will be available online once the online courses are developed. He noted that it is a 15-credit hour program, and the learning objectives make sense and nicely harmonize with the masters in artificial intelligence program.

Clarke asked Sris-an about the current CSCE 411/811 course and if students who have taken the course at the 411 levels would be required to take the 811 level or would they take additional credits from other courses. Sris-an noted that the program is for 15-credit hours but if the student took the CSCE 411 course the 811 course would be waived and another related course could be taken.

Clarke pointed out that this certificate is designed for computing professionals and suggested that it would be better for the students and the department if the title of the program was more specific to computing. She noted that AI is happening in many disciplines and in order to give UNL the ability to offer AI certificate programs in these other disciplines it would be helpful to have a more defined title. Sris-an stated that this is a valid point and suggested that the name could be changed, perhaps to Computational Artificial Intelligence. Heng-Moss pointed out that since the proposed proposal needs approval all the way up to the CCPE, we need to have the ability to offer other graduate certificates in different domains so a more specific title to the program would be needed in order to leave a clear path for others to pursue an AI certificate in their discipline. Gay agreed. Ankerson pointed out that having a more specific name is also helpful to those marketing the graduate certificate program. Perez stated that he is supportive of making the name more specific.

Heng-Moss moved to approve the graduate certificate proposal with the understanding that the School of Computing will create a more defined name for the program. Tschetter seconded the motion. Motion was approved by the APC.

5.0 Privacy and Security Concerns with Microsoft's AI Copilot

Clarke reported that she received information about the implementation of Microsoft's AI Copilot. She pointed out this program would allow Microsoft to scan all your Word and Excel documents to help develop their AI tool. She stated that currently it is set up that if you do not want this to happen, you must opt out of it. She stated that the U.S. House of Representatives has informed everyone that they must opt out of the program because of security concerns. She stated that she is concerned that people here should be notified about this so they can opt out of it. She noted that she asked Interim CIO Haugerud to attend the meeting, but he was unable to attend. Davis stated that we can follow up about this with CIO Haugerud.

6.0 Campus Strategic Planning (Davis)

Clarke stated that in light of President Golds' message about strategic plans at the system level, she wanted to get an update on UNL's strategic plan. Davis reported that the

process that President Gold laid out in his message is slightly different than what we have experienced in the past. He noted that previously, the system would create a high-level strategy and the campuses were fairly independent to create their own strategies such as our N2025 plan. He pointed out that this time we need to make sure that we have integrated strategic plans.

Davis noted that in President Gold's message there were five pillars or goals that were fairly broad. The President's Council discussed these goals which are about pursuing excellence in teaching and learning, research and creative activity, partnerships and engagement for culture and environment, and stewardship and effectiveness. He noted that the Chancellor was asked last week for feedback to the President about what strategies could support the pillars as we move forward. He reported that some input was provided, most of which was drawn from the N2025 plan and some things that are currently happening on campus now. He said that he expects that the campuses will get some sort of outline or structure around the strategic plan in the coming weeks.

Davis stated that the pillars identified at the system level will have strategies underneath them and then there will be campus level initiatives that would help advance the strategies. He reported that we are nearing the point that the Chancellor is going to ask for input and his intent would be to come back to the APC to talk about initiatives or strategies that would fit together. He pointed out that there will be metrics used that tie us with UNMC and a software program called Vision Sync, which has been broadly used across UNMC, will probably be used more broadly at UNL. He stated that he has talked with Cressler and the APC's long-range planning committee briefly and plans to get back to them about strategic planning.

Davis reported that the intent is to have an event in 2025 that would allow us to reflect on what we accomplished this past year and where are areas that need more work. He noted that the feedback and engagement from the event would help us determine our strategies that we can then tie into the system strategy. He pointed out that if you look at the President's message it is clear that there are some priorities that are identified: readmittance into the AAU, keeping talent here in Nebraska through the Presidential Scholars program, harnessing the power of AI to address the needs of the workforce in the State. He stated that going forward he believes we will see a much more integrated sort of system-level approach.

Gay asked if consultants were going to be hired to help do this work. Davis stated that he does not believe consultants were hired at the system level. He pointed out that he believes the intent of the system is to move fairly quickly and to perhaps align some of the budget process with the strategic plan.

Bloom asked if these five pillars and priorities were developed by a few people sitting in a room together and perhaps getting some feedback from the Chancellors. He asked where the campus input is for what the system is trying to do. Davis stated that there will absolutely be an opportunity for the campus to help shape the strategic plan and initiatives. He stated that in the end he believes that the strategy will look like a structure

that the campuses would then fill in with the initiatives. Bloom pointed out that the structure seems to be created by someone who has very little experience with our campus which he finds concerning.

7.0 APC Representatives Needed for APRs: Animal Science (April 28-May 2) and Agricultural Economics (MAY 5-9)

Clarke noted that APC representatives were needed for the two upcoming APRs. She asked for volunteers. Gay stated that he would serve as the APC rep on the Animal Science APR and Tschetter volunteered to serve as a backup rep if needed.

Clarke stated that she would do the Agricultural Economics APR.

8.0 Reports from EVC Ankerson, VC Boehm, Interim VC Jones Ankerson

Ankerson noted that this is her last meeting pointing out that she has been a part of this group over a period of many years, as dean and as EVC. Clearly there has been a great amount of work accomplished regarding academic programs that she is proud of and proud of the collaborative nature of this group. This is a group where it is vitally important that the members speak up. She stated that she has appreciated the perspectives and respect for others' views as we come to agreement.

She noted that the APC spoke two meetings ago about the importance of CCPE thresholds, and the reality of the Work toward CCPE guidelines and next steps, there are options available for the master's programs including non-admitting masters, dual degrees (where PhD students are simultaneously enrolled in the masters; and receive the master's degree after a certain point). She noted that the APC has also implemented a number of accelerated masters paths, not to bolster degrees that are underperforming, but rather to provide opportunities for students coming in with advanced credits to begin working toward a master's degree in the undergraduate curriculum. And to achieve the bachelor's and master's degree in 5 years, thereby shortening the time to degree.

She stated that we do have a number of programs that are below the thresholds, and many have some complexity to them in terms of work that is currently occurring in terms of merges and reimagining degrees. In some cases, you have already seen and approved elimination of degrees which are moving forward to the next steps with the Board of regents and the CCPE for final steps. Our deans are working with units to come to resolution on the underperforming degree programs, and you will be seeing additional actions coming forward to the APC.

She stated that her wish is for each of you to have a successful end of semester, and wonderful holiday season. She said that she knows the academic mission will be in good hands with Mark Button serving as the Interim Executive Vice Chancellor for UNL beginning in January.

Nelson

Nelson noted that previously she had reported on the research expenditure numbers as an institution but pointed out that the NSF HERD survey rankings has us as 55th in the nation in terms of research expenditures. She stated that this is a result of combining our collective productivity at the University of Nebraska, pointing out that it includes metrics from UNMC and

the system-wide Institutes that report up through the President's office. She stated that for Federal Research Expenditures we ranked 63rd. She stated that you can see the full list of the rankings at <https://nces.nsf.gov/surveys/higher-education-research-development/2023>. She noted that the federal research expenditures include USDA funding, but the AAU does not recognize this funding. She stated that a press release should be forthcoming soon about our improved rankings.

Nelson reported that our last faculty connector for this calendar year will be held on December 10th from 5:00-7:00 p.m. She encouraged everyone and their colleagues to attend the connector which will be held in Morrill Hall.

The meeting adjourned at 4:11 p.m. The next meeting of the APC will be on Wednesday, January 29, 2025. The minutes are respectfully submitted by Karen Griffin, Coordinator.