

**MINUTES**  
**March 20, 2024**

**University of Nebraska – Lincoln**  
**Academic Planning Committee**

**Members Present:** Ankerson, Bloom, Boehm, Button, Cressler, Doll, Heng-Moss, Jones, Latta Konecky, Minter, Mowat, Ourada, Russo, Theiss-Morse, Tschetter, Vuran

**Members Absent:** Clarke, Davis

Guests: Jennifer Ryan, Bertrand Clarke, Witty Srisa-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.

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**1.0 Call**

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

**2.0 Business Analytics Program Proposal**

Vuran noted that he was turning the meeting over to Tschetter as he had a conflict of interest with the proposal. Tschetter then asked for a motion to discuss the proposal. Russo moved and Cressler seconded the motion for discussion and the APC approved the motion.

Tschetter reported that she serves on the University Undergraduate Curriculum Committee (UUCC) as the APC representative and attended the meeting where the UUCC voted on SCMA 453, the core course that was pending for the Business Analytics program. She stated that the UUCC approved the course and felt that the prerequisites for STAT 485 were excessive for the students in the Business Analytics program.

Clarke stated that he has a number of concerns about the program proposal. He noted that many of the program courses overlap with Statistics courses. He stated that not only does SCMA 453 overlap with STAT 485, but also with STAT 101, 151, 251 and the ECON 215 course is equivalent to STAT 218. He stated that the prerequisite argument is weak and questioned what is going to be done about departments that teach outside of their discipline, particularly given the budget situation we are facing. He stated that a STEM designation should not be allowed for this program noting that employers would be disappointed to find that the graduates from the program in fact do not have STEM training and a true STEM student would outperform students graduating from the Business Analytics program.

Clarke stated that a principle that needs to be considered now and in the future with developmental teaching units is how to avoid overlap of courses. As an example, he noted that an agreement was reached between the Agricultural Economics department and Statistics. He pointed out that while agricultural economists do a lot of work that is statistical, the goal of the courses they teach are to understand the economy of the agricultural sector so they would not really be teaching statistics. He said that what was agreed upon with Ag Econ is that they would

use a Statistics' regression course to meet the needs of the Ag Econ program. Doll asked why this model wouldn't work for the Business Analytics program. Clarke stated that knowing what data needs to be collected and what decision you want to make is considered an experimental design course which Statistics already has, but he pointed out that he did not know what the business content of the design course would be since that is not his area of expertise. Ryan pointed out that a fundamental field of business analytics is linear programming, integer programming, and dynamic programming and all of these methods help to formulate the decision problem. She noted that you must understand the problem itself to understand the objectives and know the constraints that govern your decision making.

Ryan pointed out that Supply Chain Management and Analytics had an undergraduate minor in analytics before 2014 which predates the undergraduate Statistics program. She noted that Business Analytics is a designated field that has been established at other universities and it is fundamentally different from Statistics pointing out that the field is not just about statistical analysis but how that analysis is used to make decisions within the field.

Boehm asked if ECON 215 is similar to STAT 218. Ryan stated that ECON 215 is more math oriented but STAT 218 can be a substitute, although this does not happen very often. Clarke pointed out that if we want to achieve budgetary efficiency departments need to stay within their own field to teach. Ryan noted that it is not always so clear cut and something like machine computing is often taught in a different context for specific disciplines. Russo stated that statistics are used in many fields but in very applied contexts that are specific to the problems for that field. She said that an example is optimal control theory which is clearly mathematics, but it is also fundamental in engineering. However, every math course does not cover all the bases in engineering.

Theiss-Morse stated that her concern with the proposal is why the Business College didn't jump on board with the Data Science major when it was being proposed. Ryan noted that this is addressed in the proposal and pointed out that there are over 100 minors in Business Analytics, and she does not believe they have an interest in data analytics because they are really separate fields.

Srisa-an reported that members of his department reviewed the proposal and did not feel that it was a problem for the School of Computing, noting that the database course is taught differently. He stated that the proposal was also discussed with Dean Button, and he did not feel there was any problem with overlap with the proposed program.

Heng-Moss pointed out that Bellevue University has a similar program in business and science. Ryan stated that the proposal was benchmarked against other universities and doesn't see Bellevue's program as competition for UNL. Heng-Moss wondered if the proposal might hit a roadblock with the CCPE because of the Bellevue program. Ryan pointed out that she believes CCPE will be looking at the number of minors in Business Analytics and the demand for students with a degree in this field. She stated that she can get numerous letters from employers who support the need for the program.

Jones asked if the proposal was not approved, would we see the 110 students matriculate to Data Science or Statistics or whether they would remain in the Business college. Ryan stated that she does not think the students would switch because they were admitted as business students. Tschetter noted that the UUCC discussed this issue and felt that there were really no other programs for these students.

Ourada stated that one of the ways that UNL needs to rethink itself is how to be accessible to people who want higher education at a higher level, but if a person isn't good enough at math, perhaps we need to provide something else for these students that will work for them. She stated that we need to look at who we can serve so they can then in turn serve the greater community which is why she believes this is an attractive proposal.

Mowat stated that we have the uniqueness where all students take some introductory courses in departments such as English or Mathematics but then they move into specific more applied programs. She asked if there was a way students would take an introductory course and then the second follow-up course is taken within the student's college where it would be more applied to the student's major. Jones stated that she sees a day when you could have a fundamental core course that's taught and which is maybe two credit hours, and then there is a credit hour where the students would break into their disciplinary boundaries and the application of the information from the introductory course would be applied to the student's discipline they are majoring in. She stated that she thinks this is absolutely something that we could strive for. Ankerson stated that this was being looked at in the College of Architecture and she believes that this will be considered in the future. Boehm stated that he does not think there are any problems of being more applicable and believes that we will have to follow this model where the core is solid and then allow students to engage in more specific courses.

Boehm asked if the Business College had the opportunity to be a part of the Data Science program. Button stated they chose not to pursue this path in part because of the level of mathematics that was required, but he could see this happening in the future. Heng-Moss agreed but noted that part of the question is where are our opportunities to take the expertise that we have collectively so we can work together or separately. She stated that she thinks we could ask for some stronger pieces around the duplication of courses and how many majors will come from the program. Jones pointed out that we are addressing a need from our business communities and while the door remains open for the program to join the Data Science program, we want to be careful that we address the business community.

Cressler noted that the proposal has a good description of the majors and would particularly attract international students. He pointed out that a strong argument is made that they will have a significant number of majors.

Tschetter asked the APC to vote on the proposal which was approved by the Committee.

### **3.0 Approval of February 21, 2024 Minutes**

Vuran asked if there was a motion to approve the minutes. Doll moved and Russo seconded approval of the minutes. Vuran asked if there were any revisions. Hearing none he noted that the minutes were approved unanimously.

#### **4.0 Proposal to Delete the U.S. Legal Studies LLM in the College of Law**

Vuran noted that the proposal to delete the U.S. Legal Studies LLM program came from the Law College and asked if there was a motion to approve the proposal. Heng-Moss moved, and Latta Konecky seconded, approval of the proposal. The motion was approved by the APC.

#### **5.0 Proposal to Delete Mathematics MScT Degree**

Vuran stated that the proposal to delete the Mathematics MScT degree came from the Department of Mathematics. He asked for a motion to approve the proposal. Ankerson moved and Mowat seconded the motion to delete the program. Motion approved by the APC.

#### **6.0 Reports from EVC Ankerson, VC Boehm, Interim VC Jones**

##### Ankerson

Ankerson reported that travel requests, expense reporting and approvals are moving from Concur to Firefly and beginning Feb. 29, University of Nebraska faculty and staff can use the new travel application in Firefly. The goal is to create a more streamlined and user-friendly process for faculty and staff when it comes to travel and expense reporting. The move to Firefly – an interface most employees are already familiar with – makes the process of submitting travel requests and expense reports similar to submitting a leave request. Bloom pointed out that he does not think that Firefly is a mobile app which will require travelers to have to photocopy their receipts. Ankerson noted that she has reached out to VC Zeleny to ask if there was a plan for communicating the information to the campuses. She noted that he has been encouraging ITS to communicate with the campuses when the change will be occurring.

With Trev Alberts leaving UNL, you may be wondering about the Memorial Stadium Project, and everything associated with it. With the Priority President Candidate and a new Athletic Director both announced this morning, we will determine how to move forward effectively and work with the President's office to design experiences for the priority presidential candidate to be on campus to listen and learn about UNL. To quote a great leader among us, Sherri Jones, "*what is our opportunity moving forward?*" Certainly, in serving as Provost, Jeff Gold has had the opportunity to learn about academic areas of the campuses. Tschetter asked who hires the Athletics Director. Ankerson stated that currently it would be the President, or in this case the Interim President. Vuran noted that with Provost Gold holding several different positions, will searches be conducted for the positions he currently occupies? Ankerson stated that we will have to see what Central Administration decides to do.

We still have nearly a month to go in the legislative session and feel optimistic the DEI bill and the tenure bill will not advance. They didn't make it out of committee, and there are still a number of priority bills that have not been addressed yet.

In 2001, Henry Cordes with the Omaha World Herald wrote a series of published articles about UNL, and part of the series title was "confronting mediocrity." Cordes has let us know he is authoring a follow-up, and the first could be published as early as this weekend – we'll see it with all the other university news. He has interviewed Interim President Chris Kabourek and Chancellor Bennett. His first series was less than complementary about UNL; we have had many accomplishments since that time but in many ways.

- UNL’s retention rates are increasing, and graduation rates are the strongest they have ever been. Over the last 5 years, retention from first to second year has increased 3.1 percentage points and the four-year graduation rate (students who begin at UNL as first-time freshmen and graduate from UNL four years later) has increased 8.4 percentage points. Over the last 10 years, that four-year graduation rate has increased 16.9 percentage points. These increases are the result of a series of strategic actions over the years designed to specifically increase degree completion and close equity gaps.
  - In 2022, UNL launched an Academic Navigator Team to help increase degree completion and close equity gaps for at-promise scholars.
  - In 2019, UNL created a custom online degree planner to help Huskers achieve their academic goals and plan their path to graduation by ensuring they have a plan to complete all appropriate requirements for graduation. Students work one-on-one with their advisor to build a personalized multi-semester degree plan. The planner has been so successful that UNL is investing in Stellic, a next generation degree management tool, to boost retention and degree completion even further.
  - In 2019, UNL created Husker Hub, a “one-stop” office that helps students to handle the business of being a Husker. Resources include the gamut from financial issues, student bills, FAFSA, University Registrar, and more; all designed to remove barriers to students' successful continuation.
  - In 2019, UNL centralized its teaching and learning resources into the Center for Transformative Teaching. The CTT was a key partner during the pandemic, creating a robust set of workshops and online resources to help faculty and students with online teaching and learning.
  - UNL is part of the Promoting At-promise Student Success (PASS) research project through the University of Southern California Pullias Center for Higher Education in partnership with other NU campuses. This research describes common elements of a validating campus culture and strategies that faculty and staff can use to support undergraduates’ persistence, degree completion, and career development, particularly those who have been historically underserved.

Button asked what we are doing with having our own public response since we are aware that the article will be coming out. Ankerson reported that the Director of Communications Jim Coll has been gathering talking points about student successes and the issue was raised at the leadership council meeting about how deans might think about their successes from their own colleges and units. She stated that some talking points have been provided and some of our successes have been highlighted in Nebraska Today, but she does not know what other means of communications have been made. Jones noted that she has been providing talking points and data about the great research work that is being done at the university.

Ankerson stated that we are in the midst of reviewing tenure and promotion cases and it is so gratifying to see the incredible work of our faculty. She looks forward to the May 7 Tenure & Promotion Celebration!

Support for professorships and chairs allows us to attract and retain the very best educators, researchers, and scholars. We are also in the midst of the annual stewardship process, where we

ask each faculty member with a fellowship, professorship, chair, deanship, and the like to write a letter of gratitude to the donor – highlighting the impact of the support. Those requests will come through your deans' offices.

### Jones

Jones reported that the State Museum has finally reopened after the completion of delayed maintenance work. She noted that there is a new Joel Sartore exhibit that she encouraged people to see and pointed out that there will be many K-12 students visiting the museum which serves as the open door to the campus.

Jones stated that the University of Nebraska Press recently published the book *Continental Reckoning* which has won the Columbia University's 2024 Bancroft Prize in American History and the 2024 Spur Award. She noted that she is very excited about the work that the University Press is doing and what they are focusing on.

Jones reported that we are getting information on several Centers of Biomedical Research Excellence (COBRE) applications noting that these are great priorities for us, and she is feeling positive that they will be awarded. She stated that the Consortium of Social Science Associations ranked UNL number 56 for social behavioral science and federal research expenditures noting that we are ranked ahead of Iowa, Purdue, and Illinois.

Jones stated that we have a very positive trajectory where research is concerned noting that for fiscal year 23, we are up 15% in federal research expenditures from 2022, and our total awards are up 7.6%, our total expenditures are up 7.6%, and our awards are up 22% from fiscal year 2022. She stated that she wants to keep the momentum moving forward and she has been meeting with the deans to have conversations about the AAU metrics and gathering strategies for what we might do as a campus both in the short-term and long-term to continue making improvements in our metrics. She reported that the strategies she has heard about fall into three categories: shaping the team, shaping our practices and processes, and shaping our infrastructure. She noted that one of the questions that came from the deans was who at UNL produces 80% of our AAU metrics so she looked at the federal research expenditures and at the college level the College of Arts & Sciences has almost 40% of our research expenditures, IANR has another 30%, and Engineering has another 20%. However, if you go down to the unit level, you will see units from across the spectrum contributing to the research expenditures with Physics & Astronomy leading the way.

Jones stated that if you look at the book metrics Arts & Sciences accounts for 51% of the books, followed by the College of Education and Human Sciences. She stated that Engineering and IANR add another 11% but if you look at the metrics by units you see a completely different set of departments with English leading the way. She noted that the point is that everyone needs to contribute to the campus-wide effort to improve our metrics and stated that she wants to lend her support to the College of Arts & Sciences because without it being a strong college we are not going to make the improvements that we need in our metrics. She wanted to thank everyone who is doing their part.

### Boehm

Boehm reported that it is National Agriculture week and stated that everyone should thank the farmers for all of their hard work. He noted that IANR has put together information sheets for every single unicameral member and shared it with the Ag Builders Association highlighting the positive work that IANR and the University is doing. He stated that Governor Pillen and many others were in attendance on Innovation Campus for the Governor to sign a proclamation declaring the week as Agriculture Week in Nebraska.

Boehm noted that 33 colleagues from IANR are up for promotion and/or tenure and their files have been forwarded to Chancellor Bennett for approval.

Boehm reported that Congress has passed the minibus for Agriculture Appropriations bill bringing the total appropriations for the USDA National Center for Resilient and Regenerative Precision Agriculture to \$56 million. He noted that groundbreaking for the Center on Innovation Campus is scheduled for May 6.

Boehm stated that Heng-Moss led the IANR's second in a series of meetings with Omaha agriculture leadership companies. He reported that Professor Kate Brooks will become the permanent head for Agricultural Economics and there are searches being conducted for the head of Food, Science & Technology, and the head for Statistics. He noted that the Executive Director for Nebraska LEAD is stepping down so there will be a search to fill this position.

Boehm reported that another book being released from the University of Nebraska Press is The Nebraska Sandhills which was originally published in 1989 but has been updated and includes photographs by Michael Forsberg. He noted that the Sandhills encompass over 20,000 square miles and is the largest stabilized dune field in the Western Hemisphere and the largest intact mixed-grass prairie left on the continent.

## **7.0 Other Business**

Mowat reported that there will be an inaugural Graduate and Professional Student event on April 5<sup>th</sup> which will include a showcase and social. She noted that over 70 people have already sent in their RSVP that they plan to attend, and GSA is hoping to have nearly 200 participants. She stated that attendees will not only be from UNL, but also UNO and UNMC. She stated that the graduate students will be discussing their research but also will have the ability to socialize with other graduate students within the University system.

Vuran reported that he recently learned from an alumnus that he and all of the other alumni were going to lose their Husker email address. He stated that this is a major mistake that the University is making noting that he still has an email address from Georgia Tech where he graduated. He pointed out that the argument that it creates an increased cyber security risk and increases costs technically do not make sense and retaining email addresses for our alumni enables up to get updated information on what they are doing and their successes as well as being able to reach out them for donations. Jones reported that an analysis was conducted on the proportion of alumni who still use their Husker email address and the result was that the number using it was extremely small. She suggested speaking with CIO Tuttle about the decision and to see if there could be alternatives for those alumni that are still using the email address.

The meeting adjourned at 4:46 p.m. The next meeting of the APC will be on Wednesday, April 3, 2024. The minutes are respectfully submitted by Karen Griffin, Coordinator.