

**November 6, 2024**  
**MINUTES**

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

**Members Present:** Ankerson, Bloom, Boehm, Button, Combs, Cressler, Gay, Herbin, Heng-Moss, Jemkur, Jones, Kopocis, Ourada, Russo, Thomas, Tschetter

**Members Absent:** Clarke, Davis, Mueller

**Guests:**

**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**

Cressler called the meeting to order at 3:02 p.m.

**2.0 Approval of October 23, 2024 Minutes**

Cressler asked if there were any revisions to the minutes. Bloom asked for a sentence he said be removed. The APC then approved the minutes.

**3.0 Proposal to Create a Masters in Artificial Intelligence**

Ankerson reported that she is very much in favor of this proposal and feels it is timely and needed in our portfolio. Cressler noted that he and Clarke have been communicating with Dr. Bachman, Director Graduate Student Support & Associate Registrar, about some of the courses in the proposal not having received approval yet. He stated that there are also some other questions about the proposal and its involvement with other programs. He stated that the normal process is to have two people review the proposal and stated that he and Clarke are willing to review the proposal.

Heng-Moss asked if she is correct that each of the courses in a program proposal do not need to be approved before the proposal is submitted. Ankerson pointed out that it is not necessary to have all new courses approved prior to the new degree program approval; multiple examples exist of this notably the emerging media arts program proposal was approved without each new course being approved. Cressler asked if approving proposals with courses that have not been approved is a recent practice. Ankerson noted that it is not a recent practice, however the APC had robust discussion about this last year. Heng-Moss asked if approval for these programs that include courses that have not yet been approved will be accepted by the Provost Office. The Provost Office has not raised a flag about courses that have not been approved or created yet.

Regarding the required degree portfolio, Russo questioned whether the proposers have something particular in mind that will assess if the learning outcomes are achieved and if more specificity in the proposal would be appropriate. She also noted that the proposal mentions that the existing staff will be able to handle current and projected students but the proposal states that

there is an expectation that in a couple of years there could be 100 students in the program. She questioned whether additional staff will be hired to support the program with this large of an enrollment.

Cressler stated that he and Clarke hope to have their review of the proposal ready for the November 20<sup>th</sup> meeting.

#### **4.0 Review of Entomology APR (Ourada)**

Ourada reported that the review team for the Entomology department APR was very auspicious and was a good blend of people. She stated that the faculty and staff of the department are dedicated to education and research and the self-study document was well prepared and posed some questions about recruiting and retaining faculty and staff. She stated that the meetings were well-organized and collegial and the external review team managed meetings with individuals from the unit who made a request to meet with the team.

Ourada stated that the review team recommendations included that three key positions (systematics, IPM, and an area to address emerging initiations) needed to be returned to the department. Also, the review team recommended a comprehensive review of the department's BS, online MS, and resident graduate programs and suggested that there needs to be more in-person instruction for resident students, particularly in the MS program, and that the vibrant Insect Science undergraduate degree should be maintained. The team also suggested formalizing and equalizing mentorships for all groups: students, faculty and staff, and that there needs to be clarity of communications at all levels.

Ourada reported that opportunities for the Entomology department include empowering the recently established space and resource committee to address issues creatively, reducing redundancies through cross-listing or sharing courses with allied departments to streamline programs and reduce teaching demands. She noted that department affiliates have the potential to contribute to teaching and extension needs. She pointed out that the team also recommended that there be a reassessment of shared versus single office space.

Ourada stated that the review team felt that the department's signature program areas and strategic initiatives are threatened by the inability to replace tenure track positions. Furthermore, deferred facility maintenance issues present economic risks that may manifest in the future and the uncertainty with their budget limits the department's ability to plan. She reported that the lack of tenure track faculty expertise in systematic entomology presents an existential threat to all department missions, signature areas, and potential to address emerging initiatives. She noted that limited space and access to specialized laboratories also threatens the department, and there is low morale in the department due to inequities in workloads, uncertainty about job security for specialty track faculty, low salaries for graduate students, technicians, and specialty track faculty.

Ourada reported that the review team recommended the following areas for improvements: formal and consistent onboarding processes for faculty, staff, students and postdocs; communicating about available employee resources; improving clarity regarding service expectations to minimize workload inequities and confusion; provide student preparation for TA responsibilities; providing needed information to new members of the department during

onboarding; providing ample time for new teaching faculty to prepare for their courses; develop formal mentoring of new faculty to increase their chances of success; establish formal processes by which promotion/promotion and tenure committees provide faculty with guidelines and written documentation to be included in the annual review.

Ourada noted that strengths of the department include that there is a high level of trust at all levels, there is a strong culture of collaboration, and there are multiple communication tools and modalities. She pointed out that the Entomology department is highly integrated across all land grant missions and members demonstrate a clear understanding/respect for the research, extension, outreach, and teaching efforts of their colleagues.

Ourada stated that the APR was done well and there was no need for a follow-up hearing.

Tschetter asked if members of the department were able to meet separately with the review team upon request. Ourada stated that they were, but she was barred from attending these meetings because the review team chair thought having her or the other internal UNL faculty member present would prevent people from sharing their concerns.

Gay noted that there was concern in the report about maintaining the viability of the insect science program at the university level. Ourada stated that the BS in insect science program has low enrollment although there seems to be some increase. Cressler asked if the department has plans to grow this program. Ourada stated that she has heard that they are growing the program. Heng-Moss pointed out that the program has not met the CCPE threshold of seven graduates per year. She noted that very few institutions have stand-alone entomology programs and are usually tied to other science-based programs.

Combs asked at what level and place in the process is there a requirement of how some of the areas of improvement will be addressed, or whether this was a separate part of the process. Boehm noted that the department writes a response to the external review team's report and the department response in IANR goes to the Dean of CASNR, Dean of Nebraska Extension, and the Dean of Agricultural Research for a review, after which a report is written to the department and the feedback is sent to him as Vice Chancellor. He stated that the departments must develop a strategic plan in partnership with the deans and VC's office.

Bloom asked if the three tenure-track positions will be returned to the department. Boehm reported that two of the positions have been returned to the department. He pointed out that the department must look at their short-term and long-term goals in order to advance the department and they need to have communal conversations about what positions are core and need to be filled, and whether there are some positions that are no longer relevant and should not be filled. He reported that the lines that are no longer considered strategic would get returned to a central pool where they would be distributed in order to advance the Institute.

Heng-Moss noted that the entomology department had five retirements in the last few years and one of the positions that was returned was to fill a position which serves Extension and research broadly. She stated that the other position was to cover a core area of expertise for the online

master's program where students pay out-of-state full tuition. Boehm noted that there are 61 students in the online program.

Ourada suggested that consideration should be given to standardizing the APR process. She noted that providing breaks for the review team members and having most of the meetings located in one building would be helpful. Ankerson suggested sending these recommendations to AVC Marks, who coordinates the APRs. Bloom pointed out that there are written guidelines for the APRs, but Tschetter stated that they should be revised. Ourada stated that it would be helpful for the review team to have some guidelines on how they can interact with the units. Button stated that he agrees with Tschetter that the APR Guidelines should be updated, particularly in the procedural and organizational areas of the document. Jones agreed with Button and stated that she thinks we ask the review team to respond to too many questions and for us to think about the questions that we ask and what exactly we are expecting from the review teams in such a short time as are with us. Bloom noted that the Guidelines do have an expiration date of every ten years, but the APC can certainly work on revising them earlier. He pointed out that there used to be more time allotted to the APR process which allowed for more questions to be answered. He stated that there are wide swaths of this university that do not undergo APRs, so this committee does not get to see what happens in the accreditation process for these units and as a result we lose the shared governance aspect. He pointed out that we don't see either the engineering or business programs accreditation because they don't go through an APR process.

Jones stated that she would like to see the APRs be utilized more fully to look at our future research or where investments may need to be made. Cressler questioned what role the APR could play when we are dealing with budget deliberations. Bloom pointed out that some colleges have their own accreditation organization so the APC does not get to hear about how those units were reviewed. Gay asked if the university mandates that an external review team, whether it is for an APR or accreditation of a college or department, must be conducted. Bloom stated that he does not know if this is a written requirement, but historically if a program has a national accreditation process, then that is considered their external review, and they typically do not have an APR conducted. Ankerson wondered if the APC just needs to request that the accreditation documents, the self-study and the final review from the accreditation team be copied to the APC.

Jones stated that a college having its own accreditation organization does not necessarily preclude having an APR conducted. She reported that in CEHS all units have national accreditation organizations, but they still go through the APR process because the information that can be gained from the process can be different than from the national accreditation organization. She noted that the accreditation process has very specific questions that are often siloed for that specific program, whereas the APR enables a department to talk about cross program efforts and her college has found that the APR provides valuable information to a unit. Tschetter pointed out that the accreditation process is very different from the APR process.

Heng-Moss stated that one thing that is valuable from the APRs is that the external review team could help us identify if a department is performing well and we could ask them how the program compares with similar programs at other universities. Cressler suggested asking the units what the right way is to evaluate your department, pointing out that it is not always an

apple-to-apple comparison with other universities. He stated that asking the review team would be a useful way to get a standardized evaluation.

Ankerson stated that APRs often highlight the excellence that is occurring in departments while providing suggestions for improvement; there has been increasing pressure for us to adhere to the CCPE minimum degree guidelines which require that the mean of the prior five years a program must award a minimum of 3 Ph.D. degrees, 5 master's degrees, or 7 baccalaureate degrees. She pointed out that the university has a significant number of programs below the CCPE threshold.

Gay stated that there is a danger in offering programs that are currently academically fashionable. Ankerson stated that we try to be as nimble as possible in getting a degree approved and this is important in our overall enrollment picture. She suggested that some programs that are related could possibly be combined, or that other designations may be more appropriate. Bloom stated that it would be interesting to know if a department that doesn't offer a degree is attractive for recruiting. He noted that if we are seeing cases of similar programs which are struggling to meet the CCPE guidelines, there should be an effort to consolidate the programs and have them offered at the flagship campus.

Cressler stated that APRs should include information on what missions the department fills. He asked at what point does the conversation about a program not meeting CCPE thresholds go from getting rid of the degree to eliminating the entire program. Boehm noted that if we know about expectations, we can make some adjustments, so programs don't get cut. He stated that we want to avoid having vertical cuts pointing out that we need to be extremely proactive by adjusting our programs. He stated that the question is how the APRs can help us to make these adjustments. Ankerson noted that the overarching purview of APC is the regular maintenance of academic planning, and we could be more proactive by conducting these regular reviews.

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

### Ankerson

Ankerson reported that recently the Center for Transformative Teaching held a symposium on using the UNL Course Demographics Suite and how faculty could improve their teaching. She stated that it was a three-hour session which 87 faculty members attended. She noted that Professor Brassil, Faculty Director for Undergraduate Analytics, has created a suite of instructor dashboards that provide unique, course-specific data to help reflect on the success of past pedagogical implementation and identify areas for innovation.

Ankerson reported that this is National First-Generation Week and there are a variety of activities that are occurring for first generation students. She noted that coming up in a few weeks is International Education Week pointing out that this is one of Global Affairs signature events. She stated that there will be workshops occurring, one of which is a workshop in conjunction with the Office of Research and Innovation about how to secure your data as you travel abroad.

Ankerson noted that we have the opportunity to envision ourselves as a 21<sup>st</sup> century comprehensive land grant research university rather than continuing in the path of 20<sup>th</sup> century models. This is the time to position ourselves for the future. She pointed out that we need to

approach the future with an investment strategy mindset, considering the areas we need to invest more or less in so we can grow and succeed. Gay asked what are the major things that are changing in higher education and what are the big challenges we need to position ourselves to meet. Ankerson stated that students have changed, in part due to the pandemic, and the changes with AI and how it affects students and the way we reach them is part of the challenge. She pointed out that the rhetoric about the value of higher education and the pressure for the university to do more with less resources are real challenges that we face. Bloom questioned whether we are administratively structured to allow academic success. Heng-Moss reported that she was recently at a national conference where there was discussion about the value of a bachelor's degree and the speaker was presenting interesting insights. She noted that companies such as Google and Microsoft said that they don't need employees with a degree because they will train them, but the majority of the time these kinds of companies didn't hire a single person that didn't have a degree.

Heng-Moss stated that another area that we need to consider is the number of students coming in from high school with AP credits. She noted that we will be getting more high school students that will almost have an associate's degree when they enter the university. She stated that we need to consider what this will look like for a four-year degree and what it means to our general education program. She stated that we need to think about what the future looks like and what the portfolios for teaching and research look like.

#### Jones

Jones reminded everyone that Research Days will be held next week. She reported that program officers from funding agencies will be joining virtually, there will be recognition of book publications, readings, honorifics and awards and she stated that there will be an announcement that our research expenditures, combined with UNMC was \$617 million and UNL's portion of these expenditures was \$366 million. She noted that we have had a record NSF career awards which ties us with the University of Maryland at number 8.

Jones pointed out that this was her last APC meeting, and she wanted to express how much she appreciated everyone on the committee and noted how important the APC is to UNL.

#### Boehm

Boehm stated that foundational knowledge about the value of higher education is critical and universities, especially as a land-grant university, will have to leverage our expertise, knowledge, and deep understanding about contemporary issues facing the state and we will need to be ready to address these issues.

Boehm reported that President Gold has been engaged with the citizens of Nebraska and is having open sessions about Extension and engagement and what it means.

Boehm stated that our research partnership with NASA and the European Space Agency we will be able to gather many kinds of data through the 24 satellites and two planes which fly at 70,000 feet above the ground and are equipped with remote sensing capacity. He noted that these planes will be flying over our Eastern Nebraska Research, Extension and Education Center to gather data.

Boehm reported that last week the Yeutter Institute had a very good [symposium on campus](#) about trade opportunities and the U.S. Canada Mexico trade agreement which is set to expire in a year. He noted that Carlo Dade, Director of Trade and Trade Infrastructure for the Canada West foundation and Juan Carlos Baker, a former trade policy official for Mexico were among the guests at the symposium. Boehm noted that during the symposium it was highlighted that once a trade war begins, it is the ag sector that is usually the first target for punitive action by other countries.

The meeting adjourned at 4:38 p.m. The next meeting of the APC will be on Wednesday, November 20, 2024. The minutes are respectfully submitted by Karen Griffin, Coordinator.