

MINUTES
November 20, 2024
University of Nebraska – Lincoln
Academic Planning Committee

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

Members Absent: Combs, Davis, Herbin

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.

1.0 Call

Clarke called the meeting to order at 3:03 p.m.

2.0 Welcome Interim VC Nelson

Clarke welcomed Interim VC Nelson who joins the committee after the retirement of Interim VC Jones.

3.0 Approval of November 6, 2024 Minutes

Clarke stated that approval of the November 6th minutes was being deferred due to some recent feedback that was received. She stated that the revised minutes would be voted on at the December 4th meeting.

4.0 Review of Irrigation and Agricultural Water Management Undergraduate Certificate Proposal (Clarke and Jemkur)

Clarke reported that she and Jemkur reviewed the proposal and sent the proposers a list of concern which the proposers addressed in a detailed response. She noted that the proposal was submitted by Biological Systems Engineering. She stated that the proposal is being supported by Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture, the Water for Food Global Institute, the Department of Agronomy and Horticulture, and Agricultural Economics. She noted that there is a large demand for graduates who have expertise in this area, particularly in Nebraska.

Clarke stated that the questions she and Jemkur raised involved the clarity of the program, how the learning objectives are related to the coursework and whether part-time, non-degree students can complete the program within a year. She stated that the proposers outlined two different ways the program can be completed, and they reported that the courses would be offered on a regular basis. She noted that the program is a hybrid program with both in person and online courses available. She stated that they questioned how the proposers were going to make the program known more broadly and she pointed out that there were no letters of support, but these were later provided.

Heng-Moss noted that part of the request to develop the program came from the four major irrigation platforms in Nebraska which are all established internationally. She stated that for example Valmont is working with some governments in Africa who see the need for individuals with the training that the proposed program offers, and these governments are willing to pay the tuition for their students to take the courses which is one of the reasons for having a hybrid program. The students can take some of the courses online and they can also come here in person. She reported that the program already has a lineup of learners from the four major irrigation platforms.

Bloom asked how we know we are going to get the projected number of students to take the program. Heng-Moss stated that the projections are based on the information gained from the partnership the irrigation platforms have with international governments and the number of people they predict will be needed with the skills being offered in the program. Also, the community colleges such as Northeast Community College, Western Community College, and Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture have students that will have completed an associate's degree who would like to have the certificate but who aren't interested in getting a four-year degree. She pointed out that it is very important for the University of Nebraska to be the place to offer this certificate as we have the Robert Daughtery Water for Food Global Institute and because Nebraska is the center of irrigation because of the irrigation platforms we have.

Bloom pointed out that the proposal says it is important for students to have a good background in physics for the upper-level courses of the program, but he wonders why a physics course is not at least listed as an option for the students to complete the certificate. He stated that Physics 151 would be a good course for this, but it would need to be taught by someone who has academic qualifications in physics. Heng-Moss noted that the proposers may have expected that for some of the upper division classes that students would likely enter the program having taken some physics courses or that they would take Agricultural Systems 109. Bloom stated that Agricultural Systems 109 is a physics course being taught in a non-physics department by someone without academic credentials in physics. He pointed out that this continues to be an issue for programs in this college. Gay asked what the syllabus is for that course. Heng-Moss stated that these are courses at the 300/400 level, which are required for undergraduate certificates and with these courses there is an expectation that that students would enter with certain competencies. She noted that the 300/400 level courses mean the program would not be competing with programs in the community colleges. Russo pointed out that the proposal offers a physics course as an optional.

Russo asked what the option is for students that don't place out of the Math 101 course which is a requirement for students that need to take the courses online. Heng-Moss stated that these would be individuals that will likely come in with an associate's degree which would require that they had some level of math. She stated that for international students there are a number of online math classes that are available that are equivalent to math courses we have here, so there are mechanisms for students to meet the math requirement. She noted that students here can take the required math at their community college or online.

Clarke asked if there was a motion to approve the proposal. Cressler moved for approval. Motion seconded by Russo and approved by the APC but there was one abstention.

5.0 Review of Nebraska Children’s Justice and Legal Advocacy Center (Ourada and Mueller)

Ourada reported that a grant of \$1.2 million allows combining the Children’s Justice Clinic in the College of Law with the Children’s Justice Attorney Education Fellowship program from the Center on Children, Families and the Law in the College of Arts and Sciences. She stated that with additional funding the number of law students and rural attorneys trained through the program can be increased. There will also be more data collection and rural representation for children. She stated that the goal of the new center will be to increase interest and competence in child welfare and noted that the proposal would eliminate duplication of efforts and is the only such program in the State of Nebraska. It also addresses an area of Nebraska’s workforce shortage. She pointed out that all parties involved will have office space together at the College of Law. Mueller stated that the combining of the two centers is a win-win for both centers as they will combine forces. He noted that future support is already in place and the new center would support the general mission of both former centers.

Button stated that the proposal would integrate two programs that have been working together. He stated that the benefit of the integration would be the administrative support the programs would get which will really allow them to combine their efforts. He noted that the funding allows them to leverage support, and the combined programs can make more fellowships available.

Nelson asked whether the donor asked for this to be a center. She pointed out that we need to be careful with designating a program as a center and noted that there have been a number of conversations about whether some centers should really be considered a program. Ankerson pointed out that centers and institutes require approval all the way up to the CCPE. Nelson pointed out that centers must have the budget to support them to be approved and the proposers should review carefully the requirements for being a center and then choose carefully the pathway they want to go with the proposal. Clarke stated that the proposers should be asked whether they want to go through the whole process in order to be called a center. Tschetter suggested they could stay as a program.

Bloom stated that the cost of the program could be significantly larger than the grant and questioned whether there would be sufficient funds. Ourada stated that the proposers are confident that they will have several sources of funding including federal funds and state funding.

Clarke asked if there is a motion to approve the merger of these two programs as proposed. Gay moved and both Tschetter and Mueller seconded the motion. Motion approved by the APC. Clarke stated that she would communicate with the proposers about whether they want to be considered a center or a program.

6.0 Review of Computer Engineering Ph.D. Proposal (Clarke and Thomas)

Clarke reported that the proposal calls for a standalone Ph.D. program in Computer Engineering. She noted that currently the content of the proposed program is offered through the College of Engineering umbrella Ph.D. program. She stated that there are two different tracks to getting the

Ph.D. from the College of Engineering but there has been a significant increase in the number of students wanting a Ph.D. in Computer Engineering. She stated that a graph was provided showing the increase in the number of students over the past five years. She reported that the proposers also plan on organizing dedicated recruitment events for the program and will have an advertisement push for the Ph.D.

Clarke noted that there was a question about how the program would be managed since it involves two separate units within the College, the School of Computing, and Electrical Computer Engineering. She reported that the proposers stated that there will be a coordinator that will run the program and a committee that will be responsible for running the program. She noted that the chairs from the two departments will conduct an election in their units to identify who will serve on the coordinating committee. Members' terms on the committee would be for three years and the graduate chairs would also serve on it.

Clarke moved for unanimous approval. Motion approved by the APC.

7.0 Update on the Review of the Masters in Artificial Intelligence Proposal (Clarke and Cressler)

Clarke reported that she and Cressler independently reviewed the proposal, and she spoke with the chair of the mathematics department who provided some additional comments which she then sent to the proposers asking them to respond to the comments but they have not done so yet.

8.0 APC Members Needed to Review the Proposal to Create the Artificial Intelligence Graduate Certificate

Clarke noted the proposal came in while she and Cressler were reviewing the proposal for the Masters in Artificial Intelligence and they both agreed that they should also review the graduate certificate proposal.

Bloom asked if there was a time order that needed to be considered with the proposals. He noted that the graduate certificate proposal seems to be a free-standing proposal. Heng-Moss stated that she believes they are two independent programs.

Cressler stated that both proposals were comprehensive although he and Clarke agreed that they wanted more explanation about how the students will meet the learning objectives. Another concern is about the offering of the courses since they will need to be offered twice as often. Ankerson pointed out that students can start the program at different parts of the semester so the same course would not be offered during the same semester. Cressler noted that each of the classes is to be taught half of the semester. He stated that he has concerns about the teaching load this would place on faculty members. Ankerson stated that the program would be similar to how the MBA program is taught.

Ankerson stated that her office is finalizing a definition of what an online program entails in order to capture adult learners, this includes multiple starts during the year (fall, spring, summer). Clarke stated that the proposal is described as an Artificial Intelligence program for computing professionals. She noted that the proposers want to work with other units eventually when a more comprehensive program is built.

Heng-Moss noted that AI is in many different places such as in agricultural security. She questioned whether other units on campus will be able to come forward to suggest how AI can be done in other areas. Clarke suggested that this be discussed at the next meeting. Ankerson said she thinks having a more specific title for graduate certificates is really important as we think about the future and having more specific AI programs.

9.0 Reports from EVC Ankerson, VC Boehm, Interim VC Nelson

Ankerson

Ankerson noted that the announcement about her retirement came out earlier in the day. She stated that it has been an honor and a privilege to serve the university, but she feels that it is time for her to retire so she can spend more time with her family.

Nelson

Nelson reported that the Office of Research and Innovation is excited after having just conducted the Research Days. She noted that the events were well attended and there were celebrations of the many accomplishments that were achieved this year. She noted that the ORI's annual report is available on the web <https://research.unl.edu/annualreport/2024/>.

Nelson reported that President Gold's office is creating an Artificial Intelligence Task Force, and a survey has been sent out to the campuses. She encouraged everyone to complete the survey. She reported that four of our colleagues at UNL are in the Task Force. Gay asked if the charge has been written for the AI Task Force. Nelson stated that she has not seen a charge yet. Clarke asked if the AI Task Force has a web page. Nelson stated that she does not believe a website has been developed yet because the Task Force is newly formed. She noted that at a recent APLU conference AI was one of the two main topics being discussed.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:00 p.m. The next meeting of the APC will be on Wednesday, December 4, 2024. The minutes are respectfully submitted by Karen Griffin, Coordinator.