

**January 29, 2025
MINUTES**

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

Members Present: Bloom, Boehm, Button, Clarke, Combs, Cressler, Davis, Gay, Herbin, Jemkur, Kopocis, Mueller, Nelson, Ourada, Russo, Thomas, Tschetter, Van Den Wymelenberg

Members Absent: Heng-Moss

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 3:01p.m.

2.0 Welcome New APC Dean Representative Kevin Van Den Wymelenberg

Clarke welcomed Van Den Wymelenberg, who is the Dean of Architecture, to the APC. She noted that he is replacing Button as a dean representative on the Committee since Button is now Interim EVC.

3.0 Approval of December 4, 2024 Minutes

Clarke asked if there were any revisions to the December 4th minutes. Hearing none, she asked the committee to approve the minutes unanimously.

4.0 APC Representatives Needed for Fall APRs

Clarke noted that there are two APRs this fall that need to have a representative from the APC. She asked for volunteers to serve. Mueller volunteered to serve as the APC representative for the Psychology APR that will be held in September. Cressler volunteered to serve as the representative for the Nutrition and Health Sciences APR in October.

5.0 Proposal to Create the Graduate Certificate in P20 Improvement Science

Clarke pointed out that two faculty members are needed to review the proposal. Russo and Gay volunteered to review the proposal and then report their findings to the APC.

6.0 Proposal to Delete Bachelor of Arts in Geology

Clarke reported that the Earth and Atmospheric Sciences (EAS) department is requesting the deletion of the Bachelor of Arts due to low enrollment numbers over the years. She stated that the external review teams report of the EAS department suggested that the department should reconsider its curriculum, and the department approved the deletion of the program. She asked if there was a unanimous approval to delete the program and all members of the APC approved of the proposal.

7.0 Anticipated Budget Reductions, RE: President Gold's Email Message

Clarke pointed out that everyone received President Gold's email message concerning the Governor's proposed plan to reduce the university's budget. She noted that there is great uncertainty about what is happening with our budget given that we have an existing deficit.

Davis reported that things are very uncertain at this time, but he did share with the APC last semester that we have a structural deficit of approximately \$14-15 million, noting that the structural deficit will continue to grow this year. He pointed out that with the Governor's proposed reduction the system would be facing a \$31.5 million budget reduction. He stated that President Gold is working hard to improve our budget situation with the legislature.

Davis stated that the Board of Regents will set the tuition at the June Board meeting and any increase in tuition could help with our budget reduction. He stated that we need to consider what steps we can take to continue to reduce our non-academic expenses. He noted that the administration is receiving daily updates about the legislature and the budget.

Cressler asked if Davis sees a role for the APC in helping us prepare for dealing with the budget next year. Davis stated that when the time is right, we want to look at refining the metrics the APC worked on last year. Clarke pointed out that it would be helpful to do some preliminary work ahead of dealing with the budget reductions, but it is important to know what the campus priorities are because it will guide the Committee in how to respond to the budget reductions.

Gay asked what is a structural deficit? Davis stated that it is a shortfall in our revenue to cover our expenses, which is largely salary and benefits, so this is a reoccurring expense. He pointed out that enrollment numbers play a big factor because our tuition has not been covering our shortfalls. Gay asked why the structural deficit has not been dealt with years ago. Davis pointed out that last year we reduced our budget by \$23 million but the reason for our current shortfall is due largely to inflation costs and not generating revenue quickly enough. Gay pointed out that one way to decrease expenses is to reduce administrative staff. Davis noted that some of these kinds of reductions were made in last year's cut but there could be continuing efforts to keep these costs down. Herbin reported that the Lincoln Journal Star had an article stating how harmful the budget reduction will be, not only to the university, but to the Lincoln community as well.

Combs asked how much of a tuition increase could there be. Davis stated that this has not been determined yet and the decision of the Legislature's Appropriation Committee on the University's budget would be a factor in the decision of how much to increase tuition. He pointed out that no one wants to raise tuition, including the Board of Regents.

Combs asked what the APC's role is in the process of thinking about where adjustments need to be made. Clarke reported that in the budget reduction process the remit of the Committee is to consider any proposed reductions that directly relate to academic programs. She noted that the upper administration decides whether to bring other reductions to the APC, some of which may support the academic mission. She pointed out that the APC is an advisory committee in the budget reduction process. She stated that if an academic program is to be eliminated, the APC holds public hearings after which the Committee will decide on whether the reduction should, or

should not, be made. The decision is then communicated to the Chancellor who takes the Committee's recommendations into consideration when making his final decision on budget reductions. She noted that the APC can make suggestions to the Chancellor or suggest different actions. She reported that the [Procedures to be Invoked for Significant Reallocation or Reduction to the Budget](#) is available on the APC website. Combs asked if the hearings were discretionary. Clarke pointed out that the meetings are required to be public.

Mueller asked if the procedures would be the same if financial exigency is declared. Clarke stated that the scenario would be very different for financial exigency. Davis pointed out that financial exigency requires action by the Board of Regents and the University President. He stated that such a decision would have a significant impact on our reputation and ability to be funded. Mueller noted that there is permanent damage that is occurring just by the budget threats that the campuses are hearing. He stated that these threats are disruptive to student learning, and he hopes the upper administration is aware of the damage that the budget threats are causing.

Bloom stated that before we get too deep into the processes, we need to do things ahead of time such as determining what our campus priorities are. He noted that the N2025 strategic plan is coming to an end, and we need to move forward. Clarke asked where we were with the strategic planning. Davis pointed out that President Gold is doing some restructuring of the system, and we need to be in alignment with the system priorities. Clarke asked if the Chancellor would talk about campus strategic planning at some point. Davis reported that President Gold has said there would be a process for the campuses to provide feedback on strategic planning. He stated that the APC should definitely be involved in the strategic planning.

4.0 Reports from Interim EVC Button, VC Boehm, Interim VC Nelson Button

Button noted that whatever our strategic planning process is, student success and the growth of our research profile should be priorities.

Button reported that our students are doing very well, and we have the strongest retention numbers that we have had in many years with over 90% of our students returning. He noted that it is exciting to see that our course withdrawals are down, and the average student credit hours are up, which is a sign that the students will be successful. He stated that the faculty and staff are staying well focused on helping students to be successful. He pointed out that retaining students helps with our budget.

Button stated that applications for admittance for next fall look strong for both undergraduate and graduate students and we are significantly up in the number of out-of-state students and also international students. He reported that currently we have over 1,000 more applications for graduate students this year as compared to last year at this time. He noted that the way we recruit and retain students is something that we as a campus have control over and one of our priorities is to emphasize the excellence of the faculty and staff that we have.

Button stated that one of our strategies should be to rebuild the number of faculty and staff in the colleges. He reported that he has been meeting with the deans from each of the colleges and noted that the number of faculty and staff is thin in all the colleges. He noted that he is working

with the Office of Research and Innovation and looks forward to helping support the goal of rebuilding our faculty and staff numbers. He pointed out that we need to elevate our story and our successes, and we need to talk about our positive impacts and the many things the university does for our state.

Button noted that we need to be mindful that this is a challenging time politically and culturally for many people. He stated that prior to taking on the role of Interim EVC, he heard from faculty who are very concerned about their ability to continue doing their work in such a politically charged climate. He stated that everyone working in a classroom knows there are challenges, and we need to bring faculty and instructors together and to be supportive. He stated that he welcomes ideas on how we can express our support for faculty and staff.

Nelson

Nelson noted that the ORI remains really proud of the scholarship and successes of our faculty. She reported that President Gold and Interim Vice President Kratochvil recently toured that campus, and they had great interactions with many of the researchers.

Nelson stated that research expenditures are up 12% already for the year and applications for grants are up 15%. She stated that ORI is working to tell our stories of how our research is impacting the public and to explain why research is so important and how our research really matters.

Nelson reported that things are changing hourly with the federal executive orders that were made on January 27, 2025 and ORI has created a website <https://research.unl.edu/federal-research-updates-2025/> that provides the latest information pertaining to the halting of federal funds. She noted that as of today, the order was rescinded. Gay asked about how the edict impacts a federal grant where the funds have been awarded upfront. Nelson stated that this is not really the case. She stated that a number of federal grants are awarded on an annual basis, yet while the annual award indicates authorization to spend that year's annual budget, actual expenses incurred are posted to the federal agency for reimbursement on a monthly basis. Gay questioned what would happen to the proposed grants that have not been adjudicated yet. He asked if reviews have been postponed due to the Executive Order. Nelson stated that what was rescinded today was specific to the Office of Budget Management and cash flow. She stated that there are orders still in place so there is action on the part of the different funding agencies to make sure they are in compliance with the Executive Orders, and she thinks what is happening with the review panels is that they don't want to meet until they have some clarity. Gay asked if faculty members are being told that deadline dates for submitting grant proposals are still in effect. Nelson stated that we are going to continue submitting grant applications when they are due. She stated that it is not the case that there has been a cancellation of all funding.

Russo stated that there are some students in her department who were being paid by an NSF grant, but they did not get paid because of the Executive Order and asked if there may have been there being a payroll system that was down that had nothing to do with the Executive Order. Nelson reported that the timing was unfortunate, and a system was down, but she had been told that the payrolls are flowing again.

Cressler asked how the Executive Order would impact post docs and students that are paid through federal grants. He questioned whether this would be a violation of their contract and whether they could file a lawsuit. Nelson stated that we will need to seek out guidance from Human Resources on this. She pointed out that we want to look out for all our employees and may need to fund them through other resources.

Boehm stated that everyone was happy to hear about the rescission of the Executive Order because it threw a wrench into all kinds of work being conducted at the University. He stated that he really appreciates the clarity about the situation from our senior leaders noting that Heng-Moss is at a conference with colleagues from 30 different universities and he reported that other institutions have not been so forthcoming with information about what is happening and how it is affecting researchers. He reported that there has been a stop payment on a USAID grant and when this occurs you have to automatically stop and think about bridge funding so people could get paid. He asked if there has been any stoppage with NIH funding. Nelson stated that there is no NIH stop order. She reported that NIH staff were directed not to communicate with the public but there has been no freeze on NIH funding.

Boehm

Boehm reported that annual reviews of all IANR faculty members are taking place, and everyone was required to submit their documents by January 15th. He stated that there will then be one-on-one interviews which are typically completed by March 15. He stated that faculty members are asked to submit an impact report on something the faculty member was most excited about working on this past year. He stated that he and the deans then meet with each of the department heads to determine what are the most compelling stories that IANR wants to use in its communications and highlight reels.

Boehm noted that there has been sad news for IANR. He stated that Brian Larkins, former Executive Vice Chancellor for Life Sciences and a UNL graduate, recently passed away, noting that he was one of two National Academy members that UNL had when he was employed. He stated that earlier Duane Acker, who served as the first Vice Chancellor of IANR, passed away in December and in addition John Owens, another former Vice Chancellor of IANR, also passed away in December.

Boehm reported that he will be stepping down as VC and will be transitioning to the faculty on June 1st. He noted that he said when he first arrived that he would serve for only two terms. He stated that he feels good about his run as VCIANR and where the Institute is now and pointed out that he is happy about Heng-Moss being named interim VC and he will work with the Chancellor about identifying an Interim Dean for CASNR. He pointed out that he submitted his first research proposal yesterday.

9.0 Other Business

Cressler reported that he just sent an email message to the members of the long-range planning committee to schedule another meeting. He stated that if other APC members would like to join the subcommittee to please let him know. Van Den Wymelenberg volunteered to replace Button on the long-range planning committee.

Mueller reported that he has heard a lot of concerns from faculty members and students about the university's decision to have the chorale group sing at the inauguration. He questioned whether proper protocols were followed for doing this kind of event. He noted that some students felt they had to sing, and he was concerned for the students' safety because of people targeting them for their decision. Griffin suggested that Mueller contact Faculty Senate President Pete Eklund, Director of the choral group to gather more accurate information. She noted that Eklund had informed the Faculty Senate Executive Committee that students were asked whether they wanted to participate and that no students were pressured. Tschetter pointed out that there was a waiting list of students who wanted to perform. The APC discussed how the university responds to such requests. Button noted that concerns of this nature may be outside of the purview of the APC, and other avenues exist at the university to address these concerns.

Combs noted that many faculty members are concerned with the two legislative bills that have recently been introduced. One about the elimination of tenure and the other about the elimination of diversity, equity, and inclusion. She pointed out that these are social justice issues and asked what plans the university has to address these bills. Davis noted that the Chancellor sent out a message last week about the university's positions on these bills. He stated that the university is closely watching as the legislature works through the bills. Combs pointed out that that there are people who feel that the university is not taking any position on the bills. Davis stated that the Chancellor did speak to the issue on DEI but pointed out that Button's point about what is in the purview of the APC needs to be considered. He stated that in some respect the work of the APC seems to expand to the point where it almost seems like it is a hybrid Faculty Senate. He pointed out that many of these issues are raised by the Faculty Senate Executive Committee when it speaks with the Chancellor, and he is trying to be careful not to create a parallel channel to these same concerns because that would be inappropriate outside of the Faculty Senate context.

The meeting adjourned at 4:18 p.m. The next meeting of the APC will be on Wednesday, February 12, 2025. The minutes are respectfully submitted by Karen Griffin, Coordinator.