

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

**May 7, 2025 Minutes
Approved August 6, 2025**

Members Present: Bloom, Boehm, Button, Clarke, Cressler, Davis, Gay, Heng-Moss, Jemkur, Mueller, Ourada, Russo, Thomas, Tschetter, Van Den Wymelenberg

Members Absent: Combs, Kopocis, Mueller, Nelson, Thomas, Wilkins

Guests: Incoming APC members Jeff Bradshaw, Kevin Hanrahan, AVC Hope

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 3:04 p.m. Clarke thanked Dr. Cressler for serving as Chair for this meeting as Clarke is serving on an APR team and connecting via Zoom.

2.0 Recognition of APC Members Whose Terms are Ending July 31 and Welcome New Members

Clarke thanked outgoing APC members Bloom, Ourada, and Russo, noting that their service on the committee was greatly appreciated and that their voices will be missed on the committee. She also welcomed incoming new APC members Bradshaw and Hanrahan and thanked them for agreeing to serve on the APC especially during this important time for the university. She pointed out that the APC is uniquely positioned to have a voice in the budget reduction process next academic year.

3.0 Approval of April 23, 2025 Minutes

Clarke asked if there were any revisions to the minutes. Bloom stated that he had corrections to what he said about the history of the university. The APC then approved the minutes.

4.0 Strategic Pillar – Extraordinary Community and Environment Campus Safety and Security (Chief Ramzah)

Chief Ramzah reported that in looking at the metrics for the Extraordinary Community and Environment Campus Safety and Security pillar there are a number of different elements that need to be considered. He pointed out that with the current federal administration making numerous changes, particularly the Department of Education, this could impact the Clery Act and how we report crimes that occur on campus. He stated that enforcement becomes complicated when there are issues such as activism and demonstrations because there is the aspect of keeping the public safe but also allowing free speech. He noted that there are challenges around mental health safety, although he acknowledged that we are in a good position now to proactively address this issue. He stated that for law enforcement a specific concern is retention and recruitment of officers.

Chief Ramzah reported that some of the challenges the Campus Police are facing is about the uncertainty being caused by the federal administration regarding immigration status and this has created challenges with building trust with the campus community and particularly with building trust among some populations of campus such as the international students. He noted that campus safety is important in developing an environment where everyone feels safe and fortunately, we have an environment that is considered one of the safest in the U.S. He stated that emergency planning and preparedness is another extremely important factor in campus safety and the Campus Police are actively involved in doing outreach work to ensure that everyone on campus is aware of what to do in an emergency.

Gay asked what metrics are used in determining how we are one of the safest campuses in the U.S. Chief Ramzah pointed out that there is no one standard metric across the universities that could be used, but Clery Act reporting does provide statistics on crimes that occur on campuses, although he acknowledged that there are some inconsistencies that do occur with the reporting. He noted that local crimes in the community can have an impact on our campus.

Bloom stated that if unlimited funding was available, what strategic investments would Chief Ramzah recommend. Chief Ramzah stated that recruiting police officers to have a vital police force and investing in the latest technology would better support safety on campus. Gay asked what kind of technology would be purchased. Chief Ramzah stated that there are new products with AI, such as camera systems that can count the number of people in a building which would be helpful to know if a building needed to be evacuated.

Gay asked what fraction of violent crimes, such as those that would cause an alert to be sent out, are committed on campus by people in the external community versus registered students, staff, or faculty. Chief Ramzah stated that he does not have specific numbers, but certain crimes such as thefts and trespassing are usually done by people outside the university community. He stated that internal crimes typically relate to alcohol and minors-in-possession.

Davis thanked Chief Ramzah for his and his team's work. He pointed out that the Campus Police does a lot of work with the campus and local communities and works to develop a rapport with both. Chief Ramzah noted that one of the cornerstones of the Campus Police is community outreach and engagement. He pointed out that the police cannot eradicate crime by themselves and the community can assist in helping to solve crimes. He stated that engagement is a very important component for having a safe environment and noted that having enough personnel is vital to having a safe campus. He stated that when there are not enough personnel, officers have to be spread across the campuses, but he reported that all of the officer positions are now currently filled. Bradshaw noted that UNL Campus Police has good coordination with the Lincoln Police Department. Chief Ramzah stated that there is a very strong and solid relationship with the City of Lincoln and pointed out that the LPD helps the university manage things such as athletics events, the Lincoln marathon, and other large events. He stated that his team is always looking at ways to expand our relationship with the LPD and the Campus Police meet regularly with the LPD to discuss emerging concerns.

5.0 Proposal to Modify and Rename the Agronomy and Horticulture Masters Program

Cressler noted that the master's program in Agronomy is very small, and the modification will rename the M.S. degree program to Agronomy and Horticulture. This name mirrors that of the department and the doctoral program offering and reflects the industry and academic discipline as well as improves name recognition among students and employers. Heng-Moss pointed out that the M.S. in Agronomy program was not meeting the CCPE guidelines. Cressler asked how large the agronomy program is, Heng-Moss stated that it is over 100 students. Boehm stated that it is important that we bundle the program, so we do not lose it entirely. Gay moved to approve the proposal. Ourada seconded the motion. The APC approved the motion; there was one abstention.

6.0 Proposal to Modify the Ph.D. and M.S. in Civil Engineering and to Rename both to Civil and Environmental Engineering

Cressler stated that the proposal seeks to rename both degrees to Civil and Environmental Engineering which would prepare graduates for the professionally licensed disciplines of Civil Engineering, Environmental Engineering, and Structural Engineering. The proposed name mirrors that of the department and reflects the current disciplinary trends, is aligned with similar offerings at other institutions, and better communicates the breadth of the curriculum to prospective students and employers. Boehm moved for approval of the proposal. Motion seconded by Ourada and approved by the APC, there was one abstention.

7.0 Deletion of Natural Resources and Environmental Economics Program Proposal

Heng-Moss reported that the program has been under review and there were efforts to turn it around, but the efforts were unsuccessful. She stated that deleting the program would bring us in alignment with our peer institutions. Bloom asked how old the program was. Heng-Moss stated that it is approximately ten years old. Gay moved for approval of the proposal. Ourada seconded the motion which was then approved by the APC.

8.0 Report on Child, Youth and Family Studies APR (Ourada)

Ourada reported that CYFS prepared an excellent self-study report for the APR. She noted that the department has approximately 350 undergraduate majors, 76 master's students, and 35 students actively pursuing doctoral degrees. She stated that due to the multi-unit nature of the department, the External Review Team (ERT) conducted many meetings with faculty, including extension faculty, students and staff. She noted that many of the meetings exceeded the allotted time, however there were no requests for private meetings with the ERT.

Ourada stated that the ERT found high levels of collegiality and validated the strong and inclusive and supportive work of the department chair. However, the ERT felt that the department needs clear branding because currently interested students have difficulty locating the programs in the department they are interested in. She pointed out that the name of the department is confusing and it is not in alignment with other universities, but there have been discussions about a possible name change.

Ourada reported that the ERT validated research productivity and grant procurement noting that there was an increase in these areas with the chair of the department. However, the ERT noted that there needed to be emphasis to secure funding for research and graduate students because

the current system is scattered and uncoordinated. She stated that the ERT noted that some programs, such as the Global Family Healthy and Wellbeing programs were attractive to international students. She reported that the ERT suggested that there needs to be more cohesion in the expectation and competence of the Ph.D. program.

Ourada stated that the ERT's overall impression of the department was that it was a special enterprise.

Bloom asked if the length of the review time was questionable. Ourada stated that it would be helpful if there were 10-minute breaks in the schedule. Cressler noted that AVC Marks is trying to expand the length of time for the APRs.

Ourada stated that there was no need for a follow-up review of the APR.

9.0 Academic Program and Resource Metrics Overview (Interim EVC Button, AVC Volkmer, and AVC Zavala)

Button reported that the conversation today with the APC is to consult with the committee about the process for reviewing all academic programs across UNL in light of what we know will be a challenging fiscal year as we address our \$20 million budget deficit. He pointed out that we need to make strategic decisions using informed data and he wanted to present to the APC how the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) is thinking about the process of how budget reductions can be made using a data informed approach. He pointed out that the first thing is to define the vision of the university and to determine our strategic priorities. He noted that one of our priorities is to continue to improve student success and pointed out that the Office of Research and Innovation is holding a workshop today that should help define our research mission.

Button reported that one of the essential priorities for the ELT is to have consultation with unit leaders prior to any decisions being made and stated that he has completed discussion with all the college deans and associate deans and noted that consultation may expand to the departments that could be impacted by the budget reductions. He pointed out that no recommendations or plans for budget reductions have been developed yet, although he noted that we would no longer be applying the reductions in a horizontal fashion, and instead would look for more strategic reductions.

Button stated that he, along with AVC Volkmer and AVC Zavala, would be sharing some of the possible ways we could make a data informed approach to reducing the budget. He stated that the metrics being presented continue to be refined and they are closely identified with the criteria that the APC has established when dealing with budget reductions (see [Procedures to Be Invoked for Significant Budget Reallocation and Reductions](#)). He noted that many of the metrics are quantitative based, but there are qualitative metrics as well. He pointed out that data and metrics are one component of a broader comprehensive review of all academic programs. He stated that the more comprehensive questions about the uniqueness of a program, its place and importance to the university could also be a part of the conversation. He stated that Volkmer would be talking about the instructional side of the metrics and Zavala would help the committee understand any questions relating to the research metrics. He pointed out that both of these

primary areas of analysis are of equal importance because we are a Research I university. He noted that we are also the primary driver of intellectual and creative activity at the university.

Button stated that the administration recognizes that APC guidelines state that academic programs should be preserved as much as possible, but with the budget reductions we are facing, on top of the reductions we have already made, it may not be possible to preserve all current academic programs. He noted that he anticipates that the APC will need to begin considering budget recommendations at the beginning of the fall semester. Bloom asked what the timeline would be for the APC to consider the budget reduction proposals and whether it would have until the end of the fiscal year to complete its work. Button reported that the ELT is required to develop a draft preliminary reduction plan by June 30. He noted that the Chancellor needs to review and consider the plan and then he needs to consult with the various groups outlined in the Procedures.

Volkmer stated that he will be talking about the quantitative assessment but noted that there are a lot broader considerations that will factor into the budget reduction decision process. He stated that defining what is a unit was the first challenge, and it was determined that a unit was defined by having a financial hierarchy, an HR hierarchy, and an academic organizational hierarchy. He stated that currently all data reporting is dictated through data hierarchies that are sourced through various data systems e.g., SAP, Academic Analytics, Peoplesoft, NUramp, etc. Gay asked if a dean's office would be considered a unit. Volkmer stated that it would.

Volkmer reported that the guiding principles for selecting Instructional Resource metrics were growth, is the unit growing; student demand, are the majors in the unit in demand; efficiency, are the resources in the unit used efficiently; instructional effectiveness, student success metrics; tuition, does the unit generate tuition; and outcomes, do the degree earners find jobs in the state or go to graduate school after graduation.

Bloom questioned how growth would be evaluated in the context of the sagging enrollment of the university and asked if students finding a job out of state is important. Volkmer stated that the data could identify whether the market for students in a program was still in demand. He pointed out that all metrics are weighed equally. Cressler asked if the count of majors includes only those students who have declared a major. Volkmer reported that all majors were being looked at noting that many units have secondary majors. Cressler asked what period of time is being reviewed for the instructional metric. Volkmer stated that initially a 10-year period was looked at and then a 3-year period and it was found that the information was very similar. Bloom pointed out that units do not get the tuition that they would have received had the incentive-based budget model been successful. Volkmer stated that the tuition is calculated from the course prefix and the students that are enrolled in it. He pointed out that a mechanism will be developed that will calculate out-of-state tuition. Cressler questioned what the logic is of not having tuition revenue following an instructor's home department. Volkmer noted that some faculty members have a split FTE.

Zavala reported that the guiding principles for selecting research resource metrics were research stature, at what levels is the unit contributing to elevating UNL's research stature; prominence and reputation, how does the unit's research contributions compare to that of peers; resource

generation, what level of external sponsorship is being received relative to state budget; growth, is externally sponsored research growing. She stated that AAU Phase 1 indicators were considered when the research resource metrics were identified. She noted that the data gathered is for a 5-year period. Gay asked if it would make sense to compare our data with just land-grant universities. Zavala reported that this was discussed, but it would put us at a slight disadvantage. Boehm stated that the idea is good and there has been discussion about adding information on the land-grant institutions. He pointed out that there are only 15 land grant institutions in the AAU. Zavala stated that we are looking at growth of external sponsored awards for units. Bloom noted that there is plenty of research that does not get funded from external sources. Zavala agreed.

Clarke questioned if there are any metrics on outreach, extension, and engagement pointing out that this is one of the pillars identified by President Gold. Button noted that this question has been raised often. He stated that one of the aspects of the analysis is to identify what are clear and consistent metrics so assessments can be made fairly. However, he pointed out that not all units can be captured and in discussions with each of the colleges they were asked if they could think of a metric that could be tied into the analysis. Clarke pointed out that we recently achieved Carnegie status and she stated that in thinking from the faculty perspective, if we are making serious budget considerations without considering engagement faculty members could become very concerned.

Button stated that each of the data points relates to a z-score and each one is complex. He noted that a lot of context has to be brought into all of the metrics, but these are useful metrics, and they are trying to apply them equally. Bloom asked if the information from the analysis is to reinvest in successful units. Button stated that this is part of the goal. Gay pointed out that we need to get away from figuring out ways to cut academic programs and instead look at how to reduce administrative bloat. He stated that cutting academic programs should be dead last when looking for ways to reduce the budget. Boehm reported that over the last eight years IANR has cut 30% of its administration and at every chance, it strives to keep the breadth and scope of IANR programs. Gay noted that three years ago he did an analysis, normalizing student numbers, and the number of faculty have stayed flat, the staff have been cut by 40%, but administrative positions had gone up by 60%. He stated that he will review the numbers again for the upcoming budget reductions. Bloom pointed out that there are duplicative structures on campus and before we cut academic programs, we need to eliminate the duplicative structures. He stated that this could be done while still adhering to state statutes. Button noted that budget reductions will not just be on academic programs, other types of reductions will need to be made.

Van Den Wymelenberg stated that the current metrics, as he understands them presently, are strongly biased toward a narrow definition of research. Currently, metrics do not address several categories of creative activity nor community impact. Furthermore, the inconsistent treatment of faculty research and teaching apportionment between research and instructional metrics creates a substantial and concerning bias in favor of units with higher-than-average research apportionment and lower-than-average teaching apportionment. This is true at the per-metric level, and it is further exacerbated at the final step at the simple average of research and instructional z-scores.

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

Interim EVC Button

Button reported that our returning student numbers look good and we are at 83% for all students that can be enrolled for the fall semester, and those that are not enrolled typically have a hold on them, most of which are a hold related to financial bills that need to be addressed, but our academic advisors and navigators are reaching out to them to get them squared away so they can enroll for the fall semester. He stated that new student enrollment net deposits are up by 3.5% from last year at this time, which represents 167 students, and non-resident student deposits are up by 14% which is an increase of 115 out-of-state students.

Hope stated that in terms of graduate student enrollment, the number of applications looks good, but many of them are international students and there is uncertainty about whether they can get visas. She noted that the number of applications from domestic students is down. She stated that she is hoping that our graduate student enrollment numbers will at least stay flat for the academic year. Heng-Moss reported that President Gold continues to provide updates on the situation with grants, but she noted that some units are scaling back with graduate student acceptances because of concern that grants could be suspended or lost.

Boehm stated that President Gold has talked about the \$680 million in grant expenditures that the university had, and if you divide this by 12 it comes to \$56 million per month that the university receives in grant funding. He pointed out that with grant panels being frozen and the opportunity for early career faculty to apply for grants, there is going to be a time when the lack of these grants catches up with us. He stated that there has been discussion about the impacts the lack of grant funding has on early career faculty members and how the lack of grant funding could impact their tenure clock. He noted that we may have to allow an extension to protect those junior faculty members who are in the pre-tenure process.

Boehm stated that he is worried about the well-being of our international students and asked Hope if Graduate Studies is doing anything to assist these students. Hope stated that Graduate Studies supports all students and members of the office, along with members of the ISSO, are having a series of meetings that are called Graduate Student Dialogues and there are meetings virtually every week with groups of students. She noted that she has spoken with graduate students in every college and stated that if anyone wants members of Graduate Studies to come and speak with people, they would be happy to do that. She stated that both Graduate Studies and ISSO are trying to provide as much support as possible and ISSO recently released guidance for international scholars. Button reported that Global Affairs is also actively involved with having additional office hours and provided information to anyone who may be traveling internationally this summer.

Bloom asked when a team from the Higher Learning Commission will be coming to campus. Button reported that conversations have been occurring with the HLC, and he noted that Interim Provost Jackson would be meeting with the Faculty Senate Executive Committee next week to talk about the team visit. He stated that the team will be on campus June 2nd and 3rd and some members of the campus will be able to engage with the team.

Boehm

Boehm pointed out that this was his 105th and last meeting with the APC noting that it had been quite the journey and he appreciated seeing and working with everyone. He stated that he is thankful to the people that have been willing to serve on the APC, especially now since we are going through a challenging time. He noted that the recent promotion and tenure dinner was bittersweet, while he was happy for those that achieved promotion and/or tenure, it is difficult to see with what is happening with higher education due to outside forces.

Boehm stated that he completed a three-week listening tour which made 23 stops across the state, meeting and talking with approximately 200 people. He stated that two new interim leadership roles will be made to the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture, and they will report to the President of the university. He noted that NCTA is facing some challenges, but the College is figuring out a path forward and to do more recruiting. Gay asked why NCTA is under stress. Boehm stated that enrollment is only 180-200 students. He pointed out that community colleges can develop technical agriculture classes and there is a lot of redundancy with these programs, but the University has the opportunity to choreograph these programs. He noted that the Department of Labor in Nebraska indicates 50% of the 18,000 open jobs in Nebraska are in agriculture. He stated that 56% of these jobs require a GED or a high school diploma, another 30% require a specialized certificate or badge, but only 14% require an associate or bachelor's degree, but when digital technology and autonomous technologies start impacting the agricultural sector more, things will really change and there will be a need for people with advanced degrees. He questioned how we at the university can focus on the future and adjust so we are in a better position to propel itself forward in the next 20 or 30 years.

The meeting adjourned at 5:01 p.m. The next scheduled meeting of the APC will be on Wednesday, September 3, 2025. The minutes are respectfully submitted by Karen Griffin, Coordinator.