

University of Nebraska – Lincoln
Academic Planning Committee
March 11, 2026
Minutes

Members Present: Bradshaw, Clarke, Combs, Cressler, Gay, Gonzales, Hanrahan, Heng-Moss, Henson, Jemkur, McLean, Nelson, Sharif, Tschetter, Van Den Wymelenberg

Members Absent: Eklund, Mueller, Wilkins

Guests: Jessie Brophy, Jerri Harner

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

Hanrahan called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m.

2.0 Approval of January 28, 2026 Minutes

Hanrahan asked if there were any revisions. Hearing none, he declared the minutes were accepted by acclamation.

3.0 Proposal to Delete BA/BS in Russian Language

Button noted that the reason for the proposal was due to low enrollment in the program pointing out that it did not meet the CCPE requirements and there is no longer a permanent faculty member for the program. He pointed out that the program is not sustainable, which is the primary reason for the proposal to delete it, although he stated that it could be brought back at some point if needed.

Gay moved to approve deletion of the program. Motion seconded by Tschetter. Clarke suggested that the proposal should include numbers indicating the low enrollment. Button pointed out that this information was in his approval letter for the proposal to move forward. The APC then voted to approve the elimination.

4.0 APC Representative Report on Biological Systems Engineering APR (Bradshaw)

Bradshaw noted that the APR was well executed and the External Review Team's (ERT) report highlighted the department's many strengths and offered constructive actionable recommendations. He reported that the strengths of BSE included a strong national reputation and impact in the areas of irrigation, digital agriculture, and applied engineering. The faculty are highly productive, state-of-the-art facilities, entrepreneurial and industry engagement. He noted that weaknesses and challenges for the department are a lack of shared vision, unclear governance structure and inconsistent communication leading to perceptions of insular decision-making which has eroded trust among some faculty and staff. He reported that recent structural changes, including the introduction of pillars and new associate roles which have caused cultural disruption and uneven engagement, and declining enrollments in AGEN and AGST present sustainability concerns. In addition, the ERT had significant concern regarding the impact of

differential tuition charged by prefix rather than by major, staff challenges resulting in high turnover, and graduate student office space was considered suboptimal.

Bradshaw stated that from an APC perspective, the most critical issues to monitor are progress toward rebuilding trust through communication and a shared vision, alignment between departmental structures and formal evaluation, governance, and decision-making processes, strategic coordination at the system level, and solution of structural competitiveness issues including differential tuition for AGST majors which may affect enrollment sustainability.

Hanrahan asked if any issues were raised about the quality of the leadership of the department noting that an issue arose with a faculty member who described the leadership as cutthroat. Bradshaw reported that he did not observe anything, noting that there was group discussion and there was talk about the roles of some people but nothing specific was discussed about the leadership. He reported that there was no need for a hearing.

5.0 Update on Subcommittee Reviewing APC Documents

Hanrahan reported that only three of the subcommittee members: McLean, Van Den Wymelenberg, and himself, along with Griffin met. He noted that there was some discussion about the APC operating procedures and membership and whether it would be better to have a representative model of membership rather than membership based on discipline which is the current model. He stated that there was agreement that a representative model would be the way to go, but entailing the process for this would need to be considered.

Hanrahan stated that there was discussion about the Regents' Bylaws conflict of interest policy and whether it could apply to the APC, but he noted that it would be difficult because it could exclude almost everyone on the committee from voting on budget reduction proposals. He stated that the UNL Bylaws section 7 which describes the APC and its responsibilities, either needs to be changed, or the APC Operating procedures need to be changed so they match. Button pointed out that the Regents conflict of interest policy applies to every university employee.

Van Den Wymelenberg, pointed out that there needs to be clarity on what needs to be approved by the APC. He noted that the College of Architecture presented an alternative proposal to the original budget reduction plan this fall and it requires significant restructuring changes within the college, but there are no subsequent plans to present this restructuring to the APC. He stated that having clarity of these kinds of changes would help departments in the future. McLean stated that clarity is also needed on what kinds of changes need to go to the Board of Regents for approval.

Gay asked how we change the operating procedures. Griffin noted that the operating procedures need only to be approved by the APC. She stated that any changes to the APC's section of the UNL Bylaws would need APC, Faculty Senate, ASUN and GSA approval, Chancellor approval, and then the Regents approval. She stated that the Procedures to be Invoked for Significant Budget Reallocation and Reductions would need APC, Faculty Senate, ASUN and GSA, and then Chancellor approval.

Bradshaw asked if there was any discussion about guidelines for mergers and what the representation from each of the colleges would look like for the committee. Cressler stated that he could see the merits of having representation from each college, but he could see some colleges having objections because the perspectives that could be brought from the physical and biological sciences might be quite different than from the arts and humanities. He pointed out that having one voice on the committee for an entire college may be viewed as less than ideal. Nelson agreed and stated that balance across the disciplines is needed.

Button stated that his office has the latest data about the distribution of faculty by a disciplinary area and a starting point in considering membership for the various committees might be to look at where the people are located and what their numbers are. He stated that other criteria also need to be considered in order to have breadth and disciplinary perspectives on a committee.

Heng-Moss stated that she appreciates the dialogue around membership and every college having representation on the APC because this could help in providing information about program proposals or deletions from the colleges.

6.0 Faculty are hearing multiple versions of performance expectations at the unit, college, UNL, and system level. How is administration planning to create consistency and coordination across metrics KPIs, strategic initiatives, etc. and how will this information be communicated to the campus.

Button noted that there needs to be coordination of the metrics from the system, the campus and the college level. He stated that the NU metrics are meant for the entire system and are aggregated for all campuses. He pointed out that we need to think about what our priorities will be as we go through the process of developing our strategic plan. He stated that the feedback from the campus on the strategic plan along with the data for our campus will help us set our targets. He stated that the framework is well aligned with the system and the colleges will be able to determine what their specific goals will be. He noted that the design has been to have clarity across the system.

Hanrahan pointed out that the system metrics has nothing about the arts and humanities and the creative work they do, the metrics are all about grants and publications. He asked how the campus strategic plan is going to align with the Odyssey to Excellence when a significant portion of faculty work is not included in the metrics. Nelson stated that Volkmer and Zavala have been discussing how creative endeavors and engagement activities can be measured. She stated that a conversation at the campus level needs to occur and then it can be raised to the system level. She stated that her office is open to having conversations about this issue. Hanrahan asked if the system level has acknowledged that their metrics are missing the creative endeavors and engagement activities. Heng-Moss reported that the system-level has a task force on the metrics and this concern could be elevated through UNL's representations.

Bradshaw asked if stakeholders have provided any input yet into UNL's strategic framework. Heng-Moss reported that there have been different feedback loops that IANR has heard from noting that IANR's strategic directions were rolled out in 2024, and there were engagement groups as well as listening sessions across the state and feedback was provided about what priorities IANR should consider. Bradshaw reported that there are some advisory boards that

have some frustrations. Nelson asked if they are concerned with pathways for students to obtain degrees in areas that would meet the needs of the workforce in the state. Bradshaw stated that this is a concern that has been raised by stakeholders. Heng-Moss pointed out that the ABM, the Ag Builders of Nebraska AG 40 Group meets quarterly with the President and Chancellor and there has been discussion with them about the strategic plan. She reported that stakeholders will get the opportunity to provide feedback.

Hanrahan stated that he has heard from faculty departments that the metrics that were used in the determining the budget reduction plan came as a surprise to them and since then they have been working towards making improvements in the metrics, but they are concerned that the metrics will be changed. He pointed out that anything that can be done to improve communications if there are any changes to the metrics should be done in a timely manner. Button noted that last spring the metrics were discussed with the APC and the Faculty Senate Executive Committee and the Procedures to be Invoked for Significant Budget Reallocations and Reductions indicates a number of metrics and most of these indicators are long standing and are anchored to the CCPE requirements. He stated that what was new was the way the metrics were utilized for the budget reduction process. He stated that there will be an opportunity for the APC to review the metrics, and he reported that the academic program indicators were discussed in every college where it was asked whether the metrics captured everything. He pointed out that there will be more opportunities for the APC to be engaged in the refinement process of the metrics.

Gay noted that UNL has a lot of ongoing problems, but having a strategic plan that meshes with the Odyssey to Excellence isn't anywhere near the top of the list. He stated that we are not competitive in recruiting graduate students, which seriously hurts our chances of getting into the AAU. He stated that these are big problems that the administrators should be working on solving.

7.0 Update on the implementation of the budget reduction plan, what savings have already been realized, what savings are still to be realized, and are we on track to realize the expected savings in the manner that was indicated in the plan. Are we falling short anywhere, and/or are we realizing more than expected anywhere?

Button reported that we are in the midst of the current fiscal year, and we anticipate showing a significant budget reduction savings by the end of the fiscal year. He noted that a table will be created that will show accountability of where we stand in the different categories of the reduction plan. He stated that the \$4.6 million rescission has already been made and administrative cuts will be executed in this fiscal year. He pointed out that the VSIP savings has a two-year tail to it, but we know how much we will be saving with the VSIP money. He stated that the College of Architecture is diligently working on their budget reduction plan as are the other colleges, and he noted that the academic program realignments and reductions will take longer to achieve.

Gay asked when the information will be posted. Button stated that the plan is to get the information posted shortly after the spring break. Gay asked if there would be a breakdown of elimination of staff personnel versus administrative personnel. Button stated that this can be done but noted it will indicate employee classifications, not individuals. Hanrahan asked if we

are on track to reach the \$27 million budget reduction. Button stated that we are right on track with it.

8.0 Discussion and feedback on UNL's Draft Strategic Framework

Gonzales noted that Gay's comments about us not being competitive with recruiting graduate students is a prime example of an opportunity for us to see where our weaknesses are and where our strengths are as we move forward on developing Our Bold Path Forward strategic plan. He stated that the APC can help provide guidance to set UNL on the path, so we are in control of our plan.

Gonzales stated that with the N2025 strategic plan completed, it is now time to determine what is the direction that we are heading as an institution. He noted that some units have already provided a strategic approach such as determining that students' success is imperative and the need for us to focus on retention and success. He pointed out that there are some parallels between our framework and the system's plan, but he wanted to underscore that while the pillars are the same, our work on developing our strategic plan gives us an opportunity to customize the plan to our campus.

Gonzales stated that we need active input and review to create the specifics of the framework which is like the skeleton of our strategic plan. He noted that the target date for completing the framework is July 1. He reported that as we go through the plan, we will be mapping out the contributions, and if they cannot be enacted, a rationale will be provided as to why. He stated that the core of the process is to engage various groups on campus such as the APC, Faculty and Staff Senates, and other groups through roundtable discussions. He noted that it is critical that we get the shared governance partners involved in the strategic planning process and the plan is to have an engagement format to gather input.

Gonzales pointed out that this is a process that will be iterative not pre-determined. Button stated that that ELT really wants the faculty, staff, and students to co-create the strategic plan.

Clarke asked if there is any willingness to make some changes to the system's strategic plan. She pointed out that one of the pillars in the Odyssey to Excellence identifies partnership across the campuses as a part of the plan, yet collaborating with faculty members from the other campuses is very difficult to do and has been a problem for years. She questioned whether we are going to address some of the structural issues that currently exist. Heng-Moss noted that the APC could begin discussion on the strategic plan by talking about the barriers that are causing problems and preventing us from achieving the goals set out in the system's plan.

Heng-Moss suggested that the APC work on a couple of the Odyssey's pillars at a time. Hanrahan proposed that the APC work on pillars 1 and 4 at its next meeting on March 25, and then on April 8th he proposed doing pillars 2 and 3. Button stated that he will highlight what could be distinct about the new strategic plan from the N2025 plan.

The meeting adjourned at 4:20 p.m. The next meeting of the APC will be on Wednesday, March 25, 2025. The minutes are respectfully submitted by Karen Griffin, Coordinator.