

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES

Present: Baesu, Bearnese, Eklund, Gorman, Leiter, Lewis, Pierobon, Reimer, Shrader, Tschetter, Vakilzadian, VanderPlas

Absent: Gruverman

Date: Tuesday, January 27, 2026

Location: 201 Canfield Administration

Note: These are not verbatim minutes. They are a summary of the discussions at the Executive Committee meeting as corrected by those participating.

1.0 Call (*Shrader*)

Shrader called the meeting to order at 2:32 p.m.

2.0 Interim Chancellor Ankerson, EVC Button

Interim Chancellor Ankerson stated that she is looking forward to having an open and frank conversation with the Executive Committee noting that when she was EVC she enjoyed the good relationship she had with the Committee. She pointed out that there was a shared dedication to UNL and she and the Committee worked in a positive way and she hoped that this would continue.

2.1 What do you foresee as the most significant financial issues affecting UNL in the next few years?

EVC Button reported that the most significant financial issues affecting the NU system and UNL are **State appropriations** – CPI adjusted for inflation; **NU System allocation to UNL** – after adjustments for off-the top commitments (deferred maintenance, IT security), legislative earmarks, and waived revenue in the form of tuition/scholarship programs. **Net tuition** – enrollments, retention, tuition levels, and institutionally-controlled remissions. **All expenses** including salaries, benefits, and operating expenses. **Federal policies** impacting student financial aid, international student recruitment, global partnerships, federal research support and F&A rates -- all have an impact on UNL's ability to advance core elements of our mission. **Philanthropic support for UNL**. He stated that this has never been better with our year-to-date UNL Campaign = \$1.42B (goal of \$1.5B) which is 95% of UNL's goal (by 2027). He pointed out that it is always worth keeping in mind that state appropriations account for ~ 60% of UNL perm budget; total net tuition ~ 40%.

Shrader noted that UNL has the highest rate of tuition in the NU system and the largest enrollment. He asked if we get a high percentage of the tuition money. Interim Chancellor Ankerson stated that the tuition is directly related to the campus, so we do get that revenue.

VanderPlas asked how much access the DEOs have in seeing the tuition income that their department generates. EVC Button stated that net tuition for departments is not applied in the metrics in part because remissions are not controlled at the department level. He reported that a simple model is being run to look at what the relative revenue and costs look like for a unit and this can be compared across the board using in-state tuition rates. VanderPlas asked if a department does well in recruiting a lot of students from out-of-state if that department receives any kind of reward for its efforts. EVC Button pointed out that we are all involved in recruiting from everywhere we can and these efforts are to the benefit of the entire university. He stated that how successfully departments are retaining and graduating students are areas in which units have more direct roles and responsibility. He noted that student success measures – retention rates and degrees awarded - are what is looked at for each unit.

VanderPlas stated that there are rumors that we will be going through another round of budget cuts, similar to what we just went through. Interim Chancellor Ankerson and EVC Button stated that they have not heard this rumor and while we are facing some challenges and we do not know what the legislature will do in this short session, there is no way to know at this point and time what will happen with our state appropriations for the next fiscal year.

EVC Button recommended reading the Governor's budget proposal (released on 1/15/26). It is important to understand state fiscal priorities within the context of a constitutional obligation for a balanced budget and \$471M current projected budget shortfall for the remainder of the current biennium (25-27). He stated that the revised budget deficit number will likely be revised again in late February after the NE Economic Forecasting Advisory Board meets. Given the priority of property tax reform and reducing government spending, avoiding a mid-year reduction to general fund support for NU is a significant win. However, the current proposal to provide "full scholarship" with housing to students with 33+ ACT scores will have an economic impact across the NU system that we will need to plan for.

Reimer asked what the Interim Chancellor and EVC's positions are on faculty advocating for university support. She noted that many people were startled by comments made by some Regents at the December 5th Board meeting telling faculty and staff members to advocate for the university. Interim Chancellor Ankerson pointed out that employees of the university have the right as private citizens to speak on matters they deem important, but they cannot speak on behalf of the university without prior authorization. She stated that Jessica Herrmann, Director of Government Relations for UNL, can explain the role of faculty and staff for speaking to the legislature. EVC Button stated that he appreciates the question and noted that we need everyone to tell the story of the university's impact on the state. He stated that our government relations team want faculty, staff, and student input, but we need to have a coordinated strategy when addressing the legislature. Reimer stated that it would be helpful if there was a resource such as a tip sheet to assist people when they want to advocate for the university to their representatives. Interim Chancellor Ankerson stated that this is a great idea and stated that Associate Vice President Blomstedt could be helpful with creating the tip sheet.

2.2 How much money will be generated through the VSIP and where will this money be used?

EVC Button stated that at least \$5.5 million of the VSIP money will go towards addressing the structural deficit and as explained previously to this committee, the remaining balance (a little over \$4M) is currently targeted for strategic faculty investment. This investment – and others that must follow -- is critical to our goal of being a top public research university that is worthy of AAU status. The total number of tenure-line faculty at UNL has dropped by 12.55% since 2017 (not including the most recent year). He stated that we must leverage and expand our strengths to advance research and creative excellence at UNL and serve the people of Nebraska.

Shrader asked how many people we are losing through the VSIP and through terminations of positions. EVC Button reported that 33 faculty members will be terminated in eliminated departments, 62 are taking VSIP, including 18 from eliminated departments.

2.3 The budget reduction was \$27.5 million, approximately \$6 million of this was additional to UNL’s budget deficit. What is being done with these funds?

EVC Button reported that this amount was calculated by Business and Finance and represents the average annual yearly fiscal shortfall at UNL over the last several years. He noted that these savings (executed over the current year and next year) are intended to allow the university to help meet rising costs and flat revenues. He stated that we will continue to look for efficiencies and perm state savings across every area of the university, but at the same time, we need to plan for much-needed salary increases for faculty and staff this spring.

Vakilzadian noted that if UNL’s budget is short every year by \$5 million, he questioned how we are going to make up for that shortfall. EVC Button stated that it is an open question whether these savings will be enough to fully offset any of the possible future fiscal impacts from the items mentioned in response to agenda item 2.1. He noted that prudent stewardship of resources, efficiencies in all operations, growing learner demand for our programs, strong partnership with the state, and smart investments in excellence are essential. Continued public testimony about the importance of investing in UNL to support a growing and flourishing state – in its economy, innovation, culture, arts, health, and civic life is critical.

2.4 Some faculty members in eliminated departments will be retained. Who determined which faculty member(s) would be retained and which will be terminated? When will the letters of termination be sent out?

EVC Button reported that targeted faculty retentions were carefully determined by considering educational and research priorities for the University in the context of academic offerings and faculty expertise at UNL and across the NU system. These decisions were the product of significant consultations among vice chancellors, deans, and their leadership teams. Letters of termination are scheduled to be sent soon – they will provide for more than the required 12 months’ notice for faculty. He noted that separations for faculty have been timed to coincide with the end of the 26-27 AY (May 14, 2027).

Vakilzadian asked if the faculty members who are being terminated will get a separation package like Chancellor Bennett did. EVC Button stated that there will be some clarification in the termination letter, but it won't amount to a buyout package.

2.5 Is the administration planning to use the same indicators in the future and will these indicators be used to determine reinvestment?

Interim Chancellor Ankerson reported that the idea to develop indicators based on accurate data began years ago and she recalled when she first became dean that there was a lot of emphasis on needing to make sure that the different systems at UNL were reporting information like prefixes and faculty apportionments in the same way. She stated that there was a lot of work between the administration, deans, department chairs, and advisors to ensure the information was correct. She stated that several years ago AVC Goodburn worked on developing measures to enable us to be more effective in student success and as a result we started to see our graduation and retention rates improve. She stated that the effort was to provide transparency to the colleges and departments and dashboards were created so deans, department chairs, and advisors would be able to look at the dashboards to make sure the data was accurate and so they could see where they stand and where improvements could be made.

Interim Chancellor Ankerson stated that as we moved forward with collection of data, we were able to use the data in effective ways. She noted that when the modified responsibility-centered management budget system was being considered, it was extremely important to make sure the data was in a consistent and reliable format which accelerated the collection of data. She stated that when EVC Spiller was here she rolled out what was called integrated academic planning which started to match goals to how we might think about investment and which started the use of quantitative and qualitative measures.

EVC Button stated that we are committed to continual improvements in all of our processes. With that in mind we are currently in the process of engaging the campus regarding the enhancement of academic program indicators, presenting data visualizations via Tableau reports, and providing easier access to the original data sources that are utilized in program assessments. With the support of IEA and ORI, we are starting these conversations with deans and their leadership teams, and we will be sharing this information with DEOs, APC, and FSEX as well.

EVC Button noted that the APC has also agreed to undertake a review of governance processes for significant budget reductions. Any recommendations from the APC will come to the Faculty Senate, Staff Senate, Student Government, and Chancellor for review.

Shrader pointed out that the metrics for an individual faculty member has not been given to all faculty members. He stated that unit heads need to be trained and directed to share this information with their faculty members, so the faculty members know what their metrics look like and whether they are accurate. VanderPlas pointed out that the metrics used in the budget reductions did not show accurate apportionments for several faculty members in her department and there is concern about the quality of the data. EVC

Button stated that when a unit head does not make a change in SAP to reflect accurate apportionment, adjustments can be made afterwards. He agreed that proper training and support for unit heads is important and this is something that deans and vice chancellors are committed to needed. Gorman pointed out that not all unit heads are technologically savvy and said that if each faculty member received information on themselves, they could be responsible for making sure their data is correct. EVC Button stated that faculty members should be getting the information during their annual evaluation, and he thinks the administration can continue to socialize the importance of this with the unit heads.

2.6 Since department chairs have to share Academic Analytics data with faculty (e.g., during their annual reviews) wouldn't it be easier for faculty to be give access to their own record, as is intended by Academic Analytics? How much do we pay Academic Analytics?

EVC Button reported that our institutional contract with Academic Analytics (AA) does not currently allow access and training beyond DEOs. The contract with AA is managed centrally by University of Nebraska Office of the President for the NU system so we are not aware of the current contract cost.

Lewis pointed out that Academic Analytics states on its website that it was designed for faculty to have access to the data. She stated that it does not work well if she must go to the chair's office to look at her information. Interim Chancellor Ankerson stated that she will make an enquiry to see what the costs are.

2.7 Have you been told how UNL and UNMC will be managed jointly after the HLC merger?

Interim Chancellor Ankerson pointed out that the HLC accreditation is not a merger of the UNL and UNMC campuses. She noted that every indication on the application and in President Gold's comments is that each campus will have its own individual leader, and she pointed out that this is codified in the Regents Bylaws. She noted that there could be areas that might benefit from the sharing of best practices and this structure will allow enhanced collaboration both educationally and operationally between UNL and UNMC.

Shrader pointed out that UNL and UNMC will be considered branch campuses of the University of Nebraska system. He asked if there were concerns that the two campuses will be put into the same house and noted that there are concerns with UNMC having more power and receiving more funding than UNL which is the flagship campus.

EVC Button stated that joint accreditation allows UNL and UNMC to report their data together and doing this put UNL into 55th place in total research and development expenditures. He noted that UNL alone just cracked \$400 million in research expenditures. He stated that joint accreditation will also help us improve our student success rates noting that our retention rate in from fall 2025 to spring 2026 was 95%.

Leiter pointed out that the skepticism that the faculty has with joint accreditation stems from the way the faculty learned about it. He noted that the paperwork for filing for joint accreditation was already filled out and a draft submitted before UNL faculty learned about it. He stated that having a fundamental structural change like this makes people paranoid and he believes the faculty would have been much better prepared for it if it had been explained ahead of time.

2.8 There is a disconnect between the listening session last week and the letter that came out the following day. Many faculty members have made negative comments about the letter, and it defeated the beginnings of building trust that may have started with the listening session.

Interim Chancellor Ankerson stated that it was felt by President Gold and herself that there was a lack of clarity about the next steps in the budget reduction process, and they believed it should be clarified as soon as possible which is why the letter was sent out.

Shrader stated that the reaction he received to the letter was fairly universal in that the faculty and staff felt that the administration was back-tracking on what was said during the listening session. He pointed out that the faculty are taking the brunt of the negative comments that are being made and getting flogged when they are the ones doing all of the work. He stated that the faculty are tired of not hearing people defend them.

Interim Chancellor Ankerson stated that one of the things she learned from the listening session was hearing the passion from those that spoke. She stated that what attracted her to UNL in 1996 is the passion the people who work here have for the university, and she would rather see passion, whether it is negative or positive, over apathy.

2.9 What are your priorities and what priorities has President Gold asked for you to do?

Interim Chancellor Ankerson reported that her priorities align with President Gold's in that we need to work together, build toward the future, determine a structure for UNL this is future focused so we can invest in our people and our future success. She stated that being efficient and as effective as possible in the processes across all areas of our operations is a priority.

Interim Chancellor Ankerson stated that her role is to prepare us to be able to attract the best candidate for the next permanent chancellor and helping us to think towards the future. She stated that we have a long history of being an excellent land grant university with strong engagement with Extension Educators and we have faculty and students from all over the university who are impacting the state in innovative and positive ways. She stated that we need to consider what a land-grant university of the 21st century looks like and how we intersect it with the excellence and prominence that comes from being a member of the AAU. She pointed out that these can sometimes be competing priorities because the AAU does not recognize some of the funding that a land-grant university receives.

Interim Chancellor Ankerson stated that continuing our student success is absolutely essential so that we graduate students that can be productive in their own lives and careers and who can contribute to the state and beyond. She stated that thinking towards the future with curriculum, making sure we are preparing people to be learners who have an insatiable curiosity for learning for their lifetime is essential. She asked what that means for right now and for the future. She pointed out that learning and processing information now is very different from what it was.

Interim Chancellor Ankerson stated that the faculty might be familiar with the Research Identity Framework which was started by the Office of Research and Innovation in May 2025. She noted that more than 200 faculty members convened to provide initial feedback on developing the framework and in the fall, 30 faculty members volunteered to write a draft description for initial research identity areas. Teams then identified significant scope, context, and opportunities. She reported that the research identity has identified certain constraints and also cross-cutting areas that allow us to intersect, not only here on campus, but across the system with future research efforts.

Interim Chancellor Ankerson noted that the N2025 Strategic Plan concluded at the end of 2025, and we are now in early stages of developing a new strategic framework to guide our actions and investments moving forward.

Shrader noted that the AAU status is with other universities, but he asked what practical impact it would have with the people of Nebraska. Interim Chancellor Ankerson stated that it helps us to shape grant opportunities at the federal level and is a distinction to external audiences of our excellence that will assist us in realizing new opportunities.

Shrader stated that UNL needs creative, innovative, strategic ideas and planning. He stated that he thinks people outside the university don't care about us being in the AAU. He stated that we need creative, powerful leadership that is willing to fight for us or he believes we will get run over.

3.0 Announcements

3.1 Meeting with Faculty Athletics Representative Professor Fuess

Griffin noted that the Executive Committee will be meeting with Professor Fuess, who is UNL's FAR, on February 10th.

4.0 Approval of January 20, 2026, Minutes

Shrader asked if there were any further revisions to the minutes. Hearing none he asked for a motion to approve the minutes. Leiter moved and Reimer seconded, approving the minutes. Motion approved by the Executive Committee.

5.0 Unfinished Business

No unfinished business was discussed.

6.0 New Business

6.1 Draft System Metrics

Shrader noted that the draft of the system metrics appears to be vague and believed that the Faculty Senate needs to review them and provide feedback to the administration about them. He suggested having an ad hoc committee from the Faculty Senate to look at these indicators and to report back to the Faculty Senate. The Executive Committee agreed that a subcommittee should be formed and that Senators should receive a copy of the draft metrics.

The Executive Committee discussed how many people should be on the subcommittee, with the idea of having perhaps five or seven members. The Committee agreed that the Senate President should make the final appointment to the committee. Gorman noted that a motion needs to be made to create the subcommittee, and he stated that he would write the motion and share with the Executive Committee for final approval.

6.2 Training for Dealing with Student Accommodations

Pierobon reported that he teaches a large class and pointed out that he has a large number of students with accommodations. He stated that it would be helpful to have some training on how an instructor could manage some of the challenges these students are facing. Reimer wondered if the Center for Transformative Teaching could offer this training.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:04 p.m. The next meeting of the Executive Committee will be on Tuesday, February 3, 2026, immediately following the Faculty Senate meeting. The minutes are respectfully submitted by Karen Griffin, Coordinator and Ann Tschetter, Secretary.