

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, September 18, 2025 | 2:30 to 4 p.m.

Swanson Auditorium | Nebraska Union

**Senators Present:** Adam, Anderson-Baer, Barry, Baskerville, Boring, Brophy, Butler, Carlin, Coulson, Cronin, Czolgos, Davenport, Desh, Dineh, Edgington, Flagel, Flowers, Funnah, Gayer, Green McConnell, Haake, Hall, Hanas, Harner, Johnson, Kenworthy, Kunzman, Kushner, Long, Loseke, Mastera, Mattson, Ort, Pellatz, Peterson, Radach, Re, Reetz, Rose, Rutt, Scholberg, Sedlacek, Seger-Franklin, A. Smith, Spier, Watson, Zugmier

**Absent:** Dixon, Evans, Ferris, France, Holmes, Kruger, Muhlbach, Ochoa, Oliver Andrew, Svehla, Tan, Wheeler

**Affiliates Present:**  Bergland-Riese, Carter, Frasier-Davidson, Goldrich, McDaniel, Peteranetz, Roth, Schellpeper, S. Smith, Yeats

**Affiliates Absent**: Schletzbaum, Sheldon,

Note: These are not verbatim minutes. They are a summary of the discussions at the September meeting. Until approved at the November 13 meeting, these minutes are provisional and subject to change.

**Call to Order**

President Brophy called the meeting to order at 2:30 pm, and she made a land acknowledgement. She also recognized Senator Gayer as our newest senator and thanked Senator France for serving as the parliamentary advisor.

**Consent Agenda**

The consent agenda was approved by unanimous consent minus a report from the Bylaws Committee. The Bylaws Committee was not prepared to present a report at the meeting today.

**Officer Reports**

 **President Jessie Brophy**

President Brophy and Hilary Butler, Chair of the Recognition Committee presented the Presidential Citation Awards. The first award was presented to the Sheldon Museum of Art, and they were recognized for their innovative programs and outreach that inspires exploration of art’s potential to spark awareness and meaningful engagement both within the local community and beyond. The second award was presented to the 4-H State Youth Development office, and they were recognized for the tremendous impact they have on thousands of youth and families across Nebraska through their work at the State Fair and numerous county fairs.

President Brophy shared a general update about Townhall Report and the meetings that followed the report after the townhalls held in June and July. Over 550 staff members attended the town hall meetings in person or online. She shared that there were 72 unique ideas gathered through the two town hall meetings, and these were consolidated into 5 themes and 19 action items by Past President Jordan Gonzales. The report was shared with President Gold and Chancellor Bennett and their leadership teams.

President Brophy further shared that the Executive Committee held meetings with President Gold and Chancellor Bennett and his executive leadership team in August in response to the townhall report. President Brophy described the meeting with President Gold as a positive experience that included a warm reception to the report and its ideas. She also shared that she was unable to attend the meeting with Chancellor Bennett. She thanks Associate Vice Chancellor Lennander for his help with compiling the report and a willingness to meet to discuss it.

President Brophy recorded a message congratulating seniors that was shown at graduation in August. She also attended as the representative of the Staff Senate.

President Brophy provided an update about the Academic Planning Committee (APC) and staff’s participation in the APC. She explained how the budget reduction process was invoked by Chancellor Bennett on August 6th, which means that staff are giving two seats on APC. These seats are held by President Brophy and Internal Vice President Harner. President Brophy reiterated that the Budget Reduction Proposal made public on Friday, September 12th is just a proposal and not a final decision. She encouraged staff and staff senators to attend the APC hearings that will be scheduled during the first 2 weeks in October. She also reported that the APC has received over 400 pieces of feedback about the budget reduction proposal. President Brophy noted that the shared governance process that APC is a part of is working at UNL.

President Brophy shared that she was invited to represent staff in the brief, internal search for a permanent Executive Vice Chancellor (EVC). She explained how the process moved quickly, and there was a committee that reviewed candidates and made a recommendation. She also explained how the result of the search, the appointment of Mark Button as permanent EVC, has already been announced.

Finally, President Brophy encouraged staff senators to read and share the Annual Staff Senate Report.

**Vice President for Internal Affairs Jerri Harner**

Vice President (VP) for Internal Affairs Harner started her report by introducing senators to the Husker Pantry at UNL. She explained how the Husker Pantry has been a resource available to students experiencing food insecurity, providing a limited amount of food and other items to students in need. The Husker Pantry staff has approached the Staff Senate about making the Husker Pantry available to UNL staff to provide an avenue of support considering a lack of salary increases. VP Harner explained how expanding the Husker Pantry resource to UNL staff is in the initial stages of discussion.

VP Harner shared that she has started monthly Staff Senate Committee Chairs/Co-Chairs meetings to provide advice and best practices to chairs/co-chairs. These meetings allow committee leaders to share what has worked in their committees, and she explained how the first meeting discussed creating agendas and running meetings. The second meeting will cover Standard Operating Procedures and their creation.

VP Harner explained her involvement with a committee that is creating a Request for Proposals for the next University Banking Partner. The timing of the committee and the CFP coincides with the contract with Union Bank coming to an end. She explained how the new Request for Proposals will have more inclusion of staff interests than previous requests. She stated that the new Request for Proposals has been drafted, and it is being reviewed by University Counsel.

VP Harner shared a plan for the All-District Meetings for all staff that have been scheduled for Monday, September 29th. She explained how the scheduling of these meetings was completed very quickly, so the meetings will only be held in person. There is a plan for a second set of All-District Meetings for all staff in November that will be held in a hybrid format. Facilitators were still needed for a few districts, so there was a call for volunteers. The following senators volunteered to serve as facilitators:

District 1: Sara Haake and Brian Reetz

District 2: Hilary Bulter and Matthew Boring

District 3: Doug Pellatz and Zee Cronin

District 4: Annalisa Davenport, Jon Gayer, and Ruth Oliver Andrew

District 5: Amy Ort, Rebecca Baskerville, and Dave Long

District 6: Alisa Kushner, John Re, and Jessie Brophy

District 7: Jenn Rutt

District 8: Blake France and Andrew Rose

VP Harner will hold meetings with the volunteer facilitators to help them prepare for the meetings.

VP Harner shared a plan for All-District Meetings for senators if these kinds of meetings have not already been held within each Staff Senate District. She hopes to have meetings scheduled for each district that does not have them by the end of October.

Finally, VP Harner explained a workshop event for staff senators scheduled for 2:00-3:15 pm on Tuesday, November 18th with Orly Israel who will be presenting the E. N. Thompson Forum on the evening of November 18th. She explained how only Executive Committee members and Staff Senate Committee Chairs/Co-Chairs will be initially invited due to limited seating. If additional seats are still available, other staff senators will be able to register on a first-come, first-served basis. She told senators to watch for a registration form via email.

**Vice President for External Affairs Morgan Green McConnell**

Vice President (VP) for External Affairs Green McConnell shared that she has been attending Board of Regents meetings at the suggestion of President Gold. This suggestion was made during the townhall report meeting with President Gold and his leadership team. VP Green McConnell hopes to be able to attend each meeting in-person.

VP Green McConnell shared that President Gold is scheduled to attend the November Staff Senate meeting. She is working with the Staff Advisory Councils at UNO, UNMC, and UNK to ensure that they know that can attend the President Gold portion of the November Staff Senate meeting. There will also be a call for questions for President Gold in advance of the November Staff Senate meeting.

**Secretary-Treasurer Doug Pellatz**

Nothing to report.

**Executive Advisor Jordan Gonzales**

Executive Advisor Gonzales started by asking a question about APC of President Brophy and VP Harner. He was specifically wanting to know what APC is looking to receive in terms of feedback that would be useful in making their decision what to recommend to the Chancellor. President Brophy shared that APC is looking for everything, and VP Harner agreed with this. Specifically, APC would be happy with personal stories, relative statistics, and anything else that seems helpful.

Advisor Gonzales made a general acknowledgement that there is a lot going on right now for everyone. He encouraged people to think about others, to advocate for others, and to be willing to support others.

Finally, Advisor Gonzales also shared an update about the Task Force on Workplace Culture and Engagement. He explained how the effort has been continuing and how the work continues to be very important given the present circumstances at UNL. He also asked for new task force volunteers, and he encouraged interested senators to contact him directly.

**Coordinator & Executive Secretary Joann Ross**

Coordinator and Executive Secretary Ross shared an update about helping people access to Staff Senate documents on Teams/SharePoint during the ongoing ITS migration. She acknowledged that some senators continue to have issues with getting access, and this has primarily been the senators who have not migrated yet. She explained that there is way to access the new migration account if you have not migrated, and she would be happy to share this process with any senators who are having trouble. So far, Coordinator Ross has been able to grant access to 5 people who were having issues with this strategy, and she encouraged senators to contact her for help.

**Presentation by Ben Lennander, Assistant Vice Chancellor for Human Resources & Chief People Officer**

Assistant Vice Chancellor (AVC) for Human Resources (HR) & Chief People Officer Lennander started his presentation by introducing himself and his role. AVC Lennander explained how the Chief People Officer role is new at UNL, and it was created to make HR a “people forward” unit at UNL. He hopes that he can support people going forward, and he wants to have an HR unit that is about empowering employee success, which he has elevated as the HR mission statement. AVC Lennander stated his belief that supporting employees will help with supporting students and student success.

AVC Lennander addressed the Budget Reduction Proposal that was made public on Friday, September 12th. He explained how he will be stepping into the role vacated by Vice Chancellor Mike Zeleny when it comes to Staff Senate, so he will be attending Staff Senate meetings. He also appreciates thoughtful questions even if he does not have direct answers. He explained how the $27.5 million budget reduction proposal addresses a structural budget deficit that has been carried forward for several years, and it addresses a forecasted budget shortfall based on rising costs. AVC Lennander explained that Academic Program Reductions require a review by the Academic Planning Committee (APC) and Board of Regents approval. There are also administrative cuts and realignments that do not require review by the APC. He reiterated the information provided in the announcement that stated that cutting academic departments was based on data metrics in several areas, and he explained how he was not involved in those discussions. However, he talked about imagining what it was like to make those decisions. At this time, he did not have additional information about the administrative cuts and realignments that did not require APC review, and he didn’t have a timeline for when more information about those cuts would be made public. He also reiterated the time for providing feedback to the APC and for when the APC must have feedback to the Chancellor. He explained how APC must have their recommendations to the Chancellor by October 24th, and he stated that this gives the Chancellor about a week to make a final proposal to the Board of Regents for their November meeting, allowing them to vote on the recommendations at the December 5th meeting. Finally, he talked about having a teach out and department course plan that would take about 1 or 2 years to complete, but Secretary-Treasurer Pellatz pointed out that it would require 3 years to teach out students who just started their majors in the Fall 2025 semester.

AVC Lennander answered questions from senators and staff senate meeting attendees:

What about the AAU membership? What is the best way to get back in?

AVC Lennander acknowledged that he is not an expert but would provide what he knew. He provided reasons for why UNL was kicked out of the AAU like the lack of reporting research from a medical school and how agricultural research funding is counted. He talked about how President Gold’s Odyssey to the Extraordinary Strategic Plan includes reporting the research funding of UNL and UNMC together. Executive Advisor Gonzales pointed out that Iowa State University voluntarily left the AAU due to how they are counting agricultural research funding.

Is there a window or avenue for feedback about the administrative cuts? AVC Lennander did not have an answer or suggestion for this question.

Why is there Voluntary Separation Incentive Plan (VSIP) for faculty but not for staff? AVC Lennander explained how the faculty must give up their tenure rights as part of leaving the University early in exchange for a percentage of their annual salary. In this case, it is 70% of their salary. Thus, they are foregoing their right to remain at UNL by accepting the VSIP. He explained that UNL representatives connected with other schools about offering VSIP to staff, and they were cautioned that UNL might lose its most experienced staff all at once if such an opportunity was offered to staff. He also explained how there would be staff lost who would need to be rehired due to the essential work that needs to be completed. Rehiring staff lost due to VSIP would limit any savings to the University. He stated that there is still potential to offer VSIP to staff, and he explained how other schools have offered more limited versions to staff.

What steps would APC need to take if programs are recommended to be cut? AVC Lennander looked to President Brophy and VP Harner for help with answering this question. VP Harner stated that she cannot betray APC confidentiality, but there is not a list B/plan B for cuts. AVC Lennander added that any cuts not covered by department closures would likely fall on staff and administration.

What is going on with the rumors about multiple rounds of cuts?

AVC Lennander acknowledged that he has heard this rumor too. He stated that the current budget reduction proposal is meant to prevent future cuts from being needed.

Were faculty pedagogical decisions that impact instruction considered in the data used in the metrics? President Brophy took this question for AVC Lennander, and she stated that the data metrics accounted for these kinds of decisions.

When will the data used in the metrics be made public? President Brophy took this question as well. She stated that there are no plans to make the data public, but the data descriptions are published online. She acknowledged that the descriptions are brief.

Was there a look at the impact on the university system as a whole?

AVC Lennander stated that these things are being looked at and some of these things are more long-term decisions when compared to the current Budget Reduction Proposal.

To wrap up his presentation, AVC Lennander spoke about future strategic initiatives that will be handled by HR. First, there are plans to align job descriptions for positions that complete similar work even if the titles are not the same. Second, they will be working on creating career ladders for people to advance in their current role rather than needing to change roles to move up. Finally, he explained how the Board of Regents has completed their review of their bylaws. This means that they will start looking at university system-wide policies that impact staff, and AVC Lennander will be looking to make recommendations for changes. He encouraged feedback from staff and the Staff Senate’s Personnel Affairs Committee to help with making these recommendations.

**Open Mic / New Business**

**Staff Senate Resolution – Requesting Transparency in the $27.5 Million Budget Reduction Process**

Zee Cronin and Avery Anderson-Baer from District 3 came forward to present a motion on a Staff Senate Resolution: Requesting Transparency in the $27.5 Million Budget Reduction Process. Zee Cronin, District 3, moved that the Staff Senate adopt and submit to university leadership the following resolution that mirrors a resolution passed by the Faculty Senate:

*We, the Staff Senate of the University of Nebraska–Lincoln, request that the Chancellor and the Executive Vice Chancellor publicly release, by the week of September 29-October 3, all metrics, decision criteria, and processes used to develop proposals and recommendations for the $27.5 million in budget reductions.*

*This request includes, but is not limited to:*

* *The metrics and decision criteria used to determine reductions affecting staff positions, unit reorganizations, or program eliminations.*
* *The data sources and methodology within the data application used to inform or generate these recommendations.*
* *Any additional processes or evaluative tools applied in decisions that directly impact staff roles, workload, or long-term contributions to the University community.*

The motion was seconded by Avery Anderson-Baer, District 3.

Discussed followed. There was a motion to amend the resolution to make the information public to only the departments that are being considered as part of the budget reduction proposal. A voice vote on the amendment failed. Discussion continued. Senator Green McConnell, District 4, moved to close debate (call the question), which was seconded by Spencer Hall, District 3.

Motion to adopt the resolution and send it to university leadership passed by a show of hands vote.

**Meeting Adjourned**

President Brophy adjourned the meeting at 4:06 pm. The next meeting of the Staff Senate will be on Thursday, November 13th at 2:30-4:00 pm in the Nebraska East Campus Union Great Plans Room.

The minutes are respectfully submitted by Doug Pellatz, Secretary-Treasurer, and Joann Ross, Staff Senate Coordinator and Executive Secretary.