



STAFF SENATE

University of Nebraska-Lincoln

STAFF SENATE ASSEMBLY MEETING

Thursday, Sept. 12, 2024 | 2:30 to 4:00 p.m.
Swanson Auditorium | Nebraska Union

Note: These are not verbatim minutes. They are a summary of the discussions at the full Staff Senate meeting as corrected by those participating. These are provisional and subject to change until approved at the July meeting.

2:30 p.m.

1. Call to Order

2. [A Conversation with Chancellor Bennett](#)

- Sharing information to the best of their knowledge as of today.
- Expressed thanks for the work we are doing.
- Significant increase in enrollment, enrolled more students from the state of Nebraska. Recruiting more in state students is important to the state of Nebraska.
- Retention: our year 1 to year 2 rates are at 86%, we are retaining more students.
- Have work to do on 4-year graduation rates. Focused on outcomes and enrollment.
- Transitions: We have a new System President, a new athletic reporting line, and a new Athletic Director. Nevertheless, Chancellor Bennett feels that we are positioned well for the future.
- UNL and the System have been chipping away at a structural budget deficit. Chancellor Bennett has worked through this situation previously and will do the best job he can do to navigate through it. We must live within our means. We (the University) try to predict things based on Enrollment and Enrollment growth. We do not always reach that growth and when we do not, we must pivot because the money just is not there. We must be intentional on what we are spending money on, and exercise discipline in spending the resources that we have. This will be another relatively painful year, to help with the budget deficit.
- Every person and every interaction matters – especially when it comes to enrollment.
- The budget deficit is a moving target. He has been in conversations with system president, and both would like to work to minimize impact on instruction and services.
- Overarching message, while enrollment is up and we will move up in rankings, we have some back of the house things that need resolved. No straightforward way to do it other than to do it together and get through it together.
- The development of an updated UNL strategic plan will need to wait to see what the system strategic plan is. We can then develop our institutional strategic plan.



STAFF SENATE

University of Nebraska-Lincoln

- We must embrace what it means to be a Big10 Flagship, land grant, R1 institution. Agriculture is important to UNL and the state of NE. We will not abandon our commitment to agriculture.
- What we do will be evaluated against these three things:
 - Excellence-Odyssey towards the extraordinary
 - Prominence – Position of prominence
 - Impact – what is the impact that the institution is having on the communities that we serve?
- Three representatives were added to the chancellor’s executive cabinet: Student from ASUN, President of Faculty Senate and Staff Senate. They will all have a vote in those meetings.
- Chancellor Bennett approaches work as “we’re all in this together”
 - Not using job for career advancement, or for politics, thinks about how he can genuinely and authentically work in collaboration with us to elevate the system. Encouraged Staff Senate to be engaged in the senate, speak up, and encourage Jordan to bring issues to Executive Cabinet.
- There was a consistent theme around HR – how can we make the process easier for employees. He does the same processes/things that we do for procurement/travel etc. We have an opportunity with Mike Zeleny as we are looking for an individual to lead our HR department. Channel your frustration through the senate in productive ways.
- A conversation with Mike Zeleny, who answered questions from the Document linked above
 - **QUESTION 1:** During your listening sessions before becoming chancellor, you said that one of your priorities would be an audit of staff salaries to ensure they are on par with other universities and the private sector. When can we expect this process to begin?
 - **ANSWER:** The process is currently underway as a combined effort between HR and finance/personnel with IANR. Plan to review Staff Salaries. Two categories (Admin and academic advisors) – looking at salaries across the University comparing throughout the University and through the greater market. Once the pilot is in place, a recommendation will be made. Will understand through a benchmarking process where we fall. Consider the state as a benchmarkable peer.
 - **QUESTION 2:** How is the university addressing work-life balance and high turnover rates in the context of increasing workloads, continued uncertainty in job security due to budget cuts, lack of childcare, high parking costs to even come to work, and restrictions on remote work?
 - **ANSWER:** Nothing is more important than people. How can we prioritize our people even more so that the University is a preferred place to work? The pandemic changed a lot of things about our work. We have fewer staff/faculty, more work to do than people to do it. Excited about the “Business Simplified” plan – simplify structures for how we do things. What can we (the University) make less hard? Why do certain processes exist? Can we incorporate AI?



STAFF SENATE

University of Nebraska-Lincoln

- Life in Higher Ed often means budget cuts. Shortage of workforce, if a job in your department gets eliminated work with HR to find another job on campus.
- Parking/Childcare costs. – Goal is to open to more children/families at the childcare center. High parking costs are an unpleasant fact in Lincoln. Good news, our parking rates have not increased in 10 years. Tried to do partnerships with Bus/bike things in the community to make it easier for employees to park.
- Restrictions on Remote Work – we do have more restrictions now but fewer than some of our peers. Some people have no ability to be remote
- Work/Life Balance needs to be addressed, one person, one unit at a time.
Create a culture that respects everyone’s time, personally and professionally.
- **QUESTION 3:** There is a huge discrepancy in paid leave between Office/Service (OS) and Managerial/Professional (MP) staff. For example, rates of leave accrual and the amount of sick leave granted to M/P staff after 2 years. There is also significant inequity between faculty and staff, particularly when it comes to maternity leave where faculty get paid maternity leave while staff are required to use vacation/sick leave. There is also significant gender inequity with maternity leave being up to 8 weeks while paternity leave is only allowable for 5 days. What actions will you be taking to get these system policies updated? For example, [other Big 10 institutions](#) have removed the faculty/staff and OS/MP designations in HR so that all employees are covered by the same policies.
- **ANSWER:** The Board of Regents set policies for paid leave, whether vacation, sick leave, or family leave, for the Nebraska System. It is hard to make a change there, but we did work between 2-3 years ago on it. With this Board of Regents, Zeleny believes it will go back for a first, and maybe a second reading. He agrees its unfair both ways for accrual. Office/Service are paid differently. Part of it is tied to insurance but will lobby for any change that we can have an impact on.
- **QUESTION 4:** Based on your [Aug. 20 message to campus](#), what are your three top priorities for the academic year? How can we - the Staff Senate - help you accomplish these priorities?
- **ANSWER:** Priorities for the year.
 - Embrace in letter and spirit the concept of Every Person and Every interaction Matters. Connect with our students, everyone has a personal responsibility to this
 - Remain Budget Aware – budget issues are real and impact our priorities. Think about return on investment (RIO) when we are spending our resources. We want to buy/purchase/invest in what we need. This is a season in which we should not spend it all.
 - We are each a recruiter for the University no matter where we are, and what we are doing when we are wearing our logo. Do what you can to help get enrollment up



STAFF SENATE

University of Nebraska-Lincoln

- Instructional Continuity Day on September 20. There will be a disruption to our daily cadence. We will have a lot of visitors on campus. Opportunity to start recruiting guests to our campus.
- We can like/share/post whatever we want. But if/when we air our frustrations about the University on social media, it can hinder our ability to be successful. Instead, bring it to the attention of our decision makers so there is an opportunity to address it. Give them an opportunity to correct it.

Q&A

- Senator Jill Flagel asked a Question regarding the closure of ODI.
 - Answer from Chancellor Bennett: He is committed to helping us have an inclusive campus community. He indicated that the closing of ODI was his decision to make. For us to realize our greatest level of success, DEI activity needs to be work that everyone is expected to be involved with. Chancellor Bennett indicated that when universities have an office focused on DEI work, others on campus may feel that they do not have to do so. It is critical that DEI is everyone's responsibility. Centralization of the work. Evals for VC will ask where they traveled and who they saw? Deans will be asked how they ensured that every person and every interaction mattered. If by this time next year, things are not working, we will figure out something different to do.
- Senator Jennifer Rutt, personnel affairs, asked how can staff senate be more effective in addressing issues that are not just for UNL (system wide policies.)
 - Answer from Chancellor Bennet: President Gonzales will have an expectation, to share with decision makers to share areas that we need to focus on for issues with staff. As President Gonzales shares with the executive cabinet, Chancellor Bennett will share the information with President Gold. In turn, President Gold will share with the Presidents Council. There is structure in place when an item is brought to their attention.
 - As Chancellor, he asks for a lot, he wants people to ask for a lot. If you do not ask, you do not get. Get comfortable when the answer is no, or not right now, or the timing is off. Could be a no because of the sequencing.
- Questions from Senator Scott Evans regarding Information Sharing to those working in Extension
 - Answer from Chancellor Bennet and Mike Zeleny: Working on Information sharing - with those who work in Extension. Mike Zeleny agreed to investigate the matter, and Chancellor Bennett encourage President Gonzales to follow up on.

3 p.m.

3. Consent Agenda

- a. Approve the Meeting Minutes from July 18, 2024
 - i. Senator Spencer Hall, motioned for unanimous consent, seconded by Senator Meg Kester
 - ii. Motion passed unanimously
- b. Approve [Committee Reports](#)
 - i. DEI Committee
 - ii. Elections Committee



STAFF SENATE

University of Nebraska-Lincoln

- iii. Recognition Committee
- iv. Campus Recreation Advisory Committee [*information only*]
 - 1. *Senator Casey Seger Motions, Senator Tony Lazarowicz- seconded*
 - 2. *Motion passed unanimously*

4. Officer Reports

- a. President Gonzales
 - i. UNL leadership and organizational changes
 - 1. Work will be decentralized but does not mean it will not be valued. President Gonzales will be attending Cabinet meetings, but if there are issues make them known so he can share them.
 - 2. [PDF Presidential Memo 01 - 9.12.24.pdf](#)
 - ii. Family Medical Leave update
 - iii. A discussion on change and transition
 - iv. Task Force on Staff Retention
 - 1. We need a top priority, north star. While that is our goal, we will investigate a scoreboard that will be easy for us to gauge our efforts. Need to identify supporting objectives to improve staff retention. Will be meeting with committee members and other senators to discuss how best to improve staff retention. To make us an employee of choice but also to make current employees mental health, staff morale better. Will be an inclusive process with opportunities for people to participate.
- b. Vice President for Internal Affairs Brophy
 - i. Academic Planning Committee update
 - 1. Meets every other week during the academic year. We (Staff Senate) have two seats at that table. When the conversation revolves around the budget, we will be able to be there, and VP Brophy will provide the Senate with updates.
- c. Vice President for External Affairs Harner
 - i. University of Nebraska Staff Advisory Board update
 - ii. Group is comprised of members from the different staff councils across University of Nebraska systems. The advisory board meets every 3rd Monday of the month. Purpose is to advocate for staff. Each of the four campuses must have a functioning, representative staff body before we can formally petition the Board of Regents for recognition and shared governance. UNMC just got their own council.
- d. Secretary Green McConnell
 - i. Call for District Leads –
 - ii. Will send out a follow up email, seeking nominations for District Lead which would be the point person for your district to connect with your district lead
- e. Executive Advisor Haake



STAFF SENATE

University of Nebraska-Lincoln

- i. No Report
- f. Coordinator & Executive Secretary Ross
 - i. No Report

5. Committee Reports

- i. Bylaws Committee
 - 1. Doug Peltz, D3, Co-Chair Bylaws Committee
 - 2. Working on bylaw change to 3.5 which would help with filling vacancies in Senate.
 - 3. Also working on central admin employees status in Bylaws
 - 4. Looking to assign duties to the Executive Secretary to keep track of Bylaws insuring they are up to date
- ii. Communication Committee
 - 1. Derek McConnell, D4, Co-Chair Comm Committee
 - 2. Newsletter is going out, encourage folks in their district to enroll.
 - 3. Working on formalizing process to help have things added to the newsletter or things that need shared out in Staff Senate or by Staff Senate
 - 4. Newsletter is Quarterly. Last one went out August 9, with future issues sent out around November 13, March, May, and August
- iii. Liaison Committee
 - 1. Regina Flowers, D5, Outgoing Co-Chair of Liaison Committee. Shared they elected New Co-Chairs Ashley Washburn and Amy Ort
 - 2. Bylaws are in with the materials for your review
- iv. Personnel Affairs Committee
 - 1. Meg Kester, District 6,
 - 2. Working on SOPs. They are reviewing those.
 - 3. Discussed the women and gender community breakfast that is next week
 - 4. Small committee on Bullying in the Workplace Policy
 - 5. Promotional Equity – Working with Jeff Sheldon and his colleagues. Has worked with others in the past...heading in the right direction.
 - 6. Consistency and discrepancies between MP and Office Service staff. Will Continue to pull feedback on that.
 - 7. Bikes/Scooters/Skateboards on campus – a point of discussion,
 - 8. Working to review health insurance changes (in 2 years.)

3:45 p.m.

6. New Business / Open Mic

- a. Senator Rutt – on District Leads, do we need to have something in the Bylaws for that? last term we had said that communications would work on guidelines for what that looks like. Do we have an update?



STAFF SENATE

University of Nebraska-Lincoln

- i. Senator Derek McConnell -still has it on the agenda to discuss. Some resources on SharePoint. Make them more prominent.
- ii. President Jordan Gonzales – Open to having a conversation about adding it to the bylaws. More of an experiment before we enshrine it.
- iii. Senator Doug Pellatz – Agrees on Gonzales’s point

4 p.m.

7. Adjournment -3:55 pm

- a. The next Staff Senate Assembly meeting is scheduled for Thursday, Nov. 14, 2024, at the Swanson Auditorium in the Nebraska Union [city campus].
- b. Staff Senate Assembly speaker/topic schedule:
 - i. Nov. 14
 1. Speaker: [Kevin Hanrahan](#), Professor & Former UNL Faculty Senate President
 2. Topic: Robert’s Rules of Order workshop
 - ii. Jan. 9
 1. Speaker: [Jessie Herrmann](#), UNL Director of Government Relations
 2. Topic: Media and civic engagement workshop

The University of Nebraska is a public, land-grant institution with campuses and programs across the State that reside on the past, present, and future homelands of the Pawnee, Ponca, Oto-Missouria, Omaha, Dakota, Lakota, Arapaho, Cheyenne, and Kaw Peoples, as well as the relocated Ho Chunk (Winnebago), Iowa, Sac and Fox Peoples.

Please take a moment to consider the legacies of more than 150 years of displacement, violence, settlement, and survival that bring us together here today. At the University of Nebraska, we respect and seek out inclusion of differences, realizing we can learn from each other, and we look forward to building long-lasting relationships. What we do here today, may we do it with respect, humility, and gratitude.

The minutes are respectfully submitted by Joann Ross, Coordinator, and Morgan Green McConnell, Secretary.