Report to the Faculty and the Campus Community 2002

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May 1, 2002

The first major initiative for the Faculty Senate in the academic year 2001-2002 was to reinvigorate the Senate and reestablish it as a strong voice in shared governance. A subordinate goal of that initiative was to improve communication among UNK faculty, the Faculty Senate and the administration. This is my second report to the UNK faculty, the first was sent out to UNK “all subscribers” in December. My purposes are to improve campus communication and to provide updates for some of the issues that the Faculty Senate addressed.

Budget Cuts. The State’s revenue shortfall and the resulting budget adjustments had many faculty concerned about the specific nature of the cuts on the UNK campus. We all kept an eye on the Legislature and were hopeful that budget cuts for the University would not exceed 1%. (This amounts to approximately $538,000 cut from the base budget of 2002-2003 fiscal year on top of the cuts that have already been made, $288,000.) The short version of the story is that the Legislature had their way and our additional cuts will amount to 1%. There were many “champions” of the University who stuck their necks out for us. Please take every opportunity to thank them for their support. As you may know, the discussions concerning the budget are continuing, and there will be a political backlash, perhaps an effort to have a referendum to rescind the Legislature’s actions.

The Deans should be providing the faculty with information concerning how the budget cuts will be implemented in their respective Colleges.

The Chancellor Search. I would like to express publicly my thanks to those faculty members who served on the Chancellor Search Committee. The review of applicant resumes is a tedious and time-consuming task. The interviews of the finalists will be completed by the middle of next week. If you want to have your voice heard, please attend one of the sessions with the candidates and fill out an evaluation form and send it to President Smith.

Provost Search. President Smith announced the hiring of a new provost to replace Dr. Lee Jones, who is retiring. He is Dr. Jay Noren. More information about him is available at http://www.nebraska.edu/news/releases/2002/043002NR.shtml.

Committees. The Senate appointed a new ad hoc committee, which has been directed to investigate ways to encourage students to take more modern languages courses. Professor Jerry Fox has agreed to Chair the committee, which also includes Herbert Craig, Sonja Kropp, Carol Lilly, Tim Ziller, and Glen Tracy. They have had only enough time to get organized and perhaps do some preliminary work.

The Faculty Senate ad hoc Committee on the First-Year Experience completed its report, which was accepted by the administration. The Senate asked the committee to continue as a steering committee for the pilot program this fall.

The Faculty Senate ad hoc Committee on Advising also completed its report. Ten recommendations concerning advising were forwarded to the administration and are currently under review.
The Faculty Senate ad hoc Committee on Assessment continues its work. The committee will play a crucial role in the upcoming North Central Review. Since assessment was implicated as being an important area to strengthen in UNK’s last review, assessment will be a term that seems to continually echo around campus.

The Faculty Senate standing committees are still operational, some more so than others. The executive committee will continue to press the administration to use the Senate Committee structure as the advisory structure rather than appointing their own committees.

Faculty Senate Leadership. Elections for the Faculty Senate Executive Committee elections were held on April 25 with the following results:

Daryl Kelley, Sociology, President
Glen Powell, Teacher Education, President-Elect
William Wozniak, Psychology, Past President
John Damon, English, Secretary
Deborah Bridges, Economics, Senate Representative
Bob Young, Accounting and Finance, Parliamentarian

Thanks to the outgoing Senate officers, Scott Fredrickson, Annabell Zikmund, Jose Men-Werth, and Kay Hodge.

UNK Faculty Senate Plan of Action for 2002-2003. Daryl Kelley and I presented the Plan of Action for 2002-2003 to the full Senate which was accepted. It is presented below.

Goal 1: Continue to strengthen the Faculty Senate’s communication networks
Hold faculty forums concerning academic issues, such as General Studies. Continue to improve the communication between the Senate and all faculty. Enlist the help of some Senate committees to host faculty forums concerning issues relevant to that committee, e.g., faculty workload for the Faculty Welfare Committee. Strengthen the communication with the administration, especially with the new Chancellor. Utilize experienced Faculty Senators to help with the orientation of new Senators. Investigate other means, such as the UNK Web site, to improve communication. Encourage the Senators from each College to meet periodically with their Dean to discuss issue. Encourage Senators to develop better communication with the faculty in their Colleges. The Faculty Senate Executive Committee should also plan at least one meeting with the Dean’s Council to discuss issues.

Goal 2: Establish a stronger role for faculty in UNK decision making, working toward the goal of genuine shared governance
Clarify the role of the Faculty Senate in all UNK decision making, especially with regard to budget formulation and technology planning, re-emphasize the defined roles of the existing Faculty Senate Committees as sources of faculty opinion in institutional decision making.

Goal 3: Continue the momentum of the major initiatives from previous years
The ad hoc First-year experience committee, the ad hoc Advising committee, the ad hoc Modern Languages committee are Senate committees whose agendas have not been entirely completed. The Senate recommendations concerning faculty service, four-year degree programs, advising, the first-year program, and others needs to be acted upon or further developed. The joint Senate-administration activities concerning campus diversity and the status of women (among other issues) should likewise be monitored. Support the Faculty
Senate ad hoc Assessment Committee in their crucial roles in the development and implementation of good assessment practices at UNK and in the North Central Review.

Goal 4: Improve communication with the Student Senate, Staff Senate and the campus community in general
Encourage better student participation in Senate Committees. Plan a joint Faculty, Student, and Staff Senate Activity. Work to make sure that communication channels are open and used. Expand distribution lists to include more non-faculty.

Goal 5: Address systemic sources of weakness within the Faculty Senate
Work to improve the committee structure of the Senate by encouraging the participation of all committee members, ensuring that, when appropriate, Senate committees are used to address issues rather than ad hoc administrative committees, and working with the Committee Chairs to develop meaningful agendas for each committee. Continue to provide extra support for those Senate committees, which are addressing crucial academic issues; the Faculty Welfare Committee, the Academic Information Technology Committee, and the Student Life Committee. To continue to work toward greater administrative support for the Senate with regard to office space and secretarial help.

Other Faculty Senate Issues, Announcements, Resolutions

The restructuring of the General Studies Council will be delayed a bit while the Deans discuss the proposed restructuring of the Council with their respective faculties and provide feedback to the SVCAA.

The faculty workload issue was discussed extensively at the April meeting, even though the SVCAA-appointed committee of Dale Zikmund, Roger Davis, and myself had met only once. The Senate is very interested in the proposal that will result from the committee’s work. More specifically, Senators were interested on how a policy would be implemented in the various departments, how a policy would affect College autonomy, the tenure and promotion process, and how it would affect the annual review process. The committee will develop specific proposals which will then be broadly disseminated and discussed across campus.

The Service issue was also discussed in April after a resolution was received from the Faculty Workload Committee. The discussion followed a similar path as the workload issue. However, the previous two Senate resolutions from 2000-2001 concerning service were rescinded and the following resolution was passed.

Whereas the Board of Regents has determined that within the structure of the University, the Administration and the faculty, “carry out their respective responsibilities not as isolated entities, but as major and primary constituents of a total University organization and structure that remain mutually interdependent, and which must be supportive of the purposes, functions, and obligations of the University.” (Bylaws, Chapter II, 2.0), and

Whereas the Board of Regents defines one of the duties of Academic Responsibility of the University faculty as the obligation to, “Participate upon request in the activities of the University in the areas of student advising and public service, and as appropriate, in the activities of the campus, and the University,” (Bylaws Chapter IV. 4.1), and

Whereas the University of Nebraska at Kearney Guidelines on Evaluation, Rank, Tenure
and Personnel Files states that, “Service to the University and the larger communities encompassing the University contributes to and grows from fine teaching. It is expected of the faculty.” (Guidelines. I, C.), and

Whereas the UNK Guidelines are also specific in defining the criteria for promotion and tenure in the following terms, “Teaching, scholarship, and service, both in and outside of the University, are the general areas to be used by reviewers in determining faculty performance.” (Guidelines, VI, A.), therefore,

Be it resolved that the Faculty Senate of the University of Nebraska at Kearney, in accordance with Regent and University policy, hereby declares that faculty service is an essential component of the required and expected responsibilities of shared governance and the evaluation of faculty performance.

In December the Senate passed a resolution concerning 4-year Bachelor degrees.

Whereas, as published in the University of Nebraska at Kearney catalog, the minimum number of hours required for a Bachelors degree is 125 hours,

Whereas, the traditional time frame for the completion of a Bachelors degree is 4 years or 8 semesters, which is attainable if the student assumes a course load of approximately 16 hours per semester,

Whereas, 4 years seems to be a reasonable length of time for a student in good academic standing to achieve a Bachelors degree,

Whereas, some institutions use the guarantee of completing a degree in four years as an advertising ploy to attract students who are concerned about finishing a degree in a reasonable amount of time,

Whereas, there is considerable pressure from outside agencies to meet accreditation standards by expanding the number of required courses that increases the total number of required hours so far beyond the minimum that it is impossible for students to complete a degree in 4 years, especially if they change majors or cannot attend classes in the summer,

Whereas, several UNK programs now exist for which the total number of required hours does not make it practical for students to complete their degrees in four years,

Be it resolved, that the University of Nebraska at Kearney Faculty Senate urges the faculty, the administration and the general public to promote and adhere to the concept of a 4-year Bachelors degree including the Bachelor of Arts, the Bachelor of Science, the Bachelor of Arts in Education, the Bachelor of Science in Education, and the Bachelor of Fine Arts, in program development, in establishing accreditation requirements, and in meeting accreditation requirements.
The Senate discussed the removal of UNK all subscribers option in Lotus Notes e-mail. The new e-mail distribution system is seen as more inconvenient than the old system, and difficulties concerning the screening of “appropriate” messages for distribution were pointed out. However, the new system was changed by administrative directive and there was little the Senate could do. The item will probably return in the future as the new procedures are tested.

Mike Herbison visited the Senate in December and described the procedure for the “pruning” of unused and/or defunct journals. The Senate was satisfied with the process for deciding which holdings will go. Herbison asked for the cooperation of the faculty in making these decisions.

Problems concerning the centralized scheduling program continued to be described in Senate and forwarded to the administration. The project is still a “work in progress” and will be fine tuned as problems come up.

The Faculty Senate commended the First–year Experience Committee, the Advising Committee, and the James E. Smith World Affairs Conference Steering Committee for their outstanding contributions to the institution this year.

The Senate congratulated the former Faculty Senate Leaders who are retiring this year, Annabell Zikmund, Dale Zikmund and Elsie Cafferty.

Summary of Issues Still Open or Continuing.
I reported that the work of the First Year Committee will continue with the implementation of the pilot program. The recommendations of the Advising Committee are under review by the administration. The restructuring of General Studies Council is in process. The Assessment Committee’s work will become a very important for the North Central review. The faculty were encouraged to participate in the Chancellor candidate interviews. The faculty are encouraged to attend the new Education building dedication on May 9.