Faculty Welfare Committee  
Copeland Hall 203 G  
University of Nebraska Kearney

Minutes  
7 Feb. 2014 – 3:30 p.m.

Present: Jeremy Dillon (Chair); Tommy Hansen; William Wozniak; Ronald Wirtz; Ting-Lan Chen  
Absent: Kimberly Carlson; David Palmer

Dillon opened the meeting with a review of the MOU document that had been discussed previously. Discussion focused on whether or not the word “should” ought to be removed from the document in order to provide a stronger statement.

Consensus was for the removal of “should,” with David Palmer voting by proxy. Dillon stated that he would revise the document and send it to the committee for review, and that he would forward it as well to George Lawson in the absence of Rick Miller.

The second item on the agenda concerned the proposed development of a questionnaire to determine the state of Faculty morale on the UNK campus. Wirtz noted that this matter had come up in the past, and that he had served as a member of an Employment Focus Group in March, 2009 in an effort to discover why so many new faculty members leave UNK after only one or two years.

Wozniak had conducted research on morale surveys, both by a brief search of the literature on industrial psychology and by finding several examples of faculty morale surveys used in the higher education and school environments. Wozniak provided an example from Appalachian State University, dated March 2013. By email, he provided additional documentation to the Committee, including reports from Kansas State University (1994), James Madison University (2007), a document from the British Journal of Educational Psychology (2000), and a chapter on morale surveys from the book Personnel relations: their application in a democracy by J.E. Walters (1945).

Wozniak suggested that the maximum length of any questionnaire should be no more than fifty questions. He also suggested sending the questionnaire to Staff Senate to see if they were interested in doing a similar survey. He stated that he would be willing to collate questions for the survey as they were developed.

Wirtz suggested sending the proposed questionnaire to Faculty Senate for their review before actually making it available in Qualtrics. Wirtz noted that it might also be useful to University Administration as a way to identify areas that might be impacting faculty morale.

Dillon stated that he had envisioned something more open-ended than the examples provided. Wozniak stated that a number of questions could be set up to provide for comments. Wozniak also suggested that the committee take an example to Faculty Senate so that they actually have something concrete to discuss.

After further discussion, it was decided that the committee would meet again in two weeks (on Feb. 21) with the goal of roughing out an initial draft of the survey.

Meeting was adjourned at approximately 4:10 p.m.
Memorandum of Understanding on Shared Governance

Shared governance is one of the key tenets of higher education and refers to the responsibilities of faculty, academic staff, and administrators with regard to decision-making about the operation of their institution. According to the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), governance in higher education should result from cooperation and interdependence between and among the administration, governing board, faculty, academic staff, and where appropriate, students. The faculty have primary responsibility for such fundamental areas as curriculum, subject matter and methods of instruction, research, faculty status, and those aspects of student life that relate to the educational process. In addition, the AAUP emphasizes the importance of faculty involvement in personnel decisions, selection of administrators, preparation of the budget, and determination of educational policies according to the AAUP Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities.

At the University of Nebraska at Kearney (UNK), the following principles inform decisions that require shared governance:

1. Faculty and staff with academic responsibilities set academic standards and curriculum.

Faculty and academic staff, particularly those directly involved in teaching and conducting research, have the leading role in determining curriculum content, degree and certificate requirements, procedures and standards of instruction, student achievement/competence standards, grading, and all matters relating to student progress in academic programs. To fulfill this responsibility effectively, faculty and academic staff must be given access to relevant information and resources.

2. Faculty and academic staff require academic freedom.

Faculty and academic staff engaged in teaching and research must be able to exercise independent academic judgment in the conduct of their teaching and research. Administrators and administrative staff should not interfere in these matters except in proven cases of academic incompetence or wrongdoing. A strong tenure system is the key to protecting academic freedom against intimidation and arbitrary dismissal of faculty. Beyond that, protections of free expression should be extended to all faculty and staff to ensure openness, objectivity and creativity.

3. Faculty and academic staff have primary responsibility for decisions on academic personnel and status.

Faculty should have the primary (albeit not exclusive) initial role in interviewing and recommending candidates for academic appointment to the faculty, as well as administrative appointments that impact directly on academic issues, and a continuing role in decisions related to tenure, promotion and dismissal, research support, sabbaticals, standards of faculty competence and ethical conduct, and other incentives and measures of academic quality. Similarly, academic staff have the primary role in interviewing and recommending candidates for appointment to their ranks, for advancement and promotion and for other incentives and measures of professional quality.

4. Structures that promote the principles of shared governance include:

A well-functioning college or university is one that ensures that all faculty and all staff—from full professors to adjunct lecturers, from librarians to departmental support staff have the opportunity for their voices to be heard and given proper consideration in decisions that affect the mission and operation of the university. At UNK, the Faculty Senate, UNK Education Association (UNKEA), and the Staff Senate all have significant roles in shared governance. Areas of primary responsibility granted to the Faculty Senate are delineated in the Board of Regents By-Laws and include issues addressed by the following mandated committees: Academic Affairs, Professional Conduct, Grievance, and Academic Freedom and Tenure. The union and collective bargaining do not supplant the effective structures of shared governance, i.e., those structures that derive their legitimacy from genuine representation of faculty and staff. Areas of responsibility granted to UNKEA are contained in state law, delineated in the contract and arrived at through collective bargaining, which strengthens collegiality by establishing and enforcing contractual ground rules supporting it. The Staff Senate acts in an advisory capacity to the Chancellor, the administration, and other University groups in accordance with its bylaws of October 2008.

Rewrite compiled at the meeting of the Faculty Senate 12/2013
Additional changes approved by Faculty Senate Faculty Welfare Committee 2/7/14