

## **IANR Liaison Committee Meeting**

January 12<sup>th</sup>, 2021, 10 am – 11am, Zoom

Attendees: VC Boehm, AVC Bischoff, Azzeddine Azzam, Tracy Behnken, Mary-Grace Danao, Maria de Guzman, Ron Lewis, Stephen Wegulo, Carlos Urrea Florez, Anna Lowe (recorder)

### **Agenda**

#### COVID-19 Update

As a scientist himself, VC Boehm shared that the use of RNA to develop a vaccine is phenomenal. He indicated that at the University we have role in engaging individuals to understand and help them develop critical thinking skills as well as to be able to discern fact from fiction.

Yesterday, Chancellor Green shared details regarding the Saliva Based Testing program implemented for Spring 2021. The Veterinary Diagnostic Center has been planning for this since November 2020. They will be processing the results. Faculty, staff, and students who will be on campus in the spring semester are required to get tested. The university will work with the Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department to determine if additional saliva-based testing will be needed during the semester. Additional information regarding testing and the app can be found at <https://covid19.unl.edu/spring-testing>.

VC Boehm shared that of the 2,000 IANR faculty and staff, 600 do not work or live in Lincoln. IANR is working with the Extension Leadership Team to determine the best approach to make saliva based testing available to all IANR employees including county based office staff.

President Carter is in continued dialogue with Governor Ricketts to have the University to the top of the vaccination allocation line as soon as appropriate. VC Boehm proposed to the chancellor's office that there would be two tiers of priority of IANR faculty/staff for the vaccine. In the top tier would be included those working with livestock, research, in the classroom, etc.

The president's cabinet is also having conversations about travel restrictions related to COVID-19. No updates available at this current time.

#### IANR Budget Update

IANR leadership has been working on how to handle a \$10.1 million (7.7%) budget reduction. The initial proposal included the elimination of the Textiles, Merchandising and Fashion Design department and the HRTM program in CASNR. VC Boehm was pleased that the TMFD department and the tenured faculty in CASNR's HRTM department will not be eliminated. At tomorrow's Academic Planning Committee meeting, Chancellor Green and the committee will discuss how to proceed with the remaining amount of budget reduction.

VC Boehm reiterated a kudos to all IANR's faculty, staff, and students. If the faculty, staff and students continue to focus on teaching, extension/outreach, and research, the leadership team will remain concentrated on managing resources that will allow us as an entity to remain engaged towards the same mission of serving the people of Nebraska.

### Update on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Journey

AVC Bischoff directed the Liaison Committee to review IANR's diversity, equity and inclusion webpage for a list of DEI activities and initiatives. The recently formed IANR DEI advisory group has been meeting with AVC Bischoff and is scheduled to meet with the IANR Senior Leadership Team (SLT) next week to provide feedback on our journey to this point. The SLT will be meeting with the advisory group twice a year at a minimum to work collectively on how we can make and ensure that IANR is a more equitable place. IANR coordinates all efforts including IANR's strategic framework with UNL's Diversity and Inclusion office led by VC Marco Barker.

UNL is also a part of the iChange Network sponsored by APLU (Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities). iChange provides institutions a three-year institutional change effort to help reform their recruitment, hiring and retention practices. UNL has completed its first year, which has focused on a self-assessment of where UNL sits in regards to recruitment, hiring, and retention. The next two years will be focused on developing action steps.

AVC Bischoff shared about an upcoming DEI virtual event. IANR is sponsoring a film screening of *Picture a Scientist* on February 23<sup>rd</sup>-25<sup>th</sup> concluding with a panel discussion on the afternoon of February 25<sup>th</sup>. This will hopefully generate conversations about the treatment of female scientists within the Institute.

VC Boehm reiterated the commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion from the IANR leadership team and their focus on having open and transparent dialogues on what is working and what is not working in terms of DEI.

### Activity Insight Update

VC Boehm has commissioned a group of 17 faculty of various ranks, facilitated by AVC Bischoff to think about annual evaluation. He believes that the process of evaluating faculty excellence begins with the annual review process. He has charged the group to think about what the annual review process currently looks like and what is working and not working? Then the group will consider what role, if any does Activity Insight have in that process?

### Federal Engagement

VC Boehm shared a few recent exciting developments relating to UNL, particularly IANR and Federal Engagement.

David Richardson, assistant secretary of Homeland Security's Countering Weapons of Mass Destruction Office and John Waters, Deputy Assistant Secretary toured IANR facilities and met with IANR faculty and administrators to discuss the role of the university and its researchers in the security of the food supply. IANR is able to contribute to the security of food, agriculture and veterinary systems in the US.

Congressman Jeff Fortenberry was successful in achieving \$11.2 million in federal funding for planning and design of a USDA Agricultural Research Service facility. Nebraska Innovation Campus at UNL will be the site of this facility.

### Filing vacancy of Liaison Committee member

Today is Tracy Behnken's last meeting with the Liaison Committee. She is leaving the University for another opportunity. Tracy has been with UNL for 32 ½ years. She started as an extension assistant

in Douglas County and has recently served as a unit leader for the past 4.5 years in Washington County. VC Boehm thanked Tracy for her contributions and service and congratulated her on the new opportunity.

The IANR Bylaws state, "Interim vacancies of elected positions shall be filled by the Liaison Committee through appointment of an eligible person to serve the remainder of the term." The committee discussed the need to continue diversity in committee membership, the committee decided to fill the position with another extension educator. The committee unanimously decided that they would offer the position to Deb Weitzenkamp who was the other extension educator nominee on the Spring 2020 Liaison Committee ballot.

Meeting adjourned at 10:20 am

Distributed electronically to the Liaison Committee for review.