



November 5, 2019 | 7:00 p.m.  
Nebraska Union | Ballroom

## CALL TO ORDER

## OPEN FORUM

Professor Shane Farritor, from the Mechanical and Materials Engineering Department, introduced himself as one of the 4 co-chairs of the committee tasked with creating a 2025 strategic plan for the University of Nebraska. He proceeded to present slides on the committee's work. A few key points were as follows:

1. Strategic Vision. The overarching theme is “every person and every interaction matter”. This theme is subdivided into four aspirations encompassing the university's mission of education, research, outreach, and service. There are six strategies outlined to achieve these aspirations. The strategic vision defines where the University wants to be in 25 years.
2. There were 32 members of the committee that were tasked to create the 5-year strategic plan. Currently the committee is gathering feedback from different stakeholders at the University. The easiest way to provide feedback is the online forum available at: <https://www.unl.edu/chancellor/n2025-draft-report>. The current timeline indicates that the plan will be finalized and implementation will begin in February.

Assembly representatives asked the following questions, the answers provided by Dr. Farritor follow each question.

Question. What are the metrics, checks, and balances to ensure the new policies are put into practice?

Answer. Metrics are being created for each of the strategies and will be made part of the plan, but are not available yet.

Q. How will the University ensure transparency on reports showing the performance of the University in terms of the metrics defined?

A. There are plans and discussion ongoing regarding how far transparency should go. For example, UNO has a system of quarterly reports made public. The current questions are how public should this information be and how often should it be made available.

Q. How does the strategic plan pertain to graduate students?

A. The plan is graduate student heavy. Graduate students are essential for research, fellowships, proposal writing, teaching, publishing, and recruiting and retention of undergraduates into our graduate programs.

Q. How will the plan ensure sustainability and student input?

A. One example is an initiative in the plan to allow students to co-create their University experience. Majors are meant to be more modular and flexible, more experimental learning is to be introduced. The major pathway for current student input on the 2025 strategic plan is the website:

<https://www.unl.edu/chancellor/n2025-draft-report>.

Q. How does the plan address current major challenges in higher education such as mental health and sexual misconduct. Also, how does the plan address the changing demographics of the state?

A. The plan encompasses resource management and sustainability, administrative or otherwise, which includes health, wellness, and sexual misconduct. The plan does not currently specifically address any of these issues, but the topic of mental health has been constantly brought up in the feedback the committee has received and is likely to be included before February. The changing demographic of the state is indirectly addressed in the first aim of equity, access, and diversity.

D&I Chair Peters informed the Assembly of the formation of the Council of Inclusive Excellence and Diversity as part of the University's Office of Diversity and Inclusion. She invited all representatives to visit [diversity.unl.edu](http://diversity.unl.edu) to know the Council's members and bring up ideas, concerns, and suggestions.

Ruth Oliver, Assistant Director of Graduate Enrollment, addressed the assembly inviting representatives to reach out to her if they wanted to be a part of the Diversity and Inclusion conversations on campus. Graduate students are encouraged to send her anything they would like to discuss.

Q. How will the university improve access to experiential learning experiences for undergraduates, given that Regent's scholarships do not cover tuition abroad and internships during Capstone projects are not paid? (ASUN Representative)

A. Budget decisions will be made based on this plan, there are alternative learning experiences such as research on campus.

Q. What other strategies are being implemented to communicate initiatives to students and gather student feedback, emails are not effective?

A. No other strategies have been considered, but suggestions are welcomed.

Q. How will the new budget model affect the plan?

A. A lot of budget power is being given to colleges, the expectation is that the budget model will support the strategies.

Ruth Oliver and Erin Omar from Graduate Studies introduced themselves. They informed representatives of graduate studies resources and workshops. They asked that graduate students let them know of specific times that students from their departments are unavailable (i.e. seminars). VPSA Sotelo Asked if they would consider offering topics more than once a semester. Graduate Studies replied that they would not consider that, but they have considered the idea of offering all workshops in a one day or two day orientation type session.

## APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

The minutes were approved unanimously.

## EXECUTIVE REPORTS

President Ratcliff

President Ratcliff, informed he was part of a 27 person meeting regarding health insurance at the University. Some information in the meeting was considered confidential. A few key takeaways were:  
- Student plan is not self insured, while the Faculty plan is self insured. For Faculty, the University absorbs any losses involved in the insurance plan, while for students the insurance company absorbs the losses. This is a reason why the students premiums are raised.

- The health insurance options should be finalized by March 15<sup>th</sup> to allow time for UNMC's timeline (starting in May).
- International students will continue to be required to have University insurance. The reason why this was implemented was because students were seeking plans that were cheaper but "inadequate".
- A reason behind other universities having better insurance (lower premiums and out of pocket costs, and better healthcare options) is that at UNL there is lower undergraduate enrollment in University insurance plans, while most graduate students are left with no other option but to enroll in University plans. We are dramatically worse than other big 10 schools, to the point that we are the baseline of the worst situation in terms of graduate student fees and student insurance.
- In the following two months the University will put out a call for insurance companies to bid, and will assess plans.

Representative Etheredge requested to explain the term "self-insured" again. President Ratcliff reiterated the meaning of this term.

Representative Leighty asked to elaborate on the losses that are assumed by the University and insurance companies. President Ratcliff said he will ask and bring the information.

Representative Leighty asked what would be the process for negotiations on plans and premiums, and when will the student body know and be asked for input. President Ratcliff indicated he does not know yet, and he will ask next time the group meets.

Representative Fruhling asked to re explain the restrictiveness placed upon international students? President Ratcliff reiterated the reasoning he was given for the limitations placed upon international graduate students.

VPSA Sotelo asked which companies insure other Big 10 schools and why is the situation at UNL so much worse? President Ratcliff mentioned that graduate students are organized at many of other Big 10 schools. He elaborated that at other universities all students are automatically opted in to the university insurance plans, while at UNL only graduate students are automatically opted in. This results in less student users of university insurance plans.

Executive Vice President Juritsch

Nothing to report

Vice President of Student Affairs Sotelo

VPSA Sotelo commented on attending the EVC candidate meetings. She mentioned that she had seen a message from the Chancellor expressing that the search had not identified an ideal candidate. President Ratcliff later clarified that this message was referring to an older search and that the current EVC search still expects to recommend a candidate. VPSA Sotelo also commented that she will be attending the University Parking Committee meeting on November 14<sup>th</sup> and asked representative for any input they may want her to bring up at this meeting.

Vice President of Representation Rodene

VPR Rodene explained that once a department has seen more than two unexcused absences an At Large position would be open in place of that department's seat in the assembly. He encouraged members to review their absences.

Vice President of Finance Huben

Nothing to report

## COMMITTEE REPORTS

### Professional Development

PD Co-chair Richards informed the assembly that they are thinking of ways to better inform graduate students of Graduate Studies and Professional Development workshops and events. For this they have created the twitter account @unlgsaprodev. They are working on ways to get departments more involved in events, for example by offering zoom meetings and snacks. They asked the assembly on suggestions regarding who to follow. VPSA Sotelo suggested following the hashtag #academictwitter.

### Social Events

The social events committee is planning an event on east campus for bowling during this upcoming March. They requested ideas for events from the assembly.

### Diversity and Inclusion

D&I Chair Peters informed the assembly that she has attended the first D&I Council Meeting, however, there has not been activities assigned yet. She expects the following month to be more active. She informed the assembly of the State of Diversity event in which VC Barker will inform the University community on the current state of diversity and where it needs to go. Information on this and other events is available in the Office of Diversity and Inclusion website <https://diversity.unl.edu/>. She informed the assembly that Oasis and Graduate Studies are planning an inclusive retreat that will be accessible for graduate students. She also informed the assembly of the D&I Committee attendance to the LGBTQA+ dinner.

Representative Hage asked what would be the best way to spread information to international students regarding housing. Ruth (Graduate Studies) mentioned the possibility of creating a University resource for connecting people and housing information. He also asked what ideas exist for a mental health protocol, to report mental health issues while protecting students' rights, and to create awareness and ensure faculty know how to respond to mental health symptoms when they see them. Eva Bachman (Graduate Studies) mentioned she is the person whom graduate student are supposed to contact for mental health concerns. CAPS moving from long to short term care necessitates that students are connected with community providers more quickly and Graduate Studies is open to student suggestions and input in this manner.

## NEW BUSINESS

See President Ratcliff's report.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

- VPSA Sotelo announced the DearUNL Panel happening at The Bay on Friday 11/15, 10:30 am
- Representative Taladay mentioned that communication studies is partnering with the University Health Center to conduct student focus groups. Those interested will be participating on Monday Nov 18<sup>th</sup> 3-5 pm. Email: [bwornan@huskers.unl.edu](mailto:bwornan@huskers.unl.edu).
- Representative Zhou mentioned that the International Student Scholars is organizing the Dinner in Nebraska event, and asked for students, faculty, and staff to sign up. The due date is 11/11.

ADJOURNMENT