

2019

Faculty Senate Annual Report 2018-2019

UNO Faculty Senate
University of Nebraska at Omaha

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Faculty colleagues,

I wish all of you the very best this week as we bring this academic year to a close. It is a busy time for faculty, staff, and especially students, but this week culminates in Commencement, which is always a great day as well as a reminder of what a special community UNO is. Thank you for all that you do.

After a long and thorough search process, Chancellor Jeffrey Gold announced last week that Dr. Sacha Kopp will be UNO's next Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, succeeding Dr. B.J. Reed. Dr. Kopp served as Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at the State University of New York at Stony Brook. He brings the experience of helping a public university grow in stature and of building connections across a large state university system. In my meetings with him, I have found Dr. Kopp to be a thoughtful and engaged listener who understands that UNO is a university on the move, with its own distinct culture. We welcome Dr. Kopp and his family to Omaha and look forward to working with him.

I have news to report from the Faculty Senate as well. Over the past several months, the Faculty Senate Bylaws Revision Committee has worked to bring up to date the written policies and procedures of the Senate. Of particular importance are bylaws concerning the election of new senators from each college; the process for replacing senators due to illness, sabbaticals, and other reasons; and rules pertaining to the meetings, agenda, and reports of the Senate and its standing committees. The Faculty Senate will vote on the updated bylaws at our last meeting of the year, Wednesday May 8th at 2PM in CEC 230/231; as with all meetings of the Faculty Senate, visitors are invited to attend.

Also at our May 8th meeting, Dr. Candice Batton, Assistant Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, will discuss AEFIS and the plans for a pilot at UNO in 2019-20. AEFIS is a comprehensive software platform that supports activities related to program review, program and institutional accreditation, course and program assessment, course evaluations, faculty activity reporting (e.g., annual review), curriculum mapping, and student competency transcript. Dr. Batton will provide an overview of AEFIS, a comparison to what we currently have in place at UNO, and a history and timeline for moving forward with the pilot. A decision about adopting AEFIS will not be made until after the pilot.

The Faculty Senate has given its support to UNO moving ahead with its plans to begin offering courses through a platform managed by the College Consortium on a pilot basis. In meetings with the Faculty Senate's Academic and Curricular Affairs Committee and Educational Resources and Services Committee, Dr. Jaci Lindburg (Director of Digital Learning) described College Consortium as a mediator that will allow UNO to offer courses to students at member universities. This would offer UNO the potential to enroll additional students in online courses with excess capacity. There is currently no plan to allow UNO students to take courses through the platform as a substitute for UNO requirements.

We are working with Doug Ewald, Vice Chancellor for Business, Finance, and Business Development, to improve UNO's mail service. We are exploring the possibility of a separate process for scanning mail that does not need to be routed through UNMC. In the meantime, to avoid delays in mail delivery, plan to drop off mail at the UNO window 11AM-3PM, Monday-Friday. There are now ¾ inch mail slots in place for secure outgoing mail. Also, UNO has implemented check-lists (e.g., a return mail address) for certified mail and foreign packages; UNO mail services will not accept these items until all the items on these check-lists are complete. Finally, bulk mailing rates are still available through USPS, but not at UNO.

I continue to receive messages from faculty who have had negative experiences with UMR. This is particularly true for families trying to see their preferred mental health providers, because many in the Omaha area do not take UMR. This issue is personal for me, as I have faced mental health issues myself. I am stepping down as President at the end of the academic year (more to follow!), but I will remain active in the Senate as Past President for another year. I will continue to work with UNO Human Relations and NU Central Administration to address these and other problems with UMR. Please feel free to contact me with your questions and concerns; we need to make sure you are being heard.

Yes, this is the last time that I will be addressing you as Faculty Senate President! It has been an informative and rewarding experience, but most importantly, it has been an honor representing you. I am leaving my post in the most capable hands of our President-Elect Matt Hale, who will serve you well.

My very best wishes and thanks to all of you. It has been a great year!

Chris