

Dean's Advisory Board Meeting Notes

April 29, 2025 | 2:30 p.m. | Zoom

Attending: Tari Haro, Tony Sattler, Juan Perez, Shari Veil, Courtney Rodgers, Josh Planos, LaSharah Bunting, Jenna Johnson, Emily Duskow, Tia Newcomer, Paula Lavigne, Dakarai Aarons, Paige Dimakos, Haley Hamel

Shari Veil opened the meeting by expressing gratitude to Josh Planos for his participation in the site visit for the Certification in Education in Public Relations.

Veil then announced the appointment of three new faculty members. Kelsey Slater will join as an Assistant Professor in Sports Promotion, and Elle Stecher will start as an Assistant Professor of Practice in Advertising and Public Relations, both beginning in August. Additionally, Bill Doleman, currently a temporary lecturer, will transition to a permanent Assistant Professor of Practice position in Sports Media.

Continuing with announcements, Veil highlighted the college's success at the recent Midwest Broadcast Journalists Association Conference, where it received 23 Eric Severeid Awards and 10 Mark of Excellence Awards.

Veil proceeded to present the recent recommendations from a task force that evaluated the college's graduate programs. She indicated that the college would move forward with votes on the following items next week:

- Changing the name of the specialization in integrated media communications to strategic communication
- Adopting a core curriculum as recommended by the task force
- Changing the name of the PR & Social Media Graduate certificate to Public Relations Graduate certificate
- Discontinuing the specialization in professional journalism
- Requiring the use of Canvas templates for online courses

Veil further noted the long-term aspiration to rename the full master's degree to a Master of Arts in Strategic Communications and to develop areas of emphasis in sports promotion (existing), data and analytics, and public relations.

Following the presentation of the recommendations, Veil asked the group for feedback. Juan Perez acknowledged the difficult decision to discontinue professional journalism due to enrollment challenges but expressed appreciation for the future inclusion of data and analytics.

Tony Sattler echoed the disappointment regarding student enrollment but voiced support for the strategic communications focus. Emily Duskow seconded the support for the program's direction, emphasizing the focus on areas with high demand for graduate-level training. Tari Haro agreed, noting the increasing need for expertise in crisis management.

Tia Newcomer inquired about the primary career paths the program would align with, emphasizing the importance of a business background in hiring and suggesting potential partnerships with the College of Business. Veil responded that past attempts at such partnerships were unsuccessful and that the current goal is to establish a cohesive program similar to the College of Business's MBA program.

Courtney Rodgers asked about the metrics for success for this initiative, specifically growth in the master's program versus the certificates. Veil clarified that while both are beneficial, growth in the master's program is the primary objective. Duskow pointed out the opportune timing for certificate programs given the current economic climate and industry shifts, potentially attracting individuals seeking new skills or career changes.

Veil then shared a university initiative for short, non-degree seeking programs aimed at alumni and working professionals, offered for a flat fee with a digital badge upon completion. She solicited feedback on potential areas for the college to offer such programs. Paula Lavigne suggested focusing on Artificial Intelligence (AI), as current AI training lacks specific tailoring to their disciplines.

The discussion then shifted to strategic planning. Veil presented the college's current strategic plan, in its final year, alongside the recently developed University of Nebraska's strategic pillars. She outlined the previous process for establishing the college's plan and then invited feedback on the upcoming strategic planning process.

Tia Newcomer observed the numerous metrics in both the college's current plan and the university pillars, questioning if success on university metrics was linked to funding. Veil clarified that there is no direct link currently but indicated that the college has some flexibility in selecting relevant university metrics. Courtney Rodgers concurred on the high number of metrics and recommended concentrating on those that directly inform decision-making. Veil acknowledged the possibility of reducing the number of metrics.

Newcomer proposed aiming for approximately three key focus areas to effectively communicate with donors and stakeholders. Rodgers suggested proactively drafting press releases around key metrics to ensure alignment with their desired narrative.

Veil sought input on the timing of developing a new strategic plan, specifically whether to begin now to avoid a gap between plans or to wait. Sattler advised planning in advance to prevent gaps but also stressed the importance of focusing on timing and priorities for the future plan given current resource limitations. Newcomer recommended a "now, near, future" framework for prioritization. Rodgers suggested that, given the current environmental uncertainty, prioritizing the development of a long-term "north star" with shorter-term, adaptable plans might be more prudent.

Dakarai Aarons inquired about the finalization timeline for the university's strategic plan. Veil confirmed it was sufficiently finalized to allow the college to commence its planning process.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:33 p.m. CDT.