

**PERSONAL STATEMENTS FOR
ELECTIONS TO ACADEMIC PLANNING COMMITTEE,
ACADEMIC RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES COMMITTEE,
ACADEMIC RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES PANEL
SPRING 2024**

ACADEMIC PLANNING COMMITTEE:

Gwendolyn Combs, Associate Professor of Management, College of Business:

I am excited about the possibility of serving on the Academic Planning Committee (APC). The APC serves a critical role in formulating, recommending, and reviewing academic goals and programs for the University of Nebraska Lincoln (UNL). Faculty, staff, and students depend on and respect the APC for its thoroughness in the discharge of its duties. The work of the APC contributes to and ensures the building and sustainability of a campus direction and environment that serves the needs of our faculty, students, and other stakeholders at the highest level possible. Given that UNL is the flagship campus of a land grant institution operating in a climate experiencing major shifts in public perceptions of higher education, it is important that the APC and other campus governing entities strive to develop and preserve the highest academic and educational quality possible.

I received my Ph.D. from UNL and have been a faculty member for 25 years. I have also had the opportunity to experience UNL from the administrative perspective of Department Chair in my college, as Director of Faculty Diversity and Inclusion in the Office of Academic and Faculty Affairs, Director of Faculty Diversity and Inclusion in the Office of Diversity and Inclusion, member of the Faculty Senate Diversity and Inclusion Committee, and Coordinator for the Chancellor's Diversity Commissions for the Chancellor's Office. My teaching and administrative roles have allowed me to witness and participate in UNL operations at important levels and to gain valuable knowledge of the development, implementation, and integration of policy and other initiatives important to our campus. My responsibilities in the roles in which I have served allowed me to work with faculty and administrators at many levels of the campus and the NU Systems office.

Prior to earning my doctoral degree from UNL, I received my undergraduate degree from Wellesley College, (Wellesley, MA) and MBA from Washington University (St. Louis, MO). My scholarship focuses on the dynamics of human resource management, diversity, equity, and inclusion practices on organizational outcomes, employee behaviors, and wellbeing. Scholarly publications and presentations center on the areas of recruitment and selection, intersectional identities, and inter-group behaviors. I teach courses in human resources management areas and present in the College of Business Executive Education Program.

It would be an extreme honor to serve on the UNL Academic Planning Committee. If elected to the APC, I will serve with diligence and enthusiasm. <https://business.unl.edu/people/gcombs>

Tim Gay, Professor, Physics and Astronomy:

I have been a faculty member at UNL for over thirty years and a Faculty Senator for almost twenty. I served on the Faculty Senate Executive Committee for three years and was a member of the APC for three years as well. If I am elected to the APC again, I would focus my efforts in the context of budget reduction on increasing the ratio of faculty and staff to mid-level administrators. I am also concerned about the viability of shared governance at UNL and will strive to improve both administrator/faculty dialog as well as the value our leaders put on faculty input. Website URL: <https://physics.unl.edu/~tgay/>

Sajeesh Sajeesh, Associate Professor, Marketing:

I joined UNL in 2017 and have served the department and the College of Business as a member of several important committees. Being part of the Academic Planning Committee will allow me to collaborate with faculty all across campus to address challenges, develop creative solutions, and promote positive institutional change that benefits faculty and students. If elected, I look forward to advocating for faculty and students and working towards sustaining the University's mission. I will strive to consider a broad institution-wide outlook and work diligently and impartially to support initiatives that contribute to the success of the whole campus community. The following link gives you more information about my background and experience: <https://business.unl.edu/people/ssajeesh>

Amanda Thomas, Associate Professor, Department of Teaching, Learning & Teacher Education

For nearly a decade at UNL, my teaching, research, and service have aligned to promote and enhance academic excellence and innovation within and beyond our university. To the Academic Planning Committee, I will bring a strong commitment to strategic thinking and creative problem solving, as well as leadership experience with academic programs. Most recently, I served as coordinator of Elementary Education, leading my colleagues in successfully navigating the 400+ student undergraduate program through the height of the recent pandemic. My service record at UNL has also included coordination of a graduate-level elementary education program, leading collaborative redesign efforts for elementary STEM education programming, as well as varied committee work at the departmental and college levels.

I am deeply committed to inclusive and democratic leadership practices, and transparency in decision making. Particularly as UNL navigates current and upcoming challenges and opportunities, I am eager to collaborate with colleagues from diverse disciplines to offer innovative solutions that employ shared faculty governance, foster student success, and promote academic excellence.

I would enthusiastically welcome the opportunity to serve on the Academic Planning Committee and to engage with UNL colleagues in this important space for shared governance.

ACADEMIC RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES COMMITTEE:

Erica DeFrain, Associate Professor, University Libraries:

Having been an active member of the university faculty for the past decade, I have learned to appreciate the enormous privilege of participating in shared governance. I am running for election to the ARRC to support the important work of the Faculty Senate, protect colleagues, uphold academic values, and shape policies in service to the University.

Wes Peterson, Professor, Agricultural Economics:

The Academic Rights and Responsibilities Committee is one of the most important committees supported by the Faculty Senate. It is responsible for overseeing a set of procedures derived from provisions in the NU Regents' Bylaws that are designed to help resolve issues that arise within the UNL academic community related to academic freedom, tenure rights, professional conduct, and other potential sources of disagreement or conflict. Much of the work of the ARRC requires familiarity with complicated rules and regulations at UNL along with sensitivity in the handling of cases that may be extremely trying and emotional. I have served on the ARRC several times and have developed an understanding of its governing provisions as well as of the history of changes to the ARRC procedures and many of the past decisions taken by the ARRC and the special committees convened to conduct the investigative hearings. From my past service on the ARRC, I am aware of some on-going issues related to the operation of the committee and the need for procedural adjustments to assure that the interests of all members of the academic community are respected. The work of the ARRC is extremely important and there have been some notable successes in protecting academic freedom, tenure, and other faculty rights. If chosen to serve on this committee, I will strive to maintain and enhance that record.

ACADEMIC RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES PANEL:

Effie Athanassopoulos, Associate Professor, School of Global Integrative Studies

I am interested in serving on the Academic Rights and Responsibilities Panel because I am a strong supporter of academic freedom, academic rights and responsibilities, and the role of faculty in university governance. Public universities play an important role in the civic life of our communities by upholding freedom of expression and democratic principles of education. Protecting the rights of all faculty members and addressing their concerns are top priorities. Through my 20+ years at UNL my awareness of academic rights and responsibilities and the need to protect them has continued to grow. I am a faculty member in Anthropology. I am also a Fellow in the Center for Digital Research in the Humanities. I have served on the Research Council, the Convocations Committee, and many departmental committees, including Promotion and Tenure, Personnel, Community Engagement, Chair of the Graduate committee, Executive, and ad hoc committees. If elected, I will work to ensure that there is transparency in the decision-making process and that academic rights and responsibilities are safeguarded.

Elizabeth Enkin, Associate Professor of Spanish, Modern Languages and Literature:

I am honored to be nominated as a candidate to serve on the Academic Rights and Responsibilities Panel (ARRP), a position I consider to be vital for a healthy and thriving intellectual community. As a faculty member, I have served on various committees at the department, college, and university level; served as Vice Chair and Interim Chair for my department; and am currently serving on the Conflict of Interest in Research Committee (CIRC) for the Office of Research and Economic Development. These experiences have allowed me to further develop my professional discernment and attention to detail, which are skills I hope to be able to utilize on the ARRP, in order to uphold fairness in all cases. I am therefore very committed to supporting faculty by ensuring due process, as every case is unique, and I will work meticulously to ensure equity and inclusivity in all review procedures. My dedication to inclusivity can be seen throughout my teaching and research as well, as I strive to create supportive learning spaces and examine ways to address real-life teaching concerns. In closing, I believe shared governance is as much a privilege as it is a great responsibility, and I will work diligently to defend academic rights as a member of the ARRP.

Reka Howard:

I am pleased to submit my application for the opportunity to serve on the Academic Rights and Responsibilities Panel. My experiences and principles closely align with the panel's objectives. In my role as an associate professor and the director of consulting in the Department of Statistics, I have promoted the values of academic integrity, honesty, transparency, and accountability. Through my involvement in various committees, including the Faculty Advisory Committee within CASNR, and the Teaching and Learning Improvement Council within CASNR, I have honed my skills in collaborative decision-making and fostering a supportive academic environment.

Additionally, my leadership roles as chair of the qualifying exam committee and the consulting courses committee within the Department of Statistics have further equipped me to navigate complex academic issues.

Furthermore, my active engagement with over 25 MS/PhD student committees and several multi-departmental collaborations underscores my commitment to representing diverse perspectives and addressing the evolving needs of our academic community.

I am excited about the possible opportunity to leverage my expertise and dedication to make a positive impact on the Academic Rights and Responsibilities Panel. Thank you for considering my application.

Rich Leiter, Director of the Law Library, College of Law:

I am the Director of the Law Library and Professor of Law at the College of Law. I have been the director since 2000 and have served many years as a faculty senate representative from the College of Law. I have served on the Faculty Senate Executive Committee and various other committees, including the Information and Technologies & Services Committee and the Parking Advisory Committee. I am deeply committed to shared faculty governance and academic

freedom, and I welcome the opportunity to serve on the ARRP as the campus moves through this difficult time. As the university and the UNL campus confront financial pressures, I anticipate some challenging decisions that may ultimately affect our mission.

Hideaki Moriyama:

I have been working at UNL since 2002, conducting research to understand life phenomena at the atomic level. Due to the nature of the research, I have experienced cases, such as big science VS individuals, orders VS duties, as a researcher and as an administrator. I served one term on the Academic Rights and Responsibilities Panel. Based on this experience, I would like to serve on this Panel again. What will be dealt with on this panel is basically a case of conflict of interest within the university, but since the two parties facing each other belong to academia, I believe that a compromise can be reached through mutual respect. As a panel member, I would like to contribute to resolving the issue quickly. Economic principles also prevail in academia. We also want to consider the background of the problem and what kind of handling is appropriate.

Sarah Zuckerman, Associate Professor, Educational Administration:

I am an associate professor of Educational Administration. I have served as a faculty senator and faculty executive committee member, as well as having been actively engaged in UNL's AAUP chapter since 2018. My involvement in shared governance goes back to my Ph.D. program, when I served as a graduate student association representative and took part in a Blue Ribbon Panel that provided back-to-back raises for graduate students. This experience showed me the importance of being actively engaged in shared governance and faculty affairs. Since coming to UNL, my interest in faculty affairs has expanded to due process and academic freedom. Serving on the ARRP would be a natural continuation of my service in these areas.