

Report of the Higher Education Affairs Committee
Submitted by Adam Fette, Chadron State College Education Association

NSEA's Higher Education Affairs Committee was in transition this year with a resignation of the former chair. The NSEA Board appointed Adam Fette, Chadron State College, to fill the role for the Association year. The chair and co-chair of the committee have met with the NSEA president and staff to plan the rest of the year. The Higher Education At-Large Representative to the NSEA Board will be elected at the 2021 Delegate Assembly.

Staff Update:

Higher education leaders and local members spent much of July and August adjusting to the new reality of how to educate students in a COVID environment. There were a number of anxious moments as educators were told of the campus reopening protocols by their administrators. High on the list of concerns was the denial of online teaching accommodations for instructors in some institutions. Many of these employees had provided documentation of pre-existing health conditions when requested. Another concern was the opening of campuses while classrooms and buildings were not able to maintain proper filtered air being circulated to reduce the possibility of spread of COVID.

One of the more positive outcomes during the pandemic was the inclusion of faculty and professional staff members as active participants in the ongoing discussions focused on providing a safe learning environment for students and staff. Each educator contributed their talents and skills in making the transition from a face-to-face to hybrid, synchronous models of teaching.

On the topic of negotiations, 2020-21 marked the bargaining cycle for the state colleges and University of Nebraska at Kearney locals. By state statute, the bargaining agents of these groups were forced to meet virtually when conducting their sessions. With less travel involved prior to these meetings, more time was spent on delegating responsibilities, developing and editing proposals and conducting research. A number of Nebraska's community colleges were actively bargaining as well including Northeast Community College, Southeast Community College Professional Staff and Metropolitan Community College. Central Community College and Western Nebraska Community College benefitted from having multi-year agreements in place.

NSEA and local associations are conducting surveys of members to better identify their challenges and concerns so that we can provide professional development that meets their needs. NSEA U being held July 13, 14 and 15 will be an excellent opportunity for us to work together to grow and engage our higher education locals and NSEA.

– Rich Wergin, NSEA Organizational Specialist for Higher Education, SCATA and DCYC