Call to Order. A quorum being present, Faculty Council Chair, Professor Ronald Smelser, called the meeting to order at 3:35 p.m. in the Brink Hall Faculty Lounge.

Minutes. The council accepted the minutes of the October 9, 2001, meeting as distributed.

Chair’s Report. Chair Smelser reported on the following items:

- U of Idaho President Hoover is holding a special meeting for faculty, staff, and students on October 26th to discuss the current economic impact on budget planning for fiscal year 2003
- SBOE is planning to hold with the current 2% hold back for the fiscal year 2002 budgets at this time
- SBOE has still not resolved the funding “equity” issue between the institutions of higher education
- the U of Idaho facilities meeting will be held from 1-3 p.m. October 30th in the Brink Hall Faculty Lounge
- council members are responsible for nominations from their college for representatives to serve on the university level promotions committee – nomination forms were distributed to council members and will be mailed to those not in attendance
- he needs information from university departments and colleges on their involvement with state agencies and departments by November 1st – councilors were urged to check with department heads or deans within their respective colleges
- next week’s council meeting will be devoted to the subject of fiscal year 2003 budget planning issues – a follow-up to the president’s meeting on Friday

Provost’s Report. Provost Brian Pitcher made the following announcements:

- the SBOE is currently searching for a new Chief Academic Officer – many U of Idaho faculty members are qualified to hold that job – he asked council members to encourage their colleagues to apply for this important position
- the U of Idaho Foundation Capital Campaign Steering Committee met in Moscow last Friday and as a part of their orientation they heard from five “excellence in teaching” award winners – these presentations raised the awareness level of the committee to the quality of the faculty and to innovative teaching
- the American Association of Higher Education is sponsoring and providing funding for initiatives that will help update the definition of “research” used in higher education – U of Idaho faculty members might want to consider submitting a proposal and participating in that national discussion

U of Idaho Core Curriculum Update. Professor William Voxman, Coordinator of the U of Idaho Core Curriculum, provided the council with an update on the core curriculum. Voxman said that his office and a variety of working groups have been working on creating a new core curriculum for the last three years. He hopes that the work on the fundamental structure of the new core can be completed by the end of Spring 2002 and, that following faculty approval, the new core could be fully implemented by the Fall of 2003.

Professor Voxman reviewed the basic objectives of the core program and provided the council with a proposal for a revised set of core requirements.

- Core Objectives
  - establish a coherent, broad-based core program that has a positive, meaningful and lasting impact on students
    - use the U of Idaho strategic plan as a basis for its development – but keep the program flexible and one that engages the students and insures good faculty participation
    - clearly define the fundamental objectives of the core program
    - involve all U of Idaho colleges in the core program
    - use ongoing assessment to refine the core program
    - base all decisions and actions on what is best for the students
o establish an interdisciplinary core program
  ▪ develop a series of theme based interdisciplinary freshman core discovery courses
  ▪ develop clusters of courses linked to and addressing a common theme or question

o establish a tiered core program
  ▪ require that students take both a 100 and a 300 level course within a cluster
  ▪ introduce senior-level capstone courses

o place special emphasis on basic communication and critical thinking skills
  ▪ require writing, discussion, oral presentations, projects, develop critical thinking skills
  ▪ require that cluster courses all stress these skills

o ensure that students are aware of and sensitive to the diversity of humankind
  ▪ require that all core courses address diversity issues
  ▪ require students to complete at least one course with an international focus

o ensure that students complete the core requirements

  • outline of a possible core model:
    ▪ core discovery course (7 credits in the humanities and social sciences)
    ▪ cluster courses (9 credits)
    ▪ free elective course (usually a capstone course) (3 credits)
    ▪ natural and applied sciences (7-8 credits)
    ▪ communications (5 credits)
    ▪ total credits in this core model – 31 to 32 credits

Professor Voxman noted that this fall there are 7 core interdisciplinary discovery courses with 23 sections enrolling 650-700 students. He also shared with the council a course objectives assessment instrument that will be used midpoint in one of the core courses. Voxman said that the communications part of the core is being carefully reviewed by a sub-committee. One of the questions is whether the foreign language courses belong in that part of the core curriculum.

Voxman ended his formal presentation by urging the council to encourage their colleagues to submit proposals for core integrated science courses and discovery courses.

The council and Professor Voxman engaged in an informative discussion about the core curriculum. The major discussion points and the response of Professor Voxman (in italics) follows:

• what does assessment do? – what are you comparing? (Meier)
  o three areas are being looked at – critical thinking, reading and writing – exercises were prepared early in the semester in each of those areas to obtain base-line data to compare students who are taking core courses with those that are not – that exercise will be repeated at the end of the semester – an assessment committee is a part of the core working group and they are working on other forms of assessment – core courses will be carefully evaluated

• there is a concern with the increase in credits in the core and how departments seeking and keeping accreditation can work within a core course structure (Guenthner, McClure)
  o in our review of other land-grant university core curriculums we find ours to be at the lowest level in the number of credits required in humanities and social sciences – the extra course is a free elective and might well come from a department’s own capstone course – we are encouraging that approach and hoping that it will promote the development of courses outside the College of Letters and Science – the bottom line is, “let’s find a way to do it” – Provost Pitcher added that many accrediting bodies are looking for core experiences (engineering) and asking students to take more courses outside of their major field of study (communication)

• how do graduate schools view the cluster and discovery course approach? – how do they know how to match these courses to a subject area? (McClure)
  o our core courses will be identified as social science and humanities and science, etc. – research (Portland State is the model) says that there appear to be no problems in this area and that graduate schools can ask for, and applicants can supply, course syllabi

• what are the biggest stumbling blocks to establishing the new core curriculum? (McCaffrey)
  o having a workable proposal – providing the financial incentive for faculty/department participation – forcing departmental curricular changes because of the core requirements – keeping the focus on what is best for the students
• what is the rationale for core discovery courses to be seven credits? (Kraut)
  o the courses are 4 credits the first semester and 3 credits the second semester – the extra credit is not lecture time, but evening meetings that entail larger discussions, guest presentations, and films
• attention needs to be paid to the distance learning students and internet course offerings (McCaffrey)
  o we need to deal with that aspect – who might be taking these courses – it has not been dealt with yet, but will be – transfer students do not have to follow our core, they only need to meet the SBOE core requirements

Regulation M – Excused Absences – Application to Student-Athletes. Mike Bohn, U of Idaho Athletic Director, provided the council with background information on the policies of the Athletic Department and what the standards were at peer universities. He said that the general department policy was that student-athletes make every attempt to be in class, contact teachers before being absent, get assignments, and make-up work that has been missed. Coaches are urged to arrange travel that will cause the least interference with attendance and class work. Policies of peer universities are similar to the one at the U of Idaho and meet current accreditation standards.

Councilors were concerned that the policy – allowing eight excused absences for student-athletes, combined with the normally allowed excused absences of one per credit hour – simply leads to excessive missed class time. While those councilors making those points had to admit that the students in question were actually doing well in class, they still felt that the policy should be changed to reduce the number of excused absences for athletes.

Bohn informed the council that there is an extensive mentoring program being used by student-athletes. Over 400 athletes are currently taking advantage of this weekly meeting program. He said that the tutoring comes from a variety of sources, including faculty members. Bohn thought that students in individual sports like track and field fared much better in attendance than those in volleyball, soccer, golf, and tennis.

Councilor McClure observed that some academic majors simply are being avoided by athletes – such as architecture. Students in that major (as well as many others) have too many time constraints and obligations to be able to meet the demands of the major, as well as the demands of the sport. This situation seems unfair to athletes who may want to pursue degrees in those areas.

Councilor Nelson pointed out that classroom teaching has changed dramatically from the days of reading a text and listening to a lecture. Today’s classroom is interactive and involves technology, discussion, and other participatory activities that cannot be “made-up” by the absent student at a later date. Therefore, missing class is an important problem and the university needs to find some solutions. Bohn pointed out that students also face other penalties, handed out by their coaches, for missing classes. There was a suggestion that students could have classes video-taped, but the cost and manageability of such a system seems prohibitive at first glance.

Bohn said that athletes are encouraged from the first day they arrive on campus to attend all class meetings. They are even encouraged to leave practice to attend classes, but that little can be done about the time involved in participation in an athletic event. He also pointed out that because Moscow was so remote from the rest of its opponents, it required more time for travel. Both the Athletic Director and many councilors spoke about the excellent academic record of U of Idaho athletes. That success is the result of the dedicated efforts of coaches, faculty members, mentors, and the student-athletes. All of these pieces are important for success in the classroom. We need to make sure that student-athletes succeed – in sports and in the classroom.

Chair Smelser said that he would send the excused absence policy issues to the Faculty Affairs Committee for further discussion and possible resolution.

Next Faculty Council Meeting. The next council meeting will be held on October 30th.

Adjournment. It was moved and seconded (Nelson, McCaffrey) to adjourn. Chair Smelser adjourned the meeting at 5:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Peter A. Haggart
Secretary of the Faculty Council