University of Idaho

FACULTY COUNCIL MINUTES

2001-2002 Meeting #7, Tuesday, October 30, 2001

Present: Smelser (chair), Bitterwolf (vice-chair), Chandler, Chun, Dickinson, Fairchild, Guenther, Haggart (w/o vote), Hong, Kraut, Lillard, McCaffrey, McClure, Meier, Murray, Nielsen, Norby, Pikowsky, Pitcher (w/o vote), Wagner

Absent: Goodwin, Nelson, Olson, Thompson

Observers: 1

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. After a brief discussion concerning the routing of the issues regarding excused absences to the Faculty Affairs Committee, the council accepted the minutes of the October 23, 2001, meeting as distributed.

Chair’s Report. Chair Smelser took the following actions:

• distributed a draft of the remarks made by U of Idaho President Hoover to aid in the discussion of the budget crisis
• distributed a notice of the upcoming discussion of a proposed comprehensive, quantitative campus “climate” [some councilors felt that the meaning of the term “climate” needed further explanation] survey to be conducted by the Office of Diversity and Human Rights – discussion times are November 8th at 1:30 p.m. and November 9th at 8:00 a.m. and 12 noon at the Sweet Avenue Business Incubator – discussion leaders will be Professor Lilia Cortina from the U of Michigan and Professor Vicki Magley from the U of Connecticut – the whole campus community is invited to participate, call 885-9229 to confirm attendance
• asked councilors to complete and return the forms that nominate faculty members from their college to serve on the university-wide promotions committee

ASUI Report. Councilor Kaycee Murray reported on a Associated Students of the University of Idaho (ASUI) leadership initiative designed to help bring about a better sense of student unity centered around a common university-wide theme and slogan. That theme is “Be Bold” and the campus community will be encouraged to add that phrase as they greet or say goodbye to acquaintances on the campus. This slogan will also appear in many other forms on the campus, including t-shirts and posters.

Fiscal Year 2003 Budget Crisis Discussion. Provost Brian Pitcher reviewed U of Idaho President Hoover’s presentation to the university community last Friday. He placed particular emphasis on:

• the amounts and percentages of the anticipated cuts
• the complexity involved in reducing costs
• the maintenance of good morale on the campus
• the maintenance of enrollment
• the need to find innovative ways to consolidate, reorganize, refine, and simplify our operations
• the discovery of ways to increase income through existing sources and the discovery of new sources of income
• the guidelines to be used in the budget planning process
• the strategies that will be employed in the budget planning process
• the final decisions involving academic programs resting with the president

Pitcher reinforced Hoover’s view that the campus community needed to be involved in the discussions about ways to handle this budget crisis. He urged the university community to send their ideas forward to the president – “your idea may be the one that makes a difference.” He admitted that the university would probably make some mistakes in this process, but he stated that careful planning and attention to details would minimize the possibility of error.

Pitcher said that comprehensive budget planning needs to take place for both the fiscal 2003 and 2004 budgets. He reminded the council that almost 80% of the U of Idaho’s budget is devoted to salaries. He emphasized that there certainly would be a reduction in the work force, but he hoped that most would occur voluntarily – perhaps through an early retirement program and severance packages. Therefore, some very difficult decisions involving people and programs would have to be made before this school year is over. Pitcher said that there is no freeze on hiring at the present time, but administrators are being asked to carefully analyze the need to fill vacant positions and to hold positions unfilled until other budget decisions have been made. He said that somehow the university must retain its institutional focus and strategic plan goals, while maintaining the long range goal of regaining our financial health as quickly as possible. We must not make the mistake of cutting things that we might want back in a few years.
Provost Pitcher then opened the meeting up to questions and comments from the council members. A digest of that exchange follows:

- the total amount of funds that need to be cut from the budget is enormous and it will take a variety of innovative approaches to deal with these cuts
- even eliminating all administrative positions will not solve the problem
- the Budget Liaison Committee can play an important role in the planning process – use them as a conduit for ideas
- divisions, colleges, and departments will prioritize their budget cutting plans – providing scenarios representing various levels of budget reductions – these will be reviewed at the next highest level of authority
- latitude is necessary – some final budget cutting decisions will be made at the responsibility center level
- a high-level panel (a representative group of the best minds on the campus) is needed to review recommendations and provide feedback to the president – no voting, just advice
- any reduction in force will mean a restructuring of programs and services
- unless we are careful, there is a high risk of losing valuable people in this reduction process
- a financial exigency will not be declared
- reductions will not be evenly distributed “across the board” – some areas will be reduced more than others
- we must look at innovative ways to generate revenue – such as modular web courses that meet special needs and thus can carry a high fee – or perhaps marketing and putting the core curriculum courses on the world wide web
- we need to grow in non-resident enrollments
- we must keep as our number one priority our emphasis on a quality undergraduate education
- restructuring and consolidation of divisions, colleges, departments, and programs should be a high priority
- student fees need to increase and be competitive with other higher education institutions in the west
- we need to look at the affect fee increases will have on enrollment
- every program is “on the table” – there are no special “off the table” untouchable areas in the planning process
- deep cuts are being taken at other universities in the northwest – U of Idaho will watch how they are responding
- salary reductions – other than voluntary ones – and a shortened work week should be at the lowest priority level in the planning and strategy discussions and will not happen at all this year – employees never recover from those kinds of salary actions
- the state of Idaho should consider early retirement programs/incentives for all state departments under the PERSI program – we could also design our own package
- perhaps deeper cuts should be made in other state agencies before they are made in education
- salary increments for promotion should carry a high priority and be retained – if not, it just creates more inequities
- the ASUI is included as a vital advisory group in the planning process – students are our clients with a unique perspective to offer
- the state of Idaho may benefit from the national economic situation and global unrest as some companies break up into smaller units and move to locations away from the east coast - a poor job market results in higher college enrollments
- fundraising and research grants may give the impression that cuts are not hurting us – the bottom line is to send a positive message about our ability to cope with this crisis and move ahead through innovative planning – it is a very challenging education and communication process to explain cuts on the one hand and increased income on the other
- all planning needs to take into account the importance of the morale of all university employees and our students

Hoover’s Speech Praised. It was moved and seconded (Kraut, Meier) that U of Idaho President Bob Hoover be commended for his timely and instructive speech to the university community on October 27th. He is also to be commended for engaging the audience in an informative question and answer period. Those actions helped quell rumors and put all of us in the university community “on the same page.” The motion was adopted by unanimous voice vote. Provost Pitcher commented that several more of these campus community meetings are planned as each step of the budget process is completed. One will occur in late November and another at the beginning of the 2002 Spring semester.

The council also thanked Provost Pitcher for his candid and forthcoming approach in discussing this budget crisis. Pitcher responded by saying that he appreciates their feelings and that the relationship between the faculty and the administration was good and that together we can work our way out of this financial crisis.

Adjournment. It was moved and seconded (Lillard, McClure) to adjourn. Chair Smelser adjourned the meeting at 4:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Peter A. Haggart
Secretary of the Faculty Council