Call to Order. A quorum being present, Faculty Council Chair Wagner, called the meeting to order at 3:34 p.m. in the Brink Hall Faculty Lounge.

Minutes. The council accepted the minutes of meeting #2 of the 2003-2004 Faculty Council, held on September 2, 2003 as distributed.

Chair's Report. Chair Wagner briefly reported on the progress of the new administrative advisory committees. He also noted a growing concern among some faculty that not all colleges have completed their multi-year budget plans, thereby causing a degree of uncertainty for their respective faculty members.

Provost's Report. Provost Pitcher circulated the 10th day enrollment figures, which in general were quite favorable. Though enrollment at the freshman level is slightly down, enrollments in other areas increased significantly resulting in an encouraging overall 3.74% increase over last year. The Provost also announced an upcoming joint meeting of the University Council and the Financial Emergency Committee. The agenda for this meeting, which is to take place within a few weeks, will include a year-end financial report, an update on University Place, and issues dealing with the UI Foundation. This will be the last meeting of the Financial Emergency Committee; much of its work will be assumed by the new administrative committees. The Provost said that the new administrative committees are rapidly gaining momentum in their work. He and Chair Wagner will work to better define the relationships between the new committees and currently existing committees, including the Faculty Council.

Conversation with Interim President Michael. The remainder of the meeting consisted of a lively and informative discussion with Interim President Michael on a number of timely issues. In his opening remarks, Michael said he was asked by the Governor and the SBOE to focus on gaining an accurate picture of the UI financial situation. His role is to determine what controls could be implemented to ensure that the UI functions well in the future. He also noted that the PAPPAS consulting group has been hired to assist the university in looking at its financial situation and to recommend measures that will ensure the UI has the proper controls in place. He stressed that one area the UI needs to place renewed emphasis is on fundraising; but, he cautioned that the money raised should be in alignment with the UI strategic plan. Michael noted that a university president, like a CEO, should hire the right people, have a well-defined strategy, and be the public face for the university. He has been in discussions with members of the UI Foundation to determine their financial status and it is his belief that the Foundation assets are not in jeopardy. Michael expressed his pleasure with the amount of collaboration occurring among the state’s institutions of higher learning, though it often goes unnoticed. He is also very impressed with the passion of UI alums and gratified by the work performed by UI staff and faculty. In his view, faculty and staff take pride in their work and they are doing the right things.

Michael then opened the floor for questions from the council. Questions (in italics) and responses follow:

*Are you convinced that the UI programs in Boise, Idaho Falls, and Coeur d’Alene are cost effective?*

We cannot afford to isolate ourselves. These programs serve those who are not able to come to the UI campus. We have a great future in Northern Idaho and NIC is a major feeder of students to the UI campus. The Provost added that we need to strengthen our residential campuses. He pointed out that the Boise program consists mainly of graduate level programs in Education and Engineering and the program in Idaho Falls is supported by a $2,000,000 contract with INEEL. It is not our intent to grow undergraduate programs outside the Coeur d’Alene area, but there is a need for programs in targeted areas such as for professional development and certain capstone experiences.

*What is the future of some of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences degree programs in Idaho Falls and Boise?*

The Provost, answering for the academic side of the UI, stated that we need to continue to look at the sustainability of these and other programs that attract relatively few students. However, he added, cost is just one of a number of factors that must be considered in making these decisions. In any curriculum there will be small and large classes, but we must consider the overall educational experience of the students.
Chair Wagner pointed out that the administration has empowered responsibility centers to come up with multi-year budget plans that may result in the elimination of some programs. Decisions of this nature should be made internally. The Provost added that colleges do have plans regarding which new positions to fill as the financial climate improves. Michael stressed the need for fewer restrictions on funds in order to increase flexibility. Both Michael and Pitcher emphasized the need to have the discipline to accept only donations that are aligned with the Strategic Plan and the departmental and/or college priorities; however, past commitments must be honored. Michael also pointed out that we need to make distinctions between the academic and non-academic sides of the institution. His primary focus will be in trying to effect savings in the areas of non-academic programs. Appropriate cuts have not been made over the last several years in response to the worsening economic climate. This unfortunate oversight has left the UI in the unfortunate position of having to make more drastic cuts now. Pitcher added that we must also continue to look for savings in administration to save as many programs as possible. He emphasized the necessity of taking advantage of multiple sources of income—state spending is anticipated to be flat for at least the next two years. He also pointed out that unfortunately, there is still the belief outside the university that fat remains to be trimmed.

How do we deal with the problem of faculty members having significantly increased workloads, committee obligations, etc., and often feeling they have little control over their destinies?

Chair Wagner again remarked that deans, chairs, and department faculty have been empowered to make needed changes. However, as former Faculty Secretary Peter Haggart frequently said, “the devil often resides in the details.” Michael, while empathetic to faculty concerns, said that we do have control but that a proactive stance is necessary in resolving our problems. We need to deal with programs that are not measuring up to the necessary standards emphasizing that this is a pivotal year and we all need to work together in making it a successful one.

Could you address concerns about the make-up of the presidential search committee and what qualities you believe the next UI president should have?

The SBOE determined the composition of the committee. However, there will be ample opportunity for UI students, faculty and staff to have input into the process once a short list of candidates is determined. The principal quality to look for in the next president is that he/she be someone on their way up. What we don’t need is a caretaker. The Provost emphasized to the Council the need for faculty to submit nominations for the position and that they send any suggestions to the search committee.

Are there plans for further reallocation among colleges? For instance, certain programs in a college take on a higher priority, without sufficient resources for their support. Would there be a shift of funding from some colleges to others?

This is not being considered at this time; however, if things worsen it might be a possibility.

What is the importance of athletics? What is the appropriate level of competition? What is our future conference alignment? And, what is the cost per year?

Michael responded that he believes athletics is a window for the university. It is difficult for us to command large crowds for athletic events, but it is important for us to stay at the table. We did the right thing in moving to Division I level. Pitcher noted that there is considerable discussion nationally at all levels about the role and cost of athletic programs. UI costs were estimated (roughly) at $1,800,000 with $500,000 coming from state general education funding. Chair Wagner said that the UI Faculty Council has been asked to participate in a national movement on athletic policies, and this will be a future Council agenda item.

At the close of the meeting it was stressed that we need to inform others about the true state of the university and the reductions we have absorbed. Michael, Pitcher, Marty Peterson and others are actively presenting our case to the Governor, the legislature, and outside constituents. However, it is incumbent on us to find ways to communicate more effectively. Pitcher also mentioned the necessity of undertaking a careful analysis of where we have capacity for growth and where we don’t. On that note, Chair Wagner called for a motion for adjournment which was duly made (Lillard, Guenthner) and with a somewhat more tempered blow of the gavel, the meeting was adjourned at 5:07 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Bill Voxman
Interim Secretary of the Faculty Council