Present: Stevenson for Aiken (w/o vote), Brandt, Caplan, Chung, Couture (Boise), Crowley (w/o vote), Earl, Folwell, Foster, Frey, Godfrey (Coeur d’Alene), Hiromoto (Idaho Falls), Jeffery, Karsky, Kennelly, Lowe, Mahoney, Murphy, Nyavor, Perret, Qualls, Safaii, Smith, Stauffer (Boise), Stoll, Wolf, Ytreberg. Absent: Aiken (w/o vote), Boschetti, Miller, Safaii, Teal

Guests: 7

The Chair called the meeting to order at 3:34 p.m.

Minutes of October 28, 2014, Meeting #10: The Faculty Secretary suggested the insertion of the following in the minutes for last week as a friendly amendment. “During the reclassification process, what percentage of HR employees versus other university staff received a mandatory raise because they were not at the minimum in their classification level? Mr. Walters responded that he did not have these numbers. However, he noted that he provided this information last year to Trish Hartzell at her request.” The Faculty Secretary explained that he did not originally include this question and response because we have not been able to locate any information that directly addressed the question. A senator requested the inclusion of the question in the Minutes. The Chair asked if there were any other additions or corrections. Being none it was moved and seconded (Jeffery, Foster) that the minutes be accepted as amended. The motion passed with no dissents and 3 abstentions (21-0-3).

Chairs Report: The Chair reminded the Senate that next week would be devoted to brainstorming ideas related to enhancing benefits for faculty and staff. Senators should request ideas from their constituents if they have not already done so. Senators should come to the meeting with a reasonable understanding of the ideas they have received. President Staben has been invited to the Senate to further discuss his goals and priorities in two weeks. The next general faculty meeting (UFM) typically held in late fall has been scheduled for Thursday January 15th at 3pm. It was scheduled for the week classes start for the spring semester due to scheduling conflicts in December. It is also hoped that scheduling the meeting at 3pm will be better for those in southern Idaho. We need to have a quorum and obtain a 2/3 majority to pass Constitutional Amendments.

This Saturday November 8th will be Africa night from 5-8 in the SUB International Ballroom. Everyone is invited to enjoy the food, dance, and music. More information is on the Senate home page.

Provost Report: Vice Provost Stevenson made a request to the Senate for identifying individuals to serve on the committee to nominate University Distinguished Professors. The committee consists of four faculty and three deans. There are vacancies on the committee for one dean and two faculty members. This committee is responsible for reviewing nominations and making recommendations to the Provost and President. (See FSH 1565 D-9). The committee members must be tenured professors with outstanding records.

FS-15-016 - (UCC-15-031): CNR – Bifurcation of M.N.R. program. Ron Robberecht was invited to summarize the proposal calling for the bifurcation of the master’s degree program in the College of Natural Resources. Professor Robberecht explained that the proposal was an attempt to adapt to market interest and create a specialty in Fire Ecology and Management. The original master program will remain with the title of Integrated Natural Resources but students would now have the opportunity to specialize in Fire Ecology. He expects this new option to expand the number of graduate students in their graduate program.

A Senator asked how many students were expected to be in the program. Robberecht responded that they were currently planning for 20 students in the Fire Ecology option but could envision a much greater demand. A Senator asked about whether creating options was in the five year plan. Vice Provost Stevenson responded that it was in the five year plan. The proposal passed 23-0-1.

University Promotions Committee: The Chair noted that it was time for Senators to nominate faculty members to serve on the University Promotions Committee. In making these nominations Senators should consider the broad cross section of academic duties necessary to serve on this highly important committee. Senators from each
college should nominate the appropriate number of faculty (see memo from Provost Aiken) and send these nominations to Lodi Price in the Provost Office by November 12th. The committee usually meets in early February.

**Athletics:** The Chair next introduced Athletic Director Rob Spear to discuss developments in the athletic program. Dr. Spear emphasized the overall value of the athletic program to the University and the broader community. Our athletic programs market the University, serve as a rallying point for alumni, bring economic value to the community and enhances diversity on campus. He also emphasized the number of athletes who receive scholarships (207) as well as walk on athletes who provide student fees to the University.

Spear further discussed some of the recent successes of the athletic program. UI student athletes graduate at a higher rate than the typical student. Last year the athletic program won the Commissioners Cup for the Western Athletic Conference (WAC). This award goes to the university whose teams had the most overall success in the WAC. Texas A&M annually gives an award to the university that wins the most conference championships with the least amount of financial resources. The University of Idaho won this national award which demonstrates the efficiency and success of the overall program. Spear noted that this success has been obscured by the struggles of the football program although Spear voiced confidence that the football program was headed in the right direction.

In discussing the APR which is an NCAA measure of the academic progress of athletic teams, Spear noted that after a couple of poor years which resulted in a bowl ban on the football program, the football APR is now up to a strong 951. He was hopeful that the NCAA would lift the bowl ban after considering our appeal showing mitigating circumstances and strong improvement. Later in the discussion in response to a question Spear noted that all athletic programs were right around the NCAA’s necessary APR rate although a couple of programs were on the borderline.

Dr. Spear noted that changes in the financial landscape of Division I sports would affect the UI. The NCAA now allows more autonomy to programs and these changes will be driven by what the top 5 conferences do. These conferences have greater financial resources to provide a broader range of support to student athletes. The UI is trying to increase the availability of meals and nutrition for student athletes and will need to look at providing unlimited meals. Some schools will be providing the full cost of attendance to athletes. Currently the UI is about $3,600 short of providing the full cost of attendance. Asked whether the UI would guarantee four year scholarships to athletes like conferences such as the Pac-12? He responded that we do informally and will look into formalizing same as long as athletes meet their responsibilities.

Spear briefly discussed the issue of conferences. The UI is currently in the Sun Belt for football but has returned to the Big Sky for all other sports except swimming and diving which remains in the WAC. He is frequently asked about returning to the Big Sky for all sports. If we did that we would lose scholarships and have to cut two sports. He notes that for some influential alumni it is about status. They believe that the UI would be seriously harmed if BSU was the only university in the state to play FBS (Football Bowl Series) football. He also noted that over 80% (41 of 49) of the land grant universities that play football play FBS football. If we went back to the Big Sky we not only lose scholarships but conference revenue, funds from the BCS and the lost opportunity to play big money games. Playing big money games has helped to balance the athletic budget.

There were several questions about playing big money games and whether playing those games helps or hurts our status. There was also a concern about travel and whether there could be more revenue generating games played on the west coast to reduce travel costs?

In response the athletic director suggested that the athletes looked forward to playing these games and having the opportunity to be on a national stage. He also noted that they are necessary to balance the budget and help finance the non-revenue sports. He hoped that in the future they could schedule more of our big money games on the west coast.

A related set of questions wondered about the focus on football and whether the football program generated negative externalities. Spear agreed that there was too much emphasis on football in our society but felt confident
that our football situation was improving. He felt that making a decision to leave FBS football would be very shortsighted.

Some Senators objected to counting scholarship and walk-on players as generating revenue for the University. They argued that some of these players would have attended the University in any case. They also wanted to see a more adequate accounting of expenses rather than just what revenue was being generated. Director Spear disagreed as to whether these students would have come here anyway and suggested that a player who wants to play athletics will go to the school that awards them a scholarship. He acknowledged that he had not provided a full list of expenses and would be willing to provide such an account. We are not a profit making enterprise although he wanted to emphasize that the athletic department has done a good job of managing available resources.

Are we the only Division I school that doesn’t have a dedicated arena for basketball? The Athletic Director responded that perhaps Northern Arizona was in the same boat but it was a difficult situation that put us at a competitive disadvantage. There is a planned initiative to build a $30 million arena dedicated to basketball that would be funded by private money and seat around 5,000. Such an arena would also allow the Kibbie Dome to be used for other revenue generating events like concerts during the basketball season. To a related question he added that the proposed arena would have an attached conference center which could be used for entertaining guests and hosting other University activities.

As the discussion drew to a close Dr. Spear declined the request to make a stab at how much athletic events contribute to helping sustain donor satisfaction. He did note that if we changed conferences or dropped a sport we would see contributions decline.

Ombuds: The Chair invited Ellen Schreiber to give the annual report from the Ombuds Office. The office was originally created at the UI in 1992 under the title of Office of Faculty Ombudsman. The title of the office was changed in 2005 to the current title. Ellen Schreiber has been with the office since 1998 and became the university’s first full time Ombuds in 2010.

Last year the office heard 219 cases with 37% of those cases being from classified staff. Mrs. Schreiber emphasized the independence, confidentiality, impartiality and informality of her role as ombuds. Her role isn’t to take sides but to help the parties to a dispute find a fair resolution to a problem. Those seeking the help of the office still retain their rights to all formal procedures. The full report detailing the types of cases heard and some trends over time can be viewed on the Senate website.

A Senator raised the question of whether the office is sufficiently visible and how many people were aware of the office. She responded that the office could be more visible. She does address new employees on their arrival on campus. Students were provided access to the services of the office a few years ago and she felt she could use some help making the office more visible to students. She also noted that she could help graduate students in interactions with their major professor or graduate committee. Students shouldn’t wait until the sky is falling to seek a place to discuss their concerns.

As the Chair was about to introduce Matt Dorschel to discuss proposed changes to the University weapons policy a suggestion was made that this discussion be postponed so that students might have the opportunity to provide input. After a brief clarification of the fact that this was an APM change which the Senate would not be voting on, it was noted that it was desirable to give interested parties a time to react to the proposed changes. A motion to postpone (Kennelly/Lowe) was made. The motion passed 22-2-0.

Adjournment: The Chair then entertained a motion to adjourn. The motion to adjourn (Murphy/Foster) was approved unanimously and the Senate adjourned at 5pm.

Don Crowley, Secretary to Faculty Senate
Faculty Secretary/Policy Coordinator