University of Idaho
Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes
2014-2015 Meeting #12, Tuesday, November 11, 2014

Present: Aiken (w/o vote), Brandt, Caplan, Chung, Couture (Boise), Crowley (w/o vote), Earl, Folwell, Foster, Godfrey (Coeur d’Alene), Hiromoto, Jeffery, Karsky, Lowe, Miller, Murphy, Nyavor, Perret, Qualls, Safaii, Smith, Stoll, Teal, Wolf, Ytreberg

Absent: Boschetti, Frey, Kennelly, Mahoney, Stauffer

Guests: 5

The Chair called the meeting to order at 3:34. A motion to accept the minutes (Folwell/Murphy) passed with no objections and 2 abstentions.

Chairs Report: Next week President Chuck Staben has been invited to the Senate to discuss university priorities. The week after is Thanksgiving so we will not meet.

The Chair reminded Senators that nominations for the University Promotions Committee are due tomorrow. Please don’t forget to do this. The form was in last week’s packet. Senators from each college should coordinate with each other and send their nominations to Lodi Price in the Provost Office.

Senators also need to email the Chair with their nominations for faculty members to serve on the University Distinguished Professor Committee. As Vice Provost Jeanne Stevenson announced last week the deadline is Wednesday December 3rd. So far we have received one nomination.

Last week the Senate Leadership received an answer to the question that was asked at the October 28th meeting regarding the percentage of HR staff that received mandatory raises. The answer we received from Greg Walters stated that about 51 employees were brought up to minimum of their range out of approximately 1450 employees. Five of these employees were in HR. Walters stated that the independent market analysis of all job families showed that HR was the furthest below the market. HR was over 30% below the market compared to the university in general which was 15% below market. IT was the next lowest in terms of this market analysis. A Senator asked what percentage of HR employees this constituted. The Chair was not sure how many employees were part of HR.

Senator Brandt announced that tonight was the Veterans Dinner and she wanted to thank all those in the university who had helped support this event. They received tremendous support and are expecting a big crowd.

Provost Report: The Provost expressed her appreciation to the faculty and staff who gave up part of their weekend to help out with the first Envision Event. This event attracted 600 students and was very successful. This success suggests we can anticipate more Saturday recruiting events in our future.

FS-15-018 (UCC-15-035) - Rename Department of Agricultural Education and 4H Youth Development: This proposal involves the separation of the Agricultural Education and 4-H Youth Development departments. An external review committee recommended this change since they had somewhat different core missions. The proposal passed unanimously.

FS-15-019 (UCC-15-036) - Rename Program in Women’s Studies: This is a proposal to change the name of the Women’s Studies Program to Women’s and Gender Studies. The minor in Women’s Studies was changed last year and it was thought to be desirable to change the name of the program to more accurately reflect the academic minor. The proposal passed 22-0-1.

FS-15-020 (UCC-15-037) - Add a third option to the Child, Family and Consumer Studies major: This is a proposal to alter the curriculum options available in Family and Consumer Sciences. The proposal calls for changing the current two options into 3: Child and Youth Development, Family Development and Aging, and Consumer and Community Development. Professor Sonya Meyer was at the Senate to discuss the proposal. She stated that creating a third option and slightly restructuring the other two would help to clarify and streamline the program and make it easier for students to find the track best aligned with their career choices. The proposal passed 22-0-1.
FS-15-021 (UCC-15-042) - Drop all four emphases and create two options to the Food Science major: This proposal involves dropping the current four options in Food Science and creating two options. The two new options would be in Food Science and Dairy Foods Management. The Chair invited Dojin Ryu to discuss these changes to drop four emphases and create two options in Food Science. The first is a combination of the previous options and the new option in dairy foods management is a response to industry needs. The proposal passed unanimously.

Enhancing Benefits: The Chair then introduced the main topic of the day which was to brainstorm ideas related to enhancing benefits. A list of ideas that have been submitted was included in today’s Senate packet. Senator Murphy graciously agreed to help write down the main ideas as people discussed them. The Chair suggested we vote on which basic categories we wanted to discuss first. A short discussion followed on whether any of the suggested benefits were non-negotiable. It was generally agreed that some of the ideas on the list were either in violation of state law or perhaps impractical but we shouldn’t reject an entire category because of a specific idea being problematic.

The categories that received the most votes were in order (1) Discounted Services which included Parking and Childcare (2) Leave and Schedule Flexibility (3-tied) Tuition Benefits (3-tied) Extending Moscow Campus Benefits to other Campus Sites.

Before discussing some of the details of the proposals there was a discussion of the extent to which providing such benefits would reduce salary increases. The Chair noted that some of these might provide benefits without significant cost but others could entail significant costs. Most Senators seemed in agreement with the claim that increasing salaries is the top priority across campus but that should not preclude a discussion of possible ways to enhance benefits.

Since many of the proposals for specific benefit increases helped some people on campus, but not others, the idea of developing a cafeteria plan was highlighted. The idea here is that employees could receive vouchers allowing them to choose certain benefits. This would allow some to choose a child care credit while someone else a parking discount or credit towards the recreation (rec) center. A Senator suggested that the amount of these vouchers, or flex dollars, could vary by years of service.

There was a discussion of the Child Care Center and whether or not there could be a subsidy for faculty/staff for this important but expensive service. The Chair of Staff Affairs noted that she had received numerous comments on the child care issue. Undergraduates are subsidized by the ASUI but there is currently no subsidy for graduate students, staff, or faculty.

There was also a discussion of whether there could be subsidies for the rec center and swim center. One Senator pointed out that this would be money well spent since it contributes directly to overall well-being and thus reduces health care costs. Others pointed out that while access to the rec center could be subsidized that equivalent funds would still have to flow into the center to insure that the costs of these centers are covered. A Senator noted that if the university made subsidizing access to the rec center a priority it wouldn’t lead to reducing the funds flowing into the rec center but would change who was providing the funds. While there seemed to be considerable agreement that subsidizing some of these benefits would make the UI a better place to work there were numerous questions of how to go about doing so. A few senators commented that in considering options we should strive to not alter the excellent services and atmosphere of the current rec center.

The discussion then turned to issues of annual leave or more generally into ways to provide increased flexibility in work schedules. A Senator stated that providing greater flexibility in work schedules would certainly make for a better work environment without adding costs. Some work schedules are just a matter of supervisors adhering to historical arrangements when greater flexibility could be promoted. We could make it explicit university policy that this is something supervisors should do.

The long standing issue of whether the university could find a way to provide staff time off between Christmas and New Years without requiring that they use annual leave was raised. Since most of the university is closed during
those days, staff are typically asked to take annual leave. The Provost noted that providing an extra day off to all employees would cost the university $386,000. Thus providing three extra days during the holiday break would cost the rough equivalent of providing a one percent salary increase. While the cost of accrued annual leave is not in a fund somewhere it is a financial liability that must be paid to individuals when they leave the university. Providing extra vacation days would not alter the cost to the university.

The notion was raised as to whether there could be a fall break that came earlier than Thanksgiving. The Provost noted that we could do that, but it would probably exacerbate the problem under discussion. The university already forgoes taking holidays on Columbus Day and Veterans Day in order to allow for 3 additional days off in addition to the Christmas, Thanksgiving and New Year’s holiday days.

The Chair asked how the Senate wanted to proceed since we obviously were not going to make much of a dent on this list. Some of the issues (tuition benefits, day care) are already being discussed by the Faculty Affairs Committee. It was also suggested that Staff Affairs could look into some of the suggested benefits since they were a major constituency. The Chair thought it would be a good idea to have an ad hoc committee with widespread representation to look into these ideas and make some decisions as to how to proceed.

The Graduate Student representative noted that graduate students were frequently not part of the benefits conversation. For instance, only about 40% of graduate assistants received the 2% salary increase last year even though the Provost had requested that they be covered. It was also noted that not all departments cover health insurance for graduate assistants and this would be a desirable benefit. Other possible benefits for graduate students might include subsidizing a shuttle bus to WSU for classes.

The Chair agreed that graduate students as well as other constituencies like adjunct faculty should be represented on the ad hoc committee that he was proposing. He asked for volunteers from the Senate and Senators Wolf, Smith and Couture volunteered. The Chair stated that he would seek representation from Staff Affairs and possibly others.

Adjournment: With lots of good ideas floating around the Senate, a motion to adjourn (Stoll/Smith) was made and passed unanimously.

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