Present: Jeanne Stevenson for Aiken (w/o vote), Boschetti, Brandt, Caplan, Chung, Couture (Boise), Crowley (w/o vote), Flores, Foster, Frey, Godfrey (Coeur d’Alene), Hiromoto (Idaho Falls), Jeffery, Karsky, Kennelly, Lowe, Mahoney, Murphy, Nyavor, Qualls, Safaii, Stauffer, Stoll, Ytreberg. Absent: Aiken (w/o vote), Earl, Folwell, Perret, Teal, Wolf. Guests: 3

The meeting was called to order at 3:33. The Senate continued to struggle with getting the new cloud based system to work appropriately. As the chair observed, we are having issues with both seeing and hearing senators at other sites.

A motion (Brandt/Lowe) to approve the minutes for meeting # 16, January 27, 2015 passed without objection.

Chairs Report: Chair Ytreberg announced that next week Sarah Nelson, Chair of Faculty Appeals Hearing Board will come to the Senate to discuss that committee and its role. Next week the Senate will also take a first look at proposed revisions to the College of Graduate Studies Bylaws. Senators should share these proposed changes with their constituents in preparation for a vote in several weeks. Two weeks from now Trish Hartzell will return with a revised version of the student evaluation forms. Sabbatical applications for 2016-17 are due Fri. March 27th. Those applying should be reminded that the applications need to be submitted to their unit administrator and their dean two weeks prior to the deadline. The spring University Faculty Meeting has been scheduled for 3pm May 5th in the International Ballroom of the recently renamed Bruce Pitman Center. The search committee for a new Provost has conducted some preliminary interviews and the finalists will be invited to campus in the near future. There will be an effort to schedule sessions for the Provost candidates to meet with senators.

Provost Report: Vice Provost Stevenson discussed ongoing searches other than the Provost Search. Candidates for the Marketing and Communications Director are interviewing on campus in a couple of weeks. There is also a search in progress for the Idaho Falls Center Executive.

University Budget & Finance Committee (UBFC): The chair invited UBFC chair Norman Pendegraft and Executive Director of Planning and Budget, Keith Ickes, to discuss the proposal for CEC (Change in Employee Compensation) from UBFC. The full proposal is included in the agenda packet for today’s meeting. Professor Pendegraft began the conversation noting that the actual recommendation from UBFC is on page 8 of the handout. He wanted to highlight that the committee considered a wide variety of issues but eventually decided to lump together the issues of merit, inversion, and compression believing that they were inseparable. This left the committee with three categories for consideration: low pay, across the board, and the combined concerns of merit, inversion, and compression.

Chair Ytreberg wondered how the committee dealt with concerns about how merit pay will be distributed. Is this based on annual performance evaluations or the discretion of unit administrators? Professor Pendegraft stated that this led to some spirited debate on UBFC. The committee ended up deciding that merit would be based on the results of the annual performance review. The question of how such evaluations were determined and whether they were uniform across the University was not germane to the committee’s charge.

Chair Ytreberg continued the inquiry into merit by asking whether a person receiving a 4.0 rating in English would be considered more meritorious than a faculty member in Math who received a 3.8. He
expressed concerns about whether these evaluations would be comparable across units and colleges. The faculty secretary noted that the scores were not comparable across departments and colleges. Senator Brandt who was also a member of UBFC acknowledged that the current system of determining merit was a blunt instrument. She also expressed concerns about artificial limits—like the need to give most everyone a 3—being placed on the annual evaluation. Despite her concerns about how merit is determined she noted that the committee did not try to investigate alternate methods of determining merit. Professor Pendegraft stated that had the committee sought to do this he would have ruled it out of order. A senator inquired about how the funds were distributed across colleges which was answered that typically funds are distributed as a percentage of the total salary in that college.

A senator asked whether merit was determined based on this particular year’s evaluations or whether there was an attempt to look back at previous years? Professor Pendegraft mentioned that his college had discussed the use of “rolling averages” but had not done that. Generally, he was under the impression that such decisions were made college by college. More discussion followed about whether there was a movement to make evaluations for both faculty and staff more consistent across colleges. There is a committee looking into faculty evaluations but it wasn’t known if anyone was looking at issues related to staff evaluations. Having discussed, but clearly not resolved, concerns with merit evaluations the Senate returned to the proposal from the UBFC.

The Faculty Secretary thanked Professor Pendegraft and the UBFC for making a recommendation to spend $140,000 to bring all employees up to at least $25,000. A proposal, similar in intent, came from UBFC last year. Professor Pendegraft commented on the use of the term “low pay” and stated that the committee had rejected other terms that had certain legal connotations in labor law. He stated that the committee had been close to unanimous in making this “low pay” recommendation and he complimented the University for avoiding making low wage hires in recent years. In response to a question from a senator Mr. Ickes stated that raising everyone to $25,000 would not take anyone out of their current pay grade. The $25,000 would become the new floor and no hires would be made below that. Mr. Ickes noted that $140,000 would represent less than 0.1% of a 3% raise.

UBFC looked at three different scenarios of possible increases from the state:

1. CEC of 1% allocate funds across the board.
2. CEC of 2% should be allocated as follows:
   a. 1% across the board, and
   b. 1% according to the combined factors of merit, inversion, and compression.
3. CEC of 2.5% or more the University should:
   a. commit $140,000 to alleviate low pay concerns,
   b. provide 1% across the board, and
   c. allocate the remainder according to the combined factors of merit, inversion, and compression.

Professor Pendegraft noted that while members of the UBFC were very talented and worked very hard to arrive at this proposal, he did not believe the UBFC was as representative of the total campus community as the Senate. Thus he stated he would not be offended if the Senate decided to play with the recommendations.

A senator asked about where this recommendation would go. Chair Ytreberg stated that if the Senate endorsed this proposal, or one like it, than it would be sent to the President and the Provost. He observed that both had indicated an interest in what the Senate recommends.
A senator reflected that earlier in the academic year the question of whether across the board raises should be based on percentages or be a flat amount had been brought up. Had the UBFC considered that? Professor Pendegraft noted that the committee’s discussions had been spirited and far ranging and yes this issue had been raised. Ultimately, it was rejected since it had the potential to undermine the University’s ability to recruit at a high level. Keith Ickes suggested that allotting across the board on a flat dollar amount would reduce our ability to raise faculty salaries above its current position of 84% of our peers. A senator suggested that a flat raise as opposed to a percentage might help with staff retention. Mr. Ickes did not think there would be any interest in redirecting faculty dollars to help staff. He argued that this would not be desirable institutionally which needs to maintain salary scales that reflect market forces.

A concern was expressed that the UBFC’s recommendation would seem to allow for the possibility that a person receiving a satisfactory evaluation might still only receive a 1% across the board raise out of a 3% CEC. A UBFC member stated that this was possible although not likely. If a dean or unit administrator decided that the merit and compression funds needed to be allocated to others than a person might receive only 1%. If the people determining the raises are to have flexibility than it is possible someone with satisfactory ratings will not receive more than the across the board raise. Ickes suggested that there will have to be a forthcoming discussion of whether there should be caps on merit/compression increases. Chair Ytreberg noted that a plan like this one places trust in the dean’s to be consistent and to equalize different evaluation scores from supervisors.

As the conversation began to wane Professor Pendegraft stated that the committee felt strongly that the compression issue was very serious and that this was something that we would have to begin to address. If we start to address this issue now than perhaps over a period of years this will become less of a problem. He also recommended that senators look at the WSU web site that lays out in some detail how faculty should be evaluated and how CEC’s should be distributed.

It was moved (Foster/Safaai) to endorse the proposal from UBFC. There was no further discussion and the motion to endorse passed 17-3.

The chair suggested that the Senate would work on some of the wording before sending the proposal forward to the President.

**Hiring Costs:** A further report from UBFC was produced by a sub-committee led by Senator Brandt. This report sought to approximate the costs of hiring new faculty. Professor Pendegraft praised the efforts of the sub-committee and suggested that he thought the costs were considerably higher than those listed in the report. The report came to the conclusion that the average cost of a faculty search is $5,800 but did not include faculty and staff time to engage in the search. The average cost of moving expenses is $7,000. The start-up costs for new faculty ranged from $2,500 to $600,000.

A senator thanked the sub-committee for their efforts. He also suggested that if the faculty time is included, his quick calculations resulted in a cost of over $12,500 per search. Senator Brandt agreed that this was a reasonable approximation.

There was a short discussion of the faculty turnover rate. Although no one had a precise estimate, the chair noted he had seen a report suggesting that we had a faculty turnover rate of about twice that of our peers. Professor Brandt agreed that the turnover rate was startling and that the opportunity costs were significant. Another senator pointed out that it frequently takes new faculty several years to become a productive and contributing member of the faculty. Although no vote was taken it seemed
apparent that there was widespread agreement that the results of this study were troubling and that the costs of replacing faculty and adding new ones raised serious concerns. A senator noted that some of the faculty leaving actually wanted to stay but there seemed to be no established procedure for trying to retain such faculty. Another senator was disturbed by the suggestion that one should seek another job offer as a way to leverage a higher salary.

A question was also raised about whether our recently completed University fundraising campaign might help to address some of these concerns. Mr. Ickes noted that the recent campaign did place a priority on the establishment of endowed chairs. This is a pattern long followed by private universities. He felt that our current level of endowed chairs was appropriate for a university of our size and fundraising. A fully endowed chair costs 3-4 million. The strategy of partially endowing chairs was a reasonable one given our fundraising environment.

The chair asked the Senate what they would like to do with this report. While many senators suggested that this was a key issue that we needed to return to, another wondered whether such discussions would lead to any concrete policy proposals. The chair noted that it was certainly within the scope of Senate to recommend changes to the FSH. Beyond that, the Senate could clearly raise such concerns with the President and Provost.

**Adjournment:** With the time now at 5:15 pm a motion (Murphy/Lowe) to adjourn passed unanimously.

Don Crowley, Faculty Secretary and Secretary to Faculty Senate