University of Idaho
Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes
2014-2015 Meeting #9, Tuesday, October 21, 2014

Present: Aiken (w/o vote), Brandt, Caplan, Chung, Couture (Boise), Crowley (w/o vote), Earl, Folwell, Frey, Godfrey (Coeur d’Alene), Hiromoto, Jeffery, Karsky, Kennelly, Lowe, Mahoney, Miller, Murphy, Nyavor, Smith, Stauffer, Stoll, Teal, Wolf, Ytreberg. Absent: Boschetti, Foster, Perret, Qualls, Safaii
Guests: 4

The Chair called the meeting to order at 3:31 p.m. A motion (Wolf/Brandt) to approve the minutes for meeting #8 passed 23-0-3.

Chairs Report: The Chair noted that Greg Walters will be at the Senate next week to discuss practices and policies for hiring faculty and staff. This was one of the topics that Senators indicated a strong desire to discuss at the August retreat. Two weeks from today Athletic Director Rob Spear will provide an update on athletics and Ombuds Ellen Schreiber will provide a yearly report on the activities of that office. In three weeks we have reserved the entire meeting for a brainstorming session on ideas for alternative compensation for faculty and staff. Ideas related to alternative compensation have been expressed in past meetings and since no committee is specifically working on this issue this meeting will provide an opportunity for the entire Senate to consider ideas that might be turned into concrete proposals. The Chair and Senator Foster have emailed constituents in Science seeking their thoughts on alternative compensation. The Chair encouraged others to do the same.

Senator Michael Murphy announced that this weekend was the 4th year of the Bach Festival. The activities will lead off on Thursday with an event in the Commons Rotunda at noon. There will be concerts on Friday and Saturday night in the Haddock Auditorium.

Provost Report: The Provost offered her appreciation to Jeanne Stevenson for sitting in for her at the Senate and whenever her duties require her to be in two places at once. Provost Aiken reminded everyone that we are moving into a new advising period. Advising students is very important to the University’s retention efforts. If every College could retain 10 more students we would be much closer to reaching our enrollment goals. The advising literature is clear that thoughtful advising is crucial to retaining students.

It is also position description time. The Provost noted that this is the most important document faculty complete with regard to the promotion and tenure process. It is really important that faculty pay careful attention to specifying their academic goals for next year and assigning percentages to each category. The total work effort must add up to 100%.

FS-15-010: FSH 1640.89 – University Committee for General Education: The Chair recognized Vice Chair Randy Teal to present FS-15-010. This item had been brought to the Senate several weeks ago but was returned to assure that the University Committee for General Education approved of the inclusion of the Director of Advising as a non-voting member of this committee. UCGE voted unanimously to approve this addition. With this confirmation the Senate passed the full proposal 25-0-1.

Videoconference Capabilities: The Chair invited Dan Ewart to discuss videoconferencing capabilities and the ongoing process of rebalancing technology investments. Mr. Ewart began by discussing changes in the way ITS will provide support for videoconferencing. Funding has been an issue and we haven’t kept up with necessary infrastructure. Thus the University needs to make some immediate changes to improve services and provide some financial relief. The first change is to invest in a more powerful cloud
based bridging system. Bridging is how we connect to all locations. This service will be more reliable and robust with higher definition allowing us to share documents over the screen. Since it will be out in the cloud if something breaks we won’t be shut down. Also, this system will allow for recording and replay.

A second change involves aging video classrooms. One classroom in Education has already been shut down and the classrooms in Agriculture 104 and CNR 14 will be closed. The technology in those rooms is past its useful life and maintaining the equipment to ensure quality is not feasible to continue. We don’t have the money ($80,000 to $100,000 each) to rebuild these video classrooms and so we will be closing them at the end of this semester. Colleges should coordinate among themselves to schedule courses in the available video classrooms. ITS will not be able to provide scheduling services for conferences any longer. Groups across the University are working on processes related to scheduling and support for courses and video conferencing. There should be information out on this in the next few weeks.

The cloud based bridging system will be maintained by an independent service. The vendor that will maintain the system will be chosen soon. It is thought that because we will not be purchasing very expensive equipment this system will be both less costly and less risky.

In response to a question about the closing of the video conference rooms it was noted that there will be mobile video carts that will be available. The move to the cloud based system will also allow people to connect directly to the video conference from their own device.

Senators asked a variety of questions about costs and the relative ease or difficulty of connecting to the system. In particular the question was asked about the weekly Faculty Senate meeting and how connections would be made. The response was that the details will depend on what vendor is selected but that it isn’t thought that it will be very complicated. It was also noted that since the hourly costs associated with video conferencing will be going away the costs should be cheaper.

**Rebalancing Technology Investments:** The conversation then turned to what has been termed “rebalancing technology investments”. Dan Ewart noted that the Focus on the Future process had raised the need to look at all IT resources at the University regardless of where they are and determine a good balance between institutional goals and meeting all the individual unit goals. This process seeks to identify any weaknesses we have, areas of duplication, and places we might save money. They are also seeking to find those areas where we need to improve and where we need to become more flexible and adaptable to changing needs. Ewart stated that over the next three or four months they will be collecting data and doing this analysis before making recommendations. Those interested should look at their website which details the process and goals: [http://www.uidaho.edu/its/Rebalancing](http://www.uidaho.edu/its/Rebalancing).

A Senator inquired about the extent to which the process would be taking into consideration how some institutional policies have driven technology decisions. Ewart suggested that this rebalancing process was mainly concerned with our current technology capabilities and not with why some problems have developed.

A question was raised about who is on the advisory group and whether all Colleges are represented. The answer was that not all Colleges are represented although the advisory group would be consulting and seeking input across Colleges. A final question asked about whether any F&A returns might be devoted to developing technology for research. Ewart noted that while he had not been involved in direct discussions of F&A, he has had some beginning conversations with Jack McIver about support for research computing.

**Distance & Extended Education:** The Chair introduced Terry Ratcliff the new Executive Director for Distance & Extended Education. Ratcliff stated that at the President’s May Leadership Retreat the
President had dedicated more resources to support distant and online learning. As the newly hired Executive Director he has been busy trying to develop short and long term action plans for distant education at the UI. Director Ratcliff supplied some statistics about who uses online education at the University. Last Spring fully online students were 5% of total enrollment. Almost ¾ of these students were enrolled part-time and over half were graduate students. About a third of enrolled students took a combination of online and traditional courses.

Director Ratcliff discussed trends in online courses around the country and how the UI might develop its plans to expand distant education offerings. He noted that if we are going to see the desired robust growth in students a significant portion of that will need to come from online courses. We are behind many other institutions (like ASU) in the development of our online programs although there are niche markets like “Fire Science” that we can identify and develop. Due to our location and demographics we will have to be looking out of state to expand our online offerings. In November we will be choosing two or three “fully online” programs to develop although this should not preclude other departments from beginning discussions about future programs they may wish to develop.

The conversation that followed focused on questions of determining quality in distance programs and providing support for faculty interested in developing online courses. Ratcliff suggested that a strong incentive to develop online programs is the opportunity to increase students and grow programs. To show faculty what a quality online course looks like we can identify champions (faculty who have successful courses) and have curious faculty shadow a course to see what elements a quality course possesses. His experience suggests students can be more engaged in an online course than in a face-to-face course, although typically it is the older student.

Ratcliff suggested that it is difficult to get clean data for graduation rates and retention in online courses. Attrition for online courses is typically higher because students will go into courses thinking it will be easier and it isn’t. However, there is strong research that shows that student outcomes from online programs are as good or better as an equivalent residential program. Also, fully online students tend to have satisfaction levels as high as face-to-face students. Ratcliff was not sure of any studies on the satisfaction levels of faculty. Further comments from Senators emphasized the need to develop incentives and help for faculty who are seeking to improve their online or hybrid courses as well as providing support for students in these programs.

**Adjournment:** With the conversation winding down the Chair entertained a motion to adjourn at 4:53 p.m. The motion (Stoll/Murphy) passed unanimously.

Don Crowley, Secretary to Senate
Faculty Secretary/Policy Coordinator