Chair Teal called meeting #17 to order at 3:31. The connections to out of Moscow sites were all functioning well. A motion (Wolf/Brewick) to approve the minutes from the January 26th meeting passed without objection.

Chair’s Report: The Chair reminded Senators that the University Faculty Meeting is next week at 3:00 and there will be no senate meeting. He asked Senators to encourage their constituents to attend the UFM. Chair Teal asked for volunteers to hear an appeal from SDRB. Female volunteers would be particularly appreciated.

Chair Teal reported that he went to Provost Council to present the new evaluation form and discuss the process for bringing the position description and evaluation forms into harmony. He felt this was well received and there was sentiment to get rid of (or at least fundamentally change) the position description to be more efficient. The Provost commented that the Deans were positive about the direction we were moving on evaluations, although they wanted to make sure that the underlying policy changes are addressed.

Provost’s Report: Provost Wiencek announced that the Strategic Plan would be rolled out tomorrow. It may be sent to everyone as a PDF, if not it can be found as a link on the Provost’s page. There will be multiple methods available to provide feedback. Yellowdig is a very effective tool for narrative feedback but has been a challenge for some people. Also, deans and VP’s will be holding forums providing the opportunity for comments. We have a month to make revisions before the final version is approved and sent to the Regents.

A Senator wondered whether comments made about the plan would be available to everyone. The Provost noted that this depended upon the method used for feedback with some being more visible than others.

Provost Wiencek also commented on the spread pay task force. There has been a pause in their meetings, but they will be meeting tomorrow and he will be participating. A Senator asked about whether the memo on hiring practices that had been mentioned by the Vice President of Finance had ever gone out. The Provost stated that it had been approved by the cabinet and he will check on its status. Vice-President Ewart volunteered that it hasn’t been sent and the wording is being worked on with General Counsel. Another Senator asked about the enrollment picture. The Provost responded that we don’t have a complete picture yet. The number of students admitted are right on target. There has been some concern about students who were admitted under the new direct admissions program, they did not realize that they still needed to complete the process to activate their admission. The Provost further explained that he had been concerned about some aspects of the student experience that has not been totally taken into account. This was on his mind when he decided to pull the reporting process closer to him. The handoffs between different parts of the process has not always been as smooth as it could be.
Communications (IT/videoconferencing): Chair Teal introduced Dan Ewart, Vice President for Infrastructure and Chief Information Officer. VP Ewart had been invited to talk about IT and videoconferencing on campus. He distributed a handout that helped explain some key terminology necessary to understanding the issues in this area. He explained that our state-wide mission and challenging geography suggests that videoconferencing needs an emphasis that it hasn’t had. Among other issues, VP Ewart noted that we have struggled to fund the underlying infrastructure. In 2014 he had to shut down some of the centralized services that IT had previously provided. A related problem has been the wide variation of technology on campus. The number of end points and the different types of technology used by departments has created maintainance issues.

VP Ewart noted that Cloud based services are the way to go because they are the most cost effective. However, he also acknowledged what the Senate has witnessed first-hand, that for many on campus Scopia is a four letter word. Scopia has not proved to be the product they hoped it would be. It has not been reliable and doesn’t provide the experience that faculty, staff, and students desire. They are currently looking at alternatives. Beyond Scopia, VP Ewart summarized some of our current problems to include:

- Cart use is too resource-intensive to continue.
- Some units are unable to maintain equipment.
- Demand is growing and more rooms need to be built.
- Scheduling is challenging.

To help deal with some of these problems he has made a short-term budget request for $300,000 and $375,000 on an ongoing basis. This request includes:

- Three centrally-scheduled classrooms.
- Improved cloud-based bridging/session caption.
- Personnel for scheduling and tech support.
- Hardware maintainance.

Several Senators thanked VP Ewart for his candid assessment and in particular his acknowledgment that Scopia had not been working. Other comments emphasized the problems of excessive decentralization, the lack of availability of information, and the problems of scheduling. One Senator stressed the fact that providing better videoconferencing facilities isn’t the same as enabling a good distance education experience. Another Senator acknowledged that we need some centralization, but we shouldn’t go too far down that path since different departments have different needs. She also noted that we should consult with those faculty who have the most experience in providing distant education. They have a wealth of knowledge about what works.

FS-16-018 – FSH 3710 - Leave Policy: Chair Teal invited Marty Ytreberg, last year’s Senate Chair and this year’s Chair of the Faculty Affairs Committee to join us for the purpose of discussing the proposed changes to the leave policy that were introduced last week. Chair Teal also invited Provost Wieneck to join the discussion.

Provost Wieneck stated that he regretted not being at the Senate for last week’s discussion since his attendance was required down in Boise. Provost Wieneck noted that he had been told that last year the cabinet discussed the fact that our parental leave policy was essentially only what was required by FMLA. His understanding was that faculty senate had been approached by the cabinet to make some changes to enhance the parental policy. Professor Ytreberg commented that he believed that the route was HR to Faculty Affairs to the Senate. The Faculty Secretary noted that as far as he was aware, no one
from cabinet ever approached the faculty senate or FAC with regard to proposed changes to parenting leave.

The Provost stressed that we can all agree that having a parental leave policy was important. He then discussed some of what he believed were the remaining problems after the President vetoed parts of what was passed last year. With regard to whether a person had to use all annual leave before going on unpaid leave, the Provost noted that in practice we require people to use their annual leave. The University has a fiduciary responsibility and accumulated annual leave can be a cost if all annual leave is not used before going on unpaid leave. This is because the University is responsible for paying out annual leave when a person leaves the University. The Provost stated that the cabinet did not see what the case was for supporting this flexibility in the leave policy, while the potential cost was clear. Vice-Chair Brandt noted that our stated FSH policy (current M-2 old L-2 in 3710) expressly provided employees with the possibility to go on unpaid leave without exhausting all annual leave. The practice followed by HR was in contradiction to stated policy. The question was never presented to the Senate as to whether there should be limits on how much annual leave an employee could build up. Professor Ytreberg stated that FAC wanted to maximize flexibility for the employees, even though they thought it was unlikely that many employees would choose to take unpaid leave if they had annual leave left.

The Provost suggested that perhaps we should take a pause and reconsider this question without it becoming adversarial. From the administration’s viewpoint, it becomes more difficult to make funding decisions when unfunded risks are left out there. He added that it was hard to see why someone would want to take unpaid leave when they had paid leave available. Vice Chair Brandt suggested that she could think of reasons why a parent might want to preserve some annual leave. A parent, upon returning to work, might want to have some annual leave available in case a child becomes sick. She added that an employee who had exhausted all other leave and took unpaid leave to be with a sick child would be unprotected.

A Senator noted that when the President’s Cabinet states that because we can’t think of a reason to have this option, therefore you can’t have this option, definitely creates an “us vs. them” mentality. The Provost responded that this is unfortunate. There is a balance here that must be found. The university leaders are concerned about generating the resources to deal with fundamental issues, such as finding sufficient funding to bring salaries up to market rate, and thus the need to manage risks. He noted that he doesn’t know whether additional leave flexibility is off the table and suggested that a middle ground be suggested by faculty senate and brought back to the cabinet. Chair Teal suggested that if we could find some reasons for maintaining this flexibility we could take it to cabinet. A Senator stated he could think of some tax reasons that one might want to defer income to a later year. For instance, being able to defer income might affect financial aid packages.

Provost Wiencek also raised some questions about the proposal to allow new employee’s to be eligible for FMLA when they arrive on campus. He stated that allowing the primary caregiver to be eligible for parenting leave when they arrive on campus was something the cabinet would support. The question of whether this should apply to all FMLA benefits was a separate issue. Professor Ytreberg stated that allowing new employees to be eligible for all Family Medical Leave when they arrive would send an important message. The Provost thought the discussion should be limited to parenting leave and applying this to all of FMLA raised an entirely new set of issues. In particular, he wondered about how this might affect the probation period. He suggested that while he personally might support this expansion, he didn’t believe the issue had been thoroughly vetted. He also suggested that this appeared to be a type of bait and switch since we started with a limited discussion on parenting leave and now we
are discussing a much broader set of issues. Professor Ytreberg responded that FAC had certainly not tried to slip something through.

Vice Chair Brandt stated that while she thought the Provost had raised some good points that need to be considered, she had concerns about what this entire episode says about the governance structure. The way in which these policies get formed is through FAC and the Faculty Senate. FAC and the Faculty Senate have been working on these policies for a year and a half. If the cabinet has concerns about a policy, they know who the Chair of Faculty Affairs is and they have some responsibility to communicate those concerns. There is a responsibility from the cabinet to work within the existing governance structure. She noted that the Provost’s comments today are the first time that she had heard exactly what the cabinet’s concerns were. Faculty Secretary Crowley added that he made repeated attempts to promote a conversation over the issues remaining after the President’s veto last May that left some ambiguity. The first time we were able to have any sort of conversation about this occurred in December, after raising the lack of a response with the Provost around Thanksgiving.

Provost Wiencek stated that while we have some examples of how to do things right, this was a good example of how not to do things. He has some ideas about what might work. To have time to address these issues, the leave policies will have to come off the agenda for the moment. He would like to wrap up the parental leave issues this year and work on the other aspects of FMLA after that. Chair Teal stated that his recommendation would be to delay a vote for now and try to work together for a resolution of these issues before the end of the year.

**FS-16-028: FSH 2700 - Student Evaluation:** Chair Teal invited Jennifer Johnson-Leung to provide an update on the student evaluation of teaching form. Professor Johnson-Leung discussed the many activities of the committee so far this year. They are working on the issue of plus/minus grades and will be putting out a survey on that. She also presented the newest version of the student evaluation of teaching forms. They are still working on the exact wording of the questions. In particular they are working on questions 4 & 5 which have been the mandatory report questions. A Senator suggested that question six also needs to be reworded to conform to the scale. Another Senator expressed concerns that we weren’t retaining the list of extra questions that a professor could use to customize the form. He was expressly concerned about the evidence suggesting bias against women and minorities in teaching evaluations. Being able to add questions could help mitigate against this form of bias, but our move to a shorter form won’t be doing anything to protect against this bias.

Another Senator wondered how question 6 (the instructor was helpful to me outside of class) applied to online education. Professor Johnson-Leung stated that the committee had discussed this question a lot. She noted that the committee realizes that these forms can’t measure who is a good teacher, but they do tell us something about the student experience in the classroom. A concern was raised about the extent to which we link the information from student evaluations to faculty evaluations. Professor Johnson-Leung commented that we want the forms to help faculty become better instructors, but if we want to evaluate the quality of our instructors then we will have to do a lot more than ask students to fill out a form. Chair Teal noted that the form will be coming back to the Senate for a vote later in the semester.

**FS-16-029 (UCC-16-002) – Prior Learning Assessment.** Heather Chermak (the Registrar) presented a statement explaining policy on assessing prior learning. The policy explains that credit can be given for prior learning experiences with proper documentation. There were no questions and the policy passed 15-1-2.
FS-16-030 (UCC-16-026a). **Fire Ecology, Management, and Technology.** Professor Randy Brooks presented these proposals. This is a graduate certificate on Fire Ecology. There were no questions and the certificate passed with no opposition.

FS-16-031 (UCC-16-026b). **Remote Sensing.** This is an undergraduate certificate. This passed with no opposition.

FS-16-032 (UCC-16-026c). **Forest Resources name change to Forestry.** This is a proposal to change the name of the BS in Forest Resources to BS in Forestry. This was unanimously supported by the department faculty. This proposal passed without objection.

**Adjournment:** Already well past the time of our normal adjournment, the Chair entertained a motion (Folwell/Mahoney) to adjourn. This passed unanimously at 5:16.

Respectfully submitted,

Don Crowley  
Secretary to the Faculty Senate and Faculty Secretary