Present: Adams, Anderson, Barbour, Brandt, Brewick, Brown, Caplan, Chung, Couture (Boise), Crowley (w/o vote), Dallas, Flores, Folwell, Godfrey (Coeur d’Alene), Hrdlicka, Jeffery, LaPrath, Latrell, Mahoney, Murphy, Stoll, Teal, Nyavor, Stevenson for Wiencek (w/o vote), Wolf. Absent: Boschetti, Foster, Hiromoto (Idaho Falls), LaPrath, Nicotra, Perret, Wiencek (w/o vote). Guests: 15

Chair Teal called meeting #28 to order at 3:32. As Ann’s brownies were passed around, a motion (Stoll/Dallas) to approve the minutes for the April 26, 2016 meeting passed without objection.

Chair’s Report: Referring back to the discussion on spread pay from the last meeting, Chair Teal noted that there will be two options for those wishing to opt out of spread pay and receive the $1,000 incentive. Employees may opt out for FY2017, which starts this July, or wait a year and opt out next May for FY2018. If a person chooses the option for FY2017, there will be a gap in their paychecks between July and September. An open forum will be held to discuss the changes to spread pay on Wednesday, May 11th from 3-5 in the Commons Crest Room. Since this is the last scheduled meeting for this year’s Senate, Chair Teal took the opportunity to thank those on the Senate and those on Senate committee’s for their efforts. He particularly thanked the chairs of Senate committees for their dedication and hard work.

Provost’s Report: Vice Provost Jeanne Stevenson provided the Provost’s Report. She reminded everyone of the need to get grades in by noon on Tuesday, May 17th. Getting grades in promptly enables students to consider their options regarding summer school and possible financial aid. Vice Provost Stevenson also reminded everyone of the commencement this coming Saturday (May 14th) and encouraged faculty to be there and join in celebrating their students’ success.

Other items of note include:

- The search for the Dean of the College of Graduate Studies has been postponed until the fall.
- The Dean of the College of Art and Architecture has taken a position at North Carolina State. Provost Wiencek will be visiting with the faculty of the College regarding what steps will be taken regarding leadership for next year.
- The Strategic Plan was presented to the Board in April and will be on their agenda for approval in June. We will begin work on the cascading plans this fall.
- The Vandal Mental Health First Aid program is scheduled for May 17-18. This program helps provide faculty and staff with strategies for dealing with students who have encountered problems. Those interested should email Vice Provost Jeanne Stevenson for more information about registration.

Graduate Student Family Medical Leave: Chair Teal introduced Dean McMurtry from the College of Graduate Studies and former Senator Anthony St. Claire to discuss a proposal regarding family and medical leave for graduate students who hold a position as a teaching or research assistant. Dean McMurtry noted that this proposal (see packet available on Faculty Senate website) had been brought to the College of Graduate Studies (COGS) by the Graduate and Professional Student Association (GPSA). The proposal would open up family and medical leave for these positions. This is new to Idaho, but not uncommon to other universities. They are students and employees at the same time but have no protection for their jobs if they become ill. This proposal would allow full time teaching assistants or research assistants who become ill or pregnant to receive six weeks of paid leave at 80% of their salary.
A Senator asked about protections for these students as students when they become ill. Dean McMurtry stated that faculty are very good at working with students to make up their academic work, although in some cases they may end up taking a medical withdrawal for the semester. Another Senator wondered whether this proposal had been vetted by department chairs. He thought many departments might have concerns with paying 80%. Dean McMurtry stated the proposal hadn’t been vetted by department chairs, but had been supported by graduate council. He did state that COGS would be willing to split the cost with departments. The Senator noted that those working on research projects with tight timelines would have problems waiting for the student to return. Mr. St. Claire noted one of the purposes of the proposal was to help make it possible for graduate students to continue in the same, or a similar position. The number of graduate students who would be taking advantage of this would not be high.

Vice Chair Brandt raised the question of parity with what exists for faculty and staff. She understands that achieving that parity might be difficult since TAs and RAs don’t get sick leave, but on the other hand if faculty and staff run out of leave they do not get paid leave. Mr. St. Claire noted that graduate students don’t have any other benefits. Another Senator pointed out that the draft in the proposed M-4 refers to the existing M-15 when it should have referred to M-14. Dean McMurtry acknowledged that this was a mistake and they would make that change. It was generally acknowledged that the new proposal should be made consistent with recent changes to family and medical leave adopted by the Senate.

A Senator asked how these benefits would be funded. Dean McMurtry noted that he doesn’t have a specific budget line, but GPSA has approved $10,000 to seed this proposal and COGS could come up with $5,000. They estimate that if 5 students took advantage of this proposal it would cost $15,000 per year. A Senator urged the Senate to support this proposal when it comes back next year since it will help to keep graduate students from dropping out. Dean McMurtry stated that they would make some changes and will bring the proposal back next year.

**Communications Strategic Plan:** Chair Teal introduced Executive Director of University Communications & Marketing (Communications) Stephany Bales to discuss the strategic plan being developed for Communications. Ms. Bales discussed the new structure for Communications and stated that she wanted to bring forward a few ideas which can be discussed in greater detail in the fall.

She noted that Communications used to be part of Advancement, but now is a stand-alone unit. A significant part of their job is to promote the brand of the University and try to position the University to increase enrollment. They also manage internal communications on issues important across the campus.

Ms. Bales discussed the statewide survey they have just completed. The information from this survey will help determine how our marketing should change. She noted that the survey indicates that many Idaho residents view Boise State as the superior academic institution. Why this is thought to be true is harder to determine. If visibility is the problem, then Communications is committed to dealing with this problem. In general, the Senate indicated a desire to see the survey results and discuss them next year.

A Senator asked if “web analytics” are being used to determine who comes to our website. She suggested that we are analyzing this data, but the average person doesn’t come to our website. Another Senator wondered what our brand was. Ms. Bales explained that we have sought to advance the view that we are a student-focused learning center that seeks to offer academic excellence and access. The challenge is that this doesn’t differentiate us from a lot of other institutions. Ideas suggested by Senators included that the UI offered a safe and healthy environment as well as one that provided opportunities for undergraduate research. Ms. Bales promised to return in the fall to discuss the survey and ideas on how to market the University.
Committee on Committees: Senator Brandt offered the ConC’s report to fill some openings on various committee’s. The report was accepted without objection.

Sabbatical Leave: The list of those who have been recommended for sabbatical leave for 2017-18 was presented. The list was approved without objection with the edit that Professor Don Tyler’s departmental affiliation needed to be corrected.

Teaching & Advising: Chair Teal introduced Professor Johnson-Leung to present the results of a survey on student attitudes towards plus/minus grading. Professor Johnson-Leung referenced the survey (see Senate packet). She reported that 60% of the students favored adopting a plus/minus grading system. Some students (19%) were strongly opposed. There was some discussion of previous attempts to do this. The Senate did pass a plus/minus grading proposal a decade ago. President White vetoed it. A Senator reported that a growing number of universities have adopted a plus/minus system.

Professor Johnson-Leung talked about the importance of making sure that this committee has both undergraduate and graduate representation on the committee. She also discussed the ASUI proposal to post grades on BbLearn.

She noted that the committee had discussed ways in which communication about grades could be improved. If posting on BbLearn was desired, there would need to be training to ensure that professors understood how to post grades this way. In general, she stated there might be ways to improve learning by frequent “low-stakes” assessment. Since faculty care about students, they are more likely to respond to a personal request from a student than a policy change. There are ways to make students feel that they are more supported and better informed, but a policy change isn’t really necessary. She also discussed the proposal for a Teaching Center. The Teaching and Advising Committee will continue to work on this for next year.

Chair Teal recognized new Senators for 2016-17. He also provided certificates to all outgoing Senators. The Faculty Secretary presented a card and a present from the Senate to Chair Teal in recognition of his efforts for the year. A round of applause brought the last meeting of the year to a close.

Adjournment: A motion to adjourn (Latrell/Wolf) passed unanimously at 4:35.

Respectfully submitted,

Don Crowley
Secretary to the Faculty Senate and Faculty Secretary