University of Idaho  
Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes  
2017-2018 Meeting #20, Tuesday, February 27, 2018

Present: Anderson (Mike), Anderson (Miranda), Arowojolu, Baird, Brandt (w/o vote), Brown, Cannon (Boise), Caplan, De Angelis, Foster, Ellison, Grieb, Howard, Hrdlicka (chair), Jeffery, Johnson, Kern (Coeur d’Alene), Leonor, Mahoney, Morgan, Morrison, Nicotra, Panttaja, Schwarzlaender, Seamon, Tibbals, Vella, Watson, Wiencek (w/o vote). Absent: Zhao (Idaho Falls). Guests: 11

Call to Order and Minutes: The chair called the meeting to order at 3:30. A motion (Foster/Anderson) to approve the minutes was made. A senator requested that the first sentence in the second full paragraph after the provost report be amended as follows: “A senator urged that the faculty senate seek to be included in the discussion about reorganization of colleges and departments.” Another senator requested that the last two sentences of the same paragraph be amended as follows: “She believes that such mergers would endanger faculty and staff morale and that faculty and staff would leave the university. She encouraged the administration to approach the issues strategically consistent with the strategic plan.” The secretary accepted these suggestions as friendly amendments. The amended minutes were approved with one abstention.

Chair’s Report:

- General Curriculum Report #292 is available. Petitions seeking further review of curriculum changes covered by the report are due to the Chair of Faculty Senate, hrdlicka@uidaho.edu, by March 1, 2018.
- General Policy Report #66 is available. Petitions seeking further review of policy changes covered by the report are due to the Chair of Faculty Senate, hrdlicka@uidaho.edu, by March 6, 2018.

Provost Report: The Provost apologized that he was not able to attend the meeting last week. He was presenting at a conference dealing with university facilities and risk management issues. Based on the reports he has received from the meeting, he expressed his disappointment at the conversation. He pointed out that he has been raising the issue of college restructuring since the beginning of the semester. He discussed his approach to the issue at length at the February 6, 2017 senate meeting and shared a memo detailing his approach with the university community the following week. His perception is that despite these efforts at communication, many senators seemed surprised that restructuring is being considered and worried that such substantial changes should not be driven by a financial crisis. The provost stressed that our current situation is not a crisis. The university must reduce its base budget by 1-2%. He stressed that the institution has enough time to make strategic changes and avoid across-the-board cuts. He reminded senators that the deans were asked to brainstorm possible ideas to address the university’s financial situation. One suggestion offered by the provost for their consideration is that administrative costs might be reduced by considering restructuring. He pointed out that we are at the upper end of the number of colleges for the size of our institution. But, he stressed that there is no pre-existing plan by the administration to reorganize colleges or to undermine faculty voices in this process. He intends to bring the proposals to Faculty Senate and to the university community as a whole. The deans have forwarded their ideas to him. He has not had the opportunity to digest the ideas or to discuss them with the president. If he and the president decide that some of the ideas warrant further development into concrete proposals, he plans to forward them to a university-wide committee and seek input across the campus. He hopes that we do not approach these issues from a defensive posture, but instead consider the good of the institution. He stressed that while the financial situation and open dean’s positions may have prompted the current discussion, the best interests of the institution should be the prime consideration.

A senator commented that he did not have the same impression of last week’s senate meeting as was conveyed to the provost. Another senator commented that he was reflecting the worries he has heard from the faculty he represents. His intent was to ensure that the university’s approach to these issues is on the record. Another senator commented that many of the questions at last week’s meeting were seeking additional information to clarify the process and its goals. The provost responded that he had answered such questions during his
presentation two weeks earlier and through his campus-wide letter. He also elaborated that he understands that some of the current doubt and worry arises from faculty experience of past administrative practices. He realizes that faculty and staff have not always been consulted in a meaningful way. He also understands that many demands are being made on faculty and staff who are busy and tired. He pointed to his collaborative approach on issues such as market compensation and program prioritization. He assured senators that one of the things he considers positive is that “we are in this together.” The administration is not using top down approaches, but instead is engaging in a pro-active planning process. He stressed that part of our job as senators is to attempt to stop the rumors.

A senator asked for clarification on the timeline for considering changes? The provost explained that he has not developed a specific timeline because it has not been clear what proposals would be developed by the deans and whether any of the proposals would move forward. He expects to report back to the campus in the next two weeks regarding the recommendations he and the president have regarding the deans’ report. He expects to get input from the deans and from faculty senate leadership and to then convene a university-wide committee to evaluate the proposal(s). He envisions that the university committee would finish its initial work by the end of spring semester so that faculty and staff would not be left with uncertainty over the summer. He acknowledged that the details of any reorganization proposal that emerges from this process may not be fully worked out by the end of the semester. He expects that if we decide to pursue one of the proposals, we will pick it up in the fall and finalize it at that time. Finally, the provost commented that the uneven resource allocations among the different colleges must be corrected. Such a correction could come from mergers or reallocations. In either case, we must provide the resources necessary for the colleges to carry out their responsibilities.

A senator commented the faculty in his college met and developed ideas to address the current financial needs of the university. He asked whether there would be an opportunity to provide additional ideas for consideration in the process described by the provost. The provost thought this was a valuable suggestion and indicated his office would develop an approach for submitting such ideas and would communicate about this to the campus community.

A senator suggested that the Faculty Senate be actively involved in the decision-making process. The provost commented that the reorganization issues being discussed involve a mix of policy and administration. He stated that senate has a lot of control over policy. The president and provost cannot make a unilateral decision to remove policy from the Faculty-Staff Handbook. However, with regard to administrative affairs, the role of the senate is consultative. In the end the decision about restructuring is at the president’s discretion. He stressed that his practice has been, and will continue to be, to consider faculty views and input; if faculty vehemently oppose a course of conduct, it is not going to be effective. The faculty secretary reminded senators that the Faculty-Staff Handbook does not contain specific policy regarding mergers of colleges and reorganization. She also offered her view that the senate cannot take the place of the university-wide committee envisioned by the provost. The senate does not have enough representation of staff and students. It also does not have enough representation from the colleges that may be most affected. A senator requested that students also be included in the process at the appropriate time. The provost pointed out that the State Board of Education (SBOE) has policy with which the university must comply. For example, at the time the College of Art and Architecture was reinstated after having been combined with the College of Letters Arts and Social Sciences, the SBOE made clear that the elimination of the college should have been approved through the SBOE process for approving new programs.

Mike Anderson, pointed out that if a reorganization proposal goes through the program approval process, it would have to come to senate for a vote.

Finally, leaving the topic of college mergers, the provost reported that a search will be initiated before spring break for a new Ombuds. Pursuant to Faculty-Staff Handbook 3080, the search committee should be comprised of two staff members, two faculty members designated by senate leadership and two students (one graduate,
one undergraduate). The provost encouraged senators to submit nominations to Brenda Helbling (bhelbling@uidaho.edu) in the President’s Office who will be coordinating the search.

**Amy Taylor Director of the Center for Disability Access and Resources.** In addition to Director Taylor, Teresa Davi, Testing and Note-taking Coordinator, and Leslie Gwartney, Raven Scholars Coordinator, were also at the meeting. Taylor explained that she is relatively new to the University of Idaho. Since arriving, she has been impressed by the level of support offered by faculty and staff to students with disabilities. She has a broad base of prior experience in K-12 education and the private sector, as well as in higher education. She is also an alum. Taylor explained that the center keeps the medical documentation demonstrating disability and confidentially assigns accommodations to students based on need. The center is the entity within UI designated to ensure that the university is in compliance with Americans with Disability Act rules and with other accessibility standards for students. The center also works to provide equal access to all aspects of the university. They provide testing support, note-taking, C-print captioning services, ASL interpreting services, assistive technology equipment loans, and an assistive technology lab for students. The Raven Scholars Program focuses particularly on supporting students on the autism spectrum. Taylor also commented that the center provides education and outreach to faculty and staff. She hopes to expand and improve these services. Finally, the center provides a link to the larger disability community. They also attend recruitment events for students with disabilities, work with special education teachers and with parents who have heard that UI is a disability-friendly institution. They coordinate with admissions as well as with external advocacy agencies and vocational education organizations.

Since she has joined the university, the center has gone through a relocation and a name change. The new location is in the Pitman Center. This location change has enabled the center to increase the size and improve the quality of its testing environment. It has expanded the number and types of rooms available and is able to provide better on-site support. In addition, the testing facility is more private and secure for students. The main office for the center is on the main floor of Pitman and has provided the center with great visibility. Students and their families coming to the Welcome Center see the office and often stop in to ask about services. The name change is consistent with the movement in education to focus more on access than on disability. The idea is to send a more inclusive message. The center is not just about supporting individual students who will fail without support. Rather, the new name reflects that disability access is a campus-wide issue for which resources should be prioritized.

Leslie Gwartney familiarized senate with the Raven Scholars Program. This is a supportive transition program for students on the autism spectrum. Each student meets weekly with an advisor from the program who assists the student with planning, setting agendas and other needs. The program also sponsors a social support network for participating students with the assistance of students in an advanced psychology class. Teresa Davey explained the testing and note-taking programs. These are stand-alone programs. Note-taking provides a secure way for students to access class notes. The testing program provides a range of different resources including private space, reduced distraction space, and supervision of extended time for exams. The program is committed to maintaining the integrity of exams. Davey commented that the new testing center seems to meet students’ needs by reducing stigma (test takers are not visible to by-passers), and because it is a more calm and quiet space. In addition, the new space is significantly more secure.

Taylor noted that the policies and procedures for faculty on the testing process are available online as is detailed information about the note-taking program.

A senator asked whether the services of the center are available to faculty. Taylor explained that the center could provide interpreters and similar services that assist students in accessing classes and programs. Faculty who need individual accommodation should contact Human Resources.

A senator asked whether the center provides services that may assist students so they no longer need accommodation. Taylor explained that disability support has moved away from a medical model that focuses
on treating and curing disabilities. The approach now is focused on social justice issues – how do we support disabled students. The center only provides necessary support. The process of assigning accommodations considers the student’s needs and is reevaluated if the student’s symptoms change. In addition, students are offered supportive counselling and referred to other services when appropriate such as the Counseling and Testing Center. The faculty member followed up with a different question. He has worked with students to come up with unique accommodations in response to limits at the center (such as the 8-5 work days) and asked whether this was permissible. Taylor responded that if the student is comfortable with the accommodation, then such unique accommodations do not violate any policy or rule. Finally, he requested that faculty be notified when student accommodations involve unusual situations. He gave the example of a student who knits in class. It would be helpful for a faculty member to know whether this was part of the student’s accommodation. Taylor commented that these types of notifications may be appropriate. She will consider adding such notifications and thanked the senator saying she appreciated and wanted this type of feedback.

Taylor closed her presentation stating that so far, this spring semester 276 students have been assigned accommodations. The total number of accommodated students this year is 682. Nationally 11% of college students receive accommodations. At UI, 6% of students receive accommodations. Taylor believes there are many unaccommodated disabled students in our student population. She hopes and expects that accommodations will increase as the center builds a positive reputation.

**Brian Foisy, Vice President for Finance and Administration** provided an overview and update regarding university finances. Foisy stressed three major points.

First, the university must address a projected $2-4 million budget gap, starting FY19. This gap is driven by several different factors. First, the institution has a $2 million tuition shortfall. The university has had a tuition shortfall in 8 of the last 9 years. Each year the university budgets for tuition are based on expected enrollment. We experience a shortfall when actual tuition income is less than our projected tuition income. The university has not passed this shortfall on to colleges and other units. The strategy has been to absorb the shortfall centrally to keep wind in the instructional sails, while working to increase enrollment. Our enrollment of full time, resident, undergraduate students has been steadily declining. The shortfall in tuition is also influenced by a number of factors in addition to the size of the student body. The mix of students in a given year (in-state vs. out-of-state, dual-credit vs. full-time freshmen, graduate vs. undergraduate, etc.) can cause significant swings in the revenue from tuition. In addition, as significant programmatic events occur, the administration attempts to account for these changes in the enrollment projections. Estimates based on programmatic changes are not always fully realized. For example, we initiated the Navitas program to attract and support international students. It is getting off to a successful start, but its enrollment is lower than anticipated because of the current political climate. Foisy stressed that the news is not all bad. It appears that the decline in full-time undergraduate resident students may be bottoming out. Our spring semester enrollment this year has shown a significant increase. However, we have reached a point where we must address the shortfall. Going forward, expected tuition revenues will be budgeted more conservatively so that the problem is not perpetuated.

In addition to the tuition shortfall, the legislature is in the process of indirectly reducing our budget. This is because it is reducing health benefit funding for state agencies including the university. Many of these agencies have a surplus so the reduction is not going to result in a reduction of benefits. However, this reduction will create a budget shortfall for the university of approximately $1.5 million. The state has authorized a one-time, bridging amount of $1.3 million to assist in managing this shortfall. However, this funding will likely not continue past 2019.

Finally, the legislature also made the decision to stop holding the various education institutions harmless against declining enrollment. In recent years, the state has not reduced its allocation of resources based on the “enrollment workload adjustment” (EWA) (the calculation used to appropriate resources based on enrollment)
even where enrollment declined. Rather it has only used the EWA to increase resources in response to enrollment increases. The change in this policy will cost the university approximately $355,000.

Together these budget issues, the structural tuition shortfall, unfunded insurance obligation, and decreased EWA allocation, are projected to result in the estimated $2-4 million budget shortfall.

Foisy’s second point was that the current shortfall is not a crisis – the sky is not falling. The total shortfall amounts to 1-2% of the university’s budget. In addition, there is about $25 million in general education carryforward budgets across the university. A significant proportion of this carryforward funding is already encumbered or committed. If we do not address the issue through a planning process, then we might need to ask departments to return carryforward funds to balance the budget. Eventually the university would be in a crisis situation.

Foisy’s final point was that although there is some urgency to begin the planning process, we have time for reasoned conversation. This year the structural shortfall in tuition revenues has been covered by carryforward funds in the provost and enrollment management areas. However, the university must begin the planning for how to respond to this situation now so that we have time to implement solutions for FY19 and FY20. For FY19, it is already too late to implement some solutions and the possible approaches to balance the budget will be limited. We have much more flexibility to determine how we can balance the budget after FY19. These solutions should be in place by March 2019.

Foisy is assembling a university-wide committee comprised of department chairs, associate deans, deans and other administrators, to recommend budget practices that will be sustainable in the long run. Our current practice of allowing units to carry forward unspent general education funds, without considering whether the institution has collected enough money to meet budgeted expenses, is not sustainable. The institution needs to develop new budget practices that consider both expenses and revenues, before authorizing carryforward of unspent general education funds. We need a process to identify monies appropriately and to encourage responsible management for the good of the entire institution. Foisy also stated that as a service-based organization there are few ways to address budget challenges without looking at salaries and benefits. The university must look to unspent resources and open positions, because there isn’t any flex in other aspects of the budget.

A senator commented that he recently spent three hours discussing these issues with senior colleagues. He urged senators to communicate what we are hearing to our constituents to help dispel misconceptions.

A senator asked whether the only realistic base budget solution is attrition of vacancies. Foisy responded that such an approach probably would not be utilized extensively for FY19. However, he suggested that beyond FY19, some kind of attrition-based solution is probably going to be required. He emphasized that the issues have not yet been discussed by the committee. He is hopeful that natural attrition and strategic implementation of new budget processes, will alleviate the need for elimination of positions. Foisy also commented that the university has some unfortunate experience where units were quick to offer up their base operational budget to preserve all faculty and staff lines. This approach is not sustainable as it leaves the unit with no operating funds.

A senator thanked Foisy for the detailed report. He pointed out that some of the general education carryforward funds are salary savings made possible because of grant funding. He asked how feedback and ideas could be communicated to the committee. Foisy responded that, in addition to himself, there are three key finance staff supporting this effort -- Budget Director Trina Mahoney, Controller Linda Campos and Academic Budget Officer Kim Salisbury. He encouraged senators to contact any of them with feedback and ideas.
A senator asked whether our external auditor should have identified the structural tuition shortfall. Foisy responded that this isn’t the sort of issue that an auditor would address. There is nothing inherently wrong with using reserves as long as they don’t go below zero. Nonetheless, the problem has been the subject of comment by external auditors and rating agencies. They have told the university that we have no additional debt capacity, at our current strong rating, if our enrollment does not increase. This is because by spending our reserves, we are decreasing our ability to continue servicing our debt. Another senator asked whether the university is required to have a minimum reserve of 5%. Foisy explained that the SBOE has officially added a minimum reserve requirement to board policy. The SBOE does not take into consideration where the reserve funds are held within the institution. The university can look to the total unrestricted funds to calculate its reserve. Based on a conservative estimate of our unrestricted funds, the university has a 5.02% reserve balance.

**Report of the Committee on Committees.** Miranda Anderson, Chair of the Committee and Vice Chair of Senate presented the report. The Committee on Committees recommends that the structure of the Americans with Disabilities Committee be changed to update the titles of some committee members and to add the Director of the Counselling and Testing Center or designee to the list of committee members. The proposal coming as a seconded motion was approved unanimously.

Prior to adjournment a senator requested an update on the Public Safety Office. The provost reported that the position of the director is open and anticipated to be filled and that some restructuring was taking place. He assured senators that the office is not being eliminated.

The provost then took the opportunity to congratulate the Lionel Hampton School of Music on another successful Jazz Festival.

**Adjournment:** The business of the meeting having been completed, the meeting was adjourned (Panttaja Anderson) at 5:07.

Respectfully Submitted,

Liz Brandt, Faculty Secretary & Secretary to the Faculty Senate