University of Idaho  
Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes  
2017-2018 Meeting #21, Tuesday, March 6, 2018

Present: Anderson (Mike), Anderson (Miranda), Arowojolu, Brandt (w/o vote), Brown, Cannon (Boise), Caplan, De Angelis, Foster, Ellison, Grieb, Howard, Hrdlicka, Jeffrey, Johnson, Kern (Coeur d’Alene), Leonor, Morrison, Nicotra, Panttaja, Schwarzlaender, Seamon, Tibbals, Watson, Wiencek (w/o vote), Zhao. Absent: Baird, Mahoney, Morgan, Vella. Guests: 8

Call to Order and Minutes: The chair called the meeting to order at 3:31. A motion (Panttaja/Foster) to approve the minutes was made. The minutes were approved unanimously.

Chair’s Report:
- March 30 is the deadline for sabbatical leave applications for 2019-20 academic year.
- April 15 is the deadline for nominations for honorary degrees for the December 2019 commencement.
- Senators are encouraged to respond to the faculty advising survey circulated by Vice Provost Hendricks
- Faculty are encouraged to make shared leave donations. Director of Human Resources Brandi Terwilliger circulated an email to all employees regarding the procedure for such donations.

Provost’s Report: The provost updated senate on the issue of college mergers and reorganizations. He and President Staben have now discussed the report prepared by the deans. The president called his executive team together to discuss how to proceed. The provost has considered the comments and thoughts that have been forwarded to him and consulted with a number of different constituencies about the process. He plans to distribute a memo to campus in a week to 10 days to clarify the next steps. The most significant comment he has received is that the reorganization process should never be driven by financial concerns. Another key recommendation was to take enough time to facilitate reasoned decision-making and to expand the campus constituencies involved in the conversation. The provost plans to convene a campus-wide committee that is inclusive and informed to discuss the issue. There is no need to bring this conversation to conclusion until January of 2019. He expects the committee to address how we can best serve students by making it easier for them to navigate the university and by clustering programs with common themes together. The provost acknowledged that some of the potential reorganizations discussed by the deans were very sensitive. He has concluded that one possible reorganization, in particular, would not serve the university well and that is a merger between the College of Natural Resources (CNR) and the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALS). Both are strong colleges with national reputations and well-defined constituencies. A merger raises the unacceptable risk of diluting the impact of each of these colleges. More likely candidates for reorganization include the College of Science (COS), the College of Letters Arts and Social Sciences (CLASS) and the College of Art and Architecture (CAA). The provost thanked the deans for taking on this difficult task of considering the merger and reorganization issues. He commented that even though we started by asking the wrong questions, better questions have been identified through the ensuing conversations. He concluded the comments on mergers and reorganizations by stressing that we must move forward slowly and deliberately.

Regarding the university’s finances, the provost reiterated information that has been circulated around campus. The institution has a $1-2 million recurring deficit created in large measure because of our declining enrollment. He reported that early information regarding enrollment for spring appears to be positive. If the spring numbers stay strong, this would very much help us. However, as a result of actions
by the legislature, the university’s bottom line will definitely be hit with a $2 million decrease the year after next. The legislature appropriated a one-time amount to assist the university in the coming year. The university plans to continue to use one time funds to close the budget gap for FY 2019 and FY 2020, but will need to make permanent adjustments to our budget and budgeting process for FY 2020.

A senator suggested that the focus of the reorganization conversation should not be solely students. He suggested that another focus should be to reduce barriers for researchers in different units to collaborate. We need to expand the opportunity for this cross-college and inter-unit collaboration. The Provost responded that he is going to convene a university-wide committee and he will look to senate leadership for suggestions as to the makeup of the committee. More discussion will need to take place on key facts and the charge of the committee. Another senator asked what would be the projected cost savings of mergers. The provost reiterated his commitment to move away from financial considerations as part of this discussion. He also added that the timing of the conversation was too compressed to come up with a cost savings estimate that would survive scrutiny. A senator asked how the dean vacancy in CLASS would be handled. The provost responded that he anticipated appointing an interim dean when Dean Kersten leaves. If it looks next fall like a merger is not going to move forward, a dean search will be undertaken at that time. He acknowledged that this approach delays the CLASS dean search by 6 months or so. The CAA will stay with an interim dean. He plans to move forward with a search for the next dean of CNR.

FS-18-038 – FSH 1565 H-2. Graduate Student Appointees. Dean of the College of Graduate Studies (COGS), Jerry McMurtry, presented changes proposed by Graduate Council to Faculty-Staff Handbook § 1565 H. The proposal adds a new non-faculty rank of Graduate Support Assistant (GSA). Such GSAs are graduate students who are undertaking appointments relevant to their program of study, but that do not fit within the categories of Graduate Teaching Assistant (TA) or Graduate Research Assistant (RA). Dean McMurtry gave the example of a graduate student in education leadership serving in a position in the administration of the College of Graduate Studies, or a graduate student who serves in the writing center outside the definition of teaching or research.

A senator asked whether there is a requirement that GSAs have a faculty mentor. McMurtry responded that GSAs must be associated with a faculty member. The senator followed up asking whether there will be differences in compensation between GSAs and TAs. McMurtry explained that compensation of TAs will be based on market compensation rates established by discipline in the Oklahoma State salary survey. The minimum compensation for a GSA of $11,500 is based on the “general graduate assistant” category in the Oklahoma State survey. He stated that units could pay GSAs at a higher rate, if the unit has the resources. McMurtry explained that the Graduate Council and others had some concerns that the new rank would be manipulated by units to avoid the higher compensation rates for TAs. He explained that COGS must approve these positions and has published standards for GSAs on its website. He also emphasized that the compensation for TAs will come from the central TA funding system and RAs are grant funded, while departments must compensate GSAs from departmental funds. A senator asked whether GSAs must be making progress toward their degree. McMurtry responded yes.

A senator suggested that the provision be amended so that the second to last line of FSH 1565 H-2 read “. . . may receive additional mentoring from faculty and/or staff on or off campus. This was accepted as a friendly amendment. The amended proposal was approved with one abstention.

Vice Provost for Academic Initiatives Cher Hendricks. – Vice Provost Hendricks reported that her office has established the Academic Strategic Steering Committee (ASSC). This committee will be part of the process for reviewing new program proposals. Our procedures for program approval were in flux when she arrived at the university. She explained that the State Board of Education (SBOE) requires a market
analysis for all new programs. The university also is committed to the market analysis to ensure that there is student demand/interest in new programs. Hendricks found herself in the position of being the sole person to review market analysis and determine whether a program should move forward. Moreover, proposals were often bounced from place to place in the upper administration while the necessary approvals for aspects of the proposal were obtained. Finally, programs must be part of the university’s 3-year plan to be approved. Yet the process for becoming part of the plan was cumbersome and basically required that a completed proposal be developed. Her goal is to obtain broader input in reviewing the market analysis for new programs, to remove unnecessary barriers in the program approval process and to assist units in developing new program proposals and navigating the program approval process. She stressed that the ASSC will be looking at marketability and assisting in program development. The curricular and quality aspects of programs would still have to go through the regular governance process, UCC, Senate, and faculty.

A senator asked who does the market analysis. Hendricks explained that in the past the department had to figure this out. Now the university works with two outside contractors to assist with this analysis -- EMSI and Gray and Assoc. They have been very supportive and have given us access to the data sources so we can now do the market analysis in house. As a result, we can consider advance requests for preliminary analysis. Hendricks hopes that the process will help departments and units tailor proposals to meet demand. For example, if there is weak market demand in our state but there is strong national demand, a program might be offered online instead of live. She also hopes the ASSC will be able to help units and departments develop the assessment and curriculum portions of the proposal. Her goal is to mentor new program proposals for the entire time while they are working through process. All approvals can happen at one time. A chair should know what needs to happen in order to move the proposal forward.

A senator asked what would happen if we want to “get ahead of the curve” in an area in which there is no program or market data? Hendricks indicated that our external market analysis partners help us evaluate these ideas. They can help us “back design” the program even where there is no CIP code. They will work through what careers and markets the program might connect to by considering skill sets, job availability, and other indirect data. The market analysts can also do a “gap” analysis to determine areas where there are no programs and in which we could potentially do well to start a program. She acknowledged that these sorts of proposals are more challenging. She also recognized that there are issues with market analysis of academic program development and that we are not certain how to deal with all the issues. The provost also pointed out that market analysis is not the only consideration. We have a mission and will always have programs that may not be profitable, but that are central to our mission.

**ORP/PERSI Retirement Issues.** Faculty Secretary Liz Brant reported on pending issues regarding the Optional Retirement Plan (ORP) in which faculty and exempt staff participate. She explained that in late October, senate leadership was contacted by faculty and staff leadership at Boise State University (BSU) and other state colleges and universities to see if we would support a plan for faculty to participate in the Public Employee Retirement System of Idaho (PERSI). At the time, UI senate leadership convened a group of faculty and staff (including Brandt, Chair Hrdlicka, Prof. Jack Miller, Vice President Brian Foisy, Cindy Ball and Darren Kearney) to look into how we should respond to this inquiry.
After significant study, the group recommended that we contact the faculty and staff leadership at our sister institutions to discuss the issues. The group concluded that we could only support a plan to reinstitute PERSI for faculty and exempt staff if three conditions were met:

1) the ORP remained an option along with PERSI;
2) the process is revenue neutral to the University of Idaho; and
3) the plan would not increase costs or otherwise disadvantage employees who elect to remain in the ORP.

In addition, the group identified what it determined to be a much more substantial issue regarding the ORP. The group recommended that faculty and staff seek to end the continuing subsidy of PERSI by ORP participants. This subsidy has continued for over 25 years and is scheduled to continue until 2025. Moreover, other faculty and staff at Idaho’s 2-year institutions were only required to subsidize PERSI for 14 years. Finally, the group recommended that faculty and staff seek to tie the institutional ORP contribution rate to the institutional contribution rate to PERSI. Currently, the ORP contribution rate is established by statute and cannot be adjusted for inflation without a statutory amendment. In contrast, the PERSI contribution rate is set in regulations which are frequently updated to reflect inflation. When the PERSI subsidy by faculty at 2-year institutions was ended, the legislature also provided that their ORP contribution rate had to be the same as the PERSI contribution rate. There was no such adjustment made for the 4-year institutes.

The day after senate leadership shared the memorandum containing our groups recommendations with leaders at our sister institutions inviting them to participate in a meeting to discuss the issues, our Executive Director of Human Resources Wes Matthews was contacted by the director of human resources at BSU and asked to discuss possible scenarios for re-integrating faculty and staff in PERSI and eliminating the ORP. Moreover, personnel at the SBOE contacted VP Foisy to ask about the “UI Memo”. As a result of these contacts, and our continuing communications with Foisy and Matthews, UI senate leadership was concerned that a proposal making PERSI the only retirement option for faculty and staff, and to thereby eliminate the ORP, might be in the works.

A senator commented that his experience is that PERSI may not be compatible with the new system of standard pay for faculty. PERSI does not credit faculty with months of service over the summer. Under the new system, employees must make a higher contribution per month. PERSI has been unable to provide information regarding whether the increased contribution makes up for the loss of service months. Foisy, who was in attendance at the meeting agreed that this was essentially accurate. PERSI has been unwilling to put any analysis of the situation mentioned by the senator in writing. The net effect of the higher contributions over fewer pay periods is not clear.

Another senator indicated that he believes it is viable to implement a system in which employees have a choice between PERSI and the ORP. He believed it would be better to offer both plans. Another senator commented that the treatment of the retirement investment for estate planning when the employee passes away, is different. Funds in the ORP may be inherited by family members, while there may be no inheritable interest under PERSI. He opposed a change that would force all employees into PERSI. Another senator commented that most employers are moving away from defined benefit plans such as PERSI, because they are not affordable. He believes its counter intuitive to move toward such a plan. He asked whether the SBOE had been consulted. Brandt indicated that Foisy had shared the memorandum from the UI group with the Chief Financial Officer at the SBOE. At present, the SBOE seems to be taking a “wait and see” attitude. It is too late to move a legislative proposal forward this year. Senators expressed the desire to communicate their concerns before the proposals to move to a PERSI-only option for retirement gained too much momentum.
Brandt offered that, as a result of the appearance of a momentum and in preparation for the HR meeting, she had prepared the following resolution for senate’s consideration:

**Title:** Resolution on PERSI Participation and ORP Subsidy  
**Author:** University of Idaho Faculty Senate

WHEREAS University of Idaho employees currently participate in the Optional Retirement Plan (ORP) and have a choice of investing in TIAA or in VALIC;  
WHEREAS the ORP options, TIAA and VALIC, are defined contribution plans that have contracts with many other higher education institutions around the country so these plans are very portable for those considering joining the University of Idaho and for University of Idaho employees who leave for other institutions;  
WHEREAS many faculty believe that TIAA and VALIC offer individual control and the opportunity for higher returns on retirement investments;  
WHEREAS the retirement system known as PERSI and the ORP are two separate retirement systems of the state of Idaho;  
WHEREAS since 1990 the legislature of Idaho has directed that a portion of the funds set aside for the retirement of members of the ORP be paid to PERSI even though the ORP participants are not beneficiaries of the PERSI system in their roles as ORP participants;  
WHEREAS this subsidy by faculty and exempt staff at Idaho four year institutions of higher education has been required for 28 years and is scheduled to continue until 2025;  
WHEREAS similar institutions in Idaho (two year colleges and technical education institutions) were only required to subsidize PERSI for 14 years;  
WHEREAS the 4-year institutions in Idaho are not required to contribute as much to the ORP as they are required to contribute to PERSI;  
WHEREAS the 2-year institutions and technical education institutions in Idaho are required to contribute equal amounts to PERSI and the ORP on behalf of their employees;  
WHEREAS the ORP participants at the 4-year institutions are, in effect, subsidizing PERSI to their direct detriment, and have been required to do so over an extended and unfair length of time;  
WHEREAS the required ORP participant subsidy to PERSI results in unfair and unequal treatment of ORP participants;

BE IT RESOLVED THAT THE UNIVERSITY OF IDAHO FACULTY SENATE RECOMMENDS  
a. that the ORP continue to be offered as a retirement plan at University of Idaho;  
b. that if PERSI is offered to University of Idaho employees, it must be offered as an optional plan alongside the ORP;  
c. that any change in the retirement plan options must be revenue neutral to the institution; and  
d. that any change in the retirement plan options must not impose new or additional costs, or other disadvantages, on the ORP, or its participants.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT THE UNIVERSITY OF IDAHO FACULTY SENATE FURTHER RECOMMENDS that the leadership of the Faculty Senate work with University of Idaho Staff Council and with the university administration, State Board of Education and sympathetic leaders at other Idaho higher education institutions to seek an immediate legislative change ending the required subsidy of PERSI by University of Idaho employees.

After some further discussion it was moved (Foster/Panttaja) that the resolution be adopted. The resolution passed with one abstention.
Non-Tenure Track Faculty Task Force. Chair Hrdlicka reported that senate leadership, together with the Faculty Affairs Committee, and the Provost’s Office, is creating a joint task force to look at a number of issues affecting non-tenure track faculty. The taskforce will be chaired by Prof. Dan Eveleth of the College of Business and Economics. The description of the taskforce’s responsibilities is as follows:

The desired outcomes of the task force’s work are to help the university community:

• Develop a shared understanding of (and commitment to) the roles and expectations of non-tenure track faculty.
• Increase fairness and consistency with respect to practices associated with recruiting, selecting, developing, rewarding, including, and managing non-tenure track faculty.

To achieve these goals the task force is charged with:

• Identifying the current, potentially disparate, beliefs about the roles and expectations of non-tenure-track faculty across the university.
• Developing a comprehensive understanding of the issues and concerns associated with the current state of affairs.
• Identifying sentiment about a future, aspirational state of affairs, and coalescing around a single view of the future that honors the identified sentiment.
• Making policy and practice-related recommendations to Faculty Affairs, Faculty Senate Leadership and the Provost that are designed to achieve the desired outcomes.

The chair explained that the taskforce was formed because of the need to have broader representation across colleges and to include non-tenure track faculty that was not possible on the Faculty Affairs Committee. In addition, he noted the broad scope of the assignment and thanked Dan Eveleth for taking on this challenging, but important topic. He solicited recommendations for taskforce members from senators.

The business of the meeting having been completed, a motion to adjourn (DeAngelis/Ellison) passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 4:57.

Respectfully Submitted,

Liz Brandt, Faculty Secretary &
Secretary to the Faculty Senate