Present: Anderson (Miranda), Arowojolu, Baird, Brandt (w/o vote), Brown, Cannon (Boise), Caplan, De Angelis, Ellison, Foster, Grieb, Howard, Hrdlicka, Jeffrey, Johnson, Leonor, Kern (Coeur d’Alene), Mahoney, Morgan, Morrison, Nicotra, Seamon, Schwarzlaender, Tibbals, Vella, Watson, Wieneck (w/o vote). Absent: Anderson (Mike), Panttaja, Zhao (Idaho Falls). Guests: 6

Call to Order and Minutes: The meeting was called to order at 3:30 p.m. A motion (Johnson/Morrison) to approve the minutes passed unanimously.

Consent Agenda. The chair inquired whether any senator wished to remove either of the two items (committee appointments and sabbatical leaves) from the consent agenda. No request having been made, the matters on the consent agenda are deemed approved.

Chair’s Report. The chair made several announcements:

- The University Faculty Meeting (UFM) will be on Wednesday, April 25th at 3:30 in the following locations: Moscow - Vandal Ballroom, Bruce Pitman Center; Boise - IWC 162; Coeur d’Alene - 241; Idaho Falls - 350 - Twin Falls - B-66.
- A reception for retiring Vice Provost for Faculty Jeanne Stevenson will be held on May 8 from 3:00 - 5:00 in the Paul Joyce Lounge in Brink Hall.
- Senate Leadership will provide an email update on the status of senate initiatives and retreat items. The update will also serve as a carryover document for next year’s senate.

Provost’s Report. The provost reported that he is drafting a memo to faculty and staff summarizing the status of major university initiatives over the past year. He commented that the year had been very busy with many initiatives moving forward and many accomplishments. He also will address the status of issues such as college restructuring, financial restructuring, and revision or Program Prioritization evaluation metrics.

The provost also informed the Senate that President Staben would be unable to attend Commencement as he will be celebrating his son’s graduation from medical school the same day. The provost will preside at graduation in the president’s absence.

Vice Provost for Academic Initiatives Cher Hendricks. Vice Provost Hendricks reported on the progress of the Vandal Success Coalition (Coalition). The timeline has been very quick. The provost announced the goal of centralizing advising in November. He hosted a dinner with many stakeholders to discuss this goal in November. After the dinner, the provost brought together the Coalition team comprised, in part, of attendees at the dinner and some additional individuals. The dinner also served as a forum for stakeholders to give advice on how to move the goal forward. At the beginning of the spring semester, the Coalition formed three teams to examine different aspects of centralization. Team 1 focused on key anxiety points for existing advising staff and on understanding faculty rolls in advising. Team 2 conducted an audit of the responsibilities of faculty and existing advising staff. These teams got together and framed what they would do. Existing advising staff often have roles beyond advising. Any plan for centralizing advising must address how these additional responsibilities will be supported. Team 3 addressed the best practices that should inform the plan for moving forward. The teams collaborated with each other because their responsibilities overlapped significantly. The Coalition had to gather a lot of information which was used by all of the teams. The six team co-chairs met regularly. They looked at surveys and information gathered at other institutions and the national Academic Advising Association (ACADA).
Based on this information team 2 developed surveys directed to ASUI, advising staff and faculty. They had a reasonable participation rate of approximately 40% from faculty. Hendricks added that the audit of the responsibilities of current advising staff was not complete and that the list of responsibilities is substantial. All of the materials are curated, and copies can be obtained from Hendricks with the exception that the Coalition is not making raw data from the surveys available. In the last two months the Coalition has held two extended meetings to review the results of all these surveys.

Hendricks summarized the Coalition’s conclusions.

The survey results indicated that, on the whole, students are reasonably satisfied with advising. However, the level of satisfaction differs significantly across colleges. Over 20% of student in two of the colleges said advising was poor to terrible. Transfer students reflected the same level of negativity. Based on coded answers from 300 open-ended responses, students were very clear about what they are looking for in advising. They expect to receive consistent and accurate information in order to get the classes they need. They expect advisors to be available and to respond to their inquiries. Students are very frustrated when they don’t hear back from an advisor after making an inquiry or after a meeting. Students want to have a personal connection to their advisors and to know that their advisor cares about them and their success.

Overall, most faculty say they want to be involved in advising. Not only is advising one way faculty get to know students on a personal level outside class, but it is also central to teaching and mentoring students. Advising is how faculty provide specialized information about careers and how students can prepare for their chosen career. In addition, faculty believe they know curriculum in their disciplines better than anyone else and that they should advise on student choices about curriculum. Faculty are not as comfortable advising students on the general education and core requirements. Most faculty report that they have received no training on how to advise or mentor students. They also indicated that they are not rewarded nor recognized for advising and that advising is not counted in evaluating progress towards promotion and tenure. One college in particular is implementing training for faculty and student evaluations of advising. Approximately one third of faculty state that they do not have enough time to advise students and that advising takes valuable time away from their other responsibilities.

Overall, a number of concerns emerged from the information gathered. First, restructuring advising should minimize disruption of the relationships between college, students and advisors. Many concerns were raised including whether centralization would result in communication problems, disrupt advisor’s reporting lines, and disrupt college advising initiatives that are working. If advising is centralized, the change must focus on coordinated training and improved consistency and efficiency in communication.

With access to all of the information gathered through the surveys and through research, the Coalition discussed what the “dream state” for undergraduate advising should look like. We need to get out of the mindset of individual colleges – if a prospective student you know is coming to UI and will never be in your college you should be able to give that student consistent advice and collaborate with the student to tailor advising to their specific needs. We need to promote and rely on a corps of knowledgeable well-informed advisors who are responsive. Advisors have to be rewarded and recognized for good work. The Coalition recommends that advisors should remain embedded in the individual colleges after centralization. Professional advisors, faculty and other student success staff must work together. The implementation of the new system may differ across colleges depending on college unique needs.

Considering this dream state, the Coalition also examined the barriers to success. They identified fear of change, lack of trust, communication and transparency, siloed structures, lack of consistency across units, and lack of resources. The coalition believes that some of the most knowledgeable and committed faculty and staff can serve as mentors and models for other places on campus that need improvement in advising.
A senator asked about the return rate on the student surveys? Cher indicated that the return rate was low – approximately 8%. She was unable to discuss the matter with student leadership when she planned. This delayed the survey, shortened the window of time for responses and likely impacted the return rate. Because of the low return rate, the Coalition realizes that it must be careful about drawing too many conclusions from the student survey. Nonetheless, the returned surveys contained useful information. She commented that the institution needs to keep collecting data and use the data to inform decisions. The university hasn’t gathered consistent, institution-wide information on a regular basis. The bulk of the student information came from their responses to open-ended survey questions. They wrote a lot. Moreover, these responses did not appear to be just from disgruntled students. Still, the university needs to do a better job to get information from students about advising. This first survey was limited, but a start.

Another senator asked, given the 8% student response rate, if it is possible to look at responses from specific colleges relative to their overall student populations. Hendricks responded that she would not be very comfortable making comparative assessments based on the student data. At least one college was over-represented in the data and another was a bit under-represented. Given the low response rate, it would likely be a mistake to read too much into the surveys. She re-iterated that the university won’t be able to compare college advising until it is systematically collecting data and using the data to get consistent responses. Several senators commented that where advising relationships are positive a high response rate may well tell a positive story. Hendricks agreed. She concluded by stating that she is very comfortable saying that: 1) students are having different experiences across colleges, and 2) we know what students expect.

Hendricks continued that there were a couple off issues the provost assigned to the Coalition, which they did not have time to address. The first was to examine the appropriate faculty role in advising. Hendricks stated that further work must be undertaken to ensure that faculty involvement is effective and consistent. It appears certain that faculty need more support and training for advising. She suggested that this topic may be an appropriate topic for the Teaching and Advising Committee.

A senator asked whether centralized advising would be implemented on a pilot basis so that feedback and study of the centralized approach could take place before full implementation. Hendricks deferred to the provost who stated that we are now at the point of professional advisors to continue to improve advising and student success. The professional advisors believed the collaborative process over the spring semester had been positive, and that the advantages and disadvantages of centralized versus distributive functions had been studied. His plan is to work with the associate deans and deans to implement the recommended changes across the institution. After the spring semester process, the provost believes that the advantages of centralized advising outweigh the advantages of distributed advising. He stressed that he will rely upon the deans and associate deans regarding the process for implementation. He recognizes that we should not move so quickly that we do harm to existing successful advising initiatives and programs. He is hoping to get back to advisors and others on how we will proceed. Hendricks commented that after we make the decision, we still have a lot of work to do. The university must devote more time and be more intentional regarding advising. We need to learn from successful programs in our midst to improve advising across the institution. The university must develop a training plan to support advising. We must further address the questions of what the role will be of embedded advisors within their colleges. Currently, where we have a coordinated advising role, the model sometimes does not work because of communication issues and lack of clarity. Yet in some places, the embedded advisor structure is working well. The university needs to get close to the “dream state” incrementally. Hendricks commented that she attended the recruitment forum held by Strategic Enrollment Management to communicate with
embedded recruiters across campus. This group meets with the associate deans and others every two weeks. This approach might be a model for advising as well.

Hendricks asked senators whether they are aware of how their colleagues feel about the pending changes. Has it settled? A number of senators commented that most of their colleagues are not clear about what is happening and are a bit uncertain as a result. They stressed that the structure must be clear. Many of their colleagues are keeping up with the developments in advising and are waiting for some more organized communication about the end result. Hendricks commented that she was pleased at the difference in tone between the first dinner in November and the last dinner at the conclusion of spring semester – it had moved from tense to very collaborative.

A senator asked about advising for off-campus students. She stressed that these students often have unique situations. By way of example she explained that in Coeur d'Alene, North Idaho College advises students up to the 300 level then we take over. It is very hard to keep track of which set of institutional policies apply and who should be advising students. She suggested that we may need two sets of advisors – one for the core courses and one focused on the students’ majors. Hendricks commented that this dual structure is the model for centralized advising. Another senator asked whether advisors would address the tension between completion of core requirements and the completion of pre-requisites for a student’s major. The senator commented that the issues can be very difficult when students change majors frequently. Hendricks responded that part of the shared model focuses on collaboration between faculty and advisors. Generally, a student’s professional advisor covers the core requirements. However, in addition, a student should have a faculty advisor who can provide advising specific to the student’s major. The university is striving to achieve a highly coordinated model. A senator followed up stating that she can see how this might work on campus. She wondered how it would work for off-campus students. Hendricks acknowledged that the off-campus situation raises special problems and stated that the university would have to be more intentional on addressing off-campus advising. Hendricks commented that student populations vary at different locations throughout the university and have different needs – these differences include online students. She added that as a result, advising should be structured differently at off-campus sites. This is something the university has to figure out.

A senator commented that having the advisors in the college as curriculum changes are being made assists advisors in keeping up with the changes. Hendricks agreed that this is one of the benefits of the coordinated mode. She stressed that we need to do a better job of ensuring that advisors are actually coordinating!

Chair Hrdlicka commented that this was the last meeting of the 2017-18 faculty senate. He indicated that it is customary to present certificates of appreciation to out-going senators. The Chair thanked the senators for their work in moving policy and communication forward in collaboration with the provost. He encouraged them to continue in their efforts to move the institution forward. Chair Hrdlicka particularly thanked the outgoing senators and called them forward individually to receive their certificate of appreciation.

A motion to adjourn (Foster/Tibbals) was approved and the meeting was adjourned at 4:35 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Liz Brandt, Faculty Secretary &
Secretary to the Faculty Senate