University of Idaho
Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes
2017-2018 Meeting #9, Tuesday, October 17, 2017

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

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

Chair’s Report:
- Annual benefits enrollment began October 16 and runs through November 7.
- Sabbatical applications are due by October 27.
- On Monday October 16 faculty and staff received an email from University Communications and Marketing (UCM) with a link to a survey of UI employees to assess the effectiveness of internal communication. The chair encouraged senate members to complete the survey.
- UCM gave university leaders a sneak peek at UI’s new marketing and branding campaign during the Presidential Leadership Breakfast on October 17. Chair Hrdlicka reported that the presentation was very impressive. Senate leadership will extend an invitation to Stefany Bales from UCM to give a presentation to Senate later in the year.
- UCM has developed a new webpage on the Faculty-Staff site to make it easier for employees to find the links for how they can participate in philanthropic and charitable activity at UI: http://www.uidaho.edu/faculty-staff/employee-giving
- In order to streamline operations in the Faculty Secretary Office, the meeting agenda will be sent out on Monday afternoon. The draft agenda will be available on the website by Friday afternoon and will be updated as material and handouts become available.
- The chair called on Secretary Brandt who briefed senators on the progress of the Faculty Affairs Committee (FAC) in updating the forms and process for annual performance evaluations. The revised form and policy will come to senate soon. In the meantime, the draft form is being used by Vice Provost Jeanne Stevenson in workshops with unit administrators in preparation for the annual evaluation process. Brandt stressed that this is not intended to truncate the senate governance process but is, rather, an effort to ease the transition to the new form and policy.

Provost’s Report:
- The College of Natural Resources celebrated the 100th anniversary of the college with a very successful event last week.
- The Borah Symposium was also a very successful event. The Provost particularly commented on the insightful participation of students in the question and answer period at Monday evening’s lecture. He conveyed his thanks to the organizers particularly to the co-chairs Professors Bill Smith and Steven Daley-Laursen.
- The College of Education, Health and Human Services (CEHHS) sponsored a presentation about an experimental school called One Stone – a high school focused on providing project-based learning for students. The innovative learning process at the school is student-led with a guiding hand from teachers and administrators. He invited others to follow up with the CEHHS for more information.
- The Vandal Student Success Initiative continues to be rolled out. The initiative is currently focused on providing high quality support to our students.
• Faculty Senate nominations for the University-level Promotion Committee are due to Mary Stout (mstout@uidaho.edu) by October 27. Details regarding the nomination process and the nomination form are included in the packet for this meeting. The provost reminded senators that they must make nominations even if one of their college representatives has been asked to continue service on the committee this year. Chair Hrdlicka encouraged senators to be certain to include off campus faculty colleagues from their college in the nomination process.

A senator asked the provost to comment on the centralization of advising. The provost responded that he is in the process of communicating with deans regarding the possibility of centralizing some advising functions. Our current advising structure is not consistent with best practices for ensuring student success. Details on how advising may be re-organized will be forthcoming. The senator followed up by stating that the initial reaction of his colleagues was concern. His college has developed a strong connection with stakeholders through which they engage in substantial student recruitment. He did not want to see these successful initiatives undermined. The provost responded that the intention is not to move any advising staff or disrupt relationships. The changes will be behind the scenes in the organization. He stressed that expectations and approaches are still being finalized.

A senator asked if the fall enrollment numbers were available. The provost responded that UI’s enrollment will be over 12,000 reflecting another year of enrollment growth. We continue to work on first year freshman student enrollment which is slightly down this year. The drivers of increase in enrollment were the continued growth of dual credit enrollment and international student enrollment. Once the final enrollment report is finalized and submitted, we will begin a deeper analysis of the data.

**Starfish/Strategic Enrollment Management.** Dean Kahler, Vice Provost for Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM) began by introducing senators to important initiatives pending in his area. SEM received a grant through Vandal Ideas Project for the I Go Program. Through this program the division has placed a peer mentor in three different high schools in Idaho—Caldwell, Skyview and Nampa – to advise high school students as they make decisions about whether and where to pursue post-secondary education. The program is fully up and running. So far the feedback from principals at the schools has been very positive.

SEM is also working with the UI’s recruitment team. Bobbi Gerry was hired four months ago as the Assistant Vice Provost for SEM. UI has a good recruitment team in place with recruiters in California, Seattle, Coeur d’Alene, the main UI campus and southern Idaho. SEM has launched a plan to visit every high school in the state. They had over 1000 RSVPs including both students and guests for the fall recruitment event held on October 14. The event had strong faculty and staff participation. Preliminary reviews of the event are very good.

Navitas, the UI’s international student recruitment partner, has kicked into gear to bring more international students to campus. They report that the UI is being received very well by students in their process. Not only was the first year of the Navitas program successful, but enrollment of additional international students increased, as did enrollment in the American Language and Culture Program.

SEM is working aggressively on retention. Vice Provost Kahler estimated that if UI increases its retention of students from the freshman to sophomore year by one percent, we would receive $250,000 in additional tuition revenue. He pointed out that retention is also important to recruitment because prospective students and parents want to know that UI supports student success. The Student Success Center has opened in the Commons. Student success services are also available in each of the colleges.

Career services is also linked to student success. 150 employers were present for last week’s career fair. 1268 students attended; this level of student participation was lower than hoped. SEM is looking at ways to engage students in career development and convince them to speak to employers earlier in their college careers.
SEM is implementing VandalSTAR – a student success software powered by Starfish. The UI name was selected by ASUI. The software allows the institution to serve students once they have been admitted to the university. It is designed to identify students who are exhibiting behaviors (such as cutting classes) or whose academic performance signals that they may be at risk. The software would allow us to collaboratively intervene with the students to identify problems and to proactively access support services. The software will allow advisors and faculty to monitor a student’s progress. Vice Provost Kahler has met with the ASUI President and received positive feedback and support from students. He plans to follow up on the software implementation. This software will allow us to evaluate intervention strategies and evaluate the ROI and determine if we are impacting students. Phase one of the initiative will roll out in January. Two implementation teams – a technical team and a functional team – are meeting every two weeks to further the implementation process.

A senator asked who would have access to information through VandalSTAR. Vice Provost Kahler responded that a variety of different people will have different levels of access. Students will have access to their own data. Faculty will have access to information necessary for their mentoring role. Advisors and administrators will have different types of access. The access levels are determined by UI through a process that is analogous to Banner access levels. SEM will control the level of access granted to different categories of users.

A senator asked whether information in VandalSTAR will be pulled from BBLearn and expressed concern that not all faculty use BBLearn. Kahler responded that some information will likely be pulled from BBLearn. He stressed that there will be a variety of different inputs. Provost Wiencek added that we have an opportunity to more fully implement BBLearn. He acknowledged that some faculty have good reasons for not using BBLearn and that these barriers need to be addressed.

A senator commented that the RFP committee did not recommend the Starfish platform and wanted to know how the decision was made to go with this particular software. Kahler stated that an RFP committee including a faculty member met and reviewed a number of different products during the spring semester last year. The committee made its recommendation in late spring. Provost Wiencek explained that he and President Staben selected Starfish because they were both familiar with the system. The senator also asked about the cost of the software. Kahler did not have the cost information immediately available. However, he believes UI will see significant returns on its investment and emphasized that other schools have seen such significant returns.

Another senator commented that the implementation of VandalSTAR raises significant issues for some faculty. She expressed concern that the decision to implement the software was made without adequate faculty input. In her opinion and those of her colleagues, the decision to implement VandalSTAR was made without consulting faculty experts who study the long-term repercussions of labelling people as risks. RFP committee members gave this input and identified problems that may particularly impact students of color, students from low income backgrounds and women. These concerns were not addressed. If students know they are being identified as “at risk” by every advisor on campus they may be deterred from trying and may not be able to improve their performance.

Throughout the ensuing discussion, senators expressed concern about the process by which the software was adopted and pointed out that technology changes have potential to make changes that are not always positive.

Kahler responded that we already use data but we aren’t using it effectively. For example, we have access to student admission test scores but aren’t using that information when we advise students. Our students have needs and could benefit from mentoring or advising yet our approach to supporting them is hit or miss. Both the institution and our students are suffering from this lack of effectiveness. VandalSTAR is not intended to slap a label on the students and cause them to be unsuccessful. The senator followed up by indicating that data about test scores was an example of the potential problem with the system. The test scores may be old information and yet they might form the basis for labeling a student as a poor student. She pointed out that we have all worked with students for whom test scores were not predictive of college academic success. Her view was that relying on such data interferes with the true key to student success – personal advising...
relationships between students and faculty. She was troubled that we overrode the decision of the RFP committee which contained sociological experts.

A senator asked for clarification on the cost savings of investing in retention. Kahler responded that he calculated the number by determining the tuition revenue from one percent of the freshman class and then assuming that if retained they would stay at UI for the full four years.

A senator asked how many and what types of schools are using Starfish. Kahler responded that a variety of schools use Starfish or a similar product. In addition, some schools have developed internal software platforms. Student success platforms are common enough that the State Board of Education recently assumed that such software was deployed at each institution in Idaho and asked for information about which platform the schools were using.

The provost elaborated that UI has long used a student success platform. Previously the university used a product called Mapworks. The software was originally deployed to allow residence life counselors to track and support student success. UI originally made plans to expand its use of Mapworks. However, the company was sold and the platform developed problems. Expanded use could not be implemented. Last year the UI discontinued its license and initiated the RFP process that led to the adoption of Starfish. He emphasized that although he and President Staben pushed the implementation of the particular product in which UI has invested, the process included many people in the student support arena who believed that we should continue and expand our use of a software platform that could marshal data to support student success.

A senator stressed that students he knew were supportive of the implementation of VandalSTAR and viewed the software as a tool that would support their success at the university. Another senator pointed out that when a student receives early warning grades under a current system they can be deluged with emails that can be difficult to manage even though supportive. He believed that consolidating our efforts to support students would be helpful and that VandalSTAR could be implemented without alienating students.

A senator asked if Kahler could give examples of how the software will change the student experience? He responded that each student’s experience would be customized to the student’s needs. He gave the example of a hypothetical student who receives low early warning grades in three of five classes through the 4th week early warning system. The student’s professors also have reported that the student has not been regularly attending morning classes. Through VandalSTAR the attendance and grading information would be collected into a single system and, thus, the cumulative assessment would be available. An advisor could analyze the information and reach out to the student by email or text to arrange a meeting. At the meeting, the student explains that he must work late because he is short on funds. Through VandalSTAR the advisor can directly connect student with a financial aid advisor to see if more financial aid or campus employment might be possible. The senator responded that this example sounded just like the kind of general advising that happens now. She pointed out that many advisors would call financial aid for the student. She pushed for information on exactly what difference VandalSTAR will make in the process? Kahler elaborated that VandalSTAR will provide one unified system containing all the data in a single place. Faculty members can add notes so others working with the student can see what advice has been given. The system will prompt the advisor to follow up and will prompt the student to complete the advised actions. The scheduling of appointments will be automated.

A senator asked who is anticipated to be the primary user of the system – advisors, administrators, others? Kahler explained that different constituencies would be the primary users at different points in the process and depending on the issues confronting a particular student.

A senator asked how student privacy would be protected. He pointed out that sometimes a student’s academic performance is affected by a disability. The student may not choose to identify her or his disability to faculty and advisors. Kahler indicated that information will be available in the system on a need to know basis similar
to Banner access. The implementation teams are looking at these sorts of issues and at what the recommendations for best practices are. UI will likely tailor information access to meet our specific situation but will base decisions on best practices.

A senator, referring to the example previously given regarding the intersection between success and financial aid, asked whether there is a safety valve to advise students that it is not in their interest to continue. He was concerned that we should not advise students to seek more financial aid when they are not likely to succeed. Kahler responded that strict federal regulations require us to advise students about the risks of financial aid. Our responsibility is to advise students to consider other options, if we believe they will not succeed. We also have a disqualification process, which is a safety valve to dismiss students who may not be taking things seriously.

Another senator asked whether UI has the capacity and staffing to respond appropriately when students are identified by the system as “at risk” since the new system may well identify more students for support. Some expertise and time investment beyond what we have seen in our current advisors may be required. The Provost and VP Kahler stated that the UI has a good advisor to student ratio. The current advisors are being trained in the new system and should be able to handle the demands.

A senator questioned why it was necessary to link VandalSTAR to BBLearn. She believes that some faculty will be hesitant to enter information in BBLearn, if it is going to be used in this way. She also asked whether the university has examined the risk of data breach as so much student information would be available in one place. Kahler responded that the security of the system has been evaluated. All of the external software platforms used by the university including BBLearn and Banner must meet certain standards for security. He also responded to the first part of the question stating that data in BBLearn can be helpful in identifying students who are struggling. Decisions have not yet been made regarding what data to gather from BBLearn. The provost suggested that the grade center in BBLearn could be tailored to include an “at risk” column that a professor could check. Only the data in this column would be mined for use in VandalSTAR.

Distance Education. The chair moved the discussion to the topic of distance education. Vice Provost Kahler introduced Bobbi Gerry, Assistant Vice Provost for Strategic Enrollment Management, and Bob Hails, Director for Distance and Extended Education Initiatives. Gerry is responsible for distance and extended education including dual credit and Independent Study Idaho. Director Hails will provide leadership for the design, delivery and assessment of distance education programs. Gerry and Hails have been familiarizing themselves with UI’s distance and extended education programs. They plan to work collaboratively with the colleges within the existing decentralized framework. Hails will be developing a plan/framework to support distance education at UI. Right now he is assessing our current programs and identifying opportunities for improvement. He is reaching out to the deans to introduce himself and discuss programs and needs. He has a number of ideas about where the university should improve, but wants to vet these against the college needs and expectations. Once a plan is developed, Hails will move aggressively.

As part of his assessment process, Hails is identifying gaps in our online curriculum that prevent students from completing an online program. Once these gaps are filled, he plans to approach students who withdrew from UI and did not finish their degrees to determine whether they would be interested in finishing online. Assistant Vice Provost Gerry added that the university is also working on how to better identify and track online students so we send them supportive and relevant communications. We also must address issues such as how we proctor online assessment, and how we provide academic support to online students.

A senator stated that in her view UI has needed an e-campus so we can centralize information and access for online students. Hails responded that the e-campus idea is on his list of possible improvements for UI’s distance education programs. Our website is extremely frustrating for distance students. Assistant Vice Provost Gerry commented that she attempted to map out how an online student would discover the amount of tuition they might owe. She struggled until she finally made phone calls to get the information she needed. UI needs a
central platform where online students can get everything they need. The system should mimic the environment in which domestic students are involved. The senator cautioned that she does not want to lose the variety of unique programs as part of an effort to centralize. She pointed out that e-campus or similar software can help, but student experiences are ultimately determined by their learning experience. When administrators get in the way, no one wins! Gerry responded that SEM wants to provide the platform and tools. Colleges can deliver the programs the way they determine is best. SEM is in conversations with the Vice Provost for Academic Initiatives and Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning to ensure that our faculty are prepared and supported in their distance education efforts.

The chair announced that the remaining two agenda items (consideration of the campus recreation policy and the report of the Ombuds) could be postponed to a future meeting to allow additional questions for Vice Provost Kahler about the implementation of VandalSTAR.

A senator asked whether there are faculty on the VandalSTAR implementation committees. Kahler responded that there are a variety of individuals on the committees including faculty, although the names escaped him in the moment. Both the Vice Provost for Academic Initiatives and the Vice Provost for Faculty are involved with the implementation. The chair recognized Vice Provost Cher Hendricks who was at the meeting as a guest. She explained that she is an advocate for implementing VandalSTAR. At her prior institution faculty were frustrated because they had to navigate too many systems to advise students. She commented that there would be growing pains as we implement the system, but that it would be a valuable tool for student success.

A senator suggested that if more faculty were added to the implementation team, Vice Provost Kahler should also consider adding more students.

The time for the meeting having expired, a motion to adjourn (Johnson/Mahoney) was made and the meeting was adjourned at 4:59.

Respectfully Submitted,

Liz Brandt, Faculty Secretary & Secretary to the Faculty Senate