Call to Order and Minutes. The chair called the meeting to order at 3:31 p.m.

Prior to the approval of the minutes the chair noted that a parliamentary error was made at meeting #3 on August 21, 2018 and the item on the consent agenda was not approved. A motion (Tibbals/DeAngelis) to approve the item was made and passed unanimously.

A motion to approve the minutes (Jeffrey/Lee-Painter) passed unanimously. A senator asked if she could abstain. The chair explained that pursuant to the standing rules of the faculty senate, abstentions are not recorded except on the request of the abstaining senator. The senator did not ask that her abstention be recorded.

Chair’s Report:

1. The China on the Palouse speaker series begins on September 20. The first event will be held from 4:00 to 5:00 p.m. in TLC 023. University of Idaho Professor Dr. You Qiang will be talking about the modern-day relationship between science and the ancient Chinese philosophy of the I-Ching.
2. The chair informed senators that senate leadership works to minimize email from senate to the agenda and the Talking Points. Periodically, however, leadership will send additional emails. Last week we contacted senators asking for feedback on VandalStar in order to provide helpful feedback as the system is implemented. Comments will be shared with Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM) and with the Teaching & Advising Committee (TEAC). He encouraged senators to send any additional comments to Anna Thompson (annat@uidaho.edu) by 5:00 p.m. on Wednesday August 29, 2018.
3. The chair reminded senate of the University Budget & Finance Committee (UBFC) process. The report of last year’s committee year will be circulated by email and will be discussed at the next senate meeting. Outgoing chair, Prof. Darryl Wooley, and incoming chair, Prof. Phillip Scruggs, will present the committee’s report. The chair reminded senators that the role of the UBFC does not directly fund proposals. The role of the committee is to vet proposals and make recommendations to the university administration. The report is a public document and may be circulated.

Provost Report:

1. The provost first addressed recent personnel issues. The internal search for an interim director of the University of Idaho -- Idaho Falls center, is reaching a conclusion. An offer has been made and the provost is optimistic that an interim director will be named soon. The search for the Interim Executive Director of Undergraduate Advising has failed. Although a qualified candidate was identified, the person has withdrawn from the search. The provost and leaders at SEM will regroup to discuss how to proceed. In the meantime, our existing advising system is continuing to move forward to meet the needs of students as it has done in the past.
2. The provost announced that his office will focus this year on meeting the needs of our students. He pointed out that the ASUI has come to senate with a number of concerns regarding timely
grading and communication of grades. The provost is hoping faculty will support efforts to address student needs and concerns through groups such as TEAC and in collaboration with his office and ASUI.

3. Finally, the provost addressed the pending issue of possible college mergers. He is considering how to proceed with the issue especially in light of the presidential transition and would be happy to receive input from senators. He suggested that a poll of senators seeking input might be appropriate. The provost is considering whether now is a good time to move forward with a discussion of mergers, and what the objectives of the process should be. If the university moves ahead with consideration of college mergers, a larger group involving the impacted colleges must be assembled to consider all the issues. The group would have to consult with alumni and external stakeholders as well. He is wary of moving the process forward and causing stress and dislocation, if we do not have a clear vision of where we are going.

A senator commented that the focus on students should extend not only undergraduate students, but also to graduate students. Regarding the question of mergers, the senator asked whether the provost had a time frame in mind? The provost responded that at the end of last spring semester a consensus was emerging regarding the need for mergers and the goals of mergers. Several ideas seemed to have momentum including merging the College of Art & Architecture (CAA), the College of Letters Arts & Social Sciences (CLASS) and the College of Science (COS). Within those ideas, questions existed about whether a school or college of fine arts also might be created, as well as whether it would be wise to create a single large college with several significant schools. If the university moves forward with continued study of mergers this fall, the logical approach might be to look into these ideas in more detail. Possibly, a white paper could be developed that would identify the strengths and weakness of each approach. The white paper could be provided to the president who could then move a proposal forward with relevant internal and external constituencies. One additional concern is how the university’s financial issues should be considered in the discussion of mergers.

**Advising and VandalStar:** Dean Kahler, Vice Provost for Strategic Enrollment Management presented a report to senate regarding the progress on the plan for shared advising and the implementation of VandalStar.

Kahler began by addressing the activities that have occurred since last October regarding shared advising. SEM has been coordinating with students, advisors and faculty to identify needs and implement changes in the structure of advising. Kahler reminded senators that last spring, Vice Provost for Academic Initiatives Cher Hendricks, led a study group that was focused on identifying the steps necessary to improve advising services for our students. The shared advising model emerged from this discussion. The central feature of shared advising is to bring all professional advisors together to coordinate and improve service to students. One thing the study group was committed to was not disrupting faculty advising roles. The new structure for professional advising is not intended to change the role faculty members play in advising. The goal of the structure is to foster more consistent support and resources for professional advisors across campus so that all students have access to the same full menu of services. Another advantage of shared advising is that the structure should provide a career ladder for professional advisors.

Under the shared advising model, individual professional advisors will be embedded in the colleges. They will report to the student services directors in each of the colleges. The student services directors will report to the Executive Director of Undergraduate Advising who will report both to Vice Provost Kahler and to the college dean. In addition, the student services directors will still have an indirect report to the college dean. Kahler noted that with the failure of the search for an interim executive director, this structure may have to be re-examined.
A senator asked whether there are student services directors in every college. Kahler responded that not every college has a student services director. As the new system is implemented, such gaps will have to be addressed. Moreover, many student services directors and college advisors have a mix of responsibilities. During implementation, issues will have to be addressed regarding the best way to cover these responsibilities. Provost Wiencek added that the intent had been to hire an executive director who did not have a pre-conceived idea of how the system should run and who could study how each of the colleges are operating. The goal was that the executive director would sort and evaluate the different approaches and would confer with the deans to implement a long-term structure. He noted that the implementation of a new structure for advising is going to happen over time with many opportunities for comment and input.

A senator asked whether, as advising becomes centralized, advisors will continue to be located in the college or would they gradually move to a centralized location? Kahler responded that advisors will not be moved to a central location, but will remain embedded in the colleges. It is highly beneficial for advisors to be located in colleges so they can develop relationships with college students, faculty and staff and so they can develop more intimate familiarity with the programs in the college. Provost Wiencek acknowledged that he was likely responsible for the misunderstanding that advisors would be moved to a centralized location. For lack of better terminology, he and others in his office used the word “centralized” to describe their goals when the process of restructuring began. He noted that the term “shared advising” emerged from the study process and is a better descriptor of the project. He also stressed that, although many advisors have responsibilities in, for example, the areas of recruitment and career development, the re-structuring is focused on advising.

A senator asked whether, while the system is evolving, the provost or Kahler could share a working model of the final system with senate? For example, will new students get assigned to a professional advisor and an academic advisor when they are accepted and enroll? Are we expecting students to see more than one advisor? VP Kahler responded that students receive a letter of admission inviting them to attend an on-campus event such as Idaho Bound. At that time, an academic advisor within the student’s major will be assigned in Banner or, in the future through VandalStar. Hopefully, students will develop one-on-one relationships with their advisors that will continue during the students’ college careers. However, under the new coordinated system, if a student is unable to access her or his advisor when needed, the student will be able to see another advisor to get the help they need. Their original advisor will remain their primary point of contact. The senator followed up and asked whether students would see more than one advisor at a time. Kahler acknowledged that these workload issues will have to be addressed as the system is implemented.

The chair commented that what works at one college might be different at another college. He asked whether the embedded advisors will have flexibility to have these approaches. Kahler agreed that the system will permit flexibility, but he emphasized that such flexibility might have to be balanced against the goal of providing high quality and quality advising services to all students. SEM is working to balance and accommodate college and department needs.

A senator asked how many professional advisors are employed by the university? He also commented that he was still unclear as to the role of the professional advisors, and the differences between professional advisors and faculty advisors. Kahler acknowledged that the role of the professional advisors is still being developed. At present, professional advisors handle issues such as informing students of core and program requirements, mechanical processes of finding classes, successfully registering and ensuring that students have an appropriate degree plan. Faculty advisors are more likely to serve in a mentoring role assisting students with matching student aptitudes to majors and career considerations. A survey conducted during spring 2018 by VP Hendricks’s study group reinforced that faculty enjoy and are good
at this mentoring role. Having said that, Kahler emphasized that professional advisors also develop close relationships with students that should be encouraged and nurtured. Students are served best when they can find the support they need in different ways. The senator reminded Kahler to provide the number of professional advisors. He responded that although it is somewhat difficult to count because of the different roles individual advisors may assume, there are 25-26 professional advisors across campus. The provost responded that the best practice is that faculty should serve approximately 25 advisees while professional advisors should serve approximately 300 students. He emphasized that as a result of our decentralized approach to advising, colleges have customized how they approach advising and have assigned very college specific functions to their advisors. While this makes sense, it has led to unevenness in advising that has become an issue for students. The unevenness is especially problematic when students transfer between colleges. The provost, referencing an earlier question, also emphasized that there is no “end-point” in mind. Rather the hope is that the structure will emerge through the implementation process and not be governed by pre-conceived ideas. The emphasis will be to improve the quality of advising and equalize the services available across the university.

A faculty member asked whether there is a mechanism to coordinate the comments and actions of the professional advisors and the faculty advisors? Kahler responded that this type of coordination will be supported by VandalStar which he will address in the second part of his presentation.

A senator commented that students are moving between majors more quickly than colleges can respond with reassignment of faculty. This has resulted in very uneven advising. He encouraged the university to consider making the assignment of professional advisors more fluid so that professional advisors can respond to shifting student interests. Kahler agreed that our current advising system is not able to respond effectively to such changes. He anticipates that such responsiveness can be built into a new system through cross-training and coordination.

A senator commented that while she appreciates the goal of good advising, she is concerned that the uniqueness of individual college approaches will be lost. Kahler responded that professional advisors will remain embedded in individual colleges and programs. He also stated that one of the reasons the position of the executive director was created is to balance the unique needs of the college against the need for coordination and consistent services. The senator followed up commenting that the number of mid-level administrators at the university seems to be increasing rapidly at a time when budgets are limited. She asked for more information on benefits of creating the position of executive director. She suggested that resources might be more effectively used by hiring additional professional advisors. Provost Wiencek responded that the position of executive director was created because the college student services directors were concerned about their ability to meet the demands of their colleges and the demands of the new advising structure. Now that the search for the executive director has failed, there is an open question regarding whether the executive director position should remain. This question will have to be part of the ongoing discussions regarding how to organize advising.

A senator questioned the repeated statements that the role of faculty advising will not change. He commented that in his experience he rarely advises freshmen and sophomores. He expressed concern that students are being advised about whether to stay with a major by advisors who may have little or no familiarity with the program. Kahler responded that SEM is paying attention to such input and exploring ways to address concerns. Through the shared structure of advising, they hope to work with the deans to ensure that programmatic needs are met. Provost Wiencek added that the new structure has not been implemented. The faculty member’s experience reflects changes that have already been made within the faculty member’s department or college. The provost suggested that TEAC should be looking at these types of changes. The chair underscored that faculty need to be continually engaged in order to improve advising. The anticipated changes will only succeed if everybody is committed to student success and if
we trust the good will of those implementing the changes. He also stated faculty have to assist in building systems of accountability.

In addition to addressing changes in advising, Vice Provost Kahler addressed the implementation of VandalStar, an information portal that will connect faculty, students and staff. VandalStar will allow faculty and staff to share comments regarding a student’s needs, provide online access to helpful resources, complement student actions, and schedule online appointments. The software was purchased last fall. During the spring semester an implementation team worked to build the UI specific system and piloted it with 55 courses. Based on the feedback from last spring, the decision was made to implement VandalStar for all 100 level courses this fall. Kahler sent a memo to campus just before the start of the semester announcing the plan. Although VandalStar is being implemented initially for 100-level courses, it is available to any faculty who wish to use it. Two open forums were held last week in which a number of faculty expressed interest in using VandalStar. SEM is also planning to use VandalStar for early warning grades. With roll out of Banner IX, VandalWeb will no longer have the ability to support the early warning grade process. In addition to the two forums previously held, SEM will sponsor additional forums in the future. Streamed tutorials are available for VandalStar. Also, SEM staff are willing to provide training to colleges and departments on request. Kahler stated that the software is very intuitive. Initial faculty and student feedback to SEM has been positive. VandalStar supports communication in a number of ways. It allows faculty and advisors to communicate a warning when a student is not attending class or is in academic trouble in a class. Advisors can see a faculty member’s warning, act on it and respond so the faculty member knows the concern is being addressed. It allows advisors and faculty to see how they each are responding to the student needs. Professor Stacy Isenbarger, who was part of the implementation and pilot testing of VandalStar, and who attended the meeting at the invitation of Kahler, added that the system was extremely helpful in managing a class taught by graduate TAs. VandalStar also supports faculty communication with a class of students.

A senator commented that he participated in the VandalStar training and found it quite interactive and effective. He commented that he experienced issues working with the software on a Mac computer and in a calendar application other than Microsoft Outlook. Kahler indicated he would follow-up on the compatibility issues. The senator followed up asking whether there was a way to use VandalStar to communicate to a limited group as opposed to making a flag totally public or totally private communication. For example, he wondered whether a limited communication regarding a possible student mental health issue might be possible. Shishona Turner, the SEM Lead for VandalStar implementation also was in attendance at the meeting. She indicated that faculty should use VandalCare to report concerns regarding mental or physical health, Title IX or student conduct issues. She explained that although VandalStar is designed to protect student privacy, it has not been developed to support these types of reports. Integrating these systems is on the list of future expansion programs. A drop-down box in VandalStar refers faculty to VandalCare. Another senator asked whether VandalStar would have the same capability as VandalWeb regarding DegreeAudit. She commented that many faculty place notes in DegreeAudit when advising students. She asked whether faculty should use both Degree Audit and VandalStar? Kahler responded that for issues related to student completion of degree requirements, comments should be included in DegreeAudit. However, for other types of issues, comments should be included in VandalStar. Turner pointed out that notes in DegreeAudit are not broadly shared to groups such as housing advisors and career services.

A senator followed up commenting on the high number of software platforms needed to support students. He named BBLearn, VandalWeb, VandalCare, and now VandalStar. He asked whether this proliferation of incompatible software platforms could be addressed. Kahler acknowledged the observation as valid. He commented that the university is working to achieve better software integration. Isenbarger stated that the benefit of VandalStar is that it allows for input at any time and is more flexible
than DegreeAudit. Another senator commented that many off-campus faculty are frustrated with the focus on freshmen and sophomores to the exclusion of upper-division and graduate students. She pointed out that VandalStar does not support graduate students at all.

Greg Lambeth, the Director of the Counseling and Testing Center, and also a senator, commented that VandalCare is focused on a very narrow set of circumstances such as Title IX, suicide prevention, and student self-harm situations. He believes that the times when faculty need to use VandalCare are infrequent and very specific. For this reason, he did not think VandalCare would contribute significantly to the software overload.

A senator who was involved in the implementation process commented that he was impressed by the competence of the team that put VandalStar together. He specifically complemented SEM Advisor Cynthia Castro, lead Shishona Turner and others who have worked incredible hours to move the implementation of VandalStar forward as smoothly as possible. He emphasized that the team is focused on improving the experience for our students.

The chair thanked Vice Provost Kahler, Professor Isenbarger, and Shishona Turner for their presentation.

Prior to the close of the meeting, the chair informed senators that Professor Lee-Painter had volunteered to serve as the senate representative on the Campus Planning Advisory Committee (CPAC). He asked for senate confirmation of Lee-Painter’s appointment to the committee. It was moved (Morgan/Dezzani) that Lee-Painter be appointed to CPAC. This was unanimously approved. The chair thanked Lee-Painter for his willingness to serve in this capacity.

The time for the meeting having expired, a motion to adjourn (Dezzani/Tibbals) was unanimously approved. The meeting was adjourned at 5:00 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Liz Brandt, Faculty Secretary &
Secretary to the Faculty Senate