Present: Benedum, Brandt (w/o vote), Cannon (Boise), Caplan, Chopin, DeAngelis, Dezzani, Ellison, Flores (for Kirchmeier w/o vote), Grieb, Jeffrey, Johnson, Keim, Kern (Coeur d’Alene), Lambeth, Luckhart, Lee, Lee-Painter, McKellar (Idaho Falls), Morgan, Raja, Schwarzlaender, Tibbals, Tengono (for Laggis w/o vote), Vella, Wiest, Wiencek. Absent: Bridges, Kirchmeier, Laggis, Seamon

Guests: 12

Call to Order and Minutes. The chair called the meeting to order at 3:32 pm. A motion to approve the minutes (Lee-Painter/Dezzani) passed unanimously.

Chair’s Report.

- The chair called senators’ attention to the memo distributed by President Staben encouraging members of the university community to keep our values in mind during these stressful times.
- An Open Forum regarding changes in UI’s General Education Curriculum will be held Friday February 1 at 10:30 PST/11:30 MST in the Clearwater/Whitewater Rooms at the Commons. A ZOOM link will be available so all can join the meeting. The forum will address issues with UI’s current General Education program, including the pending proposals to eliminate ISEMs. This is a chance for faculty to engage in the discussion of our general education curriculum.
- The deadline for staff council award nominations has been extended to February 22. The chair encouraged senators to nominate deserving staff.
- The Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) is launching an effort to improve and bolster teaching on campus through a faculty spotlight series. Workshops in this series will be held on February 6, March 20, and April 10. Each workshop will begin at 10:00 am (PT) and will be held in Education 341. ZOOM links for each workshop are available. Details and registration links for these and other CETL-sponsored workshops are available at the CETL WebPage.

Provost Report.

- The provost reiterated the chair’s comments regarding President Staben’s memo. There is a high level of stress and uncertainty within the university community resulting from the presidential transition and pending budget processes. He encouraged productive participation in the workplace and reminded senators that the president’s memo contains details about supportive resources.
- Regarding general education the Provost stated that ISEMS are not going away unless faculty support that outcome. He stated that the Director of General Education has details and data available on our ISEMS that relate to regional accreditation and will be leading a discussion about changes that may be needed.

A senator commented to the provost regarding a recent memo to faculty and staff regarding international travel. She stated that she and her colleagues found the tone of the memo punitive because it appeared to threaten that if faculty do not know of international travel plans for the coming year and report those plans, travel reimbursement would not be available. She indicated that at this time, many faculty are not aware of possible international travel opportunities that may arise during the coming year. Moreover, she indicated that the memo created a perverse incentive for faculty to over-estimate their possible international travel in order to make sure they would be reimbursed. The provost was familiar with the memo. It was circulated as part of an effort to quantify university sponsored international travel for purposes of securing insurance. He indicated that he would follow up on it.
The provost began his report by noting that cutting budgets is always a very difficult exercise. The deans all represented their colleges and made very strong cases for college priorities. Nonetheless, in the end the division of academic affairs has a target it must meet. The provost worked to make budget decisions in as transparent a way as possible, based on data and equity considerations. He stressed that the key to resolving the university’s budget situation is to increase enrollment.

The provost first reviewed the reasons for the current budget cuts. In fall 2017, Vice President for Finance and Administration Brian Foisy reviewed the looming budget situation for the university community at a Presidential Leadership Breakfast. At that time, Foisy proposed one-time solutions for FY18 and FY19. He also announced that he was convening a committee to examine approaches to a permanent adjustment in base funding beginning in FY20 (July 1, 2019). We are now at the point of implementing the recommended adjustments to base budgets.

The current budget situation is largely attributable to declining enrollment. This decline has been masked in some way because the State Board of Education (SBOE) has counted dual enrollment students in UI’s enrollment figures. Such dual enrollment students pay vastly reduced tuition rates as the result of state incentive programs. For simplicity, the provost referred to all other than dual enrollment students as “degree-seeking students.” Excluding dual enrollment students, UI’s enrollment of degree-seeking students has declined steadily since 2011. The decline stabilized three years ago, but degree-seeking student enrollment declined again last fall.

The UI general education budget is comprised of state appropriations and revenue from tuition. While our budget office has firm information regarding general appropriation revenues, it must estimate tuition revenue. If tuition revenue falls short of the estimate, the UI has covered the shortfall using budget reserves. The expectation has been that when enrollment increases, budget reserves will be replaced. The problem has been that we have over-estimated tuition revenues every year since 2011. As a result, our reserves have decreased to a dangerously low level. The result is that UI now has a structural deficit of $3 million. This structural deficit must be addressed now by reducing base budgets going forward.

A senator asked why the university makes more money on full tuition compared to tuition paid by the credit hour by part-time students. The provost clarified that he included both full-time and part-time students as degree-seeking students. His estimates are based on full-time equivalent students. Foisy added that enrollment reports are just convenient corroborating evidence for our tuition receipts. He explained that tuition revenue is impacted by many individual circumstances such as whether individual students are in the Western University Exchange (WUE) program or whether they receive other tuition waivers. The budget office does not look at the exact tuition due from every individual student in quantifying tuition revenue. Rather it looks at overall tuition revenue compared to enrollment reports to ensure that the trends in enrollment and tuition receipts make sense.

A senator asked what we are doing about the continuing drop on college eligible students and what plans are we making to reach other audiences. Her point was that the university may be missing opportunities to recruit more students who are veterans. The provost responded that he endorsed her sentiments. He indicated that Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM) is working on these issues. He also offered to put the senator in touch with the appropriate staff members in SEM. He added again that increasing enrollment is definitely “the take home message” of his remarks.

The provost continued to explain that the overall budget shortfall is $5 million. He also explained that the SBOE wants a report on how Program Prioritization (PP) is being used to drive reallocation and priority setting at UI. He relied on PP to assign the cuts at the executive level. Based on PP the budget cut in
academic affairs is $3.6 million. If he had not relied on PP and had, instead, endorsed an across-the-board cut, the cuts to academic affairs (including the colleges) would have been higher.

A senator asked how the $5 million total amount of the budget cut was calculated. The provost responded that the structural deficit accounts for $3 million. Also included is a $2 million budget reallocation based on priorities identified by the University Budget and Finance Committee (UBFC) and by the president.

A senator added that the committee convened by VP Foisy recommended that the base budget adjustment should be based on a conservative estimate of the structural budget shortfall. Otherwise, the committee believed that the institution would experience “death by a thousand cuts” when future budget shortfalls occurred. The hope is that new continuing cuts in base budgets will not be necessary.

The provost also added that within academic affairs a reallocation must take place to support the new shared advising unit. He stressed that no new positions are being created. Rather positions are being transferred to the unit. The problem is that some colleges do not have advisors that can be transferred. Because the cost of the central shared advising model that will be allocated across the colleges, some colleges will benefit from the reallocation while others will not. The provost pointed out that the shared advising model was included in the budget reallocations. Shared advising will be funded through $519,921 reallocated from the colleges and $536,065 from the provost’s office.

The provost organized the academic affairs budget cuts by dividing academic affairs into two groups. The first he termed “academic units” including the nine academic colleges (he did not include the College of Graduate Studies (COGS) in this group). The second group was termed the “non-academic units” and includes SEM, COGS, student affairs, provost office operations, the library, and the UI centers. The provost acknowledged that the title “non-academic” did not truly apply to the units in this second group. He used the title for ease of reference and did not mean to imply that the units in the second group such as the library were not academic units. The aggregate budget reduction for non-academic units in academic affairs is $1.2 million or 4.23%. The aggregate reduction for the academic units in academic affairs is $1.98 million or 3.31%.

The provost next addressed how the aggregate reduction was allocated across individual units. The deans agreed with the approach recommended by VP Foisy’s budget committee that the amount of the reduction be conservatively estimated so that units would not have to face ongoing annual reductions in budgets. Deans also expressed concern that some units might not have to share in the budget cut. Every unit will participate in the reduction at some level. The provost also was committed to reducing budgets strategically and not making an across-the-board reduction. He noted that currently some colleges have either a structural deficit or are on the brink of such a deficit. He did not want the current budget process to push such colleges into further deficits, creating more problems in the future. Finally, he stressed that the deans made excellent cases for budget priorities in each of the colleges.

For the non-academic units, the provost has recommended budget reductions that are comparable to the academic units (not considering the shared advising reallocations). The exact allocation to each unit was made considering the PP rankings.

For academic units, he followed a different approach. First, he looked to nationally normed information regarding the cost of instruction at peer institutions available through the Delaware Cost Study (DCS). He also considered the mission centrality criteria from PP. He noted that other portions of the PP rankings were subjected to substantial criticism. Many characterized the data as merely a popularity contest. For this reason he limited his consideration of PP data to the mission centrality data. He did not use this information in a formulaic way, but rather had detailed dialogs with each dean.
The provost concluded this portion of his presentation by noting that he is optimistic that we can turn around enrollment. He admitted that the UI has struggled in the past to develop an effective approach to enrollment management. He stated that he believes that, having implemented needed changes in our approach to enrollment management, we are making progress.

The provost next addressed future adjustments. He has implemented a university-wide faculty hiring process. In the past, colleges and often units, kept vacant faculty lines. The provost has decided that vacant faculty lines should now return to the central administration. Such a process will be driven by strategic conversations with the deans, both individually and collectively, to determine the best possible utilization of limited university resources.

The provost also stated that the finance model is going to change to a new approach based on recommendations from the finance committee recently chaired by Vice President of Finance, Brian Foisy. The provost will continue to use data to inform financial decisions. As part of future analysis, the provost will be considering a few options for program level cost benchmarking including the DCS approach. There are other approaches utilized which can be considered, such as a combined benchmarking and program review process utilized by Notre Dame University.

Additional refinements to future analysis will pursue a more disciplined conformance to the Delaware Cost Study data definitions. For example, the student credit hours (SCH) will accrue to the academic department paying the instructor’s salary instead of the catalog “home” of a given course. UI’s current systems pose some challenges for this detailed DCS process that can be resolved given more time.

Finally, the provost is working to provide as much information as possible to the college. He expects the information to be considered as colleges work on cascaded strategic plans and as UI re-calibrates the PP process. However, he stated that it would be some time before information dashboards are available. He expects to circulate a memo summarizing this presentation including links to the slides to the entire campus community. He also plans to sponsor a webinar to delve into the issues further and provide an opportunity for questions.

A senator asked how the university can afford investments such as VandalStar in the face of the deficits outlined by the provost. The provost responded asking “how can we not afford it?” UI’s enrollment is not growing. Sitting back and hoping for change is not a strategy!

Another senator asked what policies are changing to foster enrollment growth? He followed up asking whether budget cuts were going to be the ongoing policy response to declining enrollments. The senator noted that if enrollment growth is vital, the university must implement changes. The provost responded that the current budget situation is the result of our failure to stabilize and grow enrollment. He is trying to be positive moving forward. However, he emphasized that in the future, the UI budgeting system must respond to changing enrollments more effectively. When enrollment goes down in programs, budgets must be periodically re-set. He pointed out that UI has rapidly growing programs that have gotten very few new resources. This is an issue. We have let the money sit where it has always been rather than funding these growing programs. The provost emphasized that enrollment changes are often beyond the control of departments or units. Rather they often are driven by external forces such as the job market (i.e. salaries and demand). University employees are working hard. But the demands and interests of society and our state is changing. The university must respond to these changes.
A senator noted that the university currently has a 13:1 student faculty ratio. This low ratio is not supportable on our current level of tuition and state appropriations. He agreed that the university must increase enrollment.

A senator asked what the enrollment benchmarks are and whether there would be consequences for failing to reach those benchmarks. The provost responded that many faculty and staff have expressed frustration with the centralized approach to enrollment and have expressed their belief that colleges can do a better job recruiting new students. However, he pointed out that since the university centralized student recruitment and enrollment efforts, the decline in UI's enrollment stopped. He stated that the central question is who gets to control how UI recruits and advises students. Infighting between colleges and with the central administration continues to hold the university back. He believes we must come together and support the efforts of SEM. The strategic plan has aggressive targets for enrollment growth. At present he believes UI must stabilize enrollment and aim for 3% annual growth. If the university can do this, it will be in a good budget position in two to three years. The provost also pointed out that the VP for SEM reports to the provost and it is up to the provost to hold him accountable. He concluded by stating that this strategic enrollment management approach now being implemented at UI is not a new and unproven approach. Rather, the university is just now catching up to best practices for recruiting and enrollment. The distributed approach was not working despite our sense that it was successful.

A senator pointed out the U.S. population is declining. Idaho’s population is not growing at 3% (the growth target previously mentioned by the provost). He asked how the university will respond to these long term changes in the population. The provost responded that the number of high school graduates in Idaho is predicted to increase for the next three to four years. He also pointed out that UI is working to attract international students – our partnership with Navitas is an example of those efforts. He stated that he thinks it would be more productive to focus on reversing our current enrollment decline rather than predicting how the state’s population trends will impact UI.

A senator commented that continued cuts are going to hurt students because they will lead to program elimination and increased numbers of instructors compared to tenure track faculty. She also stated that faculty and staff feel that decisions are made with insufficient involvement of faculty and staff. She believes UI is experiencing culture and climate issues as a result of insufficient involvement. She also asked how the other parts of the strategic plan will be advanced in the face of our focus on student credit hours and enrollment. The provost responded asking whether it is really true that students will suffer. This assumes that the institution only make marginal cuts. Even if the current crisis results in program eliminations, such changes may allow the university to provide better student opportunities in the remaining programs. He admitted that he does not have the “magic solution.” Rather, he encouraged senators to deal with the current budget situation and focus on what the university is good at. This will allow the institution to move forward. The provost also reflected on the difficult issues of transparency. He did not invite faculty members into the discussions with deans regarding the budget because he was concerned that such involvement would simply emphasize the concerns of individual colleges and units. Also, the presence of a limited number of faculty in addition to the deans would have given more representation to some colleges than to others. He emphasized that there are still many aspects of the current budget plan that must be worked out and that he is seeking faculty input on these aspects. The provost also agreed that research is not heavily weighted in the current budget calculations.

The senator followed up asking whether the size of the current budget cut could be reduced if UI forgoes some of the UBFC initiatives or other programs such as the Vandal Ideas Projects (VIPs). The provost responded that he did not wish to revisit these issues this year. However, he added that such an approach might be considered in the future. Foisy added that some of the new initiatives are scalable. He agreed that more conversation is needed. The senator responded that she is a faculty member in a college
receiving one of the largest cuts. She suggested that the cuts do not reflect the level of return on investment. The provost agreed that this was a legitimate criticism that he would think more about. He noted that even though the first waypoints of the strategic plan focused on enrollment, many faculty ignored those first steps and jumped to increasing the university’s research. He suggested that UI must recalibrate and reflect on how we value the different parts of our mission. DCS focuses on instructional costs. It includes internally funded research but does not consider external research funding.

After addressing the UI budget plan, the provost addressed the funding of UBFC recommendations. He emphasized that the process of funding is collaborative between administrative priorities and those identified by the administration. He pointed out that some projects not recommended by UBFC were funded because they represented priorities for President Staben and for the administration. A number of requests were included in the UIs legislative request but did not go forward from the State Board of Education to the legislature. VP Foisy explained that the UI legislative request must be carefully packaged to maximize the available legislative funding. He explained that this year a highly recommended request was packaged with several related, but less recommended requests, in order to develop one coherent and sizeable request that capitalized on receiving legislative funding.

A number of additional requests are part of the internal reallocation process. Budget requests for both marketing and advancement were deemed to be priorities by President Staben.

Finally, the provost explained that he has a number of academic program priorities that he has approved and that have been part of the UI’s program and curriculum approval process. He brought the proposals to UBFC in the spirit of transparency. He allocated funding to these programs, even if they were not recommended.

University Curriculum Committee Report:

- **FS-19-047 (UCC-19-038) – Discontinue Process & Performance Academic Certificate.** Senator Michelle Wiest from the College of Science presented the proposal. She stated that the program was the project of the former chair of the Statistics Department. No students have graduated from this program. The proposal passed unanimously

- **FS-19-051 (UCC-19-024 – Joint JD/MPA Program.** Senator Brian Ellison from the Department of Politics and Philosophy explained that this program will provide an opportunity for law students to earn an MPA while also earning a JD. The proposal passed unanimously

The agenda having been completed, a motion (Chopin/Dezzani) to adjourn passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 4:57 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Liz Brandt, Faculty Secretary &
Secretary to the Faculty Senate