

**University of Idaho**  
**Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes**  
**2018-2019 Meeting #18, Tuesday, February 5, 2019**

**Present:** Brandt (w/o vote), Bridges, Cannon (Boise), Caplan, Chopin, Dezzani, Ellison, Grieb (vice-chair), Hormel (for DeAngelis), Jeffery, Johnson (chair), Keim, Kern (Coeur d'Alene), King, Kirchmeier, Laggis, Lee, Lee-Painter, Luckhart, Mirkouei (for McKellar, Idaho Falls, w/o vote), Morgan, Raja, Schwarzlaender, Seamon, Tibbals, Wiest, Wiencek. **Absent:** Benedum, DeAngelis, Lambeth, McKellar (Idaho Falls), Vella  
**Guests:** 20

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

It was moved (Dezzani/Lee-Painter) that the agenda be amended to postpone the committee reports and new business until next week. The motion passed 21-1.

**Chair's Report.**

- The chair first noted the untimely death of Professor Tom Bitterwolf. Professor Bitterwolf was a mentor to many, a successful and admired teacher and a former chair of faculty senate. The chair called for a moment of silence in his honor.
- Senators' attention was called to the recent email from Vice Provost for Academic Initiatives Cher Hendricks and Director of General Education Dean Panttaja following up on last week's general education forum and outlining further steps to evaluate and reform UI's general education curriculum.

In anticipation of the upcoming discussion the chair reminded senators that we are still a Vandal family. He encouraged senators to be respectful and thoughtful with their comments. He also stated that senators should keep their comments brief so that every interested senator may participate. He announced that if it appears that time is running out, he will impose a time limit on comments and questions to facilitate full participation. The chair also announced procedural ground rules for the decision. Speakers must raise their hands and be recognized by the chair prior to speaking. Speakers will be called on in order. Speakers who wish to follow up on a prior comment are limited to one point and must be recognized by the chair. Comments should be directed to the chair not to other members of the body.

**Provost Report.** The provost noted that in recent days the university experienced a personnel matter that involved student safety and that had gotten out of control. He noted that he and the president met earlier in the day with the faculty in the School of Journalism and Mass Media (JAMM) to discuss their concerns. He noted that the president, who attended the meeting to address the issues with senate, must leave at 4:30 because of a meeting with the governor's office. At that point and with the agreement of the chair, the provost turned the podium over to President Staben.

The president attended senate to address issues that have arisen recently regarding the university's decision to place a faculty member on administrative leave and in its later decision to issue a very specific alert to campus regarding the faculty member. President Staben thanked the senate for the opportunity to have an open dialogue with those who are concerned about how the university handled the situation. He stressed that the decisions made by the university had everything to do with student, faculty and staff security needs at the time. Our campus has been scarred in the past by violence. In the matter under discussion, the administration took firm action to address a security concern that had potential to

seriously impact campus security. Actions were taken in consultation with university staff who have expertise in areas relevant to the decision. The president acted on the advice of those experts. At this point the president opened the floor for questions.

*A senator asked whether the university has a policy against the use of profanity in the workplace? The president responded that he was not aware of any such policy. He stated that the use of profanity was not a direct concern of the situation.*

*A senator stated her belief that it is important that faculty and staff come together to celebrate our strength and our sense of safety. She emphasized that faculty and staff care about safety and about productive dialog aimed at diffusing conflicts and preventing escalation.*

*A senator commented that many faculty in her department and college are concerned about how the administration handled the situation. She stated that many believe that the language used in the alert was not supportive of the faculty member and the faculty member's ability to continue as part of our university community. While she did not question the initial decision to place the faculty member on administrative leave, the specifics of the alert shook her trust. She emphasized the importance of maintaining trust in a time of substantial change, increasing demands and budget shortfalls. In particular she stated that the reference in the alert to methamphetamine (meth) appeared to be intended to shut down debate regarding the situation and demeaned the faculty member by suggesting she engaged in low class behaviors. The senator suggested that the concerns expressed by the faculty member were legitimate, although her method of expression was very problematical. Finally, she suggested that the alert has put the university at risk, including financial risk, as parents are now worried about the conduct of UI faculty members.* The president responded that several alternative wordings of the alert were considered. He stressed that the university's [threat assessment and management team](#) (TAMT) was unanimous in its assessment that serious security issues existed and its recommendation that an alert be issued. After discussion between the TAMT, the president, the provost and other administrators, the decision was made that the alert must contain very specific information in order to have credibility. He also stressed that the information in the alert had to be publicly available information. The information about possible meth use and access to firearms was part of a public police report. The president agreed that the alert was unusually specific, but reiterated that it was the judgment of the TAMT and administrative leaders that it was the best way to alert campus of the serious security concern.

*A senator asked, given all that has happened since the alert was issued, would the president include such specific information of questionable relevance and obtained from an out-of-date report, in a future alert.* President Staben responded that he believed the information disclosed was highly relevant to the specific security concern that led to the alert. He stated that it would be unlikely that such a specific alert would be appropriate in most situations. However, he stated that if the information was necessary to ensure that an appropriate alert is issued, he would include detailed specific information again.

The chair reminded the body that the TAMT and the president considered relevant personnel information that cannot be disclosed.

*A senator commented that she had recently moved to Idaho and was still learning the institution. She was struck by the irony that the alert focused on the faculty member's access to firearms given that people are permitted to carry concealed firearms on campus. She stated that the inclusion of information about possible firearms possession seemed calculated to malign the faculty member and imply behavior more serious than mere gun ownership.* The president agreed that there is wide access to guns in the area. However, he pointed out that persons carrying guns on campus are required by law to have an "enhanced carry permit." Relatively few enhanced carry permits have been issued. Even considering that a number

of people may well be carrying guns on campus without the appropriate permit, Staben stated that there probably are not many people carrying concealed firearms on campus. He agreed that, from this perspective, calling out the faculty member's access to firearms is odd. However, he pointed out that the alert clearly communicated the seriousness of the threat that had been identified at the time and caused members of the UI community to pay attention.

*A senator pointed out that the timing of the alert seemed aimed at stopping a planned student protest.* Staben responded that the intent of the alert was not to prevent the protest or to squelch it, but rather to call the attention of the community to a security threat and to protect the students participating in the protest. He noted, that the protest was postponed and took place at 6:00 p.m. He stated that the university could not prevent the protest even had that been its intent.

*A senator asked whether something happened on the morning of the alert that escalated the university's security concerns. If so, she thought this would help members of the community understand the timing of the alert.* The president stated that the TAMT received some new information that escalated security concerns the evening before and also during the threat assessment meeting that heightened the sense that there was an immediate security risk. President Staben also stated that the university was trying to provide the timeliest possible alert. He noted that historically the university does not have a "shining history" when it comes to giving alerts. We are trying to take a more appropriate approach to alerts. He stated that the TAMT and the President's Cabinet normally reviews the institution's actions after a major event. One thing the president thinks could have been handled more appropriately this time is to send a more timely and informative "all clear" message after the alert. The "all clear" message for this alert did not go out until the next day, long after the security concerns had been resolved.

Provost Wiencek detailed the timing of the process for issuing the alert in question. The TAMT made a recommendation that the alert be issued in the morning and proposed the language of the alert. The TAMT and larger group of administrators then consulted with the president. In this situation there were significant time constraints and concern about waiting too long to issue the alert. It was issued one hour before the protest event.

*A senator asked for a more clear explanation of the role and composition of the TAMT and of the process for issuing an alert.* The president responded that the TAMT included the Director of Emergency Management and Security Systems, a representative from the Office of General Counsel, the Dean of Students, the Director of the Office of Civil Rights and Enforcement, The Director of the Counselling and Testing Center, a representative from the Department of Human Resources, the Vice Provost for Faculty and a representative of the Moscow Police Department. He pointed out that depending on a situation, other experts can be called in to participate on the TAMT as needed. The TAMT convenes to consider information in as timely a way as possible given the nature of the threat. For the situation under discussion, the team convened at 9:00 a.m. Tuesday morning. The recommendation for an alert was made and a larger group of administrators was consulted to make the final decision. The larger group included the Executive Director of University Communications and Marketing, the Dean of the College of Letters Arts and Social Sciences, Provost Wiencek and the president. The Dean of Students and the police representative were not able to meet with the larger group.

*A senator asked for further information about the problem that led to the situation under discussion.* The president responded that he was not at liberty to disclose any facts regarding the underlying personnel situation. He stressed that the university did not take actions in response to foul language. Rather it took actions because of behavior that triggered safety concerns.

*A senator asked how the university can improve our handling of conflict.* President Staben responded that how we respond, depends on the nature of the conflict. He pointed out that all employees have access to supportive help through the [Employee Assistance Plan](#) (EAP). There are also offices on campus that assist with conflict management such as the Ombuds. He agreed that we need to work to de-escalate conflict, have open discourse, and deal civilly with each other. He suggested that we might begin a campus dialog about how to deal with conflict effectively. He also pointed out that in response to increasing incidents of conflict, before the incident in question occurred, his office sent out a communication calling for the UI community to act consistently with our values. One email does not solve a problem, but he wanted to remind the community of our values and call attention to the resources available for conflict resolution.

*A senator commented that he does not know many details about the underlying situation and respects that the administration cannot speak about those details. He expressed his hope that in the future that members of the university community will be able to go back and evaluate the university's actions in this situation to determine whether the response was appropriate. He asked whether there were prior issues before the situation in question or whether the current situation grew out of a single incident.* The president acknowledged the frustration of many noting that as researchers and teachers we all want to analyze the facts in a rational way. However, it is not likely that we will ever be able to know the details of the current situation. Employees have a right to share information as they see fit, but the administration cannot share any information. The facts about prior incidents, if any, are protected by confidentiality and cannot be shared.

*The senator followed up stating that any conversation about how to avoid such incidents, or respond more effectively, will have to be very creative in the absence of facts otherwise such evaluations devolve to anecdotes that are not helpful.* Staben agreed, but suggested that it would be possible to begin conversations based on detailed hypotheticals.

*A senator asked why the current alert was any more effective than past inappropriate alerts. She stated that the faculty member's administrative leave was "not disciplinary," the police did not pursue charges in November when they first interacted with the faculty member, and have indicated that they are not currently pursuing an investigation of her. Given these facts, the senator stated that it appears that the recent alert was an over-reaction and a violation of faculty rights and privileges. She asked the president to "convince us" that the alert was not an over-reaction.* The president first addressed the effectiveness of past alerts. He stated that there is no question that alerts have not been handled effectively in the past. As an example, he used a situation four years ago in which an active shooter who had killed three people was at large in the city of Moscow near campus. As the events were unfolding during mid-morning, the determination was made that no alert was necessary because the events were not actually on campus. An alert was issued later in the evening after the shooter had been apprehended. The university was properly criticized because of the lateness of the alert. In the current situation, the administration wanted to send out a timely alert. The president next addressed the question of whether the administrative leave was disciplinary. He pointed out that under UI policy administrative leave is not disciplinary in nature. It is used for a number of different things such as permitting staff to attend off campus events during work hours and other reasons that an employee cannot or should not be present on campus. The university's disciplinary system for faculty is separate from administrative leave and is set forth in detail in the *Faculty-Staff Handbook*. The university is following its disciplinary process. The initial leave was just a first step and was not a determination of the need for discipline. Finally, the president stated that the alert did not arise from any disciplinary process.

*A senator commented that he wanted to ensure that the record reflects that not all faculty share the concerns that have been raised regarding the alert. He stated that he appreciates the steps the administration took based on what he knows of the situation. He believes the level of detail in the alert*

*was appropriate. Having been in an administrative position he noted that the administration was in an almost impossible situation in which it was forced to act under severe time constraints and with incomplete knowledge of the facts. He stated his belief that faculty have to have some level of trust in the administration.*

*A senator stated that she wanted to revisit the conversation about conflict resolution. She asked whether administrators have been trained in conflict resolution and whether they understand the role of the ombuds. She asked whether the ombuds should be a member of the TAMT. She also suggested that administrators should be trained on conflict resolution before being expected to handle situations such as the one under question.* The president responded that there has been administrative training in conflict resolution led recently by the university's former ombuds. "Administration" is a very large group, however. Some training was offered at a President's Leadership Breakfast. Also, the ombuds has offered training to many smaller groups across campus. Just the evening before, the provost convened the dean's council for leadership training that included conflict management training with the current ombuds. But the president agreed that there is a need for more training.

The chair responded to the suggestion that the ombuds should be part of the TAMT. He suggested that this would not be an appropriate role for the ombuds as they need to remain as neutral as possible. He invited Ombuds Laura Smythe, who was in the audience, to comment. Smythe stated that the ombuds should not to be part of any formal or informal process at the university. If she were a regular member of the TAMT, she would be required to take an institutional position on situations that would be inappropriate to her role as a neutral office that assists with conflict resolution and other issues.

*The senator followed up suggesting that the TAMT is "skewed" in a particular direction and should be more neutral.* The president responded that the TAMT is very neutral and works hard to merely assess the level of threat without taking a position on surrounding issues. He pointed out that many times the TAMT works to de-escalate situations and refer individuals to the [VandalCARE Team](#).

Vice Provost for Faculty Torrey Lawrence followed up on the question about administrative training in conflict management. He pointed out that his office sponsors regular workshops for department administrators and associate deans. Training on conflict management is offered in this series at least annually. Such training will be offered again this spring. Attendance at the workshops is not required but is very high.

*The Faculty Secretary stated that she believes the university should work to develop more resources to address mental health issues for faculty and staff.* The president responded that there are significant resources available on campus. He pointed out that employees are eligible for 8 unpaid visits to a counselor as part of the EAP.

*The faculty secretary followed up stating that the EAP was not an effective resource when an administrator has a faculty member in her office falling apart.* The provost added that there is a possible need for more "acute" resources on campus.

*A senator thanked the president for coming to senate. He noted that the faculty in his college are shaken. He suggested that in retrospect one step that might have reduced stress would have been to acknowledge the concerns more quickly and assure faculty that there would be an opportunity to discuss concerns.* The president agreed with this suggestion and stated that the reaction and need for discussion had been underestimated. He is open to other opportunities for open dialog and stressed that we need to learn from these events and move on.

*A senator revisited earlier comments regarding the police report that was used as the basis for the specific information in the alert. She suggested that the information about meth was not relevant to the alert and served to severely label a colleague and make it difficult for her to return to work. She stated that in reality there was no immediate threat at the time of the alert and that a number of the faculty member's colleagues could have contacted the faculty member. She distinguished that the example given earlier by the president of a botched alert from the current situation because the president's example involved an active shooter. The current situation did not involve an active shooter. She believes it was a "big leap of faith" for the TAMT to come to the conclusion that there was a security threat when there was no active police investigation. She is concerned if another faculty member has conflict with the university, administrators will go digging into that person's past to find information that could be part of a public alert. She believes the approach of the administration will discourage employees from seeking help from the police in a crisis for fear of how the information in the police report will be used. She characterized the faculty member's behavior as a "Kafkaesque cry for help" that has been ignored by the university. The president responded that the alert was not issued to negatively affect the person about whom the alert was sent, but rather to protect the students and the entire university community. The information about meth was relevant because meth use is closely connected with a loss of impulse control and heightened level of violence. The information about meth was used in the alert because the possibility of meth use heightened the level of concern regarding the possible security risks. Also, the information was specific and publicly available. The university has an obligation to use publicly available information to protect the university community. The president admitted that the system for alerts is not perfect and that mistakes will be made. But, he also stated that the university would not make all information available at all times.*

The provost commented that the alternative of waiting until shots were fired was inappropriate. *The senator responded that there was no indication that shots would be fired.* The provost responded emphasizing that the senator did not have all the facts available to her.

The president indicated he had time for one more question.

*A senator stated that it was very helpful to understand the threat assessment process and stated that she intends to take information about the process back to her colleagues. She asked how the university can move forward, and regain some of the trust we have lost through this incident.* The president responded that he is not certain of what the next steps should be, but that he is open to input and feedback. He appreciated the senator's actions in taking information back to her colleagues. He also affirmed his confidence in our university processes. He stated that while we may not always reach the right decision, we will not make capricious decisions.

The chair thanked President Staben for his time. He next moved to continue the Provost's Report.

The provost stated that questions had been raised about an article in the Idaho Statesman regarding the use of university reserves to fund the new arena project. He asked Vice President for Finance and Administration Brian Foisy to come forward to address the concern. Foisy stated that at this time the university is still \$3 million short of its fundraising goal for the arena project. Nonetheless, because we are so close, we will be asking the State Board of Education (SBOE) for permission to move forward with the project. Foisy expects the gap in financing to be closed two ways. First, fundraising for the project continues. He emphasized that the university's fundraising efforts for this project have been extraordinarily successful especially when compared to similar efforts by other universities in our region. Also, many commitments for in-kind gifts such as for the wood products for the construction, have not been counted in the budget projections. Foisy confirmed that university funds would be used if the gap in the project funding is not closed through fundraising and in-kind contributions.

Foisy stated that it is an accident that the \$3 million gap in funding is approximately the same as the structural budget shortfall currently being addressed through reductions in base budgets. He pointed out that the reductions in base budgets are reductions in continuing funding whereas the funding gap for the arena project is one-time funding. He also indicated that the arena is a capital project that is funded through a separate process than the current university continuing budget process.

The provost next called senators' attention to the recent email memo regarding general education. The university will take the coming year to carefully assess our general education curriculum. A senator asked whether the university would undertake comprehensive assessment of the ISEM seminars. Vice Provost for Academic Initiatives Cher Hendricks stated that this assessment would be part of the project for the coming year. She pointed out that in the short term, students participating in the senior capstone process would be asked to participate in assessment of their ISEM experiences. The vice chair commented that in addition to learning outcomes, ISEMs may provide a baseline assessment that assists in measuring learning outcomes for the rest of students' experiences at UI. He hopes that this aspect of ISEMs will be considered as part of the conversation about how to assess them. Hendricks encouraged senators to solicit interested colleagues to participate on the taskforce and as part of the process to notify either her or Director Panttaja.

The chair thanked senators for the collegial and productive conversation of difficult issues. The chair reiterated the importance of senators communicating with their colleagues regarding the difficult issues discussed at the meeting.

A senator asked whether it would be possible for senators to make a statement in support of the community. The chair suggested that senate leadership could consider this and report back to senators. The senator followed up suggesting that there was a more urgent need for such a statement. The faculty secretary stated that the senator could propose a resolution. If not, then the issue should be considered and taken up in the future. The chair committed to address the request as soon as possible. He and the vice chair also encouraged senators to call attention to specific policy changes that might be appropriate in light of the discussion.

The agenda having been completed, a motion (Morgan/Dezzani) to adjourn passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 4:54 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Liz Brandt, Faculty Secretary &  
Secretary to the Faculty Senate