Present: Brandt (w/o vote), Benedum, Bridges, Cannon (Boise), Caplan, Chopin, Dezzani, DeAngelis, Ekins (for Kern, Coeur d’Alene, w/o vote), Ellison, Grieb (Vice Chair), Jeffery, Johnson (Chair), Keim, King, Kirchmeier, Laggis, Lee-Painter, Luckhart, McKellar (Idaho Falls), Morgan, Raja, Seamon, Tibbals, Vella, Wiest, Wiencek. Absent: Kern (Coeur d’Alene), Lambeth, Lee, Schwarzlaender. Guests: 6

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

Chair’s Report.

- The chair called for a moment of silence in memory of two recently deceased members of the UI faculty and staff:
  - Maxine (Max) Dakins was a professor in the College of Natural Resources in Idaho Falls. She was a founding member of, and the only faculty fully dedicated to, the interdisciplinary environmental science program. Max was actively engaged in campus life and was a past faculty senator.
  - Ricardo Lopez was a staff member in the soil chemistry lab in College of Agricultural and Life Sciences. Ricardo was planning to finish his degree in chemistry in fall 2019 and had been involved in the College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP)
- Senators are reminded that Senate Elections must be completed and reported to the faculty secretary (facsec@uidaho.edu) by April 15.
- The chair reported that senate leadership followed up on questions raised at Senate Meeting #22 (March 5, 2019) regarding payment for disability insurance during sabbatical. He affirmed that because faculty are currently not eligible for disability insurance coverage during sabbatical they are not required to pay the premium. However, he reported that at least in some circumstances, disability insurance premiums were deducted from faculty compensation during sabbaticals. Senate leadership is working to obtain further clarification.
- The first UIdaho Bound event will be held on March 23 on the Moscow campus. Faculty and staff are encouraged to participate.
- Stephanie Hampton, division director for the National Science Foundation’s Division of Environmental Biology, will give a talk entitled, "Ecology, Evolution, and Environmental Sciences – Opportunities at the National Science Foundation," from noon to 1 p.m. Friday, March 29, in IRIC 305.
- Open Forums with the final candidates for the position Dean of Library will be held March 20 – 28.
- 20th Annual Tutxinmepu Powwow on April 6-7, 2019 at the UI Kibbie Dome. The Native American Student Center, in conjunction with the Native American Student Association and the University of Idaho, hosts the Tutxinmepu Powwow each year.

Provost Report. The provost welcomed senators back to campus after Spring Break. He was able to enjoy some theater in New York City and commented that he is “not throwing away his shot!” The provost encouraged senators to attend the open forum for the library dean candidates. He also announced that the position announcement for the Idaho Falls Center Director position will be posted next week and that a search committee has been formed.

A senator asked the provost about UI’s recent pattern of expanding positions in the central administration more rapidly than positions in the colleges. She prepared a short handout with statistics supporting the pattern. She pointed out that recently published information seems to confirm the sense of many faculty and staff that there is more growth in central administration than in the colleges. For example, she pointed
out that between 2014 and 2019 UI College budgets increased 15% but the central administration budget increased 46%. This pattern is also reflected in the grown of full time equivalent positions and total general education salaries. She asked how to evaluate whether this growth pattern is appropriate for UI.

The provost, who had not previously seen the handout provided by the senator, invited a productive conversation about the issue. He emphasized that both the colleges and the administration must be willing to fully and honestly participate in the dialog. The provost pointed out that he has been working to benchmark UI expenditures with nationally available data. In the recent budget process, he looked to the Delaware Cost Study for data regarding college budgets. He intends to continue this process in evaluating the budgets of non-academic units. The provost also suggested that the data is more complicated than it might appear because the divisions between college and central expenditures is not a bright line. Some centrally funded staff are located in and provide exclusive support for individual colleges. In addition, some expenses are shared. The senator responded that she was concerned that what is right for some institutions may not be right for UI. She stated that staffing shortages in the colleges are starting to hurt UI’s ability to be effective.

FS-19-069 (UCC-19-053): Joint JD/MS Applied Economics. Chair Aaron Johnson presented the change for the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALS) and the College of Law (Law). The proposal would allow student to complete the J.D and M.S. in Applied Economics concurrently. The proposal passed unanimously.

FS-19-070 (UCC-19-051): Plus/Minus Grading. Professor Sanjay Sisodiya, a member of the University Curriculum Committee (UCC), presented the proposal. Sisodiya explained the proposal was originally developed by the Teaching and Advising Committee (TeAC). It was forwarded to UCC because it involved revision of the academic regulations. The original TeAC proposal was to adopt a system containing the following gradations: A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, C, C-, D+, D, D-. Pursuant to the UCC amendment, the D- grade would be passing. In addition, pursuant to the UCC amendment, the A+ grade would be worth the same quality points as the A grade – both would be 4.0 for purposes of calculating Grade Point Average (GPA). The D- grade was added by UCC because the committee believed this change would make the UIs proposed system consistent with that used at Boise State University (BSU) and Washington State University (WSU). The UCC did not believe the TeAC proposal contained a rationale for omitting the D- grade. The A+ grade was added as a way to designate outstanding students. The UCC believed that the A+ grade would assist students applying to graduate schools and in the job market.

A senator questioned whether faculty would be able to make the distinctions necessary to discriminate between grades in a +/- system. He admitted that he has never, either as a student or faculty member, been part of a system that used +/- grading. He believes that adopting the +/- system would be a mistake because faculty do not have the ability to make fine enough distinctions among so many grade levels. The proposed system would, in his view, create false discrimination points that exceed the precision of the measurements. The senator also stated that undergraduate students do not appear to support the change in the grading system.

The chair invited senator and ASUI representative Clayton King to address student support for the proposal. King indicated that students had discussed the proposal extensively and that, in his opinion, most students did not support the change. In particular, high-achieving students in difficult STEM fields believe the change will hurt their GPAs. However, even beyond this, most students view the change negatively.
A senator asked Sisodiya whether the UCC had considered any evidence that the proposed A+ grade would give an extra edge to students for graduate school admission? Sisodiya stated that while this was part of the UCC discussion, he was not aware of any such evidence. The senator commented that when he had previously examined this issue as a member of TeAC, the evidence at the time did not indicate that a +/- system impacted student performance.

A senator commented that he believes senate could take two possible approaches to the pending proposal, senate could consider the UCC proposal with the A+/D- grades, or senate could consider the original TeAC proposal that does not include A+/D- grades.

It was moved (Grieb/Seamon) to drop A+/D- grades from the proposal and move forward with the proposal as originally presented by TeAC.

A senator asked whether the +/- grades were related to a percentage scale. The chair responded that while many disciplines have practices regarding how letter grades correspond to percentage grades, UI has no formal policy.

The faculty secretary commented that she believes the A+ grade with the same quality point value as the A grade, will make UI transcripts misleading to graduate admissions officials and employers. Many of these individuals will not realize that the A and A+ are essentially the same grade as far as the grade point average is concerned. The provost commented that he had a conversation with the ASUI president about whether other schools treat the A and A+ grades as equal when calculating GPAs. He pointed out that some schools give 4.33 quality points for an A+ and 4 points for an A.

A senator commented that faculty in her college are concerned about the A+/D- grades. They believe using these grades will lead to grading conflicts involving students on the margin trying to raise their GPAs or salvage a potentially failing effort. The senator also added that BSU, WSU and many of the peer schools discussed in the documentation for the proposal do not utilize the A+ grade.

A senator pointed out that a past chair of TeAC, who prepared the committee’s report, circulated the TeAC report to senators. The chair reminded senators that the TeAC report did not contain the A+ or D- grades proposed by UCC.

The motion to reject the UCC addition of the A+/D- grades and to return to the original TeAC proposal passed 20-1.

Regarding the TeAC proposal, a senator commented that even if the +/- system is adopted, faculty do not have to give +/- grades. He also asked about the impetus for the proposal given that students do not support it. He did not think that a broad group of faculty had been consulted. Another senator pointed out that two years ago faculty were surveyed regarding the proposal and overwhelmingly supported a move to +/- grades. In addition, the faculty secretary pointed out that the issue was presented to senate approximately 5 years ago (March 8, 2005 – 10y; 2 no; 1 abstention) and passed by a narrow vote. It was forwarded to the President after the University Faculty Meeting (UFM) (was May 4, 2005) failed to obtain a quorum. At the UFM, students spoke against the proposal. The president then vetoed the proposal.

A senator questioned whether faculty were really free to not implement +/- grades in their classes. The vice chair pointed out that faculty already have varying approaches to grades. He gave examples of the different ways faculty correlate letter grades to percentages. Some faculty treat 90% as the cut off for an A, while others might treat 87% or 93% as the cut off for an A.
A senator asked if King (one of the ASUI senators) could provide more explanation for student opposition to the use of +/- grades. King stated that while pockets of students support the proposal, the majority appear to oppose both versions (the original TeAC proposal and the UCC revision) of the proposal. He again emphasized that high achieving students, particularly in difficult fields, believe that the change will negatively impact their GPAs. Students are also concerned that with so many more grades, students will not have a clear idea of the distinctions between grades. The provost added that the proposed +/- system is likely not symmetric — GPAs at the top of the grading scale are likely to be lower while GPAs at the bottom of the scale are not as likely to be impacted.

A senator commented that faculty have the obligation to adopt a grading system that will best foster student engagement. This is best achieved when students perceive that they have the ability to improve their grades if they engage in class at a higher level. A +/- system would encourage this engagement because the step between each grade is smaller. He acknowledged that this could increase student stress, but believes that the proposed system would provide a tool that faculty can use to motivate students to improve. However, the senator also commented that faculty must be more accountable to students. He pointed out that TeAC is examining issues relating to timely reporting of grades by faculty. He believes that if the +/- proposal passes, faculty must respond by addressing timely grade reporting issues.

A senator commented that her “grading curve” is not usually bell shaped. Rather she has a few very good students and many students whose academic performance is mixed. She believes +/- grades will give her a greater ability to communicate to students regarding their performance by providing a finer degree of measurement for student performance.

A senator commented that when this proposal was considered previously, a past senator asked why the university doesn’t abandon letter grades in favor of a percentage scoring system. If the concern is precision grading, such a system would permit very precise evaluations of student performance. He stated that this question was not answered then and he does not expect an answer now.

The +/- proposal as presented by TeAC and not including the revisions proposed by UCC passed 14-6.

**FS-19-067: FSH 1566 — Appointment to Faculty Status** and **FS-19-068: FSH 1520 — Constitution of the University Faculty.** Editorial changes in FSH 1566 and 1520 were explained by the faculty secretary. FSH 1566 was added at the time the faculty-at-large was created to document the decision. It is descriptive and does not include any policy directive. The section is being eliminated and placed in a footnote into FSH 1520.

**FS-19-071: FSH 1570 — Secretary of the Faculty.** The chair began the discussion by pointing out that regardless of the revisions, the search for a new faculty secretary must move forward under current FSH 1570. He asked for three senate volunteers to serve on a search committee along with himself and Vice Provost for Faculty Torrey Lawrence (the provost’s designee). Senators Jeffery, Morgan and Seamon volunteered.

The chair next pointed out that because the proposed revisions to FSH 1570 are being presented by senate leadership, a motion to adopt them is needed to open the discussion. It was moved (Morgan/Lee-Painter) that the proposed changes be adopted.

The faculty secretary refreshed senators on the pending efforts to restructure the faculty secretary position. The pending proposal reduces the position to a 25% position and removes responsibilities as the policy coordinator. She reminded senators that major concerns have been expressed about whether a 25% position is enough to handle the responsibilities and whether separating the policy functions from
the faculty governance functions of the faculty secretary would lessen the opportunity for faculty participation in shared governance. Brandt indicated that she thought the 25% position as reconfigured position would be workable. She also pointed out that even though the faculty secretary would no longer perform the policy coordinator responsibilities, changes to the FSH still must be approved by senate. She pointed out that as a political matter, the new policy coordinator would be required to work with the faculty secretary and senate leadership to accomplish policy changes.

A senator commented that the proposal states that the secretary’s position must be at least 25% time but could be more time, if necessary. Brandt agreed that the amount of time allocated to the faculty secretary position could be greater than 25% subject to negotiation with the provost.

A senator commented that the proposal does not make clear the faculty secretary’s responsibility to take minutes for the senate meetings. Brandt explained that pursuant to an arcane provision in the faculty constitution (FSH 1520), the faculty secretary is not automatically the secretary to the faculty senate. Rather the constitution requires that the secretary to senate be appointed annually by the chair subject to confirmation by senate. If FSH 1570 is amended to provide that the faculty secretary has the responsibility to take minutes at senate meetings, the change would conflict with the constitution. In addition, in contrast to general provisions of the FSH which are deemed passed even in the absence of a quorum at the University Faculty Meeting, amendments to the faculty constitution cannot be finalized without a majority vote at a UFM. For this reason, she explained she did not propose to change the constitutional provisions out of concern that the FSH revision would pass, but the constitutional change would not pass. After discussion, Brandt suggested that the senate move forward with changes to both the constitution and FSH 1570 requiring that the faculty secretary also have the responsibility of serving as the secretary to faculty senate. If the constitutional change is not approved at the spring UFM, the senate would likely continue its long practice that the chair appoints the faculty secretary as the secretary of senate next year and move the constitutional change forward next fall.

A senator suggested that it might be appropriate to formalize the buyout for the faculty secretary. In particular, she asked whether the position would stay with the department. The provost responded that the funds would be transferred from his office to the college. A dean could conceivably sweep the funds to the college level and not leave them in the department, but he thinks this would be unlikely. Senator Chopin (Dean of the College of Business and Economics) agreed that such an action by a dean would be unlikely. Brandt also added that the buyout is often structured differently depending on the needs of the faculty member serving as secretary. While some faculty members might choose to be bought out of teaching responsibilities, others might choose to hire an additional teaching or research assistant or may choose additional research funding. Currently, the provost has worked creatively with faculty in leadership positions to make the buyout meaningful for each person. The chair explained that the provision in the FSH is intended to provide a backstop against a future administration that might wish to limit or omit the buyout while not limiting the options to structure it creatively.

A senator asked whether language should be included in the FSH detailing the responsibilities of the new policy coordinator position and formalizing the connection between the policy coordinator and the faculty secretary. Brandt responded that FSH 1460 regarding the university policy sets forth the process for policy changes and obliquely refers to the policy coordinator. She also pointed out that no other administrative positions are governed by descriptions in the FSH. The suggestion was made that the policy coordinator position be detailed in the Administrative Procedure Manual (APM). Brandt agreed to work with the provost to develop a clearer picture of the relationship between the policy coordinator and the faculty secretary in the new organization.
Finally, a senator pointed out that FSH 1570 does not contain any language regarding the faculty secretary’s responsibility to serve as a resource for and advocate for faculty. Brandt agreed that such language was not part of the policy. She indicated that she viewed her role as including these responsibilities and that she believed prior faculty secretaries also viewed their role the same way. Brandt indicated she would propose language to incorporate these responsibilities in FSH 1570 more explicitly.

It was moved (Tibbals/Dezzani) that consideration of the pending proposal be postponed to a future meeting. A senator clarified that the motion to postpone related only to the policy and that the search committee could begin its job. The motion to postpone passed unanimously.

Brandt noted that the faculty secretary is an important position. She stressed that working with faculty from across campus and working to preserve and support faculty governance were rewarding responsibilities. She also noted that she has enjoyed immensely her time as faculty secretary. She encouraged senators to recruit interested persons to apply for the position.

The agenda having been completed, a motion (Ellison/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