

University of Idaho
FACULTY COUNCIL MINUTES

2002-2003 Meeting #14, Tuesday, February 4, 2003

Present: Bitterwolf (chair), Wagner (vice-chair), Baillargeon, Chandler, Daley Laursen, Fairchild, Guenthner, Haggart (w/o vote), Hong, Lillard, McCaffrey, McGuire, Nelson, Pikowsky, Pitcher (w/o vote), Reese, Rinker, Schekler, Stegner

Absent: Bailey, Cloud, McClure **Observers:** 12

Call to Order. A quorum being present, Faculty Council Chair, Professor Thomas Bitterwolf, called the meeting to order at 3:32 p.m. in the Brink Hall Faculty Lounge.

Minutes. The council accepted the minutes of the January 28, 2002, meeting as distributed.

In Memoriam. Chair Bitterwolf asked the council to observe a moment of silence in honor of the seven astronauts who lost their lives in the shuttle explosion on February 1st.

Chair's Report. Chair Bitterwolf reminded the council that the Joint Finance and Appropriation Committee (JFAC) would be meeting on the U of Idaho campus on Saturday evening, February 8th. Because it is unusual for JFAC to hold public hearings, holding this hearing suggests the importance of Idaho's budget crisis. Bitterwolf urged faculty, staff, and students to attend the hearing and express their viewpoints on the proposed sales tax increase and to offer support for the SBOE/Regents requested 4.2% budget increase for higher education. Bitterwolf also praised the leadership of the Associated Students University of Idaho for their continued support of higher education funding.

Provost's Report. Provost Brian Pitcher told the council that the spring enrollment figures were up from a year ago. Leading the way were increases in graduate students and international students.

FC-03-038, Proposed Change in the Name of the Department of Theater Arts. The proposal would change the name of the Department of Theater Arts to the Department of Theater and Film. Department Chair, David Lee Painter, provided the council with background information on the change. The old Department of Theater Arts has acquired the film program from the old School of Communication. The motion was **adopted** by unanimous voice vote.

Reconsideration of FC-03-016, Proposed Changes to Catalog Regulation K, Concerning the Awarding of Honors Upon Graduation. This agenda item was returned to the Faculty Council by faculty petition. The council entered into a lengthy discussion with one of the petitioners, Professor Jo Ellen Force, U of Idaho Registrar Reta Pikowsky, and Student Records Specialist Dennis Lincks.

Professor Force urged the council to maintain the current wording of the regulation, which calls for a prescribed percentage of each college to be awarded one of the three distinguished honors of summa cum laude, magna cum laude, and cum laude. She and the other petitioners argued that this was the only fair method of awarding those honors. There is too much variation across colleges to justify a flat GPA for all colleges; plus, grade inflation also skews the numbers.

Many councilors supported the petitioners' concerns, stating that with hindsight they wished they had not voted for approval when the proposal was first submitted to the council. Proportionality seems to be lost in a rigid GPA number system and the number of students qualifying for honors escalates under the revision that the council had passed earlier. Figures provided by the Registrar's Office supported those points, showing that in most cases the number of honors graduates would double under the previously approved changes. One councilor remarked that "grade inflation is a fact" and the percentage system is the only way to put all colleges on an equal footing.

Some members of the council believed that it was important for a student to know what grade point achievement was required for each honor category. Other councilors countered with the opinion that knowledge of the level needed was actually relatively unimportant. Students must start earning top grades from their very first semester at the U of Idaho to qualify for recognition under any honor system.

Some time was spent discussing the history and necessity of using an historical five-year grade-point-average when assigning honors in each college. Registrar Pikowsky noted that the five-year rolling average is a U of Idaho creation that pre-dates her employment. While some argued that the five-year average should be eliminated from the calculations, others saw too many difficulties in computing meaningful cut-off points calculated in the semester that the student graduated. Honors could only be determined and awarded after the fact, and the issuance of diplomas would be delayed for many months.

Registrar Pikowsky provided the council with some of the research findings used in crafting the original proposal. Eleven out of the fifteen universities surveyed used straight grade point averages to set honor levels, while only four used a percentage system similar to the one used by the U of Idaho.

In response to a question about honors for last December's graduates, Pikowsky said that the old regulation was used and that a workable scheme was developed to handle honors in the new colleges. She went on to tell the council that the faculty needs to decide on a good definition of "honors" as it pertains to graduation and diploma recognition. There are a number of questions that she thought should be addressed by the council:

- *how do we determine how many honor awards are too many?*
- *what is the ideal percentage of students who should graduate with honors?*
- *if there are too many honors awarded under a grade-point-average system, could the grade-point-averages simply be raised to a higher standard?*
- *would the new regulation be more acceptable if the grade-point-averages were higher and the new "with distinction" honor was removed?*
- *are we at a crossroads regarding determining whether honors should be awarded by a college of the university or both?*

In an attempt to modify the current catalog regulation it was **moved and seconded** (Wagner, McCaffrey) to offer a *substitute motion for the one previously passed by the council (FC-03-016) by using the current regulation, but removing all references to five-year averages in calculating college honor levels, and replacing that language with language that would call for the use of only the previous year's grade point averages that would place candidates in the top 3, 6, and 10 percent of the graduates in each college as the base number for each honor category.*

The substitute motion was discussed briefly, and then it was **moved and seconded** (Schenkler, Guentner) to **table the motion**. The motion to table was **adopted** by a majority vote (9 yea, 4 nay) of the council.

The two major questions emerging from the discussion were: (1) whether to use fixed grade-point-averages for each honor category or percentages of total graduates, and (2) whether the honors should be awarded at the college or university level, or both levels.

Policy on Discontinuance of Academic Programs. The council then turned its attention to a draft of a policy that would provide guidelines for, among other things, the discontinuance or restructuring of academic programs. The draft policy closely follows the SBOE/Regents' guidelines for program closure, but adds some important safeguards relative to faculty, staff, and student input in the decision-making process. The draft provided the council is a revision of a policy currently used by the provost's office entitled "*Guidelines for New/ Revised Program Planning and Review in Academic Units.*"

The provost pointed out that one of the problems with developing guidelines was dealing with personnel issues. The SBOE/Regents' policy says that tenured faculty members may be terminated when an academic program is eliminated. He said that the U of Idaho would prefer to have other options available, such as reassignment or retraining. U of Idaho deans have been told not to include tenured faculty terminations in any of their budget reduction plans. Exceptions to this mandate would only occur under very unusual circumstances, such as the declaration of a fiscal exigency.

The draft guidelines applicable to program closure and restructuring are:

2. *The following guidelines for review and approval of University of Idaho program changes (establishment and disestablishment) apply to on-campus and off-campus planning for:*
 - *Program changes (additions, expansions, discontinuances, consolidations, name or title changes, etc.) (one of four listed)*
3. *Steps for Planning and Approval of program changes initiated by faculty or administration at any level:*
 - b. *For Program changes (deletions, consolidations, discontinuations, title changes, etc.)*
 - *Determine program changes required*
 - *Evaluate proposal based on university and unit strategic plan*
 - *Evaluate the merit of the proposed changes relative to the State Board of Education criteria (See ISBE Governing Policies and Procedures, Section III. G. 7)*
 - *Evaluate cost efficiency, and fiscal, budget and space impacts*
 - *Evaluate fiscal and budget impact, resource savings (funding, personnel, space, etc.), and identify source of savings, one time and on-going*
 - *Evaluate need and projected demand*
 - *Assess program duplication (on and off-campus)*
 - *With other UI programs*
 - *With other Idaho higher education institutions*
 - *Consider centrality to the UI's role and mission*
 - *Assess quality of the program*
 - *Assess technological infrastructure and delivery requirements*
 - *Consult with relevant parties (faculty, students, other programs, the administration, external advisory groups, accreditation bodies, and other interested parties), and consider feedback*

- Evaluate and document impacts
- Develop NOI using SBOE form (see Office of the Provost on UI Website for more information); in addition, the board office staff may call for a full proposal to be developed
- Review and receive recommendations from appropriate department and college committees, and the dean
- Forward the original NOI and/or Full Proposal to the Registrar's Office, Academic Publications Editor. Editor processes documentation through UI faculty governance entities and the Provost's Office. [Paper flow for NOI and/or full proposal: editor assures review by graduate council if graduate program, outreach council if off-campus/distance learning program, University Curriculum Committee, Faculty Council; Faculty Secretary notifies Provost's Office after Council and General Faculty review.]
- The Provost, Office of Institutional Planning and Budget, Finance and Administration and the President review and endorse the proposal
- Once approved by the President, the Provost submits the NOI and/or the full proposal to the SBOE for final review and approval. Prior SBOE approval required for any changes, additions, expansions and consolidations to existing instructional programs, majors, minors, options emphases or instructional units with a financial impact of \$250,000 or more per year. SBOE Executive Director prior approval is required for changes, additions, expansions, and consolidations to existing instructional programs, majors, minors, options, emphases or instructional units with a financial impact of less than \$250,000. The executive director may refer requests to the board or a subcommittee of the board for review and action.

4. During proposal development for either establishment or disestablishment of programs, and certainly prior to final review by department and college committees, open dialogue sessions are to be held with impacted personnel in departments/colleges to present the proposed change and rationale, outline alternatives and their impacts, and review processes for approval of changes. Oral and written feedback from these sessions will be considered in further planning.

5. Arrangements are to be made for enrolled students to complete affected programs in a timely manner and with minimum interruptions.

Pitcher reviewed the document for the council, and then fielded comments and questions. Many councilors believed that this revision was appropriate, and would be very helpful in dealing with impending budget and program decisions.

The following points were made during the ensuing discussion of the draft policy:

- faculty should be involved in consolidation and closure discussions
- protecting tenured faculty from termination does little to help the budget problems
- termination of non-tenured faculty members removes those who are innovative and can bring new ideas to academic programs
- policies and procedures are already in place for faculty appeals regarding dismissal
- caution is needed in describing who can initiate restructuring and closures - faculty members outside of a discipline should not be able to start this process
- responsibility for changes or closure need to be delegated to the right people

The following suggestions were made to clean up the language of the draft:

- a test of "uniqueness" should be added when assessing possible duplication with other Idaho institutions of higher education
- all references to "off-campus programs" should be removed from the lists that are connected with NASC accreditation
- assessment of learning should be added to the steps for planning and approval of program changes

Councilors Rinker and Chandler noted that there did not seem to be a great deal of faculty input in the closure of the programs in the College of Engineering or the restructuring of the academic programs in the School of Communication. Department and college curriculum committees need to understand their role in approving academic offerings and program re-configurations. That power is granted to the faculty in its constitution. The suggestion was made that administrators should follow the general rule of "doing what they should do rather than what they can do."

Councilors Daley Laursen and Bitterwolf both commented on the fact that college deans need to state their case to college faculty in open meetings, and seek input from the faculty, staff, and students on how budget challenges should be met. Administrators will always have the final word in these decisions, but that decision should be based on facts and plenty of consultation. The provost added that what we need is a policy that does not construct road blocks, but allows change to happen with confidence, knowing that change was approached and worked out using good evidence and a balanced rationale approach.

Adjournment. It was **moved and seconded** (Lillard, Fairchild) to adjourn. The motion was **adopted** by unanimous voice vote, and Chair Bitterwolf adjourned the meeting at 5:09 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Peter A. Haggart
Secretary of the Faculty Council