

University of Idaho
FACULTY COUNCIL MINUTES

2004-2005 Meeting #11, Tuesday, December 7, 2004

Present: Bailey (Chair), Anderson, Baillargeon, Bechinski, Beard, Cloud, Exon, Greever, Gunter, Hammel, Houle, McGuire, McLaughlin, McMurtry, Pitcher (w/o vote), Reese, Reid, Rosholt, Voxman (w/o vote), Woolston, Young, Zemetra

Absent: Rinker

Observers: 5

Call to Order. A quorum being present, Faculty Council Chair Bailey called the meeting to order at 3:32 p.m. in the Michael Board Room of the Albertsons Building.

Minutes. The council accepted the minutes of meeting #10 of the 2004-2005 Faculty Council, held on November 30, as distributed.

Chair's Report. On behalf of the Council, Chair Bailey expressed his thanks to Provost Pitcher for the extensive work he has done for the university. He presented the Provost with a gift from the council members and the council gave the Provost a strong round of applause. The Provost said that this was a bittersweet time for him. Although he is looking forward to his new position, he has greatly enjoyed working here with "wonderful people, great projects, and some fine successes." He wished the councilors well and said he will likely continue to work with the university in his new capacity as Chancellor of the Washington State University Spokane branch. Chair Bailey also thanked the Interim Faculty Secretary for his work during the past one-and-a-half years and, on behalf of the council, presented him with a token of the council's appreciation. The Chair reminded councilors of the upcoming graduation ceremonies and encouraged them to be a part of that event. Bailey also called councilors' attention to a presentation dealing with the economic impacts of athletic programs. Councilor McMurtry suggested that several documents regarding athletics be posted to the council website (*since this meeting these have been posted to the website*). Chair Bailey asked for volunteers to attend the legislative luncheon in Boise on January 12th. He also asked for volunteers to serve on an ad hoc committee to gather information about the pluses and minuses of the university adopting a plus-minus grading system in the future. Councilor Anderson agreed to serve on this committee.

Provost's Report. The Provost asked Vice-chair Zemetra to comment on the recent SBOE meeting. Zemetra said he admired the patience of those attending the meeting, and that in general, the meeting was more positive than negative. The university provided the Board with information about a self-funded insurance program. It also requested permission to request permission to exceed the 10% cap on student fees. The Board suggested that this request was premature. During the Provost's report it was noted that if the temporary 1% sales tax increase were rescinded (which is likely), the university could potentially lose seven to eight million dollars. The Provost said he was pleased with the appointment of Linda Morris as Interim Provost and will work with her during the transition period.

Faculty Secretary Screening Recommendations. Chair Bailey said that the screening committee had interviewed two candidates, Doug Adams and Dean Panttaja, for the Faculty Secretary position. He said that if the council was in agreement (which it was) he would forward these names to the Provost.

FC-05-015: FSH 5700: Research Data Policy. Gene Merrell provided the council with a brief overview of the proposed new policy (*can be viewed at <http://www.webs.uidaho.edu/facultycouncil/>*). He said that the primary purpose of the policy change was to protect research faculty from situations where students might leave the university with lab notebooks or other data. This could have serious implications for ongoing research, acquiring patents, and properly satisfying federal regulations regarding federally funded projects. Councilor Beard said that he understood and favored the rationale behind the new policy, but was concerned it was drafted in language substantially broader than might have been intended. After more discussion there was general agreement that this was the case, and it was moved and seconded to table the proposed change until revised working could be developed. The motion passed unanimously.

Committee on Committees. Vice-chair Zemetra requested council approval for appointing Marc Klowden to the University Committee for General Education and Nilsa Bosque-Pérez to the Dismissal Hearings Committee. The seconded motion was approved unanimously.

Approval of Fall 2004 Graduates. The council gave unanimous approval to the list of fall 2004 graduates.

Approval of 2005-06 Sabbaticals. The council gave unanimous approval to the following sabbatical leaves: Ralph Budwig, Sandra Lee Evenson, Janice Fletcher, Georgia Johnson, Torrey Lawrence, and James Macdonald.

University Funding of Medical Insurance. Pat Sturko and Jay Kenton presented the council with a report on a proposal to self-fund University of Idaho medical insurance. They pointed out that self-funding has the potential to save the university from 3% to 6% (~\$625,000) in the area of health insurance by avoiding the costs of profit, margin and premium tax paid to the insurance carrier. Though self-funding involves some risks, the risks can be mitigated by creating a reserve fund and with stop-loss coverage. Under the self-funding proposal the University would continue to contract with Blue Cross to provide claims administration and network services. In addition to potential savings, self-funding would provide the university with increased flexibility, including the ability to offer new health programs. Employees would see no difference in their health coverage or in the way claims are processed. In response to councilors' questions, Kenton said that it is unlikely that the legislature would reduce university funding because of the achieved savings. In fact, the State may eventually be interested in pursuing a self-funded program for the various state entities. He also does not anticipate increased internal costs since the university already has in place a competent staff for dealing with health-related issues. Some concerns were expressed about the possibility of the university tapping into money set aside in a reserve health fund. Kenton said that there was no chance of this occurring on his watch and doubted that this would be a problem in the future. In answering a question as to why Blue Cross would be supportive of the proposed change, Kenton and Sturko replied that Blue Cross had been apprised of this possibility when they made their bid to be the university's health insurance carrier. Under self-funding Blue Cross will continue to realize a reasonable profit. Blue Cross is also fully aware of the general trend towards self-funding. For more detailed information about the self-funding proposal see the faculty council website.

Retiree Benefits. Chair Bailey opened the floor to a general discussion of retiree benefits. Councilor Gunter said that the university had made a commitment to those already retired and, under any circumstances, this commitment must be honored. He noted that at this time there are 712 retirees; the cost to the university for retiree health benefits is approximately \$3,500,000. Some councilors said that commitments should go beyond those that might be made to current retirees. They noted that many faculty and staff have chosen to stay at the university in anticipation of receiving the university's retiree benefits. Other councilors suggested that more information needs to be gathered before any decisions are made. In particular, it will be necessary to determine the university's liability under the new accounting practices announced by the Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) as well as the effect of steadily increasing health costs. The Provost said that Jay Kenton intends to form a taskforce with widespread representation that will consider these and other issues as well as possible options. Chair Bailey said that it is important that the Faculty Council be well represented on the taskforce. He suggested that an ad hoc committee be formed to review this matter. Others mentioned that the matter was only in very initial discussions and that it would be premature for the Council to form its own ad hoc committee at this time. The Provost called attention to the fact that the President had met recently with members of the University of Idaho Retiree Association and assured them that they would be included in discussions regarding possible changes to current policies. In response to a councilor's question, Vice-chair Zemetra said that the University of Idaho retiree benefit package is unique in Idaho. It is considerably more generous than most policies nationwide.

The meeting adjourned at 5:03 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Bill Voxman
Interim Secretary of the Faculty Council