

University of Idaho
FACULTY COUNCIL MINUTES

2004-2005 Meeting #14, Mardi Gras, Tuesday, February 8th, 2005

Present: Bailey (chair), Adams (w/o vote), Anderson, Baillargeon, Beard, Bechinski, Cloud, Gunter, Hammel, McGuire, McLaughlin, McMurtry, Morris (w/o vote), Reid, Reese, Rinker, Woolston, Zemetra

Absent: Exon, Greever, Houle, Rosholt, Young

Observers: 8

Call to Order: A quorum being present, Faculty Council Chair Bailey called the meeting to order at 3:31 p.m. in the Brink Hall Faculty Lounge.

Minutes: The minutes of Meeting #13, February 1st, 2005, were accepted with one editorial expansion suggested by the faculty secretary.

Chair's Report: Chair Bailey urged council members to share whatever information they were receiving from their constituencies concerning plus/minus grading with James Reid. In connection with this item a councilor commended the work councilor Barbara Greever had done in providing data on plus/minus grading from other institutions. Chair Bailey also reminded the council of President White's upcoming university convocation this coming Friday at 1:00 p.m. in the SUB ballroom. The topic of course is the academic and financial vision for the university's future and he urged everyone to attend.

Provost's Report: In her report Provost Morris pointed out that the chair had already stolen her thunder in urging attendance at the university convocation and added her urging to his. She also reported that she had been working with members of the University Vision and Resource Task Force on making more specific the "prioritization tool" mentioned in the latter groups' report. When that prioritization tool has reached a draft stage, it will be brought to Faculty Council for discussion and approval.

Announcements and Communications: Lieutenant-Colonel Kenneth Hunt of the Army ROTC, and a December 1987 alumnus of the university, made a short presentation to the council concerning his program. He pointed out that they were trying to recruit excellent students, mostly at the University of Idaho, but his territory included both NIC and Lewis Clark State College as well. They are looking for potential commissions in both the regular army and the reserve. A student in the program will spend some time during his or her freshman year being oriented to the military and in the sophomore year learning leadership skills and Army organization. The junior year is spent in preparation for the summer camp at Ft. Lewis between the junior and senior years and the senior year in preparation for commissioning into the service. There was scholarship money available and urged council members who knew of potentially interested students to send them his way.

FC-05-017 "Phased-in Retirement." Dean Joe Zeller, Director of Human Resources Pat Sturko, and Director of Benefit Services, Linda Peavey, introduced to the council a proposal to establish a policy concerning phased-in retirements. Dean Zeller pointed out that the university had a practice of granting phased-in retirements to individual faculty members but that the individual packages varied greatly depending on the negotiating skills of the faculty member and the eagerness of department head and dean for a separation. The proposed program would be established as a regular benefit for all tenured faculty members that would, if not completely level the playing field, at least reduce its slope considerably. It was a benefit for tenured faculty and the monetary incentives were designed to compensate the faculty member for relinquishing his or her tenure.

Pat Sturko explained that the permanent policy's eligibility requirements would be attainment of age 57 through 64 and ten years of continuous service to the University. In the first year of the program any tenured faculty member 57 or over with 10 years of continuous service would be eligible. (Also during the first year of this program participants would receive 100% of their previous salary, rather than the usual 75% anticipated by the policy; second and third-year participants would receive 60% of their previous salary. The work commitment for all three years would be 50%.) During the faculty member's participation in the three-year program he or she would receive full-time employee medical and other insurance benefits. If the faculty member was a member of PERSI the ordinary PERSI rules would apply; if the faculty member was a participant in Option Retirement Plan (either VALIC or TIAA-

CREF) he or she would be eligible for a special 403(b) account to which he or she could make voluntary contributions which would be matched by the university. Participation in this program would be contingent on university needs and would have to be approved by department head, dean, and provost. There are currently approximately 140 faculty members who would be eligible for participation in this program. She hoped that the first enrollment period could begin sometime later this spring and the program itself begin in January 2006. It would of course necessitate university and board approval.

Councilor concerns centered on two areas: the negotiations necessary to win approval for an individual desirous of accessing this benefit and the inability of a participant to use the 50% leave portion of the phase-in period to augment his or her salary to perhaps a 150% level through grant activity and the consequent loss to the university of those grants. Since not every faculty member has the same administrative structure to work through, it is possible, even likely, that these negotiations will not meet with the same response. Dean Zeller agreed that was likely to be true but pointed out that the situation was the same (in its unevenness) with regard to negotiating position descriptions now and that phased-in retirement was basically the same sort of thing—a position description. With regard to the concern about grants and contracts, he thought there were other kinds of models (a university “contract center”) which might solve that problem. He agreed that this issue needed further investigation.

Other concerns:

Could this process be made mandatory in the future? *Pat Sturko reminded everyone that both tenure and age discrimination statutes would prevent that.*

Could the 25% or 40% of the salary not being paid to the individual participating in the phased-in retirement program be “easy meat” for being scooped up to pay for budget reductions? *Yes, but the same is true of a vacant line created by a regular retirement.*

Could the 50% work-load left to the participating faculty member be distributed over two semesters or restricted to a single semester? *Either schedule would be subject to negotiation in the best interest of both parties.*

Despite certain reservations about details, there was considerable interest in the possibility. It was moved and seconded (McGuire, Beard) that the university administration move forward in developing such a program. The motion carried unanimously.

Retiree Health and Life Insurance Benefits: In a not unrelated matter, councilor Mark McGuire, assisted by Pat Sturko, reported on the formation of a task force to study possible futures for the current retiree health and life insurance benefits. The task force had its first meeting last Friday and is composed, *inter alia*, of faculty members Mark McGuire and Holly Wichman, a representative of Staff Affairs, and four representatives from the University of Idaho Retirees Association. They are charged with examining the history of the benefits, GASB requirements, costs, sources of funding, and evaluating possible alternatives and making recommendations to the president by June, 2005. A major incentive for this examination is the GASB requirement, beginning in 2007, that these benefits be listed as future liabilities on the university’s books. Though these liabilities can be amortized over a twenty-year period, the end result will be a \$14 million liability per year, based on the current benefits.

Councilors were concerned that the long-time benefit was what had persuaded many faculty and staff to stay at the University of Idaho despite the institution’s below average salaries. They were also concerned that the apparent GASB requirement concerning the booking of these liabilities made no sense: why should a twenty-year old, who is statistically not likely to work for the university long enough to achieve the rule of 80 and thus be eligible for this benefit when he or she retires be considered as burdening the institution with this particular liability? Pat Sturko responded that the university was engaging consultants to work with the university on this and related issues. (The comfort of this response was mitigated somewhat by the memory of Arthur Anderson and the possibility that even highly paid consultants might not have a pipeline to truth.)

It was clear from the intensity of the discussion, even at this very preliminary stage, that Faculty Council wanted very much to be apprized of the ongoing discussion. Pat Sturko promised that the deliberations of the task force would be shared with council as much as possible (given that the task force would need to work confidentially at times in order to be productive). Certainly the advice of the consultants would be reported to council in two or three week’s time.

General Orders:

There were two seconded motions from the University Curriculum Committee:

FC-05-018: Reta Pikowsky, registrar, explained that the change requested in Regulation H “Final Examinations,” was designed to clarify how the time of the final exam was tied to the time of the lecture period of a class. The vote to approve was unanimous.

FC-05-019 “Final Examination Schedule for 2005-2006”: The registrar explained that the innovations in next year’s exam schedule were two: to give a separate time (the Saturday before the rest of the exam week) for web-based courses and to give a separate time (7:00-9:00 p.m.) for courses that met in the evening. The vote in favor was unanimous.

Adjournment: There being no new business presented, it was moved and seconded (Beard, McGuire) to adjourn. The vote in favor was unanimous and the meeting was adjourned at 4:47 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Douglas Q. Adams
Faculty Secretary and Secretary of Faculty Council