

University of Idaho
General Faculty Meeting Minutes

August 25, 2004

Call to Order. University of Idaho President, Tim White, called to order a meeting of the university faculty at 3:35 p.m. in room 104 of the Janssen Engineering Building. Attendance at the meeting exceeded the requirements for a quorum (117).

In Memoriam. A moment of silence was requested to honor those faculty members who passed away since the last General Faculty Meeting. Faculty members remembered on this occasion were:

Nancy Atkinson, Catalog Librarian Emerita with rank of Professor
Ronald D. Bevans, Professor Emeritus of Architecture
Charles O. Decker, Dean of Students Emeritus
DeLance Franklin, Research Professor Emeritus of Horticulture
Edson R. Peck, Professor Emeritus of Physics
Warren K. Pope, Research Professor Emeritus of Agronomy

Minutes. The minutes of the General Faculty Meeting on April 27, 2004, were accepted as written.

Introduction of New Faculty Members and Administrative Changes. University of Idaho Provost, Brian Pitcher, formally introduced President White noting his solid accomplishments as department head, dean, provost and president. Pitcher also called attention to President White's strong scholarship in the areas of teaching and research. The Provost then asked the Deans and Associate Provost Linda Morris to introduce new faculty members and/or administrative changes in their respective areas. There were six new administrators, nine changes in administrative assignments, and twenty-three new faculty listed in the printed announcement provided by the University administration and available on the Provost's website <http://www.webs.uidaho.edu/provost/>. These changes were greeted by a strong round of applause from the faculty.

President's Remarks. As has become the custom at the University of Idaho, the beginning of the school year General Faculty Meeting conducts no formal business, but instead greets new members of the faculty and hears about the "State of the University" from the President. The President introduced Jay Kenton, Vice President for Finance and Administration, commenting that Kenton brings a wealth of experience, insights, knowledge and energy to his new work.

In his initial remarks, President White emphasized that the faculty constitutes the core of the University and is the front line in attracting and working with students, generating external recognition through research and other creative endeavors, and, more generally, in defining and realizing the aspirations of the institution. White also stressed the importance of staff in contributing to these efforts.

The President stated that there is an imperative for change. He noted the circadian rhythm that often characterizes University life as a new academic year unfolds. There is customarily a sense of renewal and excitement at the beginning of the fall semester. He noted, however, that this year the University community shares these feelings with other thoughts: curiosity, uncertainty, and unease. White warned that we cannot be lulled into a sense of complacency. Recent events together with such factors as changing public and political expectations, increasingly limited resources, and placing greater emphasis on accountability and affordability compel the University to institute significant changes. We cannot sustain what we are currently doing in light of these and other factors.

Among the many challenges facing the University, White listed: continued decrease in state support resulting in higher student fees and greater reliance on private funding sources; non-competitive compensation in many areas; high deferred maintenance costs; major infrastructure deficiencies, both on and off campus; and the need for a contemporary long range plan.

To address these issues the President emphasized the importance of changing the conversation from cost to investment. The future of the state depends in large part on the innovative ideas and creativity found at a major research university. White pointed out that because of the Morrill Act it is our charge and obligation as a land-grant institution to deliver programs throughout the state, and that the University needs to be an engine for economic growth. Also, as a student-centered university, the University must place a high value on diversity and preparing students to enter and prosper in a complex global society. White also emphasized the importance of the arts and humanities in our students' education.

The President said his first task is to establish trust with students, staff, faculty, the legislature and the Governor through openness, integrity, and accountability. Such trust, he believes, is an absolute requisite for moving forward. White noted that it is imperative that the University of Idaho adopt an informed, participatory process in reaching decisions. He added that there must be an alignment of responsibility, authority, and communication as students, faculty and administrators work to effect changes. Decentralization will play an important role in re-defining the University, but, it is essential to realize that structure is trumped by behavior.

White has decided to replace the Executive Council with the President's Cabinet consisting of the Provost, two Deans, the Vice President for Research and Graduate Studies, the Vice President for Finance and Administration, the Special Assistant to the President for Governmental Operations, the Chair of the Faculty Council, the Chair of Staff Affairs, the President of ASUI, the Director of Communications and Marketing, and the Dean of Students. The Cabinet will also include three ex-officio members: University Counsel, Assistant to the President, and the Associate Director of Communications and Marketing. The Cabinet will not be a voting body but rather will serve in an advisory capacity to help the President in setting professional, productive and behavioral standards, maintaining the institution's financial and legal obligations, and in ensuring that the University is meeting its mission and core values.

The President stated that he is a strong advocate of shared leadership and emphasized the roles of the Deans, the ASUI, the Graduate Student Association, the Student Bar Association, Staff Affairs, the Academic Deans, Faculty Council, and others in providing leadership and shaping future decisions. He indicated he had some reservations about the usefulness of the University of Idaho Council, in part because of possible redundancies with other committees.

The President then introduced a Decision, Operations and Communication "matrix" exemplifying the shared leadership and illustrating the critical alignments and responsibilities necessary for this to succeed. He announced structural changes that will go into effect immediately. White said that Wayland Winstead, Executive Director of the Office of Institutional Planning and Budget, will leave the University. His position will be eliminated, and the office will be split into two offices: the Budget Office, headed by Mark Brainard, who will report to the Vice President for Finance and Administration and the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment, headed by Archie George, who will report to the Provost. The President thanked Winstead for his contributions to the University during difficult times and wished him well in the future

White then briefly discussed the work of the University Vision and Resources Task Force. He said that Task Force members were chosen not to take parochial stances but rather to focus on the overall well-being of the University. He applauded the members of the group, who ranged from "dreamers" to "spreadsheet fanatics", for their diligence and willingness to dedicate an inordinate amount of time to their work. White anticipates that the Task Force will forward its recommendations to him in mid-September. He will then ask the Deans, the Vice Presidents, and the Provost to prepare an analysis of the

report. Following this, the Task Force report and the analyses will be made available to the University community, the regents, the Governor, and others for comments. Based on all this information the President will then formulate his recommendations. He emphasized that he will read every message that is sent to him and will respond to the various themes that emerge from the received input. He will also explain the rationale behind decisions that are made (or not made). White's recommendations will then proceed through the customary University channels and eventually go to the SBOE for approval.

The President concluded his remarks by saying that success in making necessary changes will depend in large part on those in the room. He asks the entire university community for advice, support and commitment to a common good. White said that though there will be discomfort we need to act now and be accountable for our actions. Ending on a positive note, the President referred to Christopher Reeve's comment to the effect that where there is sufficient will, dreams can progress from the impossible to the improbable to the inevitable.

Questions from the Floor. White asked for questions from the floor. In response to comments by Mickey Gunter, White said that a dysfunctional budget system has hampered efforts to determine accurate figures relating to the budget deficits. He said that Jay Kenton is working to correct this situation and we should soon have the numbers needed for making sound decisions. David Thomas asked if those seeking grants can assume that there will continue to be adequate infrastructure support. White and Vice President Chuck Hatch strongly encouraged faculty to continue efforts in seeking new grants; now is not the time to hold back. They noted that we have made tremendous strides in the past two or three years, and it would be a serious mistake to diminish our efforts in that area. Responding to a question from Joe McCaffrey, White said that it would be extremely useful to demonstrate to the legislature, in economic terms, the impact the University of Idaho has on the region and the state; Steve Peterson is currently finalizing such a report.

White said that students want access to a quality education, but regrettably, the costs for this access are rising, though the University remains an excellent bargain. The President reported that under the leadership of Gary Michael, a higher education advocacy group is being formed which will work with the business community and others to promote support for higher education. White stressed the need for cooperation among the state's institutions of higher learning to achieve their respective goals. He said he would never criticize the legislature, the SBOE, or the Governor for the degree of support they offer the University. If that support is inadequate, it is because we have failed to make a strong case for additional resources, and it is incumbent on us to develop better information and arguments to bolster our requests.

Dale Graden inquired about compensation received by members of the University Vision and Resources Task Force. White said that compensation was needed because of the immense amount of work involved. He said that from the beginning there had been discussions about this investment, although compensation for Task Force members was announced only after the members had been selected.

Responding to comments from Jack Dawson, the President pointed out that the Morrill Act requires the land-grant institutions to deliver programs throughout their respective states. White said that the University of Idaho is in a unique position because it is a land-grant university with a strong emphasis on the Sciences and the Liberal Arts, along with several highly regarded professional programs. This unusual mix of programs is a major asset for the University. The University of Idaho is well positioned to bring value to every county and, thereby, influence the political process. Finally, the President said the University must be focused and emphasize quality in whatever it undertakes.

Respectfully submitted,

Bill Voxman
Interim Secretary of the Faculty