

## **Appendix C: Focus Group Notes**

### **February 6 – 10, 2006**

*Note: These notes have been edited to protect the anonymity of participants. However, the rank, area, gender, and years at ISU factored into the Committee's analyses of the focus groups.*

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#### **Notes on Focus Group #1**

**Monday, February 6, 9AM, Biology Conference Room (LS 229)**

**Facilitator: Mike Thomas (Biology); Note taker: Brian Norman (English)**

**Participants: three**

#### **Overview**

Participants were supportive of the idea of pursuing this conversation, and enfranchising diverse/collective faculty voices in the process. Rather than identifying a series of specific/concrete ideas to address areas of concern, the participants seemed most interested in asking for broad policy statements that would articulate a college-wide vision under which specific recommendations would fall. For lack of better terminology, the group was thinking in terms of "Road Maps" around various areas with key goals to achieve around a future vision dedicated to a university with national peers. This might mean that in our final report we outline a set of concerns and goals similar to our open-ended survey report and suggest some specific recommendations that might fit under the larger umbrella or "Road Map." What would the quantitative survey look like, then?

#### **Areas that increase satisfaction**

The group agreed that there is a sense of promise, or that ISU is "turning the corner," but felt that this has been the case for quite some time and that this is mostly a recruiting tool. The college/university needs a specific Road Map to National Promise, with specific goals to meet, in order to deliver on this promise before individual faculty devolve into despair, cynicism, or looking elsewhere.

The group liked the idea of collegiality, and those who felt their individual department lacked sustained and recurring events to interact as colleagues thought that increasing/amplifying interaction amongst colleagues across the college would be wonderful. In order to foster more interaction, the group was very supportive of some form of a faculty club with recurring seminars. This could be at a faculty lounge somewhere on campus or a place in the community, but a faculty club just off-campus would be ideal. This will especially help the "loner/hermit" disciplines who may not have a departmental culture of interaction.

Rather than praise for specific programs/facilities (i.e. SPAC, ELC), the group was more dissatisfied with the infrastructure of their particular departments.

#### **Areas that detract from experience at ISU**

Frustrations over low salaries goes without saying (but said anyway!). But a Road Map to Salary & Workload Equity could address frustrations within this general gripe. (Salary and workload seemed tied together). Under that banner, though, the group was supportive of the idea of a stated salary schedule, a transparent merit-based pay criteria that is the result of collective faculty decision making process within departments, and that was tied to T&P guidelines. As for workload, there was some support for giving individual faculty some wiggle room to choose different tracks or emphases, such as teaching or research, with specific salary schedules and workload calculations attached to that individual choice.

Under the banner of a Road Map to Family Accommodation, the group was particularly excited that ISU could be at the forefront of recognizing the family demands of academics. The Dean needs to lead the way in creating an environment welcoming to families, women, and minority faculty & candidates. We

could be really proud of ISU's commitment to this! This would include: A) A college-wide policy of automatically stopping the tenure clock for female faculty giving birth, unless the faculty member decides not to stop the clock. This could also include a similar option for male faculty with newborns and for adoption. B) Priority or reserved spots with ELC or other childcare accommodations; C) A statement and practice that the college is committed to *meaningful* work accommodations for dual career couples ("trailing spouses"), which includes more awareness/equity for adjunct work for spouses in other departments; D) Benefits for partners and children, including tuition remission and domestic partner benefits. This will also help redress an environment not fully welcoming to women and minority faculty and candidates.

Under the banner of Road Map to Faculty Governance, the group expressed extreme dismay that faculty are left out of college-level policy discussions, in addition to the unaccountable, non-academic, and sometimes hostile upper administration. So, this groups seems to feel that the structure of the Dean working through the Chairs is excluding faculty from key policy discussions until the decision is next to made. The current revisions of the Tenure and Promotion standards guideline is a case in point because faculty are just now getting a copy of the new guidelines, after the fact. Some of the group felt that the Chair system can easily create "demagogues" and more turnover and/or explicit communication about the Chair-Dean conversations should be delivered to faculty, including meeting notes from the Chairs' meeting sent to faculty. Some felt that the Faculty Senate might be a more reliable, open, and enfranchising avenue for these policy discussions, not through the Dean-Chair route.

Under the banner of Road Map to Professional Development Support, the group agreed that the support for professional development (research travel, conferences, grant writing, etc.) is *technically* there, but the *quality* of research support is sorely lacking or absent in many cases. This means that we need people with successful, external, active records of research in key administrative posts, especially at the Office of Sponsored Programs and Office of Research. We also need all upper administrators to have considerable experience external to the university, and a graduate degree. Travel funds should be prioritized for importance/prominence of activity and past record/likelihood of productivity coming out of the activity. That is, there should be a merit-based criteria for delving out travel funds for research for those who need to/are pursuing a research agenda. We should cite the existing college policy on prioritizing travel funds, written by M Brandon. There may have been some support for reduced teaching loads or mini-sabbaticals for early professors to get their research/teaching agendas off the ground.

### **Areas that cause us to look elsewhere for a position**

The group felt that a White Paper of some sort on ISU's aspirations/goals for becoming a national player, along with giving productive faculty the tools to succeed, is a way of keeping faculty here, rather than serving as a springboard to greener pastures.

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### **Notes on Focus Group #2**

**Tuesday, February 7, 12:30 PM, Anthropology Conference Room (GRAV 262)**

**Facilitator: Shannon Lynch (Psychology); Note taker: Erika Kuhlman (History)**

**Participants: eight**

We began by discussing Area #1, satisfying aspects of working at ISU. There was broad agreement that landscape is indeed a positive aspect of working at ISU.

**RECOMMENDATION:** the Administration should do a better job of using landscape/geography as a marketing tool when hiring. However, some participants acknowledged that it may not yield the same results as a retention tool (in other words, for some landscape was not enough to KEEP them here).

RECOMMENDATION: Participants liked the idea of Pocatello businesses (such as Pebble Ski area) and events (Teton Music Festival) offering discounts to faculty as a retention tool.

One participant mentioned that Pocatello was a safe place to live and raise a family and that this was a positive aspect of working at ISU.

Next, faculty discussed partner accommodation as a positive aspect of working at ISU. One person mentioned that he would not be here if it were not for the fact that his partner was also hired (as a job share).

RECOMMENDATION: ISU needs a specific policy on partner accommodation. Such a policy for one person meant the difference between having to “beg” for a position for a partner when offered a job, as opposed to the Administration finding a position (either at ISU or in other Pocatello businesses). This should be done at the interview level.

Next, participants discussed autonomy in their positions at ISU. There was broad agreement that ISU offers “autonomy” as in designing one’s own career; as an example, one person mentioned that faculty in his department are free to pursue whatever avenue of scholarship they want (though this may be more palpable for tenured, rather than tenure-track faculty). Two participants cautioned that they did not feel they had “academic freedom” when it came to relations with the Pocatello press (in other words, they did not feel free to say whatever they wanted about ISU or their work when they gave interviews with the ISJ). In addition, another participant noted that while faculty may feel free to express their views to the Administration, they also do not feel that their views have any impact on how ISU evolves as an institution (faculty do not exert any real power).

RECOMMENDATIONS: none were suggested for autonomy or lack thereof.

#### *Area #2, factors that detract from satisfaction with your position at ISU*

Relations between Administration and Faculty: Two people said that they felt that the Administration doesn’t know/understand what faculty does. Faculty is too diffuse to wield any real power. One participant was especially concerned with the lack of credentials on the part of Administration; Administrators that lack credentials are making decisions that affect our faculty.

Two people said that they felt that positive changes in this area were happening at ISU, and that they felt that we need to insure that these changes become institutionalized (keep changes on track). Another person countered that she needed to see quantitative data reflecting these positive changes.

RECOMMENDATIONS: Dean of A & S should do a spring address on the “State of the College.” Participants noted that at the beginning of the academic year we hear a speech about the positive developments occurring at ISU, but that we need to hear at the end of the year what positive things *actually occurred*.

Facilities: Two participants said that while they appreciated PAC, they needed a more efficient method of dispersing information about events held there. Another faculty desired more faculty control over Bengal Theatre movies: these two facilities help create a sense of community (“university town”) among faculty.

There was broad agreement that more smart classrooms are needed on campus.

Lack of transparency between Administration/Faculty discussed.

RECOMMENDATION: There should be a structure in place to evaluate faculty every three years. One person cautioned that if it were a peer project, it would mean a still greater workload, and possible conflict of interest (i.e., if I give Jane a high evaluation, I might not get my raise).

RECOMMENDATION: Open-door policy for Administration. Deans could offer “office hours” once a week where faculty could come in and discuss issues. One person cautioned that many Chairs would not go for this (going behind their backs up the ladder). There seemed to be broad agreement that A and S has a good, approachable Dean and that his example should be duplicated elsewhere on campus.

RECOMMENDATION: Administration needs to work on its PR and sell ISU to Pocatello community.

Workload: Workloads need to be reduced (i.e., course load) if ISU is going to make the shift to a research university.

*Area #3, what factors lead you to seek a position elsewhere?*

One person noted that ISU’s relatively low prestige/status would prompt him to look elsewhere.

Salaries: One participant used California salaries in relation to California cost of living in saying that while he understands the frustration with low salaries at ISU, he feels this should be balanced with cost of living in Pocatello. Another person countered that they did not believe the cost of living in Pocatello was low enough to mean very much. Another noted that the 85% standard currently being touted is a “joke” when 100% would simply mean that ISU salaries are “average.”

There was broad agreement that SUPPORT money was more of a problem than salary, especially TRAVEL allowances. Faculty expressed frustration that there was no equity within the College of A and S. Three people complained that they used out-of-pocket money to purchase classroom materials, or had to write a grant to get a new computer. Another countered that he got a brand new computer without asking (\*so did I, by the way\*). Lack of parity across the college was lamented.

Career advancement: One person said that there needs to be more acknowledgement of faculty talent and that there should be more opportunity for career advancement into Administration. Another faculty disagreed and said that she wants to see more outside people coming into ISU Administration.

One person recommended that there should be a grievance procedure against fellow faculty members.

There was broad agreement that the “wait” period for newcomers to receive health benefits was an embarrassment and should be eliminated.

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### **Notes on Focus Group #3**

**Wednesday, February 8, 3:30 PM, English Conference Room (LA 262)**

**Facilitator: Erika Kuhlman; Note Taker: Rene Rodriguez**

**Participants: three**

At the beginning the group was asked if there were any questions.

1. Question about Methodology - what will be done with the information collected?
2. Data should be presented in a simple way. Look for a way to present this information in a new way.

Input on areas that increase satisfaction.

Group thought location was more of a personal viewpoint

Other areas that increase satisfaction not on the list.

Group did not offer any suggestion.

Input for areas that decrease satisfaction For example regarding Lack of Support

1. Concern was voiced over the lack of uniformity of employment of the 9-3-3 workload policy in the College

2. Raise money was not allocated equally, no long range basis for allocation. what are the generally agreed upon standards for merit.

3. Perks - reduced tuition for children.

4. Quality of Student Body - there was discussion about the quality of students that are coming out the high schools and entering ISU in the different programs. There was concern voiced about this.

Input on factors that lead to looking for a position elsewhere

1. Regarding needing to be more appreciated - wondered if there were underlying reasons for needing this that are more specific, are thank you's good enough

2. Regarding Partner Accommodations, some wondered if the legislature's bill regarding gay rights would affect this directly

Input for recommendations that could be offered for the areas and factors addressed/identified on the handout.

1. Discussion about the lack of the University town took place. Some said that the offerings at the Performing Arts Center were helping to address this, but that there usually are always complaints associated with the programs offered. Some suggested that the foreign film offerings could be much better.

2. Perks for faculty - benefits for children of faculty, parking pass, like the ski pass idea.

3. Quality of Student Body - Suggestion that the University revisit the open admissions policy

4. Conceptualization of ISU as moving forward is important. Image of professionalism in what we do is necessary. Don't understate the importance of professional looking areas. Need sufficient faculty and staff, moving up requires this.

5. Workload - need a similar policy across the board. This is somewhat difficult to address given the diversity of service within the college. Perhaps sectioning the college into smaller areas, i.e.

College of Performing Arts, College of Science, etc. would make it easier to have a uniform workload policy at the college level.

Overall, the group felt that the reality is that money is needed. In order to get the money we need advocacy at the legislature. How do you explain to the legislature that this is necessary, when it is already difficult to get them to spend money on Higher Education?

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#### **Notes on Focus Group #4**

**Thursday, February 9, 9AM, Sociology Conference Room (LA 307)**

**Facilitator: Rosemary Smith (Biology); Note taker: Brian Norman (English)**

**Participants: three**

#### **Overall**

The group developed a very strong and fairly collective desire for a culture/vision of excellence orchestrated and supported from the highest levels of the university. This primarily addressed areas of merit-based recognition for can celebrations of research, teaching, and service accomplishments of faculty, though it also would include fostering a culture of excellence for administration and students. The perception is that ISU's standards are too low in most all quadrants in a way that is demoralizing to productive faculty.

#### **Areas that increase satisfaction**

##### **Quality of colleagues/collegiality**

This was not seen as a reality, somewhat contrary to what previous and proximate data suggested. However, there was strong agreement that if ISU had and nurtured a culture of intellectually-engaged and motivated faculty, focus group participants would be very happy. This points a desire for "a culture of excellence," a desire that speaks to many concerns below.

##### **Location of ISU**

The group agreed that the geographic/natural location is nice, though suggestions about enhancing local opportunities did not cause much excitement (i.e. faculty ski day).

##### **Autonomy**

The group did not explicitly address this area. In fact, with the group's focus on recognizing meritorious performance in a larger university culture, autonomy might be seen as an unsatisfactory response (hunker down and do your own thing) to what they described as a culture of mediocrity.

##### **Conceptualization of ISU as in a positive, forward moving process—"turning the corner"**

The group all agreed that they did not perceive that ISU is currently in the process of "turning the corner." However, all agreed enthusiastically that they would love to see a vision for and solid, incremental, publicly-announced proof that ISU was "turning the corner" in terms of quality of academic, administrative, and student performance. That is, it would be wonderful if this were true.

##### **Programs/facilities (e.g., Performing Arts Center)**

One member agreed that the SPAC was wonderful, and all agreed it was under-sung, but none were excited about other programs/facilities.

#### **Areas that decrease satisfaction/detract from experience**

##### **Low salaries**

## **Interaction with Administrators**

### **Workload**

#### **Lack of support**

All agreed that higher salaries, with a culture of excellence, would speak to most core issues. In terms of across the board salaries, at least one participant expressed strong sentiment that the message of shooting for 85% of peer salaries was unacceptable and all agreed that below 85% salaries were demoralizing. More importantly, though, the group tied salaries, workload, administration, support, and a culture of recognition/appreciation. They advocated a road map or vision for a robust future plan that explicitly outlined improving the quality of the university (faculty, administration, students) with specific roadmaps and incentives to get there. This should come from and be supported by the Dean on up. This Vision to Excellence might include the following incentives for meritorious performance:

- 1) Meaningful merit-based pay and transparent criteria of evaluation. If this is tied to a salary schedule like at U of Idaho, great.
- 2) Flexible workload. This way, if a faculty wants to emphasize an area of strength (say, teaching or research), there should be more room for individual negotiations with departments and the Dean for how workload might be adjusted to suit the needs of the department and individual faculty members' strengths. This must be tied to a departmental vision in line with a college vision in line with a university vision (of Excellence) and it must carry meaningful accountability measures.
- 3) Meaningful celebrations and awards for meritorious performance. This might include a celebration each year of those awarded tenure, tied to a meaningful tenure review process. Or, celebrations or awards for faculty who achieve "outstanding" in tenure and promotion review areas. Or, the Office of Institutional Research should collect and help celebrate prestigious data on faculty and student accomplishments, such as how many NEH/NSF/NIH grants are won each year, how many Fulbrights we have, etc.
- 4) Rotating administrative opportunities. More and meaningful administrative opportunities should be made available to faculty who may be rejuvenated by the opportunity to work in the graduate office, for example.
- 5) Showcase events for strong/interesting faculty work. The Faculty Research Day in Fall 2005 was a good start. Make this more often, and showcase the best talent. This might be in the SPAC, in the Alumni House, or elsewhere. Cross-disciplinary seminars of some sort are a wonderful idea.
- 6) Chairs. The Chair is in a crucial position to foster/nurture a culture of excellence and reward meritorious performance. To that end, the College/Dean should: a) draft specific job descriptions of Chairs, which includes a plan for the department to fit within a university-wide vision of becoming a high quality/performing institution; b) more cross-disciplinary opportunities for Chair's professional development; c) meaningful responses to external program reviews; d) meaningful feedback for low or under-performing faculty; e) "term limits" of nine year (three terms) so that new ideas and leadership will periodically reinvigorate a department; f) better tie the Assistant Chair positions to the actual duties of Chairs so that there might be some support for faculty development in terms of taking on such a crucial leadership position; g) consider more opportunities for outside Chairs in order to bring in fresh, external ideas into the life of the department from a crucial position.
- 7) The College should nurture a culture of recognition by defining a clear mission that speaks to faculty's strengths and research activities. The College might create and showcase meaningful awards for meritorious performance not unlike the university-wide Distinguished Teaching,

Research, and Service awards. There is a sense that those awards are based less on merit and more on who you know.

- 8) The University should define a clear mission and concentrate on what ISU does well, which includes nurturing a culture of recognition and reward for meritorious performance. Instead, the upper administration is focused on competing with Boise. We can suggest a strong line in upper administration job descriptions about showcasing, enhancing, and rewarding faculty performance. This might include specifying a percentage of workload to be internally-directed toward faculty over external fundraising.

### **Conservative culture, lack of a "university town" \_\_\_\_\_**

Yes, but this did not create the most heated conversation in terms of the desire for a Culture of Excellence.

### **Quality of student body**

This was a strong incentive to look for positions elsewhere. There was general sentiment that the community college function and the Enrollment focus on numbers over quality is devastating to faculty morale. Requiring that students pass goal courses before upper division enrollment is a good step (this was before the Dean sent the policy on pre-reqs for declaring a major).

### **Lack of perks, poor benefits for faculty**

This was seen as less important than the overall vision of a Culture of Excellence

### **Partner accommodation**

When prompted, there was easy and unanimous support for an overall college/university policy statement about a commitment to family accommodation, which includes helping spouses with under-employment problems, possibly using alumni/town connections; drafting clear policies on spousal hires and expectations; enhancing child care opportunities/ELC slots; etc. That is, the college should adopt a clear, proud, overall policy on family accommodation, which departments, candidates, and faculty members could use as a guide for how to address individual situations. There was some hesitance to make sure that spousal hires are only done when appropriate.

### **Factors that lead to looking for a position elsewhere**

#### **Better salary & improved benefits**

Yes. Especially merit-based dollar recognition.

#### **Opportunities for partner**

This didn't come up, except as a reason for having come here in the first place.

#### **Better position**

This is a strong incentive to look elsewhere, especially in terms of student quality and culture of recognition & merit.

#### **Position where faculty member feels more appreciated**

This was the most common and strong sentiment.

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### **Notes for Focus Group #5**

**Thursday, February 9, 5:30 PM, Psychology Conference Room (Garrison 401)**

**Facilitator: Shannon Lynch (Psychology); Note taker: Pat Brooks (Music)**  
**Participants: four**

Opening Comments by Discussion Group Members

- I'm here (in an attempt) to improve work conditions at the university.
- Faculty tend to move out of ISU Psychology Dept in a 3 – 8 period.
- Some optimism because of new president at ISU.

Positives

Collegiality

- Collegiality of (Psychology) Department a plus, factored in decision to take offer.
- Faculty come here because of what type of university ISU is (i.e. collegial, not R1 expectations for research/constant work).
- Autonomy also a plus – perhaps not the case in larger departments/universities.
- Research I institutions often times not as collegial.
- Flexibility as to whether one can focus on research or teaching a good thing, including as it relates to tenure and promotion.

Location of ISU

- Geographical location more attractive than cultural location (atmosphere).
- Faculty perks in the community as related to the costs of certain events/activities.
- Possible coal plant a big negative
- ISU needs to work towards a better/more influential position in the community.
- There is a perception of ISU “turning a positive corner.”
- More transparency a positive. This should be maintained.

Recommendations:

- ISU needs to have a clear mission/vision.
- ISU should make clear efforts (PR) to share positive actions/contributions with the community
- University should take a stance on bringing in “positive industry” that will not decrease quality of living—preserve what we have as a selling point- positive aspects of location
- Transparency should include keeping faculty informed- e.g. send memos about major financial/other decisions so faculty know about them (not only when they read it in the paper)

Negatives

- Faculty need to be more informed, involved, and valued in the overall university decision process.
- Faculty senate need to keep the faculty better and more-timely involved.
- Faculty senate not effective at producing (concrete?) outcomes.

Recommendations:

- timely notes from faculty senate
- more focus from senate on select projects with clear outcomes rather than concentrating on too many projects at once to be effective

Facilities

- New facilities (PAC, Rendezvous) are great, but investment in people (faculty/staff), programs has been lacking.
- “Teaching facilities suck.”

- Teaching facilities embarrassing.”
- Equipment (in classrooms) doesn't work.

Recommendations:

- Update/invest in classroom technology
- Invest in staff to do PR for university (also applies to university experience section below)

Dissatisfactions

Salary

- Need a predictable pool of merit money.
- (Salary) A huge issue.
- Salary compression a factor negatively affecting retention.

Recommendations:

- We need a salary schedule.
- We should allow faculty who get grants the ability to supplement their salaries with the grant money.

Work Loads

- Need to be consistent and fair across the university.

Recommendations:

Fair pay for overloads is needed. (Overload pay inappropriately little for overloads)

Resources

- Lack of time to do job well (due to faculty loads) is the greatest lack of resource.
- Professional membership costs a further drain on low salaries.

Recommendations:

- Free parking for faculty a possible perk.
- deals with area agencies/companies would help (ski packages, etc)

University Experience

- How to enhance ISU university culture?
- Faculty club: a good idea, but is not a perk if the entire cost is born by its members.
- ISU does not do a good job a getting the word out about what is happening on campus.
- Not enough bona fide (i.e. full-time professional, not student) support positions in the university so that we are effective at getting the university image/ information out to the public.
- New facilities added (PAC) without appropriate support staff required to run correctly.
- A centralized listing of campus cultural events and activities is needed.
- Lack of system for accommodating spouses/partners of new/potential faculty “a big issue.”
- Lack of personal and maternity leave policy a negative.
- A negative: having to live in a culture that does not value education, especially higher education.

Recommendations:

- Need policies to attract faculty with partners/families
- need staff to handle PR and organizational needs of institution
- A centralized listing of campus cultural events and activities is needed.

## Factors Influencing ISU Faculty to Look for Positions Elsewhere

- Lack of positive feedback about faculty efforts

## Recommendations:

- More descriptive feedback in evaluations would be a positive.
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## Notes on Focus Group #6

**Friday, February 10, 10:30 AM, Chemistry Conference Room (PSC 145A)**

**Facilitator: Mike Thomas (Biology); Note taker: Rosemary Smith (Biology)**

**Participants: four**

### Overview & brief analysis

Much of the discussion centered on strategies to increase the “college-town feel” of ISU and Pocatello and thereby increase faculty satisfaction and retention. To the best of the abilities of the facilitators, the conversation was focused on the positive and negative areas mentioned most often in the surveys. However, a number of comments could be potentially parlayed into fruitful approaches for faculty retention; these could be tested for general support among A&S faculty in the formal survey.

Many of the comments revolved around policy issues (e.g., partner/spousal accommodation, funding for arts, etc). Other comments dwelt on perceived administrative incompetence (see below). While the latter seems to be out of the purview of the committee, the inclusion of these comments in our final report may influence the composition of the new administration when a President is selected.

### Areas that increase satisfaction

The group (prompted by a single adamantly vociferous participant) agreed that it is essential to increase awareness of ISU and importance of education among local citizenry. Another participant suggested that this might occur through the enhanced support for the arts, especially focusing on those areas in which colleges tend to excel (but that ISU has languished) involving the more progressive, avant-garde performance arts. Activities such as this would allow ISU to lead the community, rather than let “them” dictate to us; do so would greatly enhance faculty experiences and increase the college-town feel.

Another topic of extensive conversation was the extremely advantageous location of ISU and the potential for leveraging this to create “pull factors”. One participant noted the extremely low out-of-state undergrad population (~5%) and suggested that increases this population would increase tuition revenue and create a more diverse community of students. Much of the aforementioned college-town feel would follow; much agreement to this sentiment among the participant included comparisons of ISU/Poky to UMontana/Missoula and UColorado/Boulder, with their much more diverse student body and much more classic college-town feel. It was suggested that part of this recruitment process would involve becoming a more welcoming culture for incoming students, providing many more activities for students (and their families, during recruiting visits), and concentrating recruitment activities in CA and other states with expensive, poorly accessible admission to higher education. Recruitment of international students was considered a key element of this process.

### Areas that detract from experience at ISU

The main issue was salary. It was pointed out that there is no indication that salary problems will be solved: no structure or schedule has been proposed, no policy of priority for salary parity has been issued, and there is no transparency of plans for increasing salary. Current faculty are simply not able to look ahead with even minimal degree of accuracy to determine how well (or poorly) they might expect to be paid at some future point in their career at ISU. This uncertainly seems to have been the single most important factor in pushing faculty towards other jobs.

A related issue was workload compensation: departments have completely different expectations and different methods for measuring workload. This issue also involves expectations for tenure & promotion and adequate support for programs with many students but few faculty members.

The most senior participants – those who have served the longest with our current administrators – mentioned administrative problems. The main problem (and the one that found the most agreement among participants) was with incompetence: administrators who've been promoted beyond their experience, expertise, and capabilities. There was much hope that this problem would find its own solution with the hiring of a competent, external President. Much discussion followed (along the lines of "ISU on the verge"); expressing hopes of transparency in decision-making, improvements in our physical plant (building maintenance, etc); landscaping that is interesting, inviting, and professionally designed (rather than a hodge-podge of lawns-on-the-cheap consisting of bluegrass and horse- chestnut trees resembling a "scorched earth policy"); programs and events that challenge our students rather than pander to them; a culture that invites the community to grow rather than sinks to its anti-intellectual depths, etc.

Expectations of excellence in our faculty and students, it was mentioned, begin with the administration. This could be accomplished by forming transparent guidelines for the distribution of resources for programs and projects. This would include an accurate assessment of student & faculty performance and potential outcomes of the program or project in question. One participant mentioned our need to "raise the bar" of our expectations. Current assessment of students and faculty tend to be popularity contests: many students are not certain why they are in college or are simply biding time (i.e., "earning Mrs. degree"); this leads to faculty who pander to poor students in order to earn respectable teaching evaluations.

Spousal/partner accommodation was mentioned as the key to retaining married faculty: if spouses and partners are forced to fend for themselves, the faculty member will frequently be drawn towards institutions with more enlightened views. Currently, accommodation of spouses/partners is a low priority lacking any weight of policy.

There appears to be no planning or vision for buildings or campus growth. It appears that administrators making decisions on placement of new facilities have no training or expertise in this area. Landscaping again mentioned in the context of a traditional college campus feel (and lack thereof at ISU).