

Notes from University-wide Faculty Meeting

August 18, 2010

2:00 p.m. in Lecture Center Rm 10 (LC10)

Phil Cole, Faculty Senate Chair welcomed everyone and introduced himself and the Faculty Senate Executive Committee. He read his opening remarks (**attached as Appendix A**) then opened the floor for questions and comments.

Q: How do the Faculty Senate and governance structures at our sister Idaho universities compare with ISU in terms of internal structure and their relationship with their administration?

A: First glance does not show much difference, though a closer look is needed. They have much better relationships with their Presidents. After meeting with ISU Faculty Senate leadership, the other Senate leaders communicated with SBOE through their Presidents. Cole has met with BSU Faculty Senate Chair and their President. He was invited to speak at BSU Faculty Senate in September.

Q: Any sense from other Senate leaders why was ISU singled out by SBOE for governance review? Are we so different from our sister institutions?

A: Other Faculty Senates are concerned that what happens at ISU may affect them as well. Faculty leaders are uniting regionally. They are discussing getting together to hash out a set of bylaws and constitutions for all the Idaho institutions. SBOE's justification was ISU's restructuring so ISU was singled out, but Idaho universities do have to be consistent with each other.

Q: NWCCU accreditation report from last time called for better communication. Will the proposed changes to governance structure have any effect on accreditation?

A: Don't know.

Q: Does SBOE have a sense of ISU faculty's problem with this administration?

A: SBOE is not a monolithic group; each member has own opinions. Cole plans to meet with some of the SBOE members. He wants to resolve this and establish better communication with administration. This situation is not normal.

C: Need to understand the underlying agendas. Administration's is clear – their focus is solely on research. Those who pull in big grants, high technology and bring money are favored. Those whose interest is quality teaching and educating students on how the world works are less important.

National trend is the same – teaching is being left to less qualified and less experienced instructors. Faculty needs to articulate its own agenda.

Q: What sources does Exec Committee plan to consult to get a good mediator?

A: SBOE would make that choice.

C: Need to slow this process down. It is no longer clear what ISU is anymore. Can't answer the questions until we know who we are.

Q: If underlying agenda is research, why is administration not giving support? At least not to Biology, which is this professor's department.

A: Cole himself is an experimental physicist, brings in lots of money, but certainly does not enjoy favored status. But universities still need humanities – languages, arts, social sciences – to properly educate students. Those disciplines don't bring in much money, but they are very important to university's mission.

- C: Caution: SBOE may not be best bet to get good mediator. Academia is not the same as business. This person is very concerned about ISU – had hoped President Vailas’ views are not the same as Provost Olson, but things have deteriorated substantially over the summer.
- A: Suggest open letter from Senate to President advocating improving communication and relations between Senate/faculty and President. Exec Committee is seeking to solve the problem. Also good idea to establish public record of wanting to improve communication.
- C: There is merit in both suggestions, though understands the reluctance to go to SBOE for mediator. Open letter is good idea.
- A: Every day is a new day. Cole has his own opinions, but he represents the 650 or so faculty on this campus. Senate Chair and President must have mutual respect for each other and the offices they each hold.
- C: During Monday morning’s press conference faculty were denigrated. President Vailas said many times over this past Spring that nothing significant would happen over the summer. Broke his promise. He has backed out of his own commitment to meet with Senate at their first meeting. SBOE probably didn’t come up with the governance review idea by themselves. SBOE policy clearly states faculty have the right to organize themselves. The 4 new committees proposed are exactly what faculty have purview over.
- C: Reorganization and new committees centralize the power in upper administration and take away power from faculty. Open communication is good first step, but need a Plan B because the President and Provost are not likely to jump to collaborate with Senate.
- A: Executive Committee doesn’t have a Plan B yet, is seeking guidance from faculty as to what they want Senate to do.
- C: The Idaho State Journal’s summary of Monday’s meeting said there would be fewer committees on which to serve so faculty time would not be wasted. Last this professor knew, faculty volunteer to serve – it’s their choice. There are 3 aspects for tenure and promotion mandated by SBOE: teaching, research, and service. If service is relegated to a small group of faculty members who are pro-administration, then SBOE needs to rethink the service component.
- Q: Is there a precedent or similar situation to ISU’s nationally? If so, any idea how it was settled?
- A: In one school in New York, a President had gotten rid of 4 Provosts. The faculty worked with their Board of Regents without the President and worked out a solution. The President is still there, so assume it worked out mutually satisfactorily.
- A’: A former Restructuring Task Force member responded that she had done some research on restructured universities. None were like ISU. All had input from and collaboration with their Faculty Senates. And none unilaterally restructured governance on top of restructuring.
- C: Governance Review Advisory Group’s report is not based on a study of governance. Suggest Senate prepare an alternate report that explains how reapportionment deals with reorganized representation issue, and simple bylaws changes to the new College names. Also include explanation of what it would take to do a more in depth study of faculty governance, starting with how to properly form a committee in charge of it.
- A: Executive Committee member asked that question during presentation of the report: why not simply adjust Senate’s bylaws to rename the Colleges and adjust seats according to reapportionment? Received no answer.
- A’: Cole said in his presentation to SBOE he pointed out Senate’s bylaws call for reapportionment every 3 years. Senate has already scheduled its reapportionment for this Spring 2011. Institutional Research office has provided a list of all faculty to be counted in reapportionment. No departments have merged or divided, faculty have only been shuffled from one college to another. What’s the big

deal that requires restructuring of governance? If any faculty members don't feel represented, please let Senate chair know.

Proposal is to refer to SBOE policy, draft alternate report and have it ready to submit to SBOE by Sept. 14th so they have an alternative perspective to consider. Other Faculty Senate leaders are willing to participate in presenting the Senates' collective viewpoint on shared governance across the state.

By show of hands the faculty audience overwhelmingly supported this idea of an alternate report.

- C: Suggest Senate make a motion on Aug 23rd to adjust its bylaws, then can vote on it on Aug 30th and get the changes done almost immediately.
- C: Justification of governance review was reorganization and to increase efficiency and protect younger faculty members. But the report doesn't address the purported core issues justifying the need for reorganization.
- C: Kay Christensen, Governance Review Advisory Group member, spoke up and said she was here to listen to comments. She urged faculty to respond to the report during the comment period by August 31st, especially if they want to show they are cooperative. If the Group doesn't get feedback, it can't consider it and adjust the report accordingly. Separate the process from the content of the report.
- C: Recall the discussions of last year with President in which distinction was made between the phases of restructuring: plan versus implementation. Everyone, President and Provost included, agreed that implementation could take time. So again, why the rush?
Alan Frantz, outgoing Senate chair, reminded everyone that the President and Provost did not want to have a Senate chair or vice chair this summer or year. They wrote the letter suspending the summer stipend and course releases for Senate chair and vice chair until after the governance restructuring was in place. Frantz said he reminded President Vilas that Senate and its chair still have business to conduct so the President backed off, but only for this Fall semester. Spring semester is another story. Mike Ellis, Senate vice chair, said he talked to Brad Hall, the University General Counsel about this, and Brad's only concern was that the new colleges may not be adequately represented in Senate.
- C: Encourage all faculty to read the Advisory Group's report. It doesn't address Faculty Senate at all. Other concerns must be underlying this. Ask SBOE and have a dialogue to find out what the concerns really are. The main thing this report proposes is to add four new committees that duplicate Senate's Councils but report directly to the President and Vice Presidents, bypassing faculty. The proposed new committees would have all the power and do all the work. It is unclear how much this will change how the university will operate. At the moment, all catalog changes have to go through Senate's Curriculum Council for vetting. With the push toward Colleges making more decisions and these formation new committees, how much of the Senate's Councils' work will be redirected toward the committees that report only to Vice Presidents?
- Q: Any relationship between the financial exigency discussions from last Spring and SBOE's April vote and this Governance Review mandate? University Presidents' powers have been greatly expanded.
- A: Seems contradictory to the other parts in SBOE policy that say faculty governance is determined by the faculty who have the right to organize themselves, but the President can do more things now and make more sweeping changes. However, he still must have SBOE approval before he can implement anything.
- C: Kay Christensen clarified the intent was to push governance back down to the Colleges and their Executive Committees. The Colleges are to decide how to populate their Executive Committees. The

whole question is how to structure governance at ISU. The College Executive Committees will not be appointed by the President. And the new committees are not intended to be permanent.

C: This goes back to the questions last Spring about how those College Executive Committees are formed. Once again, what's the rush? If we don't know how those committees are to be built and don't have them in the plan submitted to the SBOE, how can the plan possibly address governance at ISU?

ISU needs to have a plan that is carefully thought out, else it will be another fiasco. We have to take the time to develop and think it through.

C: Idaho State Journal commentary stated ISU's confidentiality agreement is astounding thing to be requested from government employees.

Q: Where to send comments to Review Group?

A: governance@isu.edu

C: Christensen reminded that this is a majority report, not a consensus report. The confidentiality agreement allowed for robust and candid conversation. Now there is a product that the university community can discuss.

Q: Please elaborate on permanence or not of the 4 new committees?

A: Christensen replied there is a problem on this campus that work is not getting done. Need to fix it and get business done. The question "Where's the data?" is a valid question. There is data, and there are anecdotes.

C: There have been lots of new administrators in the past few years. The problem of timeliness has been with the administration. The 5 new policies released Fall 2008 were a year and a half late. Faculty were expected to respond in only 5 weeks, including Thanksgiving and Winter Break. Faculty have been working very hard to keep ISU going despite the turmoil.

Academic rights are at risk. This is a time of conflict.

A: Christensen said Faculty Senate hasn't been speedy in its responses. Senate's governance report from 2006 gives examples of how to streamline faculty governance.

A': Cole has a spreadsheet that shows over the past 3-4 years what Senate has approved when, when those recommendations were forwarded to administration and when responses were received from the administration. Many items have not yet received a response.

C: A pattern has developed: a problem is articulated from the top administration, then a committee is appointed to solve the problem. But they have no answers to questions about supporting data demonstrating the problem. But faculty are told to trust them, there really is a problem. Now there is a solution to that problem and they can fix it very quickly. So the administration pushes their solution through, whether the problem really exists or not. The goal is for ISU to become a top-notch research institution, yet there is no supporting evidence or data showing there truly is a problem and what that problem really is.

C: Yes, there are problems at ISU. Faculty need to articulate what the real problems are.

C: One problem is that faculty are not on the committees that affect faculty.

C: SBOE policy clearly states the faculty of each institution have the right to make recommendations to the President regarding policies. The main contention is where the authority to initiate responses really resides.

C: Advocate again that Faculty Senate submit its own report to the SBOE.

C: Reiterated earlier suggestion that Senate conduct its preliminary reapportionment by August 31st.

- C: Booth Barn faculty meetings last year were in response to Provost Olson and Mr. Fletcher showing up at faculty meetings and putting a damper on frank and candid discussion
- C: Caution against not acknowledging Governance Advisory Report on grounds of illegitimacy -- need to be aware of the audience. There are plenty of ways to address the document and poke holes in the arguments.
- C: Beware: other reports from this administration that said “details to be worked out later” went forward to SBOE anyway.
- C: Most review and preliminary work is done by SBOE staff.
- C: SBOE policy doesn’t discuss shared governance. Need to work with SBOE and get them to understand. Academia is different than business – has different needs and requirements. Need to strategize on how to disarm the threat to faculty governance.
- Q: Didn’t President Vailas promise that nothing of significance would be done over the summer? He doesn’t seem to be interested in communicating with faculty.
- A: SBOE directed ISU to review governance and report back to them – no timelines were given nor were actions requested. Regardless of the report’s legitimacy or not, it will be submitted. Can’t ignore it. Faculty can and should point out what’s wrong with the report before it goes forward. Shouldn’t ignore the report, but can point out why it is illegitimate.
- Q: Did SBOE specifically ask President Vailas to establish a committee? If not, he should have come to Faculty Senate.
- A: Alan Frantz read the SBOE’s motion from their June 17, 2010 meeting.

Phil Cole then closed the meeting. He thanked everyone for attending and for their input and said Faculty Senate now has several things to work on

Adjourn: 4:15 p.m.

Summary of suggestions:

- Clearly articulate faculty agenda.
- Define what ISU *is* – it’s hard to answer questions about governance until know who we are as an institution.
- Slow governance restructuring process down so can come up with a good plan, not a rushed one.
- Solicit outside mediation from SBOE and/or NWCCU.
- Write an open letter from Senate to President advocating better communication and relations between Senate/faculty and President.
- **Prepare an alternate report on governance to submit to SBOE.** (by show of hands, this idea was favored by almost all faculty at the meeting)
- Work with the other Faculty Senate chairs to develop and present to SBOE the Senates’ collective viewpoint on shared governance across the state.
- **Change Faculty Senate bylaws** to accommodate the new College names. If introduce motion on August 23rd, can vote and pass it in August 30th Senate meeting.
- Read the Advisory Group’s report and respond with comments, suggestions, criticisms.
- Talk to SBOE and find out what the real concerns are; work with them to clarify what shared governance means.
- Review Senate’s governance recommendations from 2006 and start from there.

APPENDIX A

Phil Cole's Opening Remarks to the University-Wide Faculty Meeting

Welcome back to ISU. It has been an active summer with many, many significant developments. I wish to relate these events and developments to you.

I will try to be brief and we will then open up with questions.

- SBOE passed a motion on 12 August that in 10 years 60% of Idahoans aged 25-34 should have a certificate or degree (2020), which includes Associate Degrees. ISU must award an additional 7,350 certificates in total above what our earlier projections were over this next ten-year period. Note that in the Fall of 2008 undergraduate enrollment at ISU was 10,574 students. So, we must ramp up by 111 degrees and certificates awarded this year, and increase the number to an additional 1,225 *awarded* in the year 2020. To address this mandate from the Board, we need – in my view – Associate Degrees.
 - Faculty Senate (one vote shy of a unanimous vote) in early May voted to table the Notification of Intent to eliminate 12 Associate Degrees (Foreign Languages, Biology, Chemistry, etc.) since there was no cost analysis. Why eliminate a degree if it is not costing anything?
 - Nonetheless, in mid-May the Deans' Council went ahead and approved the NOI, ignoring faculty voice. It appears Faculty Senate input was neither requested nor required.
 - This is something we as a faculty have to fix if we are to be in compliance with the SBOE mandate.
- No official word on Dr. Gary Olson's future here as provost
 - 3:1 vote of no confidence in April (295 to 95 with 41 abstentions)
 - President Vailas met with all colleges and capped it with a discussion in executive session in the Faculty Senate
 - On June 29, as reported in the Idaho State Journal: "*President Vailas said he would make a determination regarding the future of the beleaguered Provost Olson and will present his decision to the Faculty Senate in its first meeting in the fall semester.*"
 - President Vailas has conflicts in his schedule as he is scheduled to speak that afternoon at the 'Welcome Back Orange and Black,' a community event sponsored by ISU and the Idaho State Journal." He cannot make it to the first Faculty Senate Meeting on Aug. 23, 2010.
 - President Vailas can meet with the Faculty Senate in late September.
 - It is my hope that he can communicate his plans with the entire faculty sometime soon, perhaps at an open forum.
- Faculty Governance Review
 - At the June 17 meeting, the State Board of Education passed a motion to direct Dr. Vailas to institute a review of the faculty governance structure at ISU and to report back to the Board all findings at the conclusion of the review.
 - Note that there is no timeline and that it is a review of faculty governance. No need to rush.
 - On July 5 in the online *News and Notes*, it was announced that an advisory group had been appointed formed of two AVPs, several chairs, several directors, two regular faculty, a UBO, and a student leader. It is chaired by Dr. David Beard.
 - This group is known as the Institutional Governance Advisory Committee.
 - No regular faculty representation: one resigned and the other went to the University of Idaho

And here we are.....

- Crisis
 - No meaningful communication between the administration and elected representatives of the faculty.
 - No word on the President's confidence in Dr. Olson. We need to know.
 - Instead we are speaking to the other faculty senate leadership for guidance.
 - Very unhealthy for the future of higher education in SE Idaho.
 - We have a duty to educate students and pursue scholarship, but the current crisis makes for a very contentious environment. A disenfranchised faculty is highly deliterious to the University's mission.
 - We are losing faculty. The former College of Arts and Sciences has had three deans in four years. All have left ISU. The new deans are all interim.
 - Several votes (straw polls, vote on the restructuring, vote of no confidence on Dr. Gary Olson's performance as provost). All ignored.
 - A perception of a lack of transparancy, such as with the Institutional Governance Advisory Committee.
 - Serious distrust on both sides.
 - No clear path forward for resolving this conflict.

As the Chair of the Faculty Senate, I propose that we seek the guidance of the Office of the State Board to find an outside mediator to resolve this conflict.

During the summer, the executive committee has not had the opportunity to seek input from many of our constituencies on the above issues and any others to be conveyed by the faculty.

We look forward to hearing your comments and concerns and criticisms. And please understand, the Faculty Senate and its Executive Committee represents you, the faculty. We seek your guidance so we can both do the right thing and do things right.

Thank you, colleagues, for coming here and hearing me summarize the events of this past summer. I will now open it up for questions, answers, and discussion. I have asked members of the executive committee of the ISU Faculty Senate and members of the Senate Chair Working Group to help with answering any questions you may have.