

**Faculty Senate Chairs' Governance Working Group
Minutes**

July 19, 2010 2:00 p.m. REND 301

Group Chair: Mike Ellis
Senate Chairs: Phil Cole 2010-11; Alan Frantz 2009-10; David Delehanty 2008-09; Karl De Jesús 2006-07, Peter Vik 2004-05; Doug Nilson 2003-04; Russell Wahl 1996-97; Hal Hellwig 1995-96; Susan Swetnam 1990-91
Senators: Tony Forest, Marcia Francis, Barb Mason, JoAnne Pearce
Faculty Members: Dan Dale, Jim DiSanza, Karen Kearns, Nancy Legge
Recording Secretary: Catherine Wallace

Ellis opened the meeting and introduced the former Senate chairs. All faculty members were welcome to attend these meetings. Today's only agenda item was to discuss how faculty feel about the Governance Review Advisory Group appointed by President Vailas and its charge to review the current faculty governance system, and to identify areas of concern to faculty and how they would like to proceed to address those concerns. Some background information was given so attendees would understand the context in which ensuing discussions would take place.

On June 25, 2010 outgoing Faculty Senate Chair Alan Frantz, incoming Vice Chair Mike Ellis and Senate Executive Committee member JoAnne Pearce met with President Vailas to discuss the governance review ordered by the State Board of Education (SBOE). In that meeting, it was apparent that President Vailas felt that Faculty Senate did not accomplish much last year. He mentioned unspecified problems with the vote and aggressiveness of Senators regarding a personnel matter. Other issues that were brought up were the role and cost of shared governance.

Frantz said he had cautioned President Vailas not to act until faculty return in August but the President's response was that there were plenty of faculty on campus during the summer from which to select members for the review group. Pearce reminded everyone of the letter to faculty dated June 30, 2010 from Alan Frantz in which he had outlined his counter-proposals to President Vailas, and the President's responses to his suggestions.

The Senate's Executive Committee has met twice via teleconference with the Faculty Senate leaders at Boise State University, University of Idaho, and Lewis-Clark State College. Those other leaders have talked with Mike Rush, the SBOE's Executive Director, and reported that he indicated SBOE did not intend to change faculty governance in Idaho. Nevertheless, the other Faculty Senate chairs are concerned about what comes out of this and how it might affect their own faculty and governance systems, so they are closely watching the situation at ISU as it develops. Phil Cole, ISU's new Senate Chair, is scheduled to address the SBOE during its meeting August 12, 2010, which will be held on ISU's campus.

Ellis said Faculty Senate would like guidance from faculty as to whether they support the governance review process, and how well the current governance system represents them. He then opened the floor for discussion.

Several attendees expressed their support of the idea of reviewing the governance structure with an eye toward streamlining and increasing efficiency. But most were uncomfortable with the fact that the review is being conducted quietly, behind closed doors, by a committee consisting of several administrators and a few hand-picked faculty members who also have administrative responsibilities. The committee membership was announced in ISU's *News and Notes*, not by the usual "facultymemos" email distributed to all faculty and staff. The review committee members were required to sign a confidentiality agreement, which further contributes to the apparent lack of transparency and openness in the proceedings.

The point was raised that most faculty are off contract and away from campus for the summer break and are unaware of these rapid developments. This situation appears to contradict what President Vailas himself repeatedly had assured faculty in April and early May that nothing of consequence regarding restructuring would happen over the summer while they are away. Conducting a review of institutional governance directly affects faculty and their traditional role in helping formulate sound and workable institutional policies, a role which is reinforced by SBOE policy.

According to the SBOE's written motion, this review was triggered by the "significant organization changes in the University's colleges, thereby also necessitating a revision of the faculty governance structure." However, in accordance with its own bylaws, the Faculty Senate was due to conduct its periodic reapportionment of Senate seats among the colleges and departments last year; it deferred the reapportionment until this coming Spring semester after the campus reorganization plan is in place.

Three questions that arose in the discussion were:

- Will the Governance Review Advisory Group wait to convene until after the summer?
- Will faculty at large be able to give their input to the Governance Review Advisory Group?
- What is the Governance Review Advisory Group's interaction with the Faculty Senate?

Answers:

- The Advisory Group has already started meeting and expects to have its report ready by the time faculty return from summer break. Members have signed a confidentiality agreement. Members were appointed by President Vailas, as is his right; it is not an elected body.
- There will be approximately three (3) weeks after the semester starts and the governance plan is revealed to faculty and the mid-September deadline to submit agenda items to the SBOE for its October meeting, which is when President Vailas has said he intends to present the plan to SBOE. That is not much time for faculty to review, consider and respond to a proposed governance structure, and for their responses to be incorporated into a revised plan.
- So far, there has been no interaction between the Advisory Group and the Faculty Senate; nor has any been proposed.

Another question raised was whether the Faculty/Staff Handbook can be negated and dismissed by a particular administration. The Faculty/Staff Handbook has served as the official guiding document for all of ISU and its employees of every rank. Many of the recent policy changes from administration have circumvented the Faculty/Staff Handbook and are claimed to be valid under a new policy-making procedure that has not been ratified by faculty or staff. Ellis read aloud *Section III.C. Institutional Governance* from the SBOE policy.

A handout with several suggestions for action was distributed to attendees. Other ideas for action were discussed. Ellis will review the suggestions and prepare an agenda for next time. He reminded everyone of the upcoming SBOE meeting here at ISU on **Thursday, August 12, 2010**. He encouraged all faculty to attend.

Adjournment: 3:48 p.m.

The next Senate Working Group meeting was scheduled for next **Monday, July 26, 2010 at 2:00 p.m.** in the Faculty Senate conference room.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Wallace
Administrative Assistant
Faculty Senate Office

Approved by Working Group: Aug. 2, 2010
Accepted by Faculty Senate: Aug. 23, 2010