

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

August 16, 2010 2:00 p.m. REND 301

Group Chair: Mike Ellis
Senate Chairs: Phil Cole 2010-11; Alan Frantz 2009-10; Dave Delehanty 2008-09; Peter Vik 2004-05;
Russell Wahl 1996-97; Hal Hellwig 1995-96, Susan Swetnam 1990-91
Senators: Marcia Francis, Greg Leavitt, JoAnne Pearce
Faculty Members: Jim DiSanza, Leonard Hitchcock, Karen Kearns, Angela Petit, Doug Warnock
Guest: Kay Christensen 2005-06
Recording Secretary: Catherine Wallace

Ellis opened the meeting and informed everyone the Institutional Governance Advisory Group had released their initial report to the press and to faculty and staff earlier this morning. With the consent of the attendees, he added it as an additional agenda item for discussion in today's meeting.

Institutional Governance Advisory Group's Preliminary Report

Ellis welcomed Kay Christensen, a former Faculty Senate chair and current member of the Institutional Governance Advisory Group. Christensen emphasized she was attending as a former Senate chair, though she was also a member of the Advisory Group. She assured everyone she had accepted the invitation to serve on the Advisory Group in good faith, with the intention of representing her constituents to the best of her ability and for the good of the university. She asked attendees to respect faculty governance in all its forms, including advisory task forces such as the one she was on. She was here to listen openly to the concerns and comments from her colleagues and take those back to the Advisory Group for their consideration. She emphasized that she sought to have honest and candid feedback from faculty in order to make sure all viewpoints are considered. The Group's report to the President has not been finalized and will be revised based on the input received from faculty.

Attendees expressed their concerns about the report's content:

- The four new proposed committees appear to be parallel in function with Faculty Senate's Council, but working independently of the Faculty Senate structure with no clear line of communication or collaborative effort between the two groups. How is this efficient if two separate bodies are working on the same issues?
- The new committees would report directly to the President and Vice Presidents making important decisions about the direction the university will go without consulting with faculty or staff as to whether those directions are wise or in the best interest of the university as a whole.
- The Advisory Group did not include any rank-and-file faculty who are on the front lines of teaching and research; most members were administrators whose interests are inherently different than those of faculty. This goes against academic tradition and the principles of shared governance.
- The Advisory Group makes specific recommendations regarding the use of junior faculty in governance, but no junior faculty were consulted to find out whether their views and wishes are in accord with the recommendations, despite the fact junior faculty are a large constituency of the campus. The report assumes junior faculty are overtasked with service obligations, but no data was gathered to support or refute that or other assumptions on which the report is based.
- There are significant errors of fact and misrepresentations in the report that need to be corrected before this report is sent to the President or State Board of Education.

Attendees expressed other concerns about the process and the way this administration operates:

- President Vailas has ignored long-established procedures and policies in the Faculty/Staff Handbook as well as policies he himself has signed. He has repeatedly ignored the counsel and warnings from Faculty Senate leadership over the past couple of years that faculty are very unhappy with this administration's actions and tactics.

- There is no rush mandated by the SBOE to complete the governance review. It would be prudent to take the time to fully consider what changes should be made, how they should be implemented, and what the ramifications would likely be. But President Vailas seems insistent that the review be conducted and acted upon swiftly for no apparent good reason.
- The new MAPPs circumvent the Faculty/Staff Handbook, and proposed policy changes and other recommendations that have been forwarded from Faculty Senate and its Councils have been either ignored or changed by Deans' Council or the upper administration and implemented with no further consideration by faculty or staff. There is little to no feedback to Senate or its Councils from administration regarding the recommendations sent forward.
- Faculty who do not have direct dealings with the administration gauge them by the reactions of other faculty members whom they know well and respect highly. An attendee noted that for the past two years incoming Faculty Senate chairs whom he knows to be reasonable people have been fed up and frustrated by the end of their one-year terms.
- This administration does not demonstrate any respect for faculty and seems to hear only what they want to hear.
- The Faculty Senate leaders at ISU's sister Idaho institutions are watching this situation as it develops, and are communicating their concern to ISU's Senate Executive Committee. National attention is starting to tune in as well. This is not good and could damage ISU's reputation and ability to attract talented faculty.
- Communication and cooperation between the President, Provost and Faculty Senate has deteriorated significantly and must be improved quickly if this university is to avert a crisis. Faculty Senate and President Vailas have to find some way of coming together to resolve their differences.

Cole proposed approaching the SBOE about appointing an outside mediator to come to ISU, find out what is going on and help resolve the problems.

Christensen thanked everyone for their input and said she would do her best to make sure their concerns were heard and seriously considered. She suggested the working group review SBOE policies as a place to start. She then left the meeting to allow members to discuss their ideas freely.

Attendees discussed possible ways of developing a constitution as mentioned in the SBOE policy Sec. III.C.2. There is some ambiguity whether the word "will" means "must" or "may" – is a constitution required or optional? ISU Faculty Senate has bylaws but no constitution; Lewis-Clark State College reportedly has a constitution but no bylaws. Discussion of the Faculty/Staff Handbook arose; consensus among faculty is that it is a living document, not a dead one to be replaced wholesale. Regarding a constitution, the suggestion was made to use the ones from the University of Idaho and Boise State University as models since the SBOE has already approved them.

Fitzen said that the College of Technology Faculty Council used to have its own constitution. When the Council was absorbed into Faculty Senate, the University Counsel told the College that since the Council was included in the Faculty/Staff Handbook, a constitution was not needed.

More discussion arose regarding the idea of approaching the SBOE directly, if it is a good idea or not and, if so, how that might be done. A suggestion was made and discussed regarding initiating a faculty vote on the final governance proposal, and whether it mattered if it were done before or after being sent to the SBOE by their mid-September agenda deadline. Either way, attendees felt it important to let the SBOE know how faculty feel about the proposal. Again, the question of why the rush – there is no reason for it, and it is too important to university operations to not think through thoroughly.

Attendees supported the idea of continuing communication with the faculty leadership of the sister institutions (ICHEF members). Also, the Senate Executive committee was encouraged to go President Vailas again and respectfully let him know what faculty constituents are saying. Many do not support the President's decisions, though apathy and fear of retaliation are causing more faculty to keep quiet publicly.

Discussion turned to whether to consider the governance report from the Review Advisory Group as legitimate or not, and the pros and cons of the various positions. If a vote is called for, the wording of the ballot should be carefully considered.

More discussion ensued about the arbitrary timeline that has been imposed on this report. Attendees strongly felt that more time was needed if this review and proposal for changes was to be done right. Rushing this process would likely result in hurried decisions that would not address the problems this is supposed to fix.

POTENTIAL ACTION ITEMS for the Executive Committee and this Working Group to work on:

- Wording for a resolution for Faculty Senate to consider in its upcoming meeting Monday.
- Contact SBOE and find out exactly what they need and how to buy more time for careful consideration.
- Contact the Northwest Accreditors (NWCCU) and ask if they would be willing to work with the Senate and faculty to help resolve the differences with administration, or to suggest a mediator.
- Develop an alternate plan for a proposed governance structure that addresses the real problems with the existing structure, not one based on faulty assumptions.
- The Faculty/Staff Handbook IS the guiding constitution at ISU, though not in a formal sense. A full year is needed to adequately examine other institutions' constitutions and to develop a good one for ISU.
- Meet with the other ICHEF members at our sister universities and work with them to protect shared governance in Idaho.
- Notify ISU faculty and have them read the report and become informed of the summer's events so they will be prepared to discuss the issues at Wednesday's university-wide faculty meeting.
- Make sure the SBOE is aware of faculty's opinion before they address the issue at their October meeting. A faculty-wide vote on the final proposal would be a good way to measure how faculty feel about it.
- Write a critique of this proposed plan to point out the errors and flaws in reasoning.
- Emphasize the arbitrariness of the President's timeline. The SBOE did not set any date for ISU to report back to them.

Discussion of Upcoming Faculty Forum on Wednesday, August 18th

Due to time constraints, this item was not addressed except in the context of the discussion above.

Minutes from August 9, 2010

Attendees reviewed the draft minutes.

ACTION: Hellwig moved to **approve the minutes from August 9, 2010**. Seconded by Delehanty. No discussion. Motion **passed**, the minutes were **approved**.

Continue Discussion Attributes of Shared Governance

Due to time constraints, Ellis deferred this issue until next time.

Adjournment: 3:57 p.m.

The next Senate Chairs' Working Group meeting was not yet scheduled. An email will be sent out.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Wallace
Administrative Assistant
Faculty Senate Office

Approved by Working Group: Oct. 1, 2010 via email ballot
Accepted by Faculty Senate: October 11, 2010