

Faculty Senate President's Report, Spring, 2008

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President, Boise State University Faculty Senate

I am honored to have served as Faculty Senate President since May of 2005. The Senate has been very productive these past three years, taking an increasingly active role in the shaping of University policy. Faculty members serving on the Senate have brought a wide range of interesting and often controversial perspectives to the conversations taking place in our meetings; and the Provost and the President have continued to dialogue with the faculty through the Senate in a genuinely collaborative spirit.

This year we have focused on the role the Senate has as the primary advocate for faculty. The major issues to come before the Senate have all related to protecting faculty individually and as a whole and the academic well-being of our institution. Some of the work carried forth in the Senate this year is as follows:

### **The Ombuds Position Proposal**

The proposal for the establishment of a new position for a faculty ombuds originated in the Faculty Senate in the fall of 2007, sponsored by senators McCarl and Lubamersky, and has been adopted by the Provost after a review of the position description and comparison study of practices at other institutions. This position description is taken from the announcement of the opening on March 31, 2008: "The Faculty Ombuds is a designated neutral or impartial dispute resolution practitioner whose major function is to provide confidential and informal assistance to faculty within the University. The Ombud's role has a long and honorable tradition as a means of protecting against abuse, bias and other improper treatment or unfairness. Serving as a designated neutral, the Ombuds is neither an advocate for any individual nor the organization, but rather, an advocate for fairness whose primary purpose is to assist in the resolution of conflicts within the university faculty community. Key job responsibilities are: Faculty Assistance: Intakes complaints/concerns raised by individuals and/or groups regarding and/or affecting the university faculty community. Program Administration Reporting: Prepares periodic reports to the university faculty community discussing trends in reported grievances and concerns, patterns or problem areas identified in faculty policies, procedures or practices. Program Ambassador: Serves on the University Affirmative Action Committee and on the Faculty Careers Council. Organizational Relationships: The Faculty Ombuds is independent of existing administrative structures, although he/she will report directly to the Provost and is expected to establish and maintain a close working relationship with both the Faculty Senate and the Office of Human Resource Services." The exact mechanism whereby faculty grievances, problems, and other issues are channeled through the Ombuds Office remains to be worked out.

For Faculty Senate discussion, see Minutes of the meetings of October 23 and November 13, 2007. <http://www.boisestate.edu/facultysenate/sam/>

## **Policy Revisions from Faculty Senate Committees:**

### **The Faculty Grievance Committee revision of the Grievance Policy**

At the Faculty Senate meeting of January 22, 2008, the Faculty Grievance Committee presented proposed changes to the Grievance Policy. These changes were debated in that meeting and accepted with revisions in the meeting of February 12, 2008. Explanation from Scott Yenor, chair of the Grievance Committee: “we have re-written (or actually, truth be told) written a policy that future committees can use... essentially the problem was that the old policy did not lay anything of the process out, nor did it give the grievants or the committee much guidance from year to year. The goal was to structure a policy in the fall so that it would be in effect for the next committee.” More work remains to be done on this policy to bring it in line with Human Resources recommendations to incorporate guidelines for due process and problem solving with a view toward protection of faculty in disputes.

### **The Professional Standards Committee revisions of three policies:**

These recommendations were brought by Jack Hourcade, chair of the Faculty Professional Standards Committee, to the February 12 meeting. See also minutes from the March 11 meeting for discussion and approval.

#### **1. Policy 5315-B Student Evaluation of Faculty**

The policy changes here were based on the concerns: 1. that the stated purpose of student evaluations of faculty be more clearly defined, and 2. that the integrity of the evaluation process be maintained. New statements:

“The results of these student evaluations of faculty are used for three purposes: (a) the improvement of teaching performance by the faculty member; (b) as one of the factors in evaluation of the faculty member by university administrators, personnel committees and/or promotion and tenure committees for promotion and/or tenure recommendations, and (c) as one of the factors in the evaluation of the faculty member by university administrators and/or personnel committees for such purposes as reappointment and salary determinations.

To this end, each department may establish a faculty committee to implement a rating instrument for student evaluation of faculty that is responsive to the multiple uses of the outcomes of these evaluations, and to the unique needs of the department.”

#### **2. Policy 5340-B Faculty Tenure Procedure**

The significant change to this policy is changing the statement requiring evidence of *outstanding performance* in teaching, scholarly activity, and service to qualify for tenure to *meeting the college criteria*.

#### **3. Policy 5330-B Faculty Promotion Guidelines**

In this policy the statement that teaching is *the single most important* role of faculty at Boise State University is changed to read that teaching is *a critical role*,

reflecting the changing culture of faculty emphasis on research/creative activity in balance with teaching.

Revised versions of all these policies will be posted in the Faculty Senate minutes, and on the Policy Advisory Group website for comments and input as part of the approval process.

### **The Bachelor of General Studies Degree Proposal**

Brought to the Senate by Associate Vice President for Academic Planning Jim Munger, this new degree proposal is intended primarily for returning students that would like to finish a Bachelor's degree left partially completed. It is a degree without a required major, and with flexible options for study. The Faculty Senate voted to approve the implementation of this new degree program only after the University Curriculum Committee reviewed the proposal and recommended changes in it to ensure academic quality control of the program. It will be overseen by the College of Social Sciences and Public Affairs and there are substantial and rigorous academic requirements for completion of the degree. The final version of the degree proposal is available to faculty on request. See also the minutes of the Faculty Senate meeting on December 11, 2007.

<http://www.boisestate.edu/facultysenate/sam/>

### **The Clinical Faculty Proposal**

At the Senate meeting of September 25, 2007, Provost Sona Andrews and Dean of the College of Health Sciences Jim Girvan introduced a proposal for the creation of new faculty positions at Boise State. These positions would be non tenure-track positions filled by clinical faculty with full-time appointments with renewable contracts of up to three years, with State Board approval. The faculty filling these positions would have teaching and clinical supervision responsibilities, but would be free of the research and service components of normal tenure-track faculty members. Action on this proposal was taken on April 22, 2008 by vote in the final meeting of the term for the Faculty Senate. The following position definition was agreed to:

#### **Clinical Faculty**

Positions within academic departments, which have primary duties in the area of clinical instruction. Clinical faculty members are licensed or certified professionals in the health or allied health disciplines, or are in the field of education. The major responsibility of clinical faculty involves teaching students in both academic and clinical settings, supervising clinical experiences, and engaging in professionally related community service. While clinical faculty members may participate in scholarly activities as time and expertise warrant, they are not required to participate in research or scholarship activities as part of their regular assignment. Clinical faculty may serve on selected department, college, and university committees that involve curriculum or program related issues. Members of the clinical faculty are not eligible for tenure and may not serve on Faculty Senate or personnel committees evaluating the

activities of tenure track faculty. Titles in this category are clinical instructor, assistant clinical professor, associate clinical professor, and clinical professor.

**Two resolutions passed affecting faculty and campus life:**

**Concealed Weapons on Campus**

This resolution was brought to the Senate by Senator Rainford in response to a bill in the Idaho Legislature proposing to allow concealed weapons on the University campus. The Senate voted unanimously in support.

Resolution on SB 1381—Concealed Weapons Law

WHEREAS, firearms, concealed or otherwise are currently and expressly prohibited on Boise State University properties, with the exception of authorized law enforcement personnel in the commission of their duties and ROTC students and cadre, in the commission of their training (excepting that ROTC weapons are unloaded and ammunition is not possessed);

WHEREAS, State of Idaho Senate Bill 1381, if enacted, would deteriorate the climate of safety on Boise State University property and create an environment contrary to academic freedom and discourse;

WHEREAS, the Boise State University Faculty hold an expectation that safety from violence will be strictly maintained;

WHEREAS, Faculty at Boise State University cannot be expected to academically evaluate students who carry weapons;

WHEREAS, Students at Boise State University cannot be expected to feel comfortable being instructed by Faculty if Faculty are in possession of firearms;

WHEREAS, potential Faculty seeking academic appointment will not likely seek employment at Boise State University if firearms are not prohibited;

WHEREAS, potential students and their parents may not desire to seek admission to Boise State University if firearms are present on properties;

WHEREAS, visiting athletic teams from academic settings where possession of firearms is expressly prohibited will likely be less willing to conduct athletic activities at a campus where such firearms are not prohibited;

WHEREAS, academic lectures that are controversial in nature may not be convened given safety concerns should firearms be permitted;

WHEREAS, public trust in Boise State University as an institution of higher learning may likely be eroded by the presence of firearms on campus;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED by the Boise State University Faculty Senate that Administration is most vehemently urged to oppose SB 1381 using all resources available and appropriate.

### **Collective Bargaining for Faculty**

This resolution was brought by Senator Lubamersky, and approved by a majority vote. It is a resolution sponsored collectively by Idaho institutions of higher education and by the Idaho Council of Higher Education Faculty.

### **RESOLUTION ON COLLECTIVE BARGAINING FOR HIGHER EDUCATION**

Note: Representatives Shirley Ringo and Tom Trail of Moscow have introduced a higher education collective bargaining bill in the 2008 Idaho Legislature

WHEREAS, every person has a right of self-determination in all areas of his/her life;

WHEREAS, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that "everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his [or her] interests" (Article 23.4);

WHEREAS, 319,000 higher education faculty have union representation on 1,125 campuses, one third of the nation's total;

WHEREAS, union representation on these campuses has led to increased compensation and better working conditions and the lowest number of strikes in labor history;

WHEREAS, faculty unions work very well within existing faculty governance structures, primarily because their tasks are quite different;

WHEREAS, public college and university faculties in Oregon, Washington, and Montana have bargaining rights and labor contracts now exist on 33 campuses in Washington State, 44 campuses in Oregon, and 20 campuses in Montana where some faculty have been bargaining for over 30 years.

WHEREAS, the number of unionized campuses would be far more if 19 states allowed higher education faculty the right to self-determination;

WHEREAS, nearly 3,000 higher education faculty are excluded from Idaho's Teachers Negotiation Act;

WHEREAS, in 1976 higher education faculties or their representatives at the University of Idaho, Lewis-Clark State College, Boise State University, and Idaho State University voted for collective bargaining legislation;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED by the NIC, UI, LCSC, BSU, CSI, ISU, and EITC faculty or their representatives vote to support the right to vote on a bargaining agent, and, if a representative is selected, the right to bargain collectively for wages and working conditions.

**Continuing Action: Special Lecturers, Research Faculty, Adjunct Faculty**

The Senate will continue work on securing representation for the large contingent of part-time and adjunct faculty at BSU. The first step has been to identify and define the different groups of faculty and the categories into which these faculty fit. This is a major work-in-progress for the coming year.