



FACULTY ADVOCATE

IFT Higher Education Council

Dave Delehanty (deledavi@isu.edu), **Randy Berriochoa** (berrioch@csi.edu)
Lynn Lubamersky (llubame@boisestate.edu), **Kim Johnson** (kajohnso@nic.edu)

Bob Dickow (dickow@uidaho.edu), **Craig Steenberg** (csteenbe@lcsc.edu)

Kim Johnson, Vice-President (kajohnso@nic.edu)

Nick Gier, President (ngier@uidaho.edu)

Volume 20: Number 6, February, 2011 (labor donated)

Democracy in Education—Education for Democracy

Visit our website at www.idaho-aft.org/ift.htm

IFT RESPONDS TO ABOLITION OF ISU FACULTY SENATE

The Executive Council of Idaho Federation of Teachers, AFT/AFL-CIO met via e-mail over the Presidents' Holiday and voted to condemn, in the strongest possible terms, the abolition of the Faculty Senate at Idaho State University. In solidarity we call on all of Idaho's faculty senates to do the same.

For decades Idaho's faculty have had an essential role in the governance of their institutions. In 1889 the founders of the State of Idaho gave the "immediate government of the University of Idaho to the faculty." Starting in the late 1960s faculty senates were established on all of Idaho's campuses, including the new College of Western Idaho.

Under the principle of "shared governance" these senates vote on curricular and personnel matters and advise on budget issues. For over 40 years administrators and faculty have worked constructively together, not only in Idaho but all across the nation.

The ISU faculty senate has always operated according to its by-laws and has not exceeded its authority in any way. A recent faculty appeal board decision in the Sadid case and the recent no confidence votes were held according to procedures approved by the State Board of Education.

Board policy states: "The faculty of each institution will establish written by-laws, a constitution, and necessary procedures, subject to the approval by the Chief Executive Officer and the Board, for making recommendations to the Chief Executive Officer as a part of the decision-making process of the institution."

http://www.boardofed.idaho.gov/policies/documents/policies/iii/iii_c_institutional_governance_04-02.pdf

It is a distortion of fact to claim that the ISU faculty senate reneged on its decision to enter into mediation with the Vailas administration. Incredibly, the senators were not privy to the terms of the mediation agreement, and therefore believed that they had no recourse except to proceed, once again, with the no confidence vote.

The February 12 vote was extraordinary, both in terms of the eligible faculty voting (76.3%) and the number voting no confidence in President Vailas (79.6 %).

Vailas says that he wants to reconstitute faculty governance at ISU, but how can he possibly do this in the face of overwhelming opposition from his faculty? According to Board policy, the faculty, not Vailas, will have to reestablish its own by-laws and a constitution, assuming once again its role in shared governance.

Let us quote from Professor Philip Cole, ISU faculty senate chair: "Leadership collapses when those who are led conclude the leader does not care for them. You cannot beat a dog into hunting hard for you. The dog hunts hard out of teamwork, not out of fear or denigration. Will the faculty go the extra mile to help out this administration? Goodwill and respect have to be earned and once lost, it is generally lost for good. President Vailas has lost the respect and goodwill of the faculty."

This is the second year running that the Board has acted in ways detrimental to faculty rights and the employment security of all campus employees. In February of 2010 the Board by-passed--in order to give campus executives absolute power--what some legal experts consider the best financial exigency policy in the nation.

We urge the SBOE to reconsider its unwise decision and renew its support for democratic procedures and its long tradition of supporting faculty governance on Idaho's campuses.

SBOE HANDS VAILAS FALSE VICTORY

Reprinted with permission from the Idaho State Journal, Feb. 21, 2011

Idaho State University faculty should be seen, but not heard. That seems to be the message the Idaho State Board of Education delivered when it voted Thursday to suspend the ISU Faculty Senate, a move requested by embattled ISU President Arthur Vailas.

The state board's action comes one week after 72.5 percent of ISU's faculty voted no confidence in Vailas' leadership. Voter turnout was 76 percent. Of those, nearly 9 percent abstained from voting yes or no, and only 18.5 percent gave Vailas a thumbs up.

The SBOE's decision to dissolve the Faculty Senate, an unprecedented move in the annals of higher ed, will not resolve these faculty complaints any better than Vailas' refusal to honestly address them. All ISU faculty had the opportunity to vote for or against Vailas on Feb. 10, not just the 30 members of the Faculty Senate.

Problems at other universities have been handled differently. Faced with an 84 percent no-confidence vote from faculty who criticized his "imperialistic" leadership style at Indiana University of Pennsylvania in December of 2009, President Tony Atwater said the experience gave him insight into the need to improve communication about decisions and the decision-making process. He resigned last June.

The president and provost at Bowie State University in Maryland received overwhelming no-confidence votes in October of last year. They were accused of initiating programs and making appointments and demotions without faculty input. The provost resigned in November and President Micky Burnim remains with a renewed commitment to rely more on a special Communications Task Force to improve communication with faculty and staff.

At Columbus State University in Georgia last spring, President Tim Mescon and Provost Inessa Levi received definitive no-confidence votes. Reorganization of academic colleges and departments without faculty input was the main complaint. Levi resigned in September. The president pledged he and the new provost would work closely with faculty with an "unwavering focus on quality, collaboration and faculty engagement."

In contrast is the response by Vailas and the State

Board to dissolve the ISU Faculty Senate, which is the equivalent of President Obama abolishing Congress.

The adverse national publicity has already started with articles posted from the esteemed university trade magazine, the Chronicle of Higher Education, to the Associated Press. The American Association of University Professors has also weighed in by calling the suspension of the ISU Faculty Senate unprecedented.

What this means, of course, is that recruitment and retention of top-notch faculty is going to be very difficult for ISU. Why would anyone with merit want to apply or stay at an institution which doesn't listen to or value them? And without the best faculty, which is the heart and soul of a university, why would students want to enroll?

The SBOE's action has added fuel to the flames when it should have insisted that both parties meet and resolve their grievances, no matter if it took placing them all in the Faculty Senate meeting room and locking the door from the outside.

We naively expected more of Vailas and the SBOE and can only ask, "This is the best you can do?"

President Vailas, we ask that you take positive action to become a consensus builder, help heal wounds and get this university back on track. Based on your actions this past year, that may be asking too much. The community and its university can only hope you'll prove us wrong.

PLEASE JOIN US IN PROTECTING FACULTY RIGHTS AND INCREASING SALARIES AND BENEFITS

Members of the American Federation of Teachers receive a \$1,000,000 legal and professional liability policy, access to legal and moral support, and national/state AFT publications. Biweekly dues range from \$7-\$20 depending on your salary. For an application go to www.idaho-aft.org/IftDues.htm.