

MINUTES
JOINT FINANCE-APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

DATE: Friday, January 28, 2022

TIME: 8:00 A.M.

PLACE: Room C310

MEMBERS PRESENT: Senators Co-chairman Agenbrood, Crabtree, VanOrden (Bair), Grow, Woodward, Lent, Riggs, Cook, Ward-Engelking, and Nye

Representatives Co-chairman Youngblood, Troy, Horman, Amador, Syme, Bundy, Giddings, Nate, Green, and Nash

ABSENT/ EXCUSED: Representative Co-chairman Youngblood

CONVENED: **Co-Chairman Agenbrood** called the meeting of the Joint Finance-Appropriations Committee (Committee) to order at 8:01 a.m.

AGENCY PRESENTATION: **UNIVERSITY OF IDAHO (U of I), C. Scott Green, President; Janet Jessup, Legislative Services Office (LSO) Senior Budget and Policy Analyst**

Ms. Jessup indicated U of I has different appropriation bills, outlining that the Committee would be beginning with the college and university budget, then continuing to the special programs budget. She summarized the budgets presented were appropriated separately in different bills, and most programs are located on the U of I campus, although in some cases they are in other regions of the state through U of I programming.

President Green emphasized the importance to fully fund Idaho higher education and the U of I in particular since it is the State's Land Grant Institution serving Idaho students and citizens. He pointed out U of I was rated number one best value public university in the west, and second nationally, by U.S. News & World Report. **President Green** highlighted several of U of I's 2021 accomplishments and what it has done to address inefficiencies. He reported that U of I's first year undergraduate enrollment for Fall 2021 was up almost five percent and it had the largest freshman class since 2016, with early numbers showing continued growth in 2022. **President Green** stated U of I appreciated the Governor's budget recommendations which included investments in nuclear energy, distance learning, the McClure Center, the McCall Field Campus, and other endeavors to drive education, research, and outreach. He described COVID-19 related revenue losses and increased expenses which totaled \$48.3 million (see attachment 1). He confirmed that U of I is struggling to provide competitive salaries for its employees, and faces significant challenges when trying to fill positions with qualified applicants.

In response to questions from the Committee regarding measures U of I has taken since the last legislative session to reduce spending on social justice, diversity, equity, and inclusion programming, **President Green** explained U of I ensured it followed Idaho law in deed and in spirit by conducting an independent investigation which concluded U of I was compliant.

AGENCY PRESENTATION: FOREST UTILIZATION RESEARCH (FUR), Dennis Becker, Ph.D., Dean and Professor of Natural Resource Policy, College of Natural Resources

Dr. Becker detailed that the Forest, Wildlife and Range Experiment Station, created in 1939, conducts research on issues relevant to forestry, wildlife, and rangelands in Idaho. He summarized its mission to conduct research in five key areas: Policy Analysis Group, Rangeland Center, UI Experimental Forest, Mica Creek Experimental Watershed, and Center for Forest Nursery and Seedling Research. **Dr. Becker** discussed FUR's FY 2023 budget requests and the Governor's recommendations (see attachment 2). He stated the recommended five percent change in employee compensation would support FUR's dedicated employees. He pointed out that Idaho's natural resources contribute an estimated \$8 billion to the state's economy and is a significant impact to communities, with the investment further providing opportunity to support related research and outreach.

AGENCY PRESENTATION: IDAHO GEOLOGICAL SURVEY (IGS), Claudio Berti, Director, Geologic Survey

Mr. Berti established that IGS is a non-regulatory state agency which leads in the collection, interpretation, and dissemination of geologic and mineral data for Idaho, and is a U of I special program. He detailed its FY 2021 results achieved and sources of funding (see attachment 3). **Mr. Berti** highlighted economic benefits and impacts as it applies to the exploration industry, and what IGS accomplished in 2021 in regards to sustainable transportation and landslide inventory, and seismic hazards.

AGENCY PRESENTATION: AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH AND EXTENSION SERVICES (ARES), Michael Parrella, Dean, College of Agricultural and Life Sciences (CALIS); Janet Jessup, LSO Senior Budget and Policy Analyst

Ms. Jessup explained while ARES is located at the U of I, with 10 major buildings, it also has a large footprint throughout the entire state with 4 extension districts, 42 county extension offices, and 9 research and extension centers (see attachment 4). She stated the FY 2023 appropriation is fully supported by the general fund, and detailed the appropriated funds versus non-appropriated off budget amounts.

Mr. Parrella declared that CALS is proud to serve as a research and development engine for Idaho's agricultural enterprise, which accounts for 17 percent of the state's total economic output, and includes faculty and staff physically located in 42 of the 44 counties and on three reservations, who provide reliable research based education and information to citizens (see attachment 5). He summarized CALS was able to improve the infrastructure of research and extension locations across the state, and has doubled external funding from nationally competitive programs, state programs, and private grants to support its research and extension initiatives. He also summarized their upcoming programing, grants, and developments. **Mr. Parrella** affirmed ARES supports the Governor's FY 2023 budget recommendations and brought attention to the Idaho Center for Agriculture, Food and Environment line item, replacement items at research and extension centers, and the adult computer literacy program. He pointed out that CALS is challenged to fill vacant positions and provide competitive salaries, with a turnover rate of 16 percent.

In response to Committee questions, **Mr. Parrella** further discussed the adult computer literacy program, that it is funded with American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 funds, and is a temporary three year program.

**AGENCY
PRESENTATION:**

**WASHINGTON IDAHO MONTANA UTAH (WIMU) VETERINARY
EDUCATION**

Mr. Parrella informed that as the Dean of CALS he was responsible for veterinary medical education in Idaho, in partnership with the Washington State University College of Veterinary Medicine, wherein the state benefits with five to six new veterinarians taking positions within Idaho annually upon graduation. He stated the program currently allows 44 Idaho students, 11 per class, to pay in-state tuition for their veterinary medical education related to animal health.

**AGENCY
PRESENTATION:**

**WASHINGTON WYOMING ALASKA MONTANA IDAHO (WWAMI)
MEDICAL EDUCATION PROGRAM, Jeff Seegmiller, Ed.D., LAT, ATC,
Director**

Mr. Seegmiller explained the 50 year old program was a five state partnership with the University of Washington School of Medicine, the number one ranked primary care medical school in the nation.

Frank Batcha, MD, Assistant Clinical Dean of Regional Affairs Idaho WWAMI, addressed the Committee discussing how WWAMI allows Idahoans to train in-state and pay in-state tuition, all while receiving the nation's best medical education. He detailed the physician pipeline, noting that 800 students have been trained as physicians, and 51 percent of graduates return to practice in Idaho (see attachment 6). He summarized WWAMI program sites and workforce data.

Mr. Seegmiller discussed WWAMI's virtual program, Project ECHO — Idaho, which was previously funded by the Committee, and its successes and challenges.

ADJOURNED:

There being no further business before the Committee, **Co-Chairman Agenbroad** adjourned the meeting at 10:03 a.m.

Senator Agenbroad
Chair

Erin Miller
Secretary