Dennis Wignall: About the survey: I won’t offer any analysis, but I’ll give my interpretation. I think surveys like this are informative and provide descriptive statistics; this one set the stage for some thinking and to get a sense of where we’re at as community. I’d rather have dialog about this today.

(unidentified attendee): Thank you for doing the survey!

(unidentified attendee): I was under impression it was a faculty survey, but 32% of the respondents were not faculty?

Dennis Wignall: I wanted input from non-faculty to get different viewpoints.

(unidentified attendee): But questions specifically about faculty-input into choosing a new president didn’t apply to non-faculty people that took it, so the survey had a different flavor to them as a result.

Dennis Wignall: I’ll be the first to admit that my primary concern was that the Board of Regents was going to make their decision by early January and I wanted some feedback.

(unidentified attendee): Do you think Board of Regents will look at/read this?

Dennis Wignall: They requested it! Let me stress: faculty plays only an advisory role to Regents. There was no question in my mind about whether or not we need a search; the question was: now or later? The stronger a voice we generate now, the more influence our input will have when a search actually happens. If you don’t have your voice heard, someone will tell you what to do. I’m not interested in getting everyone in this group to think the same. I don’t think we’re able to change Regents policy. One of my challenges is trying to find out how to work within this system. Tragically, President Caldwell was probably too confrontational for the culture/structure that exists in Utah; I’m trying to avoid the same kind of confrontation but still work positively. That’s my motivation.

Randy Jasmine: I was in that meeting, but the transcript was clear that the Board of Regents representatives were not unified that searches are necessary; they feel there are times when appointments are better. I’m a bit worried that any action we take that minimizes the importance of searches, for any reason, only encourages the Regents that have this opinion. As far as economic concerns, a search will cost us whenever it happens; there’s no reason to think the economic situation will be better when the opportunity arises. So I agree about not being confrontational, but we need to express a strong opinion that searches in general are necessary. After all, Nadauld’s appointment was before the economic downturn! I think we need to tread carefully.

Nancy: What is it about search that puts everything at a standstill?

Dennis Wignall: They felt that they would have to suspend immediate action on proposals, degrees, etc. while putting attention on a search.
Nancy: Isn’t there a committee that makes their final recommendation to the Board of Regents, and the Board of Regents only acts at the end? Someone needs to call them on that! A committee will represent us, and we can go on with business as usual.

Randy Jasmine: By doing that, Nadauld becomes a lame duck; we have to bargain with the legislature for funding, and having a lame duck president harms that.

Erin O’Brien: But if they appoint him, he’s on his way out anyway in his own words, so how does when we have search impact that?

Dennis Wignall: The president is an “at will” employee, from the Board of Regents’ point of view, but yes, any president could say he wants to step down at any time.

Erin O’Brien: But when a university or college hires a president, it’s with the expectation that they’ll be around a while (15-20 years). No matter what President Nadauld’s title is (interim, president, etc.), he’s short term, but he still gets stuff done. So he’s made himself a lame duck but stuff is still getting accomplished!

Dennis Wignall: My intuition says he’ll get appointed no matter what in January. We won’t be successful in accreditation with an interim president.

(unidentified attendee): That’s false, though, because even though the process starts soon, the first actual accreditation won’t be for 2-3 years!

Georgine Bills: They said there’s some flexibility. I think, in that mtg, I heard that yes, Nadauld’s done good job, but if we took firm stance that we wanted search, he’d say “Good luck” and have some negative ramifications. There would be a different, if we wanted search now, a lot of strategic inits happen in that office, and they might not want to work on stuff put forward in case new prez might want to do something different!

Glen Blakley: It’s a Regents problem. President Nadauld has done a terrific job, and in the circumstances we’re now in where all other schools in the state have had to make big cuts, including faculty, I think for us to come up in arms and say we want search now -- this is not the time.

Randy Jasmine: But it’s never the time. Before, it was “don’t jeopardize the affiliation”!

Glen Blakley: I’ve been here 30+ yrs, and this is the strangest political situation I’ve ever been in. We’re the only institution that hasn’t cut faculty! The last 5-7 presidents we had would have panicked and some of you wouldn’t be here right now. We’re in a good boat; let it float until the economy comes up and the Board of Regents has their feet elsewhere.

Jennifer Ciaccio: I’ve been in institutions that were doing a search; it typically took one year to do the search, and one year to get the new person in place – that’s two years right there!

(unidentified attendee): But it’s a bad move for us to support – be smart rather than emotional.
Glen Blakley: But you’re dealing with the Board of Regents – they’re the one being pushed into a corner, not the president – if you try to push them around, they’ll respond negatively.

Jennifer Ciaccio: But if you couch it in terms that we need a president for 2012, 2013, or whatever, we need to start search a year before that.

Glen Blakley: The Board of Regents determines when, how, timetables, etc. for that – they have the power.

Jennifer Ciaccio: Granted, but if we want to not anger them that we’re trying to send President Nadauld out, then we say we’re doing a search for that point.

Dennis Wignall: I don’t think anyone, even from the Regent’s perspective, thinks we’re trying to push President Nadauld out.

Erin O’Brien: So given that the Board of Regents is aware of President Nadauld’s current plans, have they said when they’d initiate a search?

Randy Jasmine: They said they wouldn’t set a time to avoid the lame duck thing.

Ed Reber: But since he told the student paper about his thoughts to be here only another two years, he’s already a lame duck!

Georgine Bills: They said that when he says he’ll step down, there will be a search.

(unidentified attendee): My concern is whether or not they’ll follow through with that. There’s a different between having a legal authority to exert pressure and saying our desires, which gets back to my first point: I have no idea what general faculty opinion is; some seem to feel he’s not doing a good job, and those were the longest, most impassioned comments on the survey. We don’t know the proportion of faculty that want a search, or want to emphasize that we need faculty involvement in a search, so we’ve weakened our status. Can the survey be divided into those parts?

Dennis Wignall: I’ve got list of various engagements of people that took the survey and we can pull out the statistics of faculty-only, staff-only, etc.

Nancy: A few yrs ago, when Donna became the permanent Vice-President, I responded to something that was put out about whether or not everyone agreed with that decision – what was that process?

Dennis Wignall: The Regents appoint a president; the president appoints everyone else.

Nancy: Right, but if we want to have a voice, I want to know that if we just took President Nadauld as who he is, what percent of the faculty would want to support him as president for however many years? There’s still a lot of emotions out there; I do think we need to separate that. Can we be surveyed with just one question, without all the other questions?

Dennis Wignall: Well, that’s what we’re dialoging about.
Marius van der Merwe: What does President Nadauld think about all this? Maybe he’d support us to the Board of Regents in getting a search started.

Dennis Wignall: It doesn’t hurt to ask!

Marius van der Merwe: The ultimate question is: what will be the best thing for the college, and he’ll probably support that.

Dennis Wignall: Maybe the idea of an “immediate search” was too aggressive and not collaborative; I don’t know. If we told the Regents that we want a search right now, what are they going to do? They’d take umbrage, being approached that way.

Glen Blakley: We saw that in their attitude toward Caldwell.

Dennis Wignall: I’m just saying that there has to be a way to phrase/present/express our need, etc. so it’s collaborative and they want to step in and work with us, rather than “their camp vs. our camp.” I think they have our best interest at heart, but they want to do things their way. We need to use their way to get what we want.

Erin O’Brien: How long does a search typically take here?

(unidentified attendee): President Caldwell took three months; Huddleston took six-eight.

Glen Blakley: President Caldwell was from Georgia Tech; he came in working as Vice-President in this area. When President Alder came in, the college chose R.J. Snow; President Kerr was Education Commissioner, and he called the governor, who said “you get someone else,” so the Board of Regents chose President Alder. It was a huge blow to campus because no one expected it. Only one recent president has been in-house.

Erin O’Brien: If Board of Regents waits until the president steps down, we’ll have a year without a president. He’ll have to give advance noticed about when he’s stepping down. The route this follows is that to get a new president, the current president would have to say he’s stepping down in a year, becoming a lame duck, and then the search takes a year.

Glen Blakley: President Caldwell’s appointment was quick.

Randy Jasmine: President Huddleston announced around this time of year that he would step down at end of the year; President Caldwell was named before Spring was over.

Erin O’Brien: OK, so we’ll have 6-8 months or so when we’d have a lame duck. Is the Board of Regents saying we shouldn’t do a search because it will create that situation? But we’re going to have to do it anyway!

Glen Blakley: We just don’t want to push the Board of Regents that we want search now.

Curt Walker: I sounds to me like Dennis Wignall should go to President Nadauld and ask him “Please let us know what your plans are in advance so that we know. What if we took a faculty vote and wanted
you around another five years? Will you give us a year-and-a-half advance notice so we can take a year to find someone?” We have to give a new president time to move, sell his house, etc. If we have some notice from President Nadauld, we (or he) can tell the Board of Regents what we need.

Paul Abegg: But none of us can give a timeline for how long we’ll be here!

Dennis Wignall: I’m happy to try and pin him down.

(unidentified attendee): I like the idea that he’d be consulted. I understand the Board of Regents really likes him, but I’m thinking what if the Board of Regents appoints him in January – is there any negative? We go on, then when he’s ready to leave, we go through the search process. To play the system, we have to be politically correct because of animosity between the Board of Regents and us. I don’t see what the big fuss is about. Presidents don’t stay here for very long (4-6 years) anyway.

Glen Blakley: One thing we could lose is the Commons Building. Right now, we’re close to getting. It’s to our advantage right now to not support a search.

Dennis Wignall: If we say we want a new search; they’ll take it as a negative. If we have an “official” lame duck,” then donors, etc. to those initiatives dry up because they’ll wait to see what the new president will want to do.

Jennifer Ciaccio: Is there any reason it just can’t be left with him as interim until he steps down?

Dennis Wignall: A couple other faculty have pointed out that our position is more fragile for accreditation with an “interim” president.

Jennifer Ciaccio: Do we actually have any power in this? (General answer from all: no.)

Amy Comeford: I admit to being new and inexpert, but to further what Randy Jasmine said earlier, I think this discussion is about the longer term effects of this. If the Board of Regents can appoint now, what’s to prevent them from doing it again later to kill anything else that they don’t like? I read the minutes of the meeting with the Board of Regents, and was alarmed by their disregard to have any kind of solid “this is what needs to be done” but more “we’ll do whatever we want.” Those saying we need a search don’t necessarily dislike President Nadauld, but want to see the legal process followed – that needs to be addressed as a separate issue. I agree it’s complex issue.

Dennis Wignall: One of the questions on the survey was that the Board of Regents can expect a letter from us saying that when the time comes, we want the process to happen.

Amy Comeford: But they’re disregarding their own process!

Georgine Bills: But they can. We can’t change them! When President Nadauld was at Weber, he became the darling of the Regents; that’s to our benefit now! President Nadauld’s goal at Weber was to make university status, and when he did that, he stepped down. But the Regents gave a mandate that we would not offer graduate degrees for at least five years. Think how we felt when UVU was supported and that the day their signs went up, they had six MS programs in place. We are not unique in having
Board of Regents do things at will! I don’t know about all the pieces, but they do treat everyone equally that way!

Nancy: When President Nadauld came in, he said “I’ll be here year or two, then I have to go back to my old position.” But obviously that’s changed. At that time, he was perceived as interim and that we’d have search. What changed that?

Dennis Wignall: I’ll speculate: if I wanted to put someone in there that didn’t want to stay but would slow down the affiliation process, I’d do it. In other words, it was a reaffirmation that we were getting spanked, in a way. Feeling that way, he did well, so we can now save time, money, etc. if we just left him alone. He does have health issues; he’s told us as much, but he’s shown great progress and won political, monetary victories, etc. So why not, from Nadauld’s and the Board of Regents points of view, just leave him there?