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## Vailas says ISU remains on track for med school

POCATELLO — Idaho State University President Arthur Vailas assured one student Wednesday the university remains on track to help establish a medical degree program in the Gem State.

“We have to work with the other schools in the state to see if they can do it,” Vailas said, referring to a State Board of Education recommendation that all state universities collaborate on the development of a medical degree program. “Right now, our primary emphasis is that we do well with the programs we do have.”

Vailas, along with other members of his cabinet, spoke to a sparse crowd at the Bengal Theater Wednesday as part of the president’s fall general assembly. Vailas highlighted improvements to student services and fielded questions about the hope for establishing a medical degree program, the influence of the student body on the university’s budget and how the growing number of online courses can assist commuter and working students, among other topics.

Tyler Gibbons, a senior majoring in mass communication, asked Vailas about how students can have an influence on the university’s budget, and the president responded by noting the presence of the Associated Students of ISU, the on-campus governing body representing students.

Ross Knight, president of ASISU, told Gibbons student government allows students to have their suggestions and proposals heard by university officials. “You can come talk to me, and then we can go to the senate,” Knight said.

Vailas said he had previously been advised to not have the ASISU president on the president’s cabinet, but he argued students need a representative to communicate with them about university matters.

“Students should know about money (matters at ISU) and be aware of the decision-making,” he said.

One female student from Rigby told Vailas about her class schedule, indicating she has to travel to Pocatello to take upper-division biology courses. She said one of her major challenges is transportation costs.

“As opposed to driving my own car five days a week, it is cheaper for me to buy bus passes for five days a week,” she said before asking administrators about future improvements to the university’s commuter services.

While assuring her they would like to expand commuter services, administrators said university buses have not had enough passengers to generate additional revenue, which would help pay for improvements.

“Unless you have enough people on that bus, it’s hard to pay for costs of that bus,” said James Fletcher, ISU’s vice president of finance and administration.

Offering an alternative to alleviate the costs of commuting, Vailas told students to begin looking at the growing number of online courses, which he noted are beginning to offer more upper-division credits.

“(That way) you may not have to leave your house,” he said. “It would save you a trip to Pocatello.”