

**MINNESOTA STATE COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES
BOARD OF TRUSTEES
Work Group on Technology Meeting Notes
April 24, 2008**

Work Group Members Present: Cheryl Dickson, Chair; Trustees Duane Benson, Scott Thiss, and James Van Houten; Staff – Vice Chancellors Laura King and Ken Niemi

Other Board Members Present: Ruth Grendahl, Vice Chair, Board of Trustees

Leadership Council Representative Present: Cheryl Frank, President, Inver Hills Community College

The Work Group on Technology held its meeting on April 24, 2008, 4th Floor, World Trade Room, 30 East 7th Street in St. Paul. Chair Dickson called the meeting to order at 9:00 am.

Approval of the March 10, 2008 Committee Meeting Minutes

Chair Dickson called for a motion to approve the March 10, 2008, meeting minutes. Trustee Van Houten requested that the committee acknowledge but not amend the notes to reflect the goal of utilizing this committee as a means of educating and alerting trustees on IT projects and issues. The trustees would use this information when there are questions from outside the system. The minutes were approved with no dissent.

1. REVIEW OF THE IT ENTERPRISE STRATEGIC INVESTMENT PLAN

Vice Chancellor Niemi presented a recap of the Information Technology Strategic Investment Plan. This plan establishes a clear focus on building a strong technical foundation.

Trustee Van Houten inquired if the board needs to look at cost reductions and if it should make cost reduction strategies a priority, independent from the enterprise goals. Vice Chancellor King clarified that the present projects are cost avoidance driven. The System is cutting costs by addressing the critical issues of the enterprise system. In doing so, the System will be able to deliver a higher level of service.

Trustee Grendahl inquired about the hiring in IT. Vice Chancellor Niemi stated that progress continues. The hiring process is not a speedy one and the issue of noncompetitive salaries for some positions continues to be a problem. As a result of this the ITS division is using more consultants than would be ideal in order to keep the projects on track. The basic strategy is to use consultants for specific skill sets that are needed on one-time projects, not ongoing operations.

Trustee Benson suggested that the System compare itself to other businesses, like the banking industry. Vice Chancellor Niemi explained that a comparison is difficult with other higher education systems, as every system is configured differently. Gartner has broad level data to do some comparisons at a higher level.

Vice Chancellor King requested that Trustee Benson help her get access to individuals in the business community who could help with comparative data.

2. REVIEW OF CURRENT FISCAL YEAR PROGRESS

Vice Chancellor Niemi presented the Enterprise Technology Investment Story. This presentation explains the Enterprise Investment process used to prioritize the available resources. He explained that staff has developed a system where each channel is led by the different Vice Chancellors. Recently a Cross Functional Advisory Group was added which consists of faculty, students, campus staff and the channel representatives. The Group provides the Enterprise Investment Committee with advice on the overall priority of the proposed projects.

3. DISCUSSION OF DIVISION OF RESPONSIBILITY BETWEEN CAMPUS AND CENTRAL ITS ORGANIZATION

Chair Dickson requested a clarification of what would require mandatory campus participation and at what point campuses can choose not to participate. Vice Chancellor Niemi explained that mandatory participation requires all institutions to participate in the use of certain applications, such as ISRS and DARS/CAS. With optional participation, institutions may choose to participate in the use of specific applications, such as Resource 25. In the event there are a number of institutions who want the same thing, the ITS division may assist them as a group. The division also has developed a list of preferred products which are supported at the enterprise level.

In meeting with other institutions at the national level, Vice Chancellor Niemi reported that the general direction is to provide more services at an enterprise level than in the past. However, the shift needs to keep this balanced by using a system that includes voluntary participation attuned to local needs.

Trustee Van Houten inquired if a study of centralizing services at the enterprise and/or regional levels has been considered. Vice Chancellor Niemi responded that there is considerable interest in pursuing more regional approaches to providing services. Sharing services would allow us to provide specialized services where local resources are insufficient, expanding technology services to some institutions.

Trustee Benson asked if the student technology fees stay at the campus. Vice Chancellor Niemi explained that the fees stay at the institution level. There are a few campus components that are paid for by the enterprise funds; Novell and security components are examples, but generally the campuses pay for their own local infrastructure components. At this time, ITS leadership believes that it has the right balance between enterprise and campus technology support delivery. The campuses are supporting their local users and at the system level, we operate much as a technology service utility.

Discussion continued concerning the policies and principles that govern distinctions between campus roles and responsibilities and those of the central ITS division. It was agreed that more information was needed and staff agreed to pursue data collection detailing the size of college and university IT budgets and what they support. Staff then will develop more explicit principles and guidelines for what the central IT enterprise will support and what activities will be a campus expectation. College and university input will be sought as principles and guidelines are developed.

4. OTHER BUSINESS

Chair Dickson invited the attendees to share a brief statement for further discussion or consideration at the next meeting.

Nancy Black, IFO President, stated that the IFO wants to look at the big picture. With limited budgets and increases in enrollment for both online courses as well as in the classroom, they want to make sure that we do not limit services in the classroom. The overall plan is fine, but faculty wants to have assurances that it is going to work. They are concerned about D2L and the court case implications. They need to know what the contingency plan is and would like to hear more about the D2L issue. They also would like an explanation of where the delivery of the course management system is in this plan. They are also concerned to hear that IT salaries are not always competitive. They have concerns about the use of consultants, who cost more money.

Kelly Ashton, the representative from the Minnesota State University Student Association, thanked Vice Chancellor Niemi for listening and working with them. The Student association is happy with the communication they have with the Chancellor and Vice Chancellor Niemi and feel that their concerns are being heard.

MSUSA still has questions about the Enterprise Investment Committee. They would like to know the definition of enterprise. They need a better understanding of what technology is provided by campuses as opposed to those provided by the enterprise. For instance, some campuses do not use all of the applications provided by the ITS enterprise. As a result, the students are concerned that more costs may be incurred than is necessary.

Regarding the campus funding allocations, Kelly Ashton would like to better understand what is considered critical maintenance. Kelly Ashton provided the following example: a campus used the money to create a new web site. The Student Association would like to know if this would be considered critical maintenance.

Karen Foreman, AFSCME Representative, stated that they are happy with the addition of the Cross Functional Advisory Group. She was especially supportive of

the plan to aggregate a number of smaller administrative system enhancements into a project that would pay great dividends for front line staff.

Jessica Medaeris, MSCSA Representative, stated that they are happy with the level of inclusion they are experiencing with the additional advisory groups. They have concerns and questions about local technology fees and would like more information about how the fees are used at the local level.

5. MEETING SCHEDULE

Trustee Dickson announced that the next meeting for the Work Group will be scheduled by email.

Respectfully submitted,
Christine Benner, Recorder