MINNESOTA STATE COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES  
BOARD OF TRUSTEES  
WORK GROUP ON TECHNOLOGY  
MEETING MINUTES  
April 15, 2009

Members Present: Cheryl Dickson, Chair; Trustees Duane Benson and Scott Thiss 
James Van Houten

Other Trustees Present: Thomas Renier and Terri Thomas

Board Work Group on Technology Members Absent: None

Others Present: President Cheryl Frank, Vice Chancellor Laura King, Vice Chancellor Ken Niemi, Sr. Vice Chancellor Linda Baer, Associate Vice Chancellor Joanne Chabot, Associate Vice Chancellor Alfred Essa and Director Jim Dillemuth

The Minnesota State Colleges and Universities Board Work Group on Technology held its meeting on April 15, 2009, at Wells Fargo Place, 4th Floor, Board Room, 30 East 7th Street in St. Paul. Chair Dickson called the meeting to order at 10:05 a.m.

Approval of the August Committee Meeting Minutes
Chair Dickson called for approval of the February 12, 2009 Work Group on Technology Meeting Minutes. The minutes were approved.

1. Enterprise Investment Project Update
Vice Chancellor Niemi shared information from the Infragard Minnesota Meeting including the “Electricity Infrastructure Security” article by S. Massoud Amin. This article describes the risks to the nation’s power network. Most security discussions are about the information network; however, one should also consider the power grid behind it. This article stresses the importance of a commitment to security. Vice Chancellor King responded that one of the things the system is doing is outsourcing the sensitive data; like credit cards and bank account information.

Vice Chancellor Niemi provided an update on the Enterprise Investment projects. The Board Members received handouts detailing project status; including the estimated implementation timeline; listing of fiscal Year 2009 completed projects; a timeline for estimated project implementation through the end of this fiscal year and a listing of projects that are multiyear or scheduled for completion in fiscal year 2010. Many projects are dependent on the completion of the Oracle conversion, specific hardware upgrades and the availability of human resources.

Vice Chancellor Niemi provided an update on three primary goals developed and presented to the Board at the March 2006 meeting.
The first goal was the stabilization of the system in order to achieve and sustain high levels of system availability, data security and user support. Accomplishments include the expansion of Desire to Learn and data warehouse capabilities, significant enhancement of security by implementing a broad security program and substantial improvements to user training and documentation.

The second goal was innovation initiatives; accomplishments include acceleration of enhancements, expansion and integration of enterprise systems, web interfaces with student services and migration off obsolete technology.

The last goal targeted was to improve the Information Technology Services organization by implementation of best practices management protocols, redesigning the Information Technology Services Governance Committees and building capacity for multi-campus technical and purchasing initiatives reducing costs. There has been significant progress in each of these areas.

Vice Chancellor Niemi introduced Joanne Chabot who is in charge of Systems Development and Customer Support, Jim Dillemuth who heads the Portfolio and Project Management office and Alfred Essa whose focus is on Instructional Technology working in partnership with Academic and Student Affairs, and the leadership of the data center hardware area. Each of these individuals will present information to the Board in their area.

Mr. Dillemuth reported that the Integrated Student Services / Registration Information System Update groups met and developed a process flow chart from the student perspective and presented the Fiscal Year 2010 Initiative Summary for the ISS / REGIS correlation document which maps projects to the process flow. The project management office is using this information to develop a workplan for fiscal year 2010 which will be presented to the Enterprise Investment Committee in May.

Vice Chancellor King commented that the for the most part the infrastructure improvements are complete. The front-end spend focused on improvements to the infrastructure; investments will now focus on the student facing investments. The information presented is the beginning of a strategic posture of how to evaluate a project and how it fits into the flow chart. The Enterprise Investment Committee has not yet adopted this process and requested that the Board members provide feedback to let them know that they are on the right track. Vice Chancellor Niemi affirmed that Information Technology is moving in this direction, yet cautioned that infrastructure changes will always be needed and that the completed projects will result in a continuing investment requirement; .

Ms. Chabot provided a report on the joint Integrated Student Services / Registration Information System meeting. Ms. Chabot participated in the development of the Process Flow Chart from the Student Perspective. A decision
was made to look at the flow of activities involved from the time a student decides to go to college all the way through to completion of a program or graduation and employment. Cross-functional groups which included student representatives were assigned an area and determined the elements for the flow chart and goals. The compiled information was used to create the chart shown. The next step in the process will be to present workplan information to the Enterprise Investment Committee who will use this information as a guide in assessing the priorities and determining if there are gaps in an initiative area. More work will be required by this group to develop the work plan.

Vice Chancellor King observed that this is the beginning of a strategic plan to build a new suite of student service software developed internally. A decision was made by the Board several years ago to not purchase a suite of software and to instead build it internally. This is thought of as the next generation of student services and administrative records systems with our own homegrown platform. Vice Chancellor Niemi responded that this platform is the framework for the build out. Eight areas of need were presented to the legislature; this will address two of the areas; student services including online learning and then the retooling of administrative services. This framework will provide the direction needed to make decisions in building out systems. The advantage in building these ourselves is a product that can be fine-tuned to meet the complex needs of the system and the ability to leverage the intellectual property of what has already been developed. In conclusion, the EIC is very carefully overseeing the projects asking for feedback, prioritizing and tracking the progress of the projects.

Trustee Benson complimented Vice Chancellor Niemi on the development of the Student Process Flow Chart and the information provided. Is this Board somewhat an impediment because students are only given tuition cost estimates in the spring? Vice Chancellor King responded that this has been a problem for the system; the campuses are not provided with final Board action on the rates and charges until June or July. The campuses are provided with assistance in developing projections used to estimate the rates and charges. This estimate is rolled into the financial aid engine and the students are provided with a preliminary estimate and notification that the prices are not fixed until the Board’s final action.

Trustee Benson stated that the most important information for students is financial aid and the costs at the front end. Should the system set tuition and then let the Legislature do what they are going to do? Is this an obstacle to recruitment? Vice Chancellor King requested that this issue be brought back to the Board when more campus presidents are in attendance to see if this is more of an obstacle than reported. President Frank responded that the estimates have been effective and that comparative information shows how affordable the system is in comparison to private colleges. Until the Legislature completes the budgets, final decisions will be delayed. Chancellor McCormick responded the students have some
concerns, however on a biennial budget every other year, the information is available and the Board has an opportunity to pass two-year tuition rates.

Trustee Van Houten stated that the case was made to improve the infrastructure and for the most part that effort is now complete. Is the focus moving past the convenience for the student and towards a system and institution level which will be more useful to faculty and administrators in budgetary planning? Vice Chancellor Niemi responded that the emergency items are for the most part complete. Information Technology is working on filling out the services that could not be provided on the old system. The items considered are not bells and whistles; they will modernize core applications and student services provided. The Student Perspective Flow Chart will serve as a guide.

Trustee Van Houten replied that in terms of future Board reports what would be helpful is information about the next steps. Vice Chancellor Niemi stated that there is a tangible enthusiasm in IT that things are now moving ahead. Trustee Thiss shared his compliments; on behalf of the customer and from a strategic perspective this is the right track.

2. **Oracle Conversion**

Chair Dickson stated that reading the timeline was like being at Cape Canaveral, it looked exciting and exquisitely planned. Vice Chancellor Niemi responded that one of the reasons that this topic and the details are being shared is to demonstrate the detailed planning and documentation that is used. This used a sophisticated level of communication that allowed essential staff to log on and monitor what was happening. Ms. Chabot reported that the staff was sitting on the edge of their seats. This was a huge project and the enterprise investment money from the Board made the planning possible and the tools and technology needed available. The conversion was really three projects:

- conversion of Uniface 7 to Uniface 8;
- Seamless Core project which merged the student data; and
- RDB to Oracle conversion.

Success of this conversion can be attributed to first the extensive planning and detailed communication used and the establishment of a major testing environment. The staff was required to travel to common locations; a big thank you needs to go out to the staff and their families. Each business process was tested over and over again until the tests were successful. The system’s highest level of use was mimicked to test performance. In addition to this, a triage plan was established. The triage team was gathered in St. Cloud to address any issues that arose. Due to the success of the conversion, the team was able to go home on day two, because there were few issues that needed urgent attention. Normally 75 incidents are reported, however by the second week fewer than this were reported. The campuses themselves are owed a huge thank you. Vice Chancellor Niemi
responded that the campus participation played a huge factor in the success of this conversion. They looked at the data and provided user acceptance testing.

Trustee Thiss inquired how this was celebrated. Ms. Chabot responded that an event is planned in April. President Frank responded that they are including a staff member in the campus staff appreciation and have acknowledged this staff member’s commitment.

Chancellor McCormick responded that this conversion needs to be included in the progress report. Not one president criticized the investment in Information Technology. There were individuals who said, cut the Information Technology’s budget. The university student leaders responded by saying, “no, wait, students need these services.” They acknowledged the impact this investment has on the students and the services provided.

Chair Dickson responded that it is important to acknowledge the work completed by Ms. Chabot. Thank you and congratulations to your team. Vice Chancellor Niemi responded that this could not be completed without the commitments and hard work of the rest of the team including Mr. Essa, Mr. Dillemuth, Mr. Rushenberg and their teams.

Trustee Van Houten requested that the finance committee provide information on the savings in the areas of maintenance and operational costs as a result completion of this conversion. Vice Chancellor Niemi responded that a report on cost savings is possible. The most significant cost savings was in risk elimination.

3. **MnOnline Future Technology Discussion**

Chair Dickson introduced the discussion of MnOnline, from the technology perspective. Vice Chancellor Niemi stated that this presentation will provide strategic high-level analysis of what it might take from a technology standpoint to support an increase in online enrollment driven by the Governor’s challenge. Mr. Essa stated that as result of the RDB to Oracle conversion the teams will be able to focus on initiatives like MNOnline. There are three questions one should ask before making a decision to meet the Governor’s challenge; what will be required from a technology perspective, what strategy will be used and what will this cost? Mr. Essa described the current and future states of MnOnline in a presentation.

Chair Frank inquired if there are limits to our growth with the current platform. Mr. Essa responded that the system could continue to grow for the next two to three years on this platform. Vice Chancellor King responded that at the next Finance Committee meeting the Board will be asked to approve the Desire to Learn contract extension.
Trustee Thiss stated the Governor gave the challenge; however, it is up to the system to decide whether to be good or great. Mr. Essa responded that at the current cost, the system could continue to offer good online educational opportunities. Information will need to be gathered prior to a commitment to becoming a great online education provider. The business plan, design and targets will need to be developed and then a cost analysis can be completed. Vice Chancellor King responded that a facilities model will be used to complete the preplanning needed. This way the process of thinking through what this may look like and the cost analysis are developed and then a decision on whether or not to make a commitment can be made.

4. Technology Work Group/Technology Standing Committee Discussion and Possible Charges
Chair Dickson presented and led a discussion of three possible recommendations to the charge of the technology Work Group. The committee members agreed that the Board of Trustees Work Group on Technology successfully completed its charge and recommends that it be disbanded as of the end of June 2009.

Trustee Benson responded that the original charge was to review the allocation of the money and felt that there is a clear understanding of this process and recommended that the group go dormant and be brought back if the need arises. Trustee Thiss agreed that the challenge of how the investment in Information Technology would be spent and how to make the controls transparent has been met. The only concern is that if this continues to be a part of the Finance, Facilities and Technology Committee of the Board will it get enough attention. Trustee Van Houten responded that a work group is temporary, serves its purpose, and does not require a full board vote. At this time the work is complete and if this committee is needed it could reconvene.

Trustee Renier started that Information Technology may choose to present information in the appropriate area depending on the issue as IT weaves itself through all the other areas. Trustee Thiss stated that the chair of the committee would be responsible for recommending a presentation of an Information Technology topic to their committee.

Chair Dickson moved to disband the Board of Trustees Work Group on Technology as of the end of June. Trustee Benson seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 11:50 a.m.
Respectfully submitted,
Christine Benner, Recorder