

Senate Committee on Information Technologies (SCIT)
March 11, 2019
Minutes of the Meeting

These minutes reflect discussion and debate at a meeting of a committee of the University of Minnesota Senate; none of the comments, conclusions or actions reported in these minutes reflect the views of, nor are they binding on, the senate, the administration or the Board of Regents.

[**In these minutes:** Welcome and Introductions; Learning Analytics and Student Data]

PRESENT: Michelle Driessen (acting chair), John Butler, Nancy Carpenter, Santiago Fernandez-Gimenez, Bernard Gulacheck, Jonathan Koffel, Timothy Nichols, Robert Rubinyi, Daniela Sandler, Rodney Williams

REGRETS: Geoffrey Ghose (chair), Al Beitz, Kristin Janke, Yoichi Watanabe, Carlos Soria

ABSENT: William Dana, Charles Miller, Karen Monsen, Arash Mahnan, Paul McSpadden

GUESTS: Donalee Attardo, senior director, Academic Technology, Office of Information Technology; Lincoln Kallsen, assistant vice president, Institutional Analysis, University Budget and Finance; Emily Ronning, assistant to the provost, Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost

1. Welcome and Introductions

Michelle Driessen, professor, College of Science and Engineering, sat in as meeting chair as Chair Geoffrey Ghose was unable to attend the meeting. Driessen called the meeting to order and invited a round of introductions.

2. Learning Analytics and Student Data

Driessen began the discussion by detailing her annual process of requesting analytical information on the students in her classes. She noted that faculty have many questions as to what data is available, who should be contacted to access the data, how much of the data can be used in the classroom setting, whether or not the data should be used to inform how the faculty member would instruct or advise a particular student, etc. Driessen explained the discussion was intended to provide faculty and staff a better understanding of the University of Minnesota's position regarding the creation of policies around learning analytics, and what is private versus usable information in light of helping students succeed.

Lincoln Kallsen, assistant vice president, Institutional Analysis, University Budget and Finance, began by saying that these are all very reasonable questions but, as of yet, there is not a comprehensive University infrastructure set up, nor a finalized policy in place around the use of learning analytics. He noted that on the University campuses, different constituencies approach learning analytics with varying requests and from many levels throughout the organization. He explained the goal was to structure the data in such a way that it would serve multiple purposes.

Kallsen listed some of the places where data is currently stored:

- In-course analytics: Moodle, Canvas, teaching and learning tools within classrooms such as clickers and software
- Between and among course analytics: how getting an A in one course might predict what the student would get in the next course in that discipline, or in another discipline
- Multi institutional analytics depositories such as Unizin
- Pure de-identified data sets for research

Robert Rubinyi noted that in “in-course analytics” gathering the data would be very time sensitive, whereas with some of the other areas the need for the data might be less immediate. John Butler added that as data becomes a candidate for broader distribution, there are increasing concerns about the data and the options for abstracting it.

Kallsen next introduced Emily Ronning, assistant to the provost, Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost. Ronning introduced the work that has been started around learning analytics with the development of [DiaLOG - Digital Learning Operational Governance](#), a project of the Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost, the Office of Informational Technology (OIT), and various administrative technology groups from all system campuses at the University.

Ronning stated clearly that operational governance was needed to move the project forward in a cohesive manner, but that it would in no way infringe upon faculty governance, nor would decisions be imposed on faculty about what or how to teach. Ronning explained that sometimes the three segments of DiaLOG (Learning Platform, Learning Tools, and Learning Analytics) are tied together with profound effects on each other, and sometimes they operate quite independently from one another. The charge of DiaLOG is to create a centralized infrastructure, a solid starting point, for policy and procedures around learning analytics and information technology, that can then be taken forward to faculty for discussion and input.

Dreissen said she believes the most beneficial place to start is with policy, as currently there is not a clearly defined policy that faculty can follow regarding using learning analytics to inform their classroom work and pedagogy. Kallsen noted that University of Minnesota Rochester has been researching and developing best practices around these topics, and he intends for that information to be incorporated into the policies that will be developed for system-wide use.

Next, Kallsen shared two documents with the committee; [Goals and Principles for Learning Analytics at the University of Washington](#), and [University of California: Learning Data Privacy Principles](#), and said it is incumbent upon the University of Minnesota to create a similar document in order to outline system-wide guiding principles. Kallsen then shared a third document, [PS to Unizin Mapping 98](#), which is a sample of the types of data that are and can be collected on student populations. A discussion followed regarding the use of, complexity of and validity of some of the elements in the mapping table. Kallsen noted this was a starting point only, a way to encourage conversation as to what data would be especially valuable and usable were it to be collected.

When asked about the projected timeline for learning analytics information to be available for use by faculty, Bernard Gulachek said the University is hoping that within approximately 90 days, the technical controls that safeguard data in the Unizin Data Platform will be at the promised level of security so that the University can confidently place its information into the Unizin system. That would be a starting point, he added.

A robust discussion followed in which a number of areas requiring future listening sessions arose:

- The need for transparency about how and by whom the collected data would be used
- The need for well-informed, literate discussions around learning analytics guided by operational governance and University policy
- The importance of responsible and appropriate use of the collected data in accordance with the Minnesota Data Practices Act as well as federal standards
- How administrative departments such as Institutional Analysis, Office of Information Technology, and the Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost can best interact with faculty governance regarding these issues
- How well is the University meeting its objectives and its mission when there are two competing yet altruistic paths (protecting student privacy versus providing the best academic experience possible which may include using private data)
- The need to clearly communicate to participants the benefits and risks of either participating or opting out of data collection processes
- The need for the guiding principles that are established by the University to keep pace with the technological advances made in the data collection field

Daniela Sandler asked how these discussions would continue and how faculty could participate. Kallsen said he was very open to ideas and input as to how the conversations should take place. He noted that this topic needed to be addressed system-wide, with many different constituencies being heard from. Gulachek asked the committee members if this type of meeting, with accompanying documents, had been helpful in understanding the current standing of policy and infrastructure around learning analytics at the University of Minnesota. Committee members were positive in their assessment, adding that many people in their respective departments were also very interested in hearing about the progress being made around learning analytics.

In the interest of time, Driessen adjourned the meeting.

Geanette Poole
University Senate Office