The University Senate

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UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

Senate Committee On Information Technologies (SCIT)
April 7, 2025
Minutes of the Meeting

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[In these minutes: Draft Alternative Credentials Task Force Report; Course Retention (Canvas) and Media Retention (Kaltura) Policies]

PRESENT: Michelle Driessen, chair, Kaylee Brosius, Keith Brown, Adolfo Carrillo Cabello, Bernard Gulachek, Michael Manno, Natasha Monsaas-Daly, Emily Ronning, Jason Roy, Cassandra Scharber, Mani Subramani, Engin Sungar, William Tantzen, George Vinals, Alisha Wackerie-Hollman, Eric Watkins, Yi Zhu

REGRETS: None

ABSENT: Dehkontee Cuppah, Andrew Gallia, Liibaan Engel, Carter Johnson, Angie Ohler

OTHERS ATTENDING: Anne Barnes, assistant to the provost, Executive Vice President and Provost, Jake Kramer, service owner for video and conferencing, OIT,

Laurie Cooper Stoll, director, University Senate Office, Stacey Tidball, co-chair, Alternative Credentials Task Force, Ryan Torma, co-chair, Alternative Credentials Task Force, Jeff Weber, service owner, Academic Technology Tools

1. Welcome

Professor Michelle Driessen, chair, called the meeting to order.

2. Draft Alternative Credentials Task Force Report

Ryan Torma and Stacey Tidball, co-chairs, Alternative Credentials Task Force, then gave a presentation to the committee entitled, "Alternative Credentials Task Force Recommendations." The task force concluded that the University of Minnesota needs a formal governance structure and consistent standards due to the growing presence of these credentials and increased regulatory interest. They noted that despite prior efforts, there remains a lack of centralized coordination, standard terminology, and clarity about the meaning of credentials. Their recommendations include formal guidelines, an approval process, and a staff position in the Provost's office or delegated office to lead this work, along with the formation of a systemwide governance council.

Tidball emphasized the urgency of this work due to pressures from accrediting agencies and shifting dynamics in higher education. Tidball and Torma explained that the aim was not to impose uniformity but to ensure that credentials represented meaningful and verifiable achievements while maintaining institutional credibility. The task force also recommended creating resources for faculty and staff across the university, emphasizing the need for a streamlined, future-oriented process that avoided the complexity of traditional academic approvals.

Torma proposed a two-part approach: establishing governance for oversight and quality assurance and expanding faculty support through collaboration with existing communities of practice. Tidball added that growing attention from regulators, including the Higher Learning Commission and state and federal entities, made compliance and dedicated staffing increasingly important.

The committee also recommended establishing a university-wide policy on credit for prior learning (CPL), allowing students' previous work or educational experience to count toward academic credit. While some campuses already practice this, broader institutional adoption is underway, and the group is considering how to embed alternative credential language into existing policies.

Driessen asked which units currently offered CPL and examples of credentials under consideration. Torma shared that several units—including CCAPS, Carlson School, and CHD—issued digital badges and certificates for skill-based learning, often tied to coursework. Tidball noted the lack of a comprehensive inventory of such credentials and gave a personal example to illustrate how work-based learning might be credited.

Adolfo Carrillo Cabello asked whether Extension's work influenced the recommendations, raised concerns about limited consultation with the Faculty Senate, and inquired about links to the new core curriculum. Torma confirmed Extension's input was valued despite no formal representation and highlighted the importance of involving non-tenure-track instructors. He also saw potential for skill-based badges linked to the core curriculum. Tidball clarified that policy development includes both formal and informal consultation and stressed that alternative credentials could be more aligned with specific learning outcomes than with general curricular structures.

Driessen asked about whether alternative credentials could appear on transcripts or be transferable between institutions. Tidball responded that traditional transcripts would remain focused on credit-bearing coursework, but institutions were exploring comprehensive learner records (CLRs) to capture a broader range of student achievements. Currently, no standard system exists for transferring these credentials, though that could evolve.

Mani Subramani raised concerns about centralized governance, arguing that units were already adapting to different market needs and should be allowed to innovate without added bureaucracy. He questioned the necessity of new structures, suggesting instead a quarterly steering committee where units could share updates and learn from each

other. He noted that varying market demands meant that credentials did not need to be standardized across campuses. Tidball replied that centralization aimed to provide answers to external entities, not to control local decisions. Torma emphasized that without a shared framework, the value of credentials could be diluted. He advocated for a balance between structure and departmental autonomy. Carrillo Cabello concluded by noting two potential benefits—revenue generation and enhanced student recruitment—that could be emphasized more in future presentations.

3. Course Retention (Canvas) and Media Retention (Kaltura) Policies

Driessen then introduced Keith Brown, senior director for academic technology, who discussed proposed policies for retaining Canvas and Kaltura data. Brown explained that the university was considering implementing course and media retention policies, following best practices already adopted or being developed by other Big Ten institutions. The motivation behind this initiative includes aligning with upcoming digital accessibility regulations effective in April 2026, setting clear expectations for data access and storage, and allowing flexibility to switch vendors by reducing long-term storage dependencies—particularly with platforms like Kaltura, where storage costs could limit vendor options.

Brown noted they had been gathering feedback from colleges and campuses, and were in ongoing discussions with the Office of Undergraduate Education and Vice Provost Eric Watkins. He outlined two proposed options for Canvas course retention: a three-year retention policy with broad exception capabilities (such as allowing the Medical School to retain courses for five years), and a strict five-year policy with no exceptions. These proposals would affect courses associated with PeopleSoft that are used for credit-bearing instruction. The team is evaluating technical requirements, including whether to purchase or build tools to enforce these policies effectively. Brown stated the aim is to create a stable, reliable process that avoids unintended data loss and supports faculty, instructors, and students.

Jake Kramer, service owner for video and conferencing, OIT, explained that Kaltura is primarily a media streaming tool intended for academic content delivery, not long-term storage or archival purposes. The platform currently holds extensive data, some of which dates back 15 years and has not been accessed in a long time. To manage this, the team plans to implement a four-year retention policy: any content older than four years with fewer than five plays will be moved to a recycle bin, with users notified and given 30 days to respond before the content is permanently deleted. This process will only run between September 30 and April 1 to avoid impacting faculty during summer or leave periods. Kramer emphasized there will be clear, advanced communication about this change and the opportunity for users to flag content they want preserved. Special use cases—like those from university libraries that use Kaltura for archival and access purposes—are being taken into account, and exceptions may be made following further discussions. Driessen raised concerns about the 30-day response window, especially during semester breaks or for faculty on leave. The suggestion was made to possibly extend this window to 60 days.

The retention policy is based on total lifetime plays, and further strategy is being developed to address content that was viewed slightly more than five times but is still very old. The team is also considering presenting the plan to broader faculty committees for more input, particularly to account for adjunct instructors who may teach infrequently and rely on having their content accessible over longer periods.

4. Adjournment

Hearing no further business, Driessen adjourned the meeting.

Laurie Cooper Stoll
University Senate Office