

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF MEETING
APRIL 5, 2011
Morrill Hall Room 238A

[In these minutes: graduate education transition project; technology enhanced learning council update]

[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 represent the views of, nor are they binding on, the Senate, the Administration or the Board of Regents.]

PRESENT: Ted Higman (Chair), Craig Hohn, Allison Jacobsen, Sue Van Voorhis, Brent Larson, Simin Hickman, Billie Wahlstrom, James MacDonald, Yuk Sham, Bernie Gulachek (for Stephen Cawley), Pam Solvie

REGRETS: John Butler, Bonnie Westra, Judd Dudgeon, Neil Olszewski, Benton Schnabel, Paul Rubenis

ABSENT: Micah Haber, Mary Vavrus, David Arendale,

GUESTS: Frank Blalark, Director, Office of the Registrar

Professor Ted Higman called the meeting to order and welcomed those present.

Graduate Education Transition Project

Sue Van Voorhis, Director of Academic Support Resources, and Frank Blalark, Director of the Academic Records Unit, discussed the role of Academic Support Resources (ASR) in the Graduate Education Transition Project (Transition Project). Ms. Van Voorhis began the presentation by demonstrating the Graduate School website regarding the transition. (<http://www.grad.umn.edu/transition/>) She highlighted the meeting list and project information sections. She noted the primary focus of the Transition Project is to automate as many processes as possible. Currently, the Graduate School process is very paper intensive for students, DGSs and their assistants. ASR is working with the Graduate School, colleges, and departments to document and analyze over 150 graduate processes related to student services and administration of academic programs.

Mr. Blalark gave a power point presentation on the Transition Project. He stated the role of ASR is to assist in the project, and facilitate the development, modification, and automation of systems. Mr. Blalark noted that the Graduate School has been centralized since 1905, and is one of the five largest in the country. He went on to provide background on the Transition Project, and stated its guiding principles:

- Moving the authority for programmatic decisions out to the collegiate units, program leaders and faculty,

- Creating more efficient user friendly processes by leveraging undergraduate-enterprise systems for graduate and professional students,
- Removing duplication of efforts and inefficiencies at the central and program levels so that students are not redundantly responsible to both their colleges and the Graduate School,
- Accountability: allowing for systems to give information back to collegiate units so that accountability for quality and effectiveness of administrative processes rests with collegiate deans.

Mr. Blalark stated the implementation of the Transition Project began on May 28, 2010 and will continue into FY 2013. ASR began by realigning the academic structure in People Soft. This required gathering the academic records for all Graduate School students (except those in certain interdisciplinary programs) and reassigning it to the collegiate unit responsible for overseeing the student's academic major. This change in data structure affected numerous report, queries, and systems, and required creation of new active plan codes for 100s of majors, minors, and non-degree plans. Alignment was particularly challenging when multiple collegiate units owned majors.

Mr. Blalark showed slides comparing the previous academic structure with the new structure. Under the old structure, the Graduate School was over the Ph.D. and most MA and MS programs and collaborated with collegiate deans, professional programs, and departmental masters. Under the new structure, the Graduate School is not over any programs, but the collegiate deans are better aligned with all of the programs within the college. Mr. Blalark also noted the programs with multiple collegiate unit affiliations that are remaining in the Graduate School.

Mr. Blalark next discussed the process ASR used to learn the functions of the Graduate School. It met with students and staff members and created business process review committees. These committees were charged with identifying the needs for documentation, determining the subject matter experts on the individual processes, and managing the change. Documentation and transition teams including collegiate units associate deans, DGSs and students helped validate documentation and verify that it was correct.

ASR also expanded the Registrar's Advisory Committee to include staff from the Graduate School. The Committee brings together stakeholders from the collegiate units to review transition plans, identify priorities, and assist with stakeholder identification and involvement. Inclusion of the Graduate School staff in the Committee helped ASR recognize that Graduate Student processes, advising, and rules are different from those for undergraduates and could not be readily merged and aligned.

ASR also worked with CLA to determine the impact on collegiate units. This resulted in a redefinition of the buckets used to classify the different business processes being communicated to the collegiate units. The CLA graduate education transition teams are:

- Admissions,
- Communication and Change Management,

- Curriculum,
- Data Management,
- Governance,
- Placement, and
- Progress to Degree.

Mr. Blalark also noted the funding for the Transition Project and the members of the Transition Project team.

Admissions - Mr. Blalark discussed the list of 150 business processes that must be vetted. He stated 48 of the processes belong to admissions. The Director of the Office of Admissions has worked with collegiate units to create their own communications forms, and has streamlined the application processes, so that all of the decision-making is in the collegiate units. Currently, ASR is working on the change-of-major process for the Graduate School and the readmission process, so that students do not have to reapply to the Graduate School under these circumstances. Ms. Van Voorhis noted that the largest change with regard to the admissions process is that students are admitted directly to the colleges rather than to the Graduate School. Mr. Blalark stated that ASR is also working to expand access to the Graduate School cabinet so that every collegiate unit can have access to this. In the future, collegiate units will be able to scan in and update information.

Communication and Change Management - Next Mr. Blalark noted the importance of communication and change management to senior level administrators, faculty, DGSs, collegiate staff members, students, and frequent users of academic data. He stated one of the biggest hurdles was letting students know that they are no longer in the Graduate School and will not be graduating from it.

Curriculum. – Mr. Blalark stated that modifications are being made to PCAS to include graduate and professional programs. This will allow for an online catalogue and digitized approval process. The Graduate School was the primary approver for 800-level courses, now colleges will be included as approvers.

Data Management – Mr. Blalark noted review of this process resulted in the set up of GRD programs for registration. Students are now registering for the fall term in their new collegiate units.

Graduate School Custom Tables - The Graduate School has 30 custom tables, and ASR is seeking ways to move information from the custom tables into People Soft. Mr. Blalark noted that some reports will not work due to movement of data, and ASR is seeking methods for ad hoc reporting in these circumstances.

Governance - ASR found that six or seven collegiate units owned some minors, and ASR is working on an approval process to handle this situation. Mr. Blalark noted that Duluth and Rochesters' graduate programs were left in the Graduate School because they do not offer Ph.Ds. Another issue is tuition rates. Previously there was a single rate but with the

decentralization of 300 majors, there could potentially be 300 different rates. The fringe rate also needs to be reviewed.

Placement – Mr. Blalark noted there are five business processes to review within this area. These involved developing standard workshops and events. For example, he stated that the Graduate School puts on writing workshops and would determine if these should be decentralized.

Progress to Degree – Mr. Blalark next discussed the problems with the existing system for tracking graduate students' progress to degree. He stated that historically, students filled out a form indicating the courses they were taking, and have taken. The advisor signed it, and the form was imaged. To change the form, it was printed, written on, and reimaged. Mr. Blalark showed a complex diagram of the things students must do to receive a Ph.D. He noted that for all of the collegiate units there are over 400 different milestones to graduation. He also noted the cumbersome process of passing paper forms between collegiate units, and stated that ASR is working to digitize these forms and firm up the approval process. He showed the process map for preliminary orals.

Ms. Van Voorhis stated that when ASR meets with the programs, it asks them to consider what information is necessary, what forms can be eliminated and automated, and how the processes can be streamlined and made more efficient. ASR tries to approach this from the viewpoint of the students and DGSs. Mr. Blalark noted ASR also found that many students do not know what is expected of them. He discussed the disconnect between the information from advisors and the information from the Graduate School. Simin Hickman asked if there is a lot of lost paperwork. Mr. Blalark noted that they had discovered more duplicative paperwork than lost paperwork. He stated ASR is trying to eliminate some of these problems with an authentication project. Professor Brent Larson stated he appreciates that ASR is focusing on the process from the student perspective, and emphasized the need for good communication with students.

Mr. Blalark provided the committee with a handout titled Executive Update on the Work of the Graduate Education Transition Project. Ms. Van Voorhis noted this information is also located on the website.

Technology Enhanced Learning Update

Vice Provost Billie Wahlstrom reported on the work of the Technology Enhanced Learning Council (TEL Council). She provided SCIT with handouts regarding committee membership, activities supported by the Office of Distributed Education and Instructional Technology, and new federal regulations for online learning.

Vice Provost Wahlstrom stated there are 40 members of the TEL Council and it draws membership from the Twin Cities and coordinate campuses. It considers issues growing out of e-learning initiatives. Currently, it is spending time on the new Federal Department of Education regulations for online learning. She read the key language of the Regulation on State Approval of Distance Education Providers.

If an institution is offering postsecondary education through distance or correspondence education in a state in which it is not physically located, the institution must meet any state requirements for it to legally offer distance or correspondence education in that state. An institution must be able to document upon request from the department that it has such state approval.

She stated that the regulation is problematic because every state has different registration rules, and some states charge steep fees for registration. Additionally, if the University is found to be in violation of the regulation it could be required to return the Title IV financial aid awarded to students in those states, and result in revocation of the institution's eligibility to offer Title IV financial aid to any student. She noted that the TEL Council would be meeting with ASR regarding this issue. Professor Higman asked how it is determined that the University is offering education outside of its physical location. Vice Provost Wahlstrom stated it is based on the student's state of residence. She gave an example of a student from Connecticut who completes most of his degree at the University of Minnesota and then returns home. The University cannot offer the student the option of distance learning to complete his degree if the University has not met Connecticut's requirements to offer distance education.

Vice Provost Wahlstrom stated the University hoped to stay the legislation because it undermines regional accreditation, and puts an undo burden on non-profit Universities. Ms. Van Voorhis provided additional information on this topic. She stated according to the national organization ACRO, most higher education institutions are asking Congress to block this regulation. They are also working with the Department of Education to create a common set of state registration requirements. Vice Provost Wahlstrom noted that the University's legislative representative stated it is unlikely common requirements will be identified.

Vice Provost Wahlstrom went on to state that the TEL Council is dealing with two compliance issues:

- What constitutes a credit hour under federal regulations, and
- Identification of an individual to whom on line students can contact.

She noted that each collegiate unit would receive a letter about the credit hour requirements. Ms. Van Voorhis noted that the University of Minnesota's current policy regarding credit hours meets the federal regulation. Vice Provost Wahlstrom stated that ASR, the General Council, the University's legislative liaisons, and the Deans are aware of and working on these issues.

Vice Provost Wahlstrom also noted the TEL Council's work on policies and procedures regarding on-line courses. It has identified 30 policies and procedures that put the University at risk for not serving students well, and has dealt with almost every unit at the University.

Additionally, the TEL Council is working on a set of templates to help faculty and collegiate units take courses from face-to-face, to online, to syndication. She stated the Office of Distributed Education and Instructional Technology (DEIT) has developed an E-learning Clear Path Process to help faculty create, implement and market online courses and programs. She noted the first goal with e-learning is to serve students, but the TEL Council also wants to help faculty to market on-line courses.

Other DEIT work mentioned by Vice Provost Wahlstrom includes:

- Creating and providing templates for intellectual property, external sales, and revenue sharing models,
- Assisting collegiate units with market research, analysis, market pricing and business plan development of online and hybrid programs,
- Integrating e-folio Minnesota into the University's suite of academic technology tools,
- Assisting faculty and collegiate units with social media, iTunes U, research and analysis of e-learning technology trends, and
- Partnering with Stanford University on nationwide teacher licensure

Allison Jacobson noted a program offered through the extension service and asked if it is compliance with the new federal regulations regarding credit hours. Vice Provost Wahlstrom stated that non-credit and continuing education courses are exempt from the federal regulation regarding credit hours.

Professor Larson asked if the regulations regarding distance education applied to hybrid courses where students complete part of their course work on campus. Vice Provost Wahlstrom responded that it only applies to on-line courses. She explained that the TEL Council is first working to meet the distance learning requirements of states within the region. It will then focus on states without registration fees. Finally, it will ask units if they have enough students from a particular state to warrant meeting the requirements of that state. She noted the focus is on insuring students are not penalized by the regulation.

Vice Provost Wahlstrom also stated that the TEL Council is working with MNSCU and all of the coordinate campuses to pay one fee and issue one set of letters annually. Vice Provost Wahlstrom encouraged committee members to join the TEL Council and its subcommittees.

Professor Higman thanked Vice Provost Wahlstrom and noted the May 3 SCIT meeting.

Hearing no further business, Professor Higman adjourned the meeting.

Dawn Zugay
University Senate Office