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# The University Senate

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## UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

### **Senate Committee on Information Technologies (SCIT) September 11, 2023 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; University Senate Governance Orientation; IT Overview; PEAK Initiative and Virtual Teams Updates; Committee Priorities Discussion]

**PRESENT:** Michelle Driessen (chair), Keith Brown, Adolfo Carrillo Cabello, Dehkontee Cuppah, Liibaan Egal, Carter Johnson, Michael Manno, Angie Ohler, Emily Ronning, Cassandra Scharber, Mani Subramani, Engin Sungur, William Tantzen, Alisha Wackerle-Hollman, Eric Watkins, Yi Zhu

**REGRETS:** Bernard Gulachek, George Vinals

**ABSENT:** Bryan Pekel

**GUESTS:** Kathy Breitenbach, transformation leader, IT Virtual Teams, Office of Information Technology, Phoebe Johnson, senior director, IT Leads, Office of Information Technology

**OTHERS ATTENDING:** Stacey Tidball, Maggie Flaten

#### **1. Welcome**

Michelle Driessen, chair, welcomed members and invited a round of introductions. Members introduced themselves noting their unit or college, their academic field and interests, and why they chose to participate on the SCIT Committee.

#### **2. University Senate Governance Orientation**

Geanette Poole, senate associate, University Senate Office, provided a brief presentation titled [University Senate Governance Orientation and Overview](#). The orientation was provided in order to describe the responsibilities and charge of the committee, familiarize members with meeting logistics, and outline the function and structure of University Senate governance.

#### **3. IT Overview**

Phoebe Johnson, senior director, IT Leads, Office of Information Technology (OIT), shared a PowerPoint titled [IT@UMN 2023 Onboarding](#) to introduce committee members to the work of

IT at the University. Johnson noted that IT services supports nearly everything that takes place at the University, and is an integral part of the University meeting its MPACT 2025 goals and commitments. Johnson's presentation included the following points:

- Through IT governance as well as University Senate governance, IT receives input and evaluations of its services and technologies.
- Annual surveys and focus groups are additional methods by which IT gathers satisfaction levels as to how technologies and services are being delivered at the University.
- Site reliability engineering is a system that has been recently implemented to evaluate IT system performance at the University. This system helps determine investment decisions, future planning, and scalability.
- Major cost drivers of IT expenses systemwide are staff payroll and software.
- Compliance and cybersecurity are also significant cost drivers, especially as compliance regulations and types of cybersecurity threats are continually evolving.
- NXT GEN Programs are groundbreaking college experiences significantly supported by IT at the University.
- Identity and Access Management (IAM) is an initiative at the University with the intention of providing the right people with the right information at the right time, and guarding against mismanagement of access to information.
- Real estate changes at the University are motivating relocation efforts of the Network Operations Center (NOC) and the Data Center (DC). Planning for the move is already underway with a projected date for the actual move beginning in 2026.
- Artificial Intelligence and ChatGPT have the potential to cause seismic changes at the University. Discussions are taking place among IT administration, the Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost (EVPP), Academic Support Resources, and many others in order to answer the question: *How will the University prepare itself for the impending changes (good and bad)?*

After the presentation, Johnson opened the floor for questions. The following points were made during the discussion:

- In response to a question regarding the percentage of the University's IT expenditure that was going toward cybersecurity, Johnson said she would obtain that information and share it with Chair Driessen.
- Additional disciplines in the NXT GEN platforms include UMN Crookston offering NXT GEN Badge (policing and public safety) and NXT Gen Teach (post-baccalaureate special education licensure) on all five UMN campuses.

#### **4. PEAK Initiative and Virtual Teams Updates**

Johnson and Kathy Breitenbach, transformation leader, IT Virtual Teams, OIT, shared a slide deck titled [PEAK and Virtual Teams Update](#). The presentation included the following points:

- While PEAK is in the implementation phase for four areas (IT, Human Resources, Marketing/Communications, and Finance), IT had situated itself in the operations center framework some time ago. IT is currently focusing on creating Virtual Teams to enhance opportunities for employees who have IT responsibilities within their units, and would benefit from an opportunity to contribute to enterprise IT initiatives otherwise not available to them in their units.

- The intention is to decrease possible feelings of isolation for employees, and to interact with colleagues across the system who may be in similar positions, while building nimble, well-trained teams who can serve a number of areas.
- Responses from the most recent Employee Engagement Survey indicate that employees are asking for opportunities to develop and grow in their positions, while on the job; Virtual Teams may provide this opportunity.
- Keeping the goals of the PEAK initiative in mind, IT administration stood up three pilot Virtual Teams during the summer of 2023 and asked several research questions about how Virtual Teams can be successful for participants and the University as a whole. It also put in place ways to measure outcomes and results.
- Some of the research questions asked of the pilot Virtual Teams included:
  - Can we bring a team that is narrowly focused together and have them work quickly?
  - Can we take an existing team and broaden the scope of work for that team and will it be able to work efficiently?
  - Can a team of **clinical** support specialists be brought together to work effectively and fluidly around the organization, to provide backup for units/areas that may only have one technology specialist?
- Takeaways from the pilot program include learning *while on the job* solidifies the learning of the new skill set. A majority of participants said they felt that they were learning new skills and developing professionally. However, capacity and availability pose challenges; how to carve out the time for both participants and their managers that allows for daily work *and* the additional Virtual Team work/learning to occur is challenging.

Following the presentation, Johnson and Breitenbach invited questions. The discussion included the following points:

- In response to questions regarding how much time would be required of those participating in the Virtual Teams, Breitenbach said that team leaders (such as product managers, product owners, and those leading big initiatives) would require about 25% time commitment to do the necessary planning and facilitation work. Virtual Team individual contributors would be asked to commit 15-20% of their time to the work. She observed that in the pilot programs, those who were able to commit 20% of their time were most successful.
- For employees who will be invited to participate on Virtual Teams, their managers will be consulted prior to the invitation being extended to the employee.

Hearing no further questions, Driessen thanked the guests and moved to the last agenda item.

### **5. Committee Priorities Discussion**

Driessen invited committee members to reach out directly to her with topics they would recommend for upcoming agendas.

Hearing no further business, Driessen thanked committee members and adjourned the meeting.

Geanette Poole  
University Senate Office