MINNESOTA STATE COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES
BOARD OF TRUSTEES
TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
July 21, 2010

Technology Committee Members Present: *David Paskach, Chair; Christopher Frederick, Vice Chair; Trustees Cheryl Dickson, Jacob Englund, Phillip Krinkie, and James Van Houten*

Technology Committee Members Absent: *Trustee Michael Vekich*

Other Board Members Present: *Board Chair Scott Thiss, Vice Chair Clarence Hightower, Chancellor James McCormick, and Trustees Louise Sundin. Dan McElroy, Thomas Renier, Duane Benson and Alfredo Oliveira*

Leadership Council Committee Members Present: *Vice Chancellor Darrel Huish and President Judith Ramaley*

The Minnesota State Colleges and Universities Technology Committee held its meeting on July 21, 2010, at Wells Fargo Place, 4th Floor, Board Room, 30 East 7th Street in St. Paul. Chair Paskach called the meeting to order at 8:31 a.m.

Approval of the Technology Committee Meeting Minutes
Chair Paskach called the committee to order. As this is a newly formed committee there are no minutes for approval.

1. **Vice Chancellor Overview Process**
   Chair Paskach welcomed the members to the Board Technology Committee. This committee was formed in part as a response to the Office of Legislative Auditor (OLA) report and as a means of addressing the critical nature technology plays in all areas of the system.

   Vice Chancellor Darrel Huish provided an overview of the important insights gained during these first 15 weeks with the system. Vice Chancellor Huish has been meeting with presidents, faculty leadership, student leadership, chief information officers, technology staff, and many others. A half dozen campus visits have been conducted and three more are scheduled in the near future.

   This system has a strong CIO community, which is a tremendous asset. An atmosphere that cultivates sharing of information has been created because of the efforts of individuals like Ken Niemi, Carolyn Parnell and Ken Ries, CIO from Pine Technical College.

   Vice Chancellor Huish reported that information technology governance structure is above average, the governance processes are generally strong with exception of

the project initiation and selection process as mentioned in the OLA report. Trustee Van Houten inquired about the difference between the governance chart depicted in the OLA report and the one shown in the packet. Vice Chancellor Huish responded that the chart within the OLA report on page 75 figure 5.1 describes the prioritization of projects and new initiatives; the chart in the Board packet shows the overall advisory structure within information technology.

Vice Chancellor Huish reported that excellent progress has been made to address the audit findings. That includes reduction of reliance on consultants, improvements to the process for prioritizing IT projects, implementation of a process to track progress on audit findings and implementation of new software and processes to improve user access controls. Trustee Hightower responded that caution should be used when interpreting the finding on consultants. Consultants were used to address difficulty in hiring; as the use of consultants is decreased, the staffing increase may cause some concern. Instead, careful consideration should be given to the use of contractors without a cost benefit analysis. Hiring staff without a cost benefit analysis may result in the same finding.

Trustee Krinkie inquired if the audit finding stating that there was inadequate sequencing of projects and staff resources was an accurate statement. Vice Chancellor Huish responded that it was an accurate statement. When the analysis was completed, there was considerable room for improvement in project management. There is a lag from the time the need for improvement is recognized and the time it takes to bring about change. Changes in staffing and training have resulted in improvements that are now being realized.

Chancellor McCormick stated there are three topics that this group might want to be prepared to address with the legislature in February. First, what are the benefits and efficiencies of providing centralized technology services as opposed to each individual campus providing their own services? A list of return on investment benefits should be developed. Second, develop an explanation of cost savings for hiring staff rather than using consultants. Finally, determine if the presidents along with leadership from the other areas of the organization support the investment in technology. Vice Chancellor Huish will be ready for a presentation to the legislature in February. President Ramaley responded that efforts have been made to bring different constituencies together.

Trustee Van Houten stated the report contains criticism on how the board was providing oversight to the system. Page 78 of the report states that, "we observed that oversight of the $30 million spent on IT-related professional/technical services between fiscal years 2007 and 2009 fell short of state standards set for state agencies." To address the findings the system will need to manage to the state standards and evaluate project management. Chair Thiss responded that a lot can be done by February and a clear message can be developed for the legislature. It has become clear that there is not an appreciation or understanding

about how big a role technology plays in higher education. This message must be clear for both the legislature and all of the constituents. Technology touches all aspects of education; it is complex and massive.

2.   **Students First Update**
      Vice Chancellor Huish introduced Jon Eichten, Director of Students First who provided a Student First update.

      Jon Eichten acknowledged John O'Brien's leadership, which led to a collaborative, inclusive process that considered the interests of students, faculty, staff and administrators. Jon indicated that Students First would continue to function in the same collaborative and inclusive spirit.

      Jon Eichten presented the Student First Update to the committee providing an update on the six projects within Students First including the key milestones, the campus preparedness plan and the next steps. Individuals interested in following progress on these projects can find additional information on the following website: www.studentsfirst.projects.mnscu.edu.

      Chair Thiss stated that fraud prevention has been an additional benefit from the e-transcripts project. Jon Eichten replied that the response to the completion of this project has been positive, from both the students and the campuses perspective.

      Board Chair Thiss requested that Jon Eichten provide an update on Students First at every meeting.

3.   **Brief Primer on Information Technology Services**
      Vice Chancellor Huish introduced Carolyn Parnell the Chief Operations Officer and attributed the recent progress to Carolyn's efforts.

      COO Parnell presented the Brief Primer on Information Technology Services. Some of this information was included in past board presentations; however, this will provide a baseline of information to the committee.

      Trustee Van Houten stated increases to bandwidth capacity have been described as essential improvements; what other items are essential? Carolyn Parnell responded that improvements to servers were essential. The risks of running an aging infrastructure with little redundancy is high. This investment has created redundancy between the Westbank Office Building and Classroom Office Building server sites. Successful failover tests of the Learning Management System (Desire 2 Learn) have been conducted. Once the upgrades to the data center are complete, a failover test of the ISRS system will be conducted.

      Carolyn Parnell stated that by 2009 the enterprise information technology division doubled the amount of money spent per student on activities that can be directly

attributed to student services. The numbers do not reflect the amount of money the campus IT units spend in terms of student support.

Trustee Van Houten complimented Carolyn Parnell for a first class presentation of a complicated subject. Trustee Dickson thanked Carolyn Parnell for a valuable presentation that should be heard by the Leadership Council, student organizations and any of affiliated groups or associations that would be interested. It is tremendously important that everyone understand the comprehensiveness of the presence of technology in every area of higher education.

Trustee Dickson responded to the pyramid chart on page 26 of the board packet. One of the criticisms heard is that information technology does too much. An evaluation of the services provided would be helpful this may include analyses of which services are being used, which are cost effective, which services people need versus want and a study of the cost. President Ramaley responded that Vice Chancellor Huish has presented information on reviewing innovations that begin anywhere in the system to help determine if a service is helpful and cost effective.

Board Chair Thiss thanked the presenters for the information shared especially use of measurements and accountability to describe the progress made. This is exactly what was needed from the IT division. These presentations demonstrate why the board came to the realization that a Technology Committee was needed.

Chancellor McCormick commented that the IT system was previously at the breaking point. The old system did not have any more capacity and without the Oracle conversion the system could not move forward. Chancellor McCormick suggested that committee members take a moment to thank the people of Minnesota for the significant investment in technology. A thank you should also be extended to the governor, legislature and the Board who supported this request. The conversion could not have taken place without this investment in technology.

Carolyn Parnell agreed that the system was at risk. Chair Paskach responded when you compare the amount spent on some major conversions ISRS is still a bargain due to its capacity alone. This is a bargain compared to what others are paying for the same functionality. The money received and the speed of the action may have led to the findings but it was critical that the upgrades were quickly completed. Now the process of project management can be refined and improved.

Chair Paskach requested that efforts be made to include the campus per student spending in the per student calculation in order to measure the amount spent by the whole system. Carolyn Parnell agreed to gather this information.

Trustee Sundin inquired where the system is compared to the other institutions around the county. How do the services provided by the system compare with the

793 institutions or the for-profit institutions? Carolyn Parnell responded that the obtaining average of the five institutions was difficult. There is not a good set of comparative institutions to measure against. The information on these five institutions can be gathered again. Information on comparative services can be gathered as well.

Trustee Sundin stated that if this is truly a learning organization then a goal should be to retain knowledge and improve employees' skill sets. This will allow employees to become proficient and provide great service. Carolyn Parnell stated that a tactical plan for professional development and succession planning has been created. The information technology division is committed to and believes in the mission of higher education and making sure that employees have the training needed is a component.

4. Discussion of Committee Goals

Chair Paskach lead a discussion of the committee goals. The committee agreed that the completion of the Students First project and response to the OLA report would be the top two overriding goals.

Vice Chancellor Huish requested that the committee consider setting the development of a service delivery model as a goal. There is considerable activity in developing innovations and efficiencies. This committee could assist by providing clear descriptions of when an institution has the latitude to develop innovations or share services and when they cannot. Chair Paskach responded that this really is an IT strategy. In developing this the roles for the whole system will be clearer. President Ramaley responded that collaboration on this goal would get to the issues of how to determine if something should receive centralized support as opposed to what should distinguish institutions. This goal sets a platform for the future. The Leadership Council Technology Committee is prepared to act as a companion to the Board Technology Committee on this goal.

Chair Paskach stated that the first two goals would be sent out to the committee for acknowledgement from members. Additional information on the last goal would be provided for clarification. The goals will be presented at the September committee meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 10:05 a.m.
Respectfully submitted,
Christine Benner, Recorder