Data Stewardship Committee: Minutes of March 30, 2015

In attendance: Brian O'Connor (CAS), David Love (SEAS), Shirley Walker (Student Accounts), Kara Saunders (Registrar), Greg Olsen (VPEM), Mark Molnar (OIA), Sue Krzystofiak (HR), Gary Pacer (EAS), Craig Abbey (OIA), Ashley Kravitz (Resource Planning), Kelly Hayes McAlonie (Capital Planning), Rachel Link (OIA)

Meeting called to order at 4:00 p.m. by Gary Pacer.

Craig and Gary will be meeting on Thursday (April 2, 2015) with the Data Governance Committee. The DGC will be looking for updates and progress on the deliverables, so Craig and Gary need information from the working groups to share. All materials worthy of being shared with the DSC and ultimately, the DGC, should be sent to Craig for posting on the website. Craig also mentioned that any drafts or definitions that need review can also be posted for feedback on the website.

Brice Bible, CIO, recently attended IT roundtables sponsored by the Education Advisory Board (EAB), a consulting company that works with more than 600 colleges and universities. Brice brought back copies of eight presentations related to data governance, business intelligence, and analytics in higher education and shared these materials with Craig and Gary. The presentations will be uploaded to the data governance site for review by committee members. Since EAB works with so many in the field of higher education, their case studies and examples are tuned towards those terms, making them relevant and useful for the DSC and DGC. EAB will be presenting another workshop at the end of April on IT topics as well.

Reports from working teams were presented next. Sue presented for the Faculty working team. They are making progress with the matrix, and have filled in slots for qualified academic rank, including the titles used by the law school. No handout was provided to the group, but the updated matrix will be posted on the website. The group is working on fine-tuning definitions to make them as complete as possible. Additional definitions include full/part time, staff, student employee, instructional faculty, annual salary, and appointment. There is still work ahead, but the group is making progress. Craig asked about the Law School's use of the term "visiting associate professor" to designate new tenure-track faculty. Sue replied that this terminology was used to match what other law schools do. Craig suggested that the "visiting" title be used in local titles in HR data tables, as local titles are easily changed, while the state title for a position instead read "assistant" or "associate" professor. Sue stated that attempts to change this policy have been unsuccessful in the past, but it could be tried again as leadership has changed. Kelly asked if the provost could make a blanket rule stating which state titles could be used.

Craig said that the initial use of the VAP titles may also have come about at UB due to UUP contracts in the past that limited pay scales for assistant/associate professors, making it difficult to attract law faculty, but that VAP titles were not subject to the same restrictions, so those titles were used. Craig suggested raising the title change issue again now, because there are many issues with coding and reports using the VAP titles, which in all other units do not indicate tenure-track faculty. Kara asked if these sorts of data issues are the purview of the DSC: Craig stated that this is a data quality issue, so it can fall under the group's charge. There are numerous data quality issues on campus that can lead to issues. One example is the quick admit process, where gender is not a required field. However, state and federal reporting requires gender on all student records, and the missing genders on quick-admit records leads to additional time to correct these fields. Kara said that the group should be explicit in the purview of data quality issues: we do not want the tail wagging the dog, but we need definitions in a larger context than currently exists.

In terms of coding and the VAP issue, Craig suggested surveying other AAU law schools to see how they classify faculty titles, but the main issue faced here at UB is the current coding in systems. Kara stated that this could lead to a slippery slope: there are already many questions about reporting and requests for policy changes in data entry for ease of reporting can lead to problems down the road. This conversation needs to be fostered without a particular point of view. Craig said this is why unit representation is part of this committee and the DGC as well, which ensures that all voices are heard.

Kara presented working group 3's update. They have not yet finalized the student definitions, but will have another meeting this week. They are making progress, and plan to finalize the student definitions, along with definitions for externally and regularly funded and enrollment. Upcoming definitions include headcount, matriculated/non-matriculated, and undergraduate/graduate/professional. Unit and departmental pieces of these are also forthcoming.

Rachel presented working group 1's update. They met last week to discuss what other AAU institutions have created and documented for data warehousing and business intelligence. Joe Mantione conducted a survey of the AAUDE members asking what tools are used for BI at their campuses. The top response was Tableau, either Desktop (76%) or Server (34%). 10 AAU institutions were researched in more depth for data warehousing and BI. The most common data contained within data warehouses is Financial, Student, HR, and Research data. Health Systems data is excluded as a general rule. Additional areas sometimes included are services/resources, advancement, and space. Online documentation is generally available and usually includes data maps/matrices, table listings, and refresh schedules.

Security policies at many institutions are following business trends and role-based access is becoming more common. This allows all people in a certain title or role to access the same data and speeds access when on-boarding. There is a movement towards self-service BI, which lets users retrieve and explore their own data, rather than providing it to them. Canned reports are usually available, although access may vary depending on an individual's role.

Two model institutions were presented: Washington and Pitt. Washington has broken out their data warehousing teams into four areas: strategy, planning and outreach, data delivery, and data analysis and design. There are multiple staff in each area, reporting to an AVP of Information management. Washington provides a lot of training opportunities, with pre-recorded videos, online documentation, schedule classes, and even private training by appointment.

Pitt has three main systems are combined into one data warehouse, which is then organized into three data marts. The data warehouse is seen as the authoritative source of university data. There are regular updates to add additional data sources, which are documented in detail and average 45 updates per month. Pitt is also developing a Faculty Mart, which will contain faculty professional data to ease burden on faculty reporting and collect all faculty data in one place. Pitt also uses a single-sign on, making all data access university-wide happen with just one login and password to remember.

Craig next spoke about working group one's areas for recommendations. Classification of data is not currently in place, and should be a priority, along with access policies and levels of security for data types. Although there is an information security office here, it has not been part of the security level process. Craig will reach out to Brice on this issue. In addition, the data governance process needs to be sustainable, and the committee's recommendations should reflect that. The recommendations should also contain information about the future: what the next steps after definitions should be, and the composition of the committee in the future. Data custodians should be represented, and membership terms need to be defined.

Craig will be discussing space definitions with Kelly Hayes McAlonie, research definitions with Tom Wendt, and meeting with Financial Aid to discuss definitions as well. He recently met with the Libraries on bibliometric data and is working on documentation to guide people with questions about bibliometrics to the appropriate office to answer their questions. Craig and Shirley Walker will also meet to discuss Student Accounts definitions in the near future. Shirley stated that in Student Accounts differential tuition, in particular for Social Work and Architecture, can lead to data questions. Due to limitations at the time, when these programs were configured, they fell under graduate tuition and it would be difficult to move them at this point. Brian stated there are actually 22 different tuition rates at UB now (11 rates with both in state and out of state rates for each). Craig mentioned that definitions for these, as well as externally funded and regular funded programs, should be created. Mark said that the student's active career at the time determines the billing group in terms of combined programs like JD/MBA, and charges should be attributed to the active plan. David mentioned that sometimes this active plan can lead to registration difficulties for students in combined programs who are active in one career but need courses in the other and might be locked out of registration due to this. There are not many students in this situation, but there are data questions and definitions that need to be considered.

With no further discussion forthcoming from the attendees, Gary announced that the next meeting with be April 20 at 4 p.m. and meeting was adjourned at 4:42 p.m.