Data Stewardship Committee: Minutes of December 21, 2015

In attendance: Kelly Hayes McAlonie (Capital Planning), Leah Feroleto (Social Work), Brian O'Connor (CAS), Rachel Link (OIA), Gary Pacer (EAS), Craig Abbey (OIA), Laurie Barnum (Resource Planning), Mark Molnar (OIA), Michele Sedor (OIA), Lynne DePasquale (Resource Planning), Michael Korona (HUB), Nigel Marriner (Registrar) Kim Yousey-Elsener (Student Life), Beth Corry (Financial Services), Mark Coldren (HR).

Meeting called to order at 4:04 p.m. by Craig Abbey.

Gary went over the agenda, which included the following items:

- Highlights from the most recent meeting with the Data Governance Council on November 13;
- The formation of the Business Intelligence Task Force;
- Purchase of Data Cookbook;
- Upcoming January Data Stewardship Committee meeting, which the Provost will attend; and
- Review and approval of items from the Enrollment and Degrees Committee.

Craig and Gary met with the DGC on November 13, where they provided an update on the DSC's progress. Craig and Gary supplied the DGC with the total number of definitions completed or in progress to date in order to demonstrate progress. No concerns were raised on the timeline, but Craig and Gary continue to stress to the DGC that the process will be ongoing. The DGC raised the question of data quality, and where this issue should reside. Gary stated that they think it is an important question but there is no definitive answer yet. Craig gave an example of data quality issues that can impact costing: if the institution grows by 2,000 students, yet we cannot tell for certain where classes are held because schedulers are not entering data, we cannot provide good information. Gary and Craig felt that the issue of data quality may be raised again in the spring as well.

Following up on the issue of data quality, Kelly raised the topic of the Academic Utilization study, which showed that 40% of sections were missing some data elements. However, by the end of the term, it should be corrected, as arranged classes should have a known location. Course section information was not the only problem identified on the study: people, assignments, and unit name changes were all problematic.

The business intelligence task force was the next topic at the DGC meeting of November 13. This task force is charged with figuring out what business intelligence looks like at UB, and what it should be. Brice Bible, Chief Information Officer, has reached out to his connections at Oracle, who will perform an Oracle Insight assessment of BI maturity at UB and provide a plan for a path forward, all at no cost. This was proposed to occur in mid-January 2016, and the group is looking to see what resources would be needed for this assessment, and if the assessment would cover the same ground as the current BI task force.

The Data Governance Council has approved the data definitions creation and approval process. If definitions are approved by the DSC, the DGC does not need to review them for final approval. Review by the DGC would only occur in the event of disputes at the DSC level.

Data Cookbook has been approved for purchase. Michele Sedor has been in contact with the vendor, and shared that the typical configuration process takes three to six month. Erin Walker at Data Cookbook will be the lead contact there and will coordinate training on the product. Michele suggested that training commence after the holidays and will work with Gary to schedule.

The next meeting of the DSC is set for January 25 at 10:30 a.m. although the time may change based on the Provost's availability as he will be attending. An invitation will go out closer to that date. Each Working Team chair will be asked to provide slides to present and times will be slotted accordingly.

Mark next provided an overview of the data definitions and approval process used by the Enrollment and Degrees Working Team. The team's documents were sent out by Gary in advance of today's meeting. Mark thanked the team for attending today's meeting, and stated they took the Voltaire quote from the first DSC meeting to heart: "If you wish to converse with me, define your terms". They had to know what it was they were defining before definitions could commence. The team was comprised of people with experience in working with enrollment and degree data, and people who create reports from that data. Definitions needed to be useful for these tasks, while not overly complicated nor simplistic.

The team identified critical terms that were known to be problematic and that were used in enrollment discussions. Dimensional issues were identified: what is a student—someone on the system at a certain time, like census? Or taking courses? Most terms fall into two groups: official, which are used for SUNY or federal reporting, or operational. Through this process, the team came up with approximately sixty terms known to be challenging, and then prioritized these by order of importance, determined by factors like how frequently the term was used across dimensions. Several weeks of discussion ensued, and some definitions went through the process multiple times as reports using draft definitions were created and needed to be adjusted. The people on the team have a great deal of experience applying knowledge to data.

Additional definitions needed to be added, with the final count nearing 85. These are the core business intelligence definitions for enrollment and degrees. The team felt that these are applicable beyond the working team and are ready for the general university community to use. Nigel stated that the circling back process, where definitions were tested and then adjusted and then re-tested, was helpful with the final product. While you might know what a term meant when you saw it, you still needed to be able to define it.

Mark reviewed an example of an operational definition created by the working team to provide context. Credit heads are a fractional apportionment of students who are enrolled in multiple units. An example would be a student who was enrolled in both CAS and Engineering.

The next phase will be to release these definitions and roll out to the campus functional experts. The process will need to be documented and the functional experts may need to update reports to use these definitions. Craig stated that these definitions will need to be entered into the Data Cookbook once it is launched as well.

Beth shared some experiences from the Financial Working Team. This area (Financial) has many more terms. At this point, they have reviewed about 120 terms of approximately 300 total. Part of that team's process is adjusting definitions for terms that appear on multiple reports so that the definitions are standardized across dimensions. This process has the added benefit of serving as a review of business processes and identifying ways to streamline or improve current procedures. Many terms are predefined by SUNY, like IFR, state support, and others, and the team felt there was no need to come up with a local definition as well when a SUNY definition exists. The SUNY Budget Glossary of Terms was helpful in identifying these terms. Gary pointed out that the SUNY Board of Trustees Policy on Human Resources also has many definitions that can be used.

Beth also stated that there are terms that are only used by the central office and are not used in communicating with the general campus community. The team felt it was nonetheless important to document these terms for succession planning and for the data governance efforts.

Mark stated that some of the Enrollment and Degrees official definitions came from SUNY. Nigel asked if the team should talk to Admissions before the definitions were rolled out, and Mark agreed. Brian asked if the Enrollment and Degrees team was focused on undergraduate only, or all levels. Craig stated that while the group started with undergraduate, many terms may cross over. They may need to ensure that these terms are consistent between the two groups. Undergraduate and graduate are two different spheres, and professional programs are yet another consideration as their data come in to the system in various ways.

Mark next went over the reports listed on the handout. These show the primary display, the source of the data, definitions, and any relevant technical background. The comments field is intended to place the reports in context. The thought is that if a report is important enough to be done on a regular basis, used to drive decisions, or administrators ask for it regularly, it should go in this listing.

Gary stated that we will want to move this information into Data Cookbook, and Mark commented that as the implementation goes live, we will learn more about how to move information into the product. Right now, spreadsheets like the Enrollment and Degrees team used are an easy way to organize data, but require a lot of editing. Brian asked about the customization available within Data Cookbook. Michele said that there is not much customization available, but if data files meet a preset format, they can be directly uploaded, speeding up the process. More information will be available soon.

Meeting adjourned at 4:45 p.m. Next meeting will be **January 25, 2016: tentative time: 10:30 a.m**.