

Meeting Minutes from

SENATE COMMITTEE – Education Services and Information Technology (SCEDIT)
STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK AT STONY BROOK

Date: February 16, 2024

Time: 3:00 pm – 4:05 pm

Location: Zoom Meeting

In Attendance: Keri Hollander, [Scott Campbell](#), [Simeon Ananou](#), [Rose Tirota-Esposito](#), [John Shackelford](#), [Thomas Wilson](#), Moshe Eisenberg, [Erez Zadok](#), [Chintu Pandya](#), [Diana Voss](#), Lenore Lamana, Victoria Pilato

Meeting called to order at 3:00PM, Adjourned at 4:00PM

As usual we asked the committee members for permission to record the meeting solely for the purpose of minutes. The recording will not be shared or referenced after the minutes have been completed.

We typically alternate who leads the meeting to make sure both Educational Services and Information Technology get a fair chance to present information. We will start with Information Technology this meeting.

Introductions: Chintu Pandya is a Senior Linux Systems Engineer in the DoIT Infrastructure Group. We are always seeking participation from the campus community and he expressed an interest in this committee. If any member of this committee have anyone in mind that might make a good addition to this committee please invite them to attend a meeting.

Recently we met with [Simeon Ananou](#) and [Rose Tirota-Esposito](#) who are the cognates to this committee, without their participation this committee cannot fulfill its charge. Both expressed an interest in elevating our agenda items from a summary of major projects to covering important areas of interest and major topics in Educational Services and IT. This is a welcome change and we will begin with a presentation from our CIO Simeon.

Information Technology

[A PDF of Simeon's presentation is in our Google Shared Drive: Senate_SCITED -> Meeting Minutes -> [Framing the Vision of IT to Support Our Moment](#)]

The university's strategic plan is called [Our Moment](#), before I begin, I want to thank you all for the welcome you have given me since I arrived 6 months ago. I have been very pleased with the degree of collaboration and cooperation I have experienced in meeting you all.

In my role as a CIO one can show up and pretend we know everything or one can also show respect that we have shared governance in place and the institution has a culture and traditions in place that we have to respect. I have chosen the latter approach and I will continue to take.

We often talk about CIO's or the role of a CIO to be a visionary. Every time I hear that I chuckle and I ask people, what exactly do you mean by that? For me to be a visionary, one has to have an intimate understanding of our environment.

And maybe the pressures that the or the forces are exerting pressure on our industry, and so that we can react accordingly. So for me, there are 3 data points that I often will consult to help frame my vision and the vision for the university.

1. The global trends in Higher Education, if we're to scan the landscape of higher education here in the US. and abroad. What are we seeing?
2. Some of the societal and technical trends that are happening out there. What are some of the consumer behaviors that we are, seeing that are now being translated into higher education?
3. The third one is Stony Brook University's own aspirations. Where do we think we're headed over the next 5 years, and how those 3 Venn diagrams intersect?

There are some themes that have emerged as part of the Higher Ed trends, student well-being is very important. Maximizing the campus experience is something that many institutions are talking about. AI is here because many, not necessarily because all institutions have embraced it, but because many platforms now show up with an AI feature to a certain degree, and then preparing students for the workforce. It is important for us to educate students who are going to become global citizens, but we also know that many of them see education as an investment, and therefore expect a return on that investment. Last and not least, is micro-credentialing as part of lifelong learning. We also see this as a trend in higher education.

I look at [Educause](#), a nonprofit association and the largest community of technology, academic, industry, and campus leaders advancing higher education through the use of IT. They publish the Top 10 Issues every year. I won't read the entire list but I will zero in on the top 3 or 5.

- Cyber security remains a problem because there are individuals, malicious intent, who want to get their hands on our data, particularly at a research university. We are a bigger target.
- Also driving better decision-making. We have a lot of data at our disposal, therefore we should be able to find ways to identify patterns and trends in the data to make the best decisions.
- Enrolling crisis. We have many competitors both here and even some of the high schools, depending on what they're teaching are starting to become competitors of higher education or even industry.
- Again, data very, very important how we use data to be able to make decisions both in the moment and predictive analytics, or even advanced analytics.
- One is administrative cost reduction again, the cost of administrative processes are creeping up fairly quickly. Because of many, many reasons, we think about inflation. We think about the supply chain restrictions and such. So I'll stop at those 5 and then move on to other things.

The third circle you saw on my screen earlier is where Stony Brook University itself wants to go. There are 4 pillars that have been identified in the University's current strategic plan that was unveiled in the Fall last year.

Pillar 1: We want to transform teaching and learning.

Pillar 2: Grow our research enterprise for impact.

Pillar 3: We want to serve communities as a flagship university.

Pillar 4: Reimagining the way we work.

Over the past four months I've met and spoken with over 300 people here at Stony Brook. I had the privilege of speaking with the Senate Executive Committee early on. Some of the people on this committee have also had a chance to speak with me one on one.

After speaking with all 300 people what did I hear? I took many notes but they clustered around the following themes:

- We need to improve the overall end user experience, we all use technology but the experience needs to be a little more seamless.
- Bridging digital disparities on our campus. For example, those who may come from STEM fields may feel more comfortable doing research, scholarship and creative pursuits in a research High Performance Computing environment. But those coming from arts and humanities who may not have the same preparation face barriers. How can we find ways to support them almost equally.
- Artificial Intelligence, there will be greater exposure on our campus in three major areas: academic pedagogy, research going all the way to the GPU level and the third one is using AI to support administrative processes.
- The technologies we face today are moving so fast and changing so rapidly that they can leave some of us behind. So how do we go about upscaling our community collectively, creating a culture of inclusivity.
- Increase our collaboration with our key partners and deepen those partnerships.
- Strengthen our collaboration around safe computing practices and cybersecurity. Information security is something that we all own, it not solely the province of the Chief Information Security Officer (CISO).
- Help prioritize IT investments to support our University's strategic direction.

In consultation with the DoIT senior leadership team and refining all the information I have gathered we have landed on three strategic pillars:

1. Enabling Innovation and Transformation - that's a place we need to invest, we need to create more partnerships.
2. Fostering Inclusivity and Professional Growth - making sure the community is ready to absorb and embrace new technologies that are coming up.
3. Partnering to Modernize and Protect - modernize our infrastructure in ways that protect the university.

So the theme is we need to innovate to elevate.

Let me expound on one point as an example:

Enabling Innovation and Transformation - let's think about adaptive learning and how we should equip our classrooms to support this type of transformation. There is an infrastructure we have to establish in order to support things like image recognition or facial recognition for various functions on campus, advanced analytics, natural language modeling, creating a robust GPU cluster for Stony Brook, for example.

Partnering to Modernize and Protect - many of our mission critical systems exist here on campus or parts of those systems exist in the cloud. We have a tension of cloud vs on premise. We have a hybrid infrastructure that uses either public cloud or some of the private clouds we have created. Moving in the direction of AI threat detection. We have many pockets of excellence that are fragmented and fairly distributed, so not to centralize anything, but I think it would be in our best interest to consolidate our resources more and redeploying and repurposing where appropriate. Also we need to think about infrastructure and how can we automate some of the provisioning of our infrastructure. Does that mean a private cloud for Stony Brook? So that if and when people need resources we can provision those fairly quickly as opposed to waiting several weeks or months for the acquisition of those technologies to come onto campus.

Fostering Inclusivity and Professional Growth - we need to upskill our IT workforce, we don't have any other choice. But we also need to upskill the campus community to many technologies that are being sold and coming to market fairly quickly. We need to find a way to allow people to feel comfortable and competent in the use of those technologies and being able to make decisions around the ethical use of those technologies. We need to think more about our roles not disappearing but changing, for example a technical/business analyst vs programmers. Another role that is emerging more and more is process engineering vs configuration management. Those are IT functions but we need to think about them in terms of supporting the University's aspirations.

I am going to pause for any questions.

Question: You mentioned several topics, cloud versus on-premise, AI based threat detection, upskilling our employees, and programmers vs business/data analysts. Each one of these is a big topic, could you expound on any of these or point me to a document?

Simeon: Our student information system PeopleSoft Campus Solutions (CS) has been on premise for a long time. In January, we moved that to Oracle Cloud Infrastructure, so the teams that managed that on premise are learning how to operate in that new environment. Another example, is the WolfieOne Project which will move our PeopleSoft Finance (FS) and PeopleSoft Human Capital Management (HCM) to a Software as a Service (SaaS) offering. The work will change, it won't mean we lose any jobs but in a SaaS offering you no longer manage the hardware and the major application updates are handled as part of the service.

Another example is AI, some students may expect to learn this as a consumer. You go to ChatGPT and ask it to translate something for me or prompt something for me. Another expectation is when students ask for more, how do we ethically use and expose students to those tools. Rose has been offering some webinars and workshops to expose faculty to some of those practices and processes. Today, our email platform is guessing what the next word is that you will type, that's what's happening now, what is about to come? What's happening in 6 months or 9 months from now, what are we about to see? And how do we get ahead of those things and embrace them?

Response: I have been involved in a couple of the projects Simeon mentioned earlier and I think it's really important for the people we have in place to not be scared that their positions will be eliminated as we advance. This upskilling is very important, changing from a long established working paradigm for on premise to a cloud offering involves big change and we need to be able to train people and make them confident they will not lose their jobs, they will have the support they need to get to the next stage.

Response: Based on the previous response, I co-chaired this OCITO working group and my impression from looking at DoIT from the outside and my own 30 years experience of it is there is never a shortage of work, absolutely never! You could never say I don't have anything to do. It's always, I'm wasting my time doing all this menial task. Why can't this be automated? Why isn't there a better way of doing this? And so that's kind of the nature of things. The only impediment is people's willingness to learn new skills. Honestly, not not. They should not be afraid that their job is going to go away. In fact, if anything, their job will be more rewarding.

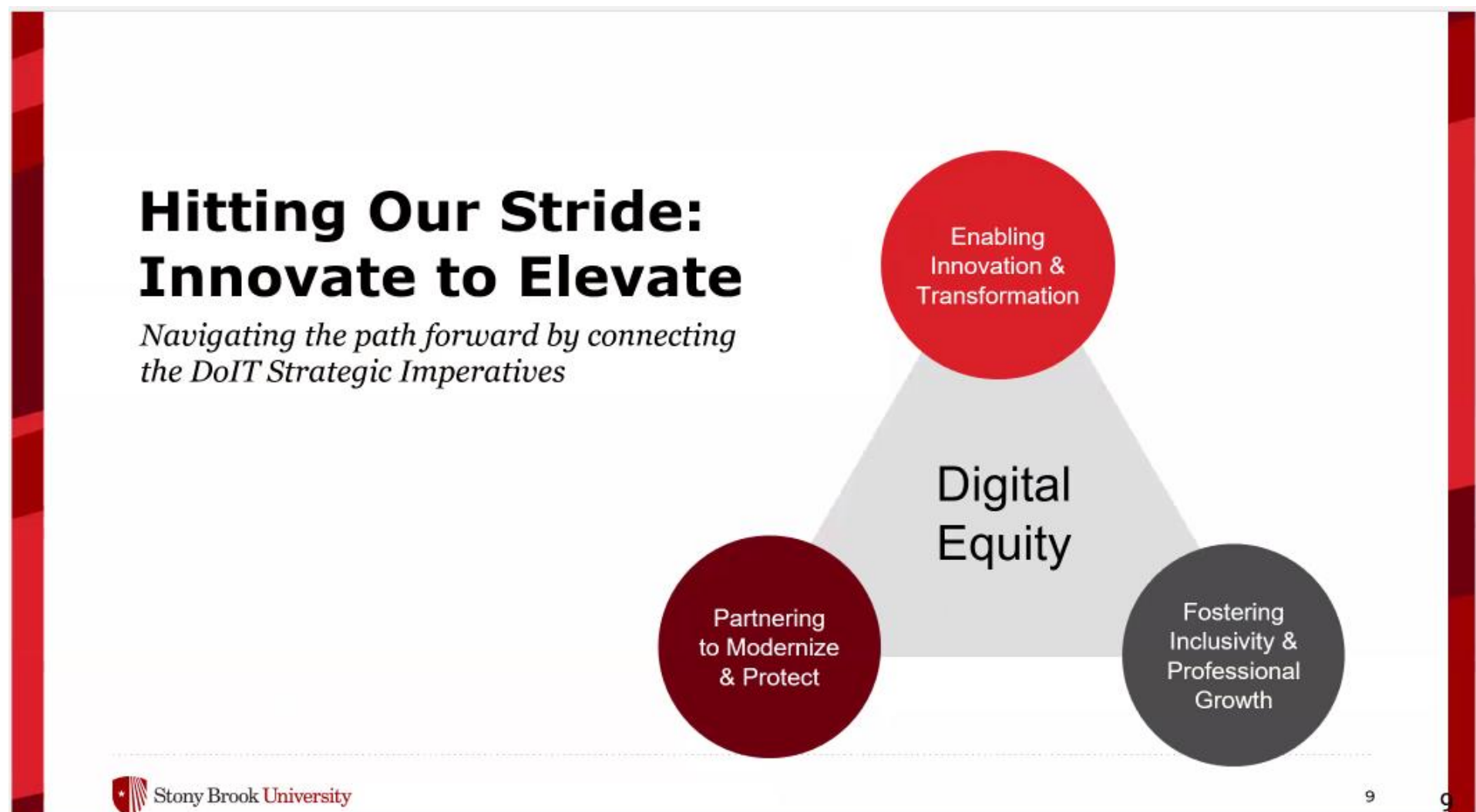
Simeon, your presentation makes perfect sense but it seems to be at a little bit of a high level. In a future meeting could we get the next level down or what are the projects planned for the next few years and a rough timeline for them? We have had a couple of really successful multi year projects, the LMS a new trouble ticketing system that will allow west campus and stony brook medicine to work better together. Notices about the new ERP system updates to HR, a huge task. What kind of big multi year projects are you thinking about? Putting an Identity Management program in place is a big thing because it enhances security but also will help us better merge ore of the East and West services.

Simeon: You touch on many projects that are so massive. And, in fact, the next thing for us to do is not to expect to deliver any one of those in one year, but to segment them in ways that it makes sense and to connect them to the strategic plan. One area that I will also touch on briefly, is classroom design. How we go about designing our classrooms.

That is not something that we may have all full visibility into right now, but we need to have that as one of our tasks and to pay attention to the direction of the technologies. A quick example is Panasonic is now testing or is about to release a new version of cameras. Those cameras have intelligence built into them. How will those affect the classroom design today? Or if we're to redesign your classroom in the future. So designing classrooms in ways that respond to the needs of today's learners and faculty. Those are things that I really want us to have as concrete actions that we should be taking.

[Keri Hollander:](#) Simeon asked Scott, I and Rose to meet with him, which we did, and we talked about all the things he's sharing now. The idea was to kick off the meeting at a higher level and then drill down into different areas and have that drive our agenda. For example a member of this committee Joe Balsamo could present some of his many projects working with AI.

Simeon: From today the one thing I want people to remember from this presentation is this one slide as our IT strategic direction, making sure we don't deviate from it too much over the next 5 years (below).



If there are no more questions for Simeon we would like to transition to [Rose Tirotta-Esposito](#) with her presentation as the Director of the Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT).

Educational Services

It's been a pleasure to be a part of this committee's schedule over the past few years. There have been some great collaborations across the board with IT, now we are under the Office of the Provost it's exciting to keep that strong connection because so much of what we do has a very large overlap when it comes to technology, we are focusing on the academic piece of it.

Looking at the campus strategic plan I really resonate with this image as part of it (below).



- **Excellence** - we talk about effective practices through teaching and learning.
- **Equity** - work with faculty to get them to look at all students and teaching to all learners.
- **Collaboration** - we are seeking to collaborate with everyone across campus, not only departments, but also looking at the community piece of it. It's not just the faculty piece of it, there are a lot of different departments that are all working towards the same goal. We are always looking for those collaborations to better support faculty, who in turn would support students.
- **Innovation** - teaching and learning can occur with or without technology. But in today's classroom, especially post-covid, much of it does involve technology. Even if the faculty members or the instructors don't realize it. Brightspace, zoom, all of these tools are almost second nature at this point. We took a huge leap since before Covid. It's really exciting because we can have a conversation where everyone comes from the same basis.

Part of the campus strategic plan, we clearly fall under the priority of transforming teaching and learning. More specifically the key objective to support innovative and inclusive pedagogy. We're strategically leveraging emerging technologies, designing students, student centric and cutting edge curricula and multiple modalities. So students here, students, virtual and to develop interdisciplinary and interprofessional education opportunities.

More specific in the strategic plan, I took a look at this paragraph (below)

Our Moment:

Past, Present, and Future Actions

We will reinforce our culture of innovation in pedagogy and empower our faculty to respond to shifting learner needs through **emerging technologies** and **student-centric design**. To do so, we will leverage our Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching and invest in **Active Learning Classrooms (ALCs)**, other specialty learning spaces, and central innovation spaces across our campuses. We will also encourage our faculty to engage in **inclusive teaching practices**, enrich our learning environments, and enhance our students' educational outcomes by promoting access to mentorship opportunities for both graduate and undergraduate students.

and it really again resonated with me because they talk about emerging technologies and student centric design. And this is what we've talked about all the time with instructors. They also mentioned, like Simeon, was talking about earlier classroom design, and specifically of interest is active learning classrooms or ways that we could integrate different characteristics of an active learning classroom into maybe classrooms that are already, you know, literally, you know, in concrete. Then inclusive teaching practices across the board: anti racist pedagogy, accessibility, neuro diverse students. All of that are things that we talk about. And the pieces that connect to technology are growing exponentially.

CELT had already created our mission and vision prior to the Our Moment announcement, so it was really nice to see we already aligned and we didn't have to make any changes. We talk about inclusivity, we talk about innovation across the board. The innovation piece really is challenging because not only is the technology prevalent in our society. We have to work closely with IT to ensure the faculty are supported with these technologies, that we have the infrastructure for these various pieces of technology. We are looking at AI every day. We have something going on with AI, whether it's internal meetings or external panels, discussions and workshops. We are looking at that as one of our large charges moving forward. We advertise our workshops and panels out to the wider community, we advertise them out to SUNY and we get a worldwide audience from some of these. That's in our inclusive teaching panels as well as our AI panels and workshops.

What I think is really important to pull out of our mission vision is that we provide opportunities for all educators to flourish in an increasingly challenging educational environment. And it is an increasingly challenging environment, there's so many things happening, and there's security and all the different pieces of software and applications, and even moving from here to the cloud. All the stuff that Simeon talked about. It does impact faculty, and instructors in many, many ways. And we're just trying to work together to get them to utilize what we have. So it's secure for all students. And then, the students have appropriate support and that the students can be hopefully successful.

Our goals. We are all about service. We are supporting faculty and instructors of programs and resources. We have had a big push to conduct some educational research. We want to research what's going on here on campus and adding to the literature, one of the things that we are doing a lot of work around is active learning classrooms. We have a large research study on how faculty are using them across the board here at Stony Brook University, both on the west campus and east campus. Then other research around inclusive pedagogy and we are looking for some partners for VR as well.

We also assess the learning, not only supporting faculty but assessing everything we do and we try to help faculty assess everything that they do in the classroom. We have been collecting data to inform us of how we should move forward and what programs we can work at collaborating with other departments to try to align with everybody across the board. We pride ourselves on working with all departments to see what's going on and make connections, which is why we try to collaborate with everyone across campus.

We support educators with educational technologies and we work very closely with Diana Voss and her team to do that.

In closing, we want to collaborate with everyone to assess, to build, to celebrate. We're always looking to celebrate all instructors and we have a celebration of teaching nomination period going on right now. So if you or anyone knows of any instructors that should be nominated, we have 6 or 7 awards, please do so. Continuing we seek to engage, foster equity, innovate and also do some research.

Questions

Comment: Rose. I just wanted to thank you for the excellent work that you and your team do. I have been fortunate enough to participate in several of your programs, and they're extremely helpful. And I know my colleagues who attend also say the same thing. So again, I just wanna thank you for all that. You do.

Rose: Thank you, and I'll pass along the thanks to the rest of the team. Please do thanks

Comment: We all understand and accept the plight of the staff members who are overworked, underappreciated, underpaid and the amount of administrative burden that goes on faculty. The more people, the lower that administrative burden and red tape, the more everybody could be productive. Which helps all these other factors like, you know, we want to increase the ranking. We want to bring more funding. You know if I didn't have to do that much administrative work, I could write more grants, more papers, etc. Those are the kinds of things.

A conversation about creating workflows and collaborating researchers and internships between various departments unfolded. Simeon encouraged a meeting with [Erez Zadok](#) to discuss some work his department is engaged in. Possibly different seed programs that can start initiatives across campus to do some IT work.

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With approximately 6 minutes remaining we want to ask Victoria Pilato for a report from the Libraries.

Victoria: We are done with our strategic planning, we are trying to figure out how to implement that plan. It has not yet been published to the campus, hopefully that will happen by the end of this month.

Related to our conversation today, we no longer have a full time staff member to maintain the library web site. So that has been falling to our programmer/analysts who have lots of other duties. An area where a partnership with the university could help us, having an up to date website that students can use to find things is an important feature.

Stony Brook University is partnering with Ithica on a multi year project that's called Making AI Generative for Education. They are saying that maybe at this point the largest qualitative data set on higher education use case in 2024. That project is lead by one of our senior programmer/analysts [John Fitzgerald](#). He's also working on automating ChatGPT whisper to transcribe those interviews.

Libraries are now part of Hathi Trust, which is a digital library that comprises digitized book collections from 60 plus academic libraries. You don't have to be a member to access most things on Hathi Trust unless they're not in the public domain. As a member you're able to download a whole public domain title.

Our intra library loan department now has an easier, more user friendly dashboard for your intra library loan request.

A conversation about publishing and libraries ensued.

Keri Hollander: So that sort of brings us to our last. As far as our agenda is everybody comfortable? And this is what we had thought prior to going into this meeting, and I think we've heard a lot. So I think we've got some good information. But we'd like to then start to plan the agenda for the remaining meetings of this semester. In the past, you know, Scott, and I've sort of been reaching kind of trying to hear and and try to understand and think what's important, and make sure to put it on the agenda. And then certainly the status update of all the changing systems, whether it be the learning management system or the new ticketing system. But we want to move from a reporting other than sort of at a high level and timeline. And what's next to more real specific items?

So is everybody comfortable. If Rose, myself, Scott and Saman, we that we meet separately from this, and and sort of begin to come up with, what do we think would be great agenda items to start having these great conversations and and dig a little bit deeper. Is everybody okay with that?

****The members of the committee agreed that would be a good path forward****