Meeting of the Provost’s Open SUNY Advisory Committee  
Meeting Minutes  
Thursday, August 29, 2013  
Center for Professional Development, Syracuse  
Video to NYC and Albany

Attendees:

I. We began with introductions and approval of the 07/19/13 meeting minutes. Minutes were approved with no revisions.

II. **Charge Discussion:** The Open SUNY Development Team was presented to the group and roles were explained. It was explained that the role and duration of the Provost’s Open SUNY Advisory Committee will likely extend beyond the launch of Open SUNY. Hopes are high for this group to exercise open and honest communication in vetting the issues with which they are charged related to the development of Open SUNY.

III. **Regional Open SUNY meetings.** As of this meeting, the SUNY team had been to 4 of the economic development regions to gather feedback and input
from stakeholders on the development of Open SUNY. It was emphasized that we are not offering “SUNY degrees,” and that this process is collaborative and requires active participation and feedback from campus constituencies. One member strongly encouraged members of this committee to attend one of the regional engagement sessions as it was a valuable experience for that member.

IV. **Draft Organizational Chart for Open SUNY.** One member said that the organizational chart for the Open SUNY development process was unique and comprehensive in a way that is beneficial and seems well-organized/established. Student support services and assessment were identified as two items to be added to the organizational chart.

- A member was interested in hearing more about the academic oversight and how much of that might have to be centralized.
- Another member countered that there should not be a strong need for centralized academic oversight as that would be provided at the campus level.
- MOOCs were briefly discussed and the group was thinking that MOOCs would likely be approved at the campus level. However, it was emphasized that nothing related to MOOCs is policy yet, and it is all still being worked out.
- One member suggested that everyone engage in conversations to help shape Open SUNY rather than assuming it will be a sort of new umbrella-like imposition from the system level down.
- Members feel that communication is key to the Open SUNY process and would like to see expanded communication—this can be, in some ways, an output for this group.
- A brief discussion around SLN covered the fact that SLN was/is a great starting point, but Open SUNY help will bring the talents and offerings of the many campuses together.
V. **Open SUNY Update:** As of 08/29/13, 4 of the 10 regions have been visited for campus stakeholder sessions. A representative from the McKinsey team walked members through some of the early outcomes/discussions that they’ve seen so far. Support for faculty collaboration, student services and other forms of assistance were listed as things that multiple campuses are hoping to receive from Open SUNY. These sessions are also showcasing that Open SUNY is an opportunity to reach place-bound and other students that have difficulty participating in a traditional classroom environment. The McKinsey representative also covered some notable “gives” and “gets” from the sessions to date along with commonly heard concerns about Open SUNY.

- One member of the group was concerned that there hasn’t been much distinction in the Open SUNY materials he’s seen between traditional-aged students and adult learners. Since adult learners may be a major piece of this, they should be considered strongly as things move forward.
- Another member suggested that it will be the job of the faculty and campuses to create compelling, quality courses, to be able to stay relevant in a world when students can take course sections at other campuses.
- Members of the group feel that communications to date have not been handled in the best way.
- A member suggested that people are thinking of Open SUNY the wrong way—it’s an opportunity to gain students.
- Multiple members of the group noted that students generally prefer to take courses at their home institution.

VI. **Faculty, Student, and Campus supports:** Students, faculty, and campuses were identified as the three groups that need to be supported most through the Open SUNY process. The McKinsey team helped lead a discussion...
on what types of supports this group thought would be helpful, were needed, etc., to help all of these groups be successful through Open SUNY.

• One member said that we may be able to reach student populations that have chosen not to attend traditional college experiences, but may be more interested in this type of delivery through Open SUNY. Students need the process to be as simple as possible, and they need information on what their options are for access to online-enabled higher education. Students need to have the technical skills required for online-enabled learning before they can start or else they might get stuck in trying to navigate the system rather than learning. A single, or “common logon,” would be really beneficial. An “online learning center” could be useful to students on physical campuses as well as those strictly online. Financial aid and registration needs to be streamlined so that students don’t run into issues. Accessibility tools would be helpful too. Open SUNY can be an informational “base” for all students, but it needs to be simple with a point of contact for student questions. The back office issues (financial aid, registration, etc.) need to be seamless and more or less invisible to the student—it just needs to work for them. Sometimes in an online environment, students miss pieces of courses due to computer hardware issues—perhaps we can develop loaner programs or a list of vendors that can help get students connected in the event of a hardware failure. Certificate options could be an easy way for campuses to get into the online environment as a starter. Textbooks need to be more affordable to benefit students that are selecting online-enabled learning as a way to save money. Berkeley’s undergraduate model may be a good example of how to look at change on campus.

• We should develop a journal or newsletter where ideas can be disseminated throughout the system with a dedicated editor. There needs to be a reward structure for faculty to give them incentive to participate in
online education more. We also need to make sure that this is considered “legitimate scholarship.” Faculty collaboration could be facilitated in new ways—e.g., pick two campuses that teach a course in computer science and see if they would like to work together. Blind review vs. open review was discussed—perhaps blind review of online instruction could be a way to connect and create new relationships between campuses and faculty.

- There are Middle States requirements about assessment, so we need to figure out how campuses will review courses and programs. One member said that they handle their online assessments at the campus level. If curriculum and courses are the purview of the faculty, we need to consider shared governance in the decision making process.
- For launch, we need to have a website with a searchable catalog. We need to make sure that the guiding principles we are working with are made well known.
- There is a pilot on PLA at Empire State College along with Complete SUNY that could be pieces of Open SUNY that would help campuses, faculty, and students. Questions discussed during this portion of the agenda will be distributed to the group along with the minutes for review and further comment at a later date.

VII. **MOOCs**: Lisa Stephens (UB) led a discussion around MOOCs that touched upon Coursera, and Open Educational Resources (OER). One noted major challenge of MOOCs is how to scale with quality. One member noted that Daphne Koller, CEO of Coursera, has clips on YouTube that are very informative. Another member said that these are a “different animal” as far as courses are concerned, because some campuses offer MOOCs that are not intended to be for credit. An interesting benefit of using Coursera is that ADA compliance is somewhat automated through their services.
• Stony Brook’s experience with Coursera was explained to the group by one member and it seems to be going well. A member wanted to know the relationship between Pearson and MOOC providers—no one in the room had a definitive answer, but one member volunteered to do some research and report back.

• One member was apprehensive about MOOCs and what jobs implications there may be on jobs and educational quality. The way credit is granted/transfered across SUNY remains the same—one member wanted the group to keep this in mind. A member of the group felt strongly that MOOCs are of high academic integrity and encouraged everyone to realize that we all have differing opinions on this topic and should consider using this debate as an educational tool to get this topic discussed further and more broadly.

• One member mentioned that Open SUNY is not all about MOOCs, so we need to remember that we are moving the dial in ways that make sense for us as a system. The group said that better communication related to MOOCs would need to occur going forward.

VIII. The meeting concluded and another meeting of the group will be scheduled in the near future with plans to have meetings twice monthly in person with an option to participate by video.