

Annual Report

July 2016 – June 2017



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What is the Minnesota Learning Commons (MnLC)?

The Minnesota Learning Commons (MnLC) is a joint powers agreement among the Minnesota Department of Education, Minnesota State, and the University of Minnesota. The roots of the MnLC can be traced to legislation passed in 1997 that brought together Minnesota's public K-12 and higher education community to collaborate in creating efficient and high quality access for learners to online and hybrid opportunities. The goal of the MnLC is to identify strategies where Minnesota's public education sector can work on issues that could be better accomplished together than alone, providing greater benefit, and better use of limited resources to lower costs and reach broader audiences.

What is the mission of the MnLC?

The Minnesota Learning Commons supports public educators teaching in online, blended, and digital learning environments.

How does the MnLC deliver value?

The MnLC supports a number of initiatives that provide value not only to Minnesota's public P-20 education sector, but to all educators and learners across the state.

- **Minnesota eLearning Summit** – The MN eLearning Summit, now in its fourteenth year, is the premier gathering place for K-12, college, and university educators and innovators in Minnesota that are committed to effective online and blended learning. In 2016, over 350 registered for the Summit at its new venue, Minneapolis Community and Technical College in downtown Minneapolis. Keynote presenters were Randy Bass, Vice Provost for Education and Professor of English, Georgetown University, and Dr. Marie Norman, Associate Professor, School of Medicine, University of Pittsburgh. The 2017 eLearning Summit is scheduled for August 2-3 at Normandale Community College.
- **Joint licenses for statewide efficiencies** – Through the MnLC, public higher education has benefited from lower cost licensing for Quality Matters, Open Educational Resource tools, and WCET/State Authorization membership.
- **Open Education Resources (OER)** – Making available Open Education Resources at lower cost to students has become a top legislative and educational priority in Minnesota. Through the MnLC, an inter-system pilot project was initiated to research and develop OER collaboration aligned across systems for quality resources and rubrics. In this effort, MnLC provided tools and resources for educator and subject matter experts in Minnesota to collaboratively evaluate, share, and develop Open Education Resources for public education. In 2015, the MnLC hosted multiple orientations, trainings, and educational sessions to support the implementation of OER projects in individual institutions. From that pilot work, each partner has expanded efforts in Open Educational Resources and continues as an active special interest group of the MnLC.
- **Federal and state regulation** – Higher education institutions across the country are required to obtain authorization to serve students in other states, whether they are engaged in learning via online or face-to-face delivery modes. Each state has its own set of rules and its own agency for granting

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authorization. The Federal and State Online Learning Regulations initiative facilitated the State of Minnesota's participation in the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA), a multi-state reciprocity agreement to streamline the authorization process. Currently, all five University of Minnesota campuses and 30 of the Minnesota State colleges and universities are SARA members, greatly streamlining the ability to offer educational programs to students residing outside of Minnesota.

- **Quality online best practices** – The Quality Matters (QM) initiative uses nationally recognized quality assurance standards to ensure excellence in course design for use with public education systems. This includes providing Quality Matters resources consortium-wide to faculty, staff, and teachers interested in online and hybrid learning; providing targeted training on the Quality Matters rubric; providing peer review and Quality Matters course and program certification opportunities; and evaluating the effectiveness of the QM training and use of the QM Rubric for course and program design.
- **Implementation of five Special Interest Groups (SIGs) based on partner review of digital learning trends** – The MnLC leverages the expertise of its members to share the latest trends and analysis in digital, blended, and online learning. For the 2016-17 academic year, specific initiatives in this area included accessibility, digital literacy, quality practices, innovation, and Open Education Resources (OER). The SIGs brought together Minnesota public educators to address these critical instructional issues.

How does the MnLC accomplish its work?

The MnLC is governed by an executive committee composed of academic leaders from the Minnesota Department of Education, the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system, and the University of Minnesota, who oversee the MnLC annual work plan. Representatives from public and private schools and campuses provide guidance through the MnLC Advisory Council. Special Interest Groups (SIGs) are organized in the areas of the MnLC strategic priorities to help implement the priorities.

To be included as an annual goal requires agreement and buy-in from at least two of the three joint powers partners. Some of the MnLC annual goals and projects have specific budget allocations from partners. All MnLC goals require collaboration from the participants from the partner institutions. It is through collaborations and shared expertise of the joint powers partners, members, and special interest groups that the annual goals are accomplished.

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Minnesota Learning Commons Annual Report Goals Status Update

During 2016-17, MnLC targeted eight strategic areas of joint interest for P-20 educators, and its three partners (Minnesota Department of Education, Minnesota State Colleges and Universities, and University of Minnesota).

Goal	Purpose	Outcomes/ Deliverables	FY2016 Budget
1. Provide monthly professional development opportunities	To make available free professional development opportunities over distance that reach instructors and staff involved with digital learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Produced series of monthly “Best of Summit” webinars 	Included in MnLC agreement with U of M College of Continuing and Professional Studies (CCAPS)
2. Encourage sharing and networking across K-12 and higher education in high priority areas of common interest	During 2016-17, the MnLC supported Special Interest Groups in five areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Open Educational Resources (OER) Quality Online Practices Innovation Digital Literacy Accessibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At least one face-to-face and one virtual meeting was held for each of the special interest groups 	In-kind contributions from SIG leaders and volunteers
3. Research and develop OER collaboration aligned across systems for a collection of quality resources and rubrics	To discuss open education resources and formulate collaborative content and materials that could lead to affordable learning solutions for students. Specifically: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that public education systems share and document their OER initiatives to learn from each other and collaborate where strategic. Leverage high quality courses and modules for P-20 use in the state, and ensure faculty, staff and students know about these resources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multiple eLearning Summit concurrent sessions focused on OER Collaboration between U of MN and Minnesota State in the Open Textbook Network A team of MnLC partners presented at Educause ELI conference 	In-kind contributions from OER SIG participants
4. Enhance MnLC communications to Minnesota P-20 instructors and staff	To publicize learning opportunities for MnLC stakeholders, including webinars, conference listings, and news on topics related to MnLC goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implemented new MnLC Website with U of M CCAPS partner Created new visual identity for the MnLC to improve recognition 	Included in MnLC agreement with U of M CCAPS
5. Promote quality best practices, benchmarking, and quality assurance with Quality Matters (QM) collaboration	To promote opportunities for quality assurance using resources from OLC and QM for higher education and K-12 to ensure high quality online learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enrollments in Quality Matters professional development opportunities Use of the Quality Matters rubrics in Minnesota State and U of M course design External and internal Quality Matters course reviews 	\$9,800 (QM and IYOC statewide license (MN State)) \$5,625 (U of M affiliations) \$41,625 (MN State affiliations) TOTAL: \$57,050

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<p>6. Monitor U.S. Department of Education Federal Regulations, State Authorization and State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (SARA)</p>	<p>To provide current and accurate information to MnLC stakeholders on good practices and sound policies around state/federal distance learning regulations, especially state authorization, which requires membership in entities such as WCET (to track regulations in higher education), iNACOL (K-12 distance learning legislation), and others as determined by the council as related to online and digital learning.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Minnesota State and the U of M jointly supported MnLC membership in the WCET State Authorization Network, participating in monthly conference calls and in-person meetings, sharing this information with member institutions. ● MDE supported membership in iNACOL which provides quality program standards. 	<p>\$1,650 for WCET membership \$5,000 for State Authorization Membership (SAN). Total: \$6,650</p>
<p>7. Sponsor annual Minnesota eLearning Summit</p>	<p>To provide a premiere professional development opportunity at an affordable cost for MN P-12 and higher education educators, instructional support staff, and academic administrators</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Over 350 people attended the 2016 Summit held July 27-28, 2016 at the Minneapolis Community and Technical College 	<p>Subsidies provided of \$12,936 for U of M presenters and \$22,417.50 for MN State attendee discounts. Otherwise, self-supporting. Partner with U of M CCAPS. In-kind support for conference committee. Total: \$35,353.50</p>
<p>8. Manage MnLC Programs</p>	<p>To administer the Minnesota Learning Commons programs, the three MnLC partners contract with the University of Minnesota College of Continuing and Professional Studies (CCAPS) to: manage the MN eLearning Summit; arrange the monthly “Best of Summit” webinars; support the coordinating committee, executive committee and Special Interest Groups; and host and maintain the MnLC website.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Coordinating committee reformulated as a forum to share ongoing projects and approaches of the three partners in the digital and online learning areas. ● Minnesota State chaired the MnLC during 2016-17. 	<p>\$10,000 CEI, University of MN \$10,000 MN State \$14,550 from CCAPS, University of MN Total: \$34,550</p>

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Status of Online Learning in Minnesota

Minnesota State

During the 2016-17 academic year, the number of students enrolled in online learning courses continued to grow at the campuses of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities. Minnesota State now has more than 300 online programs offered across its 30 colleges and 7 universities.

Minnesota State Online Course Offerings and Online Enrollment from FY11 to FY16 Academic Years

MnSCU Totals Online Learning	FY11	FY12	FY13	FY14	FY15	FY16	FY17
Unduplicated Headcount	102,466	107,123	110,696	111,903	114,035	116,808	118,914
Change from previous year	9.93%	4.54%	3.34%	1.09%	1.91%	2.37%	1.78%
Online FYE	22,612	24,634	25,535	26,293	27,232	27,995	28,871
Change from previous year	16.33%	8.94%	3.66%	2.97%	3.57%	2.72%	3.03%
Online Course Sections	12,174	12,932	13,152	13,696	13,892	13,799	NA
Change from previous year	7.27%	6.23%	1.70%	4.14%	1.43%	-.01%	NA

University Of Minnesota (U of M)

During the 2016-17 academic year, online and blended learning continued to grow at the University of Minnesota. The University now offers more than 60 programs in online or blended format (<https://online.umn.edu>) through its five campuses. The number of students taking at least one online course increased to 24,503.

University of Minnesota Online Course Offerings and Online Enrollment from FY11 to FY16 Academic Years

U of M Totals Online Learning	FY12	FY13	FY14	FY15	FY16	FY17*
Duplicated Headcount	31,175	36,025	38,739	41,333	44,091	54,316
Change from previous year	8.97%	15.56%	7.53%	6.70%	6.67%	23.19%
Unduplicated Headcount	18,179	20,148	20,428	21,151	22,270	24,503
Change from previous year	2.23%	10.83%	1.39%	3.54%	5.29%	10.03%
Online Sections	1,439	1,422	1,567	1,538	1,655	2,014
Change from previous year	-0.48%	-1.18%	10.20%	-1.85%	7.61%	21.69%

Data source: Office of Institutional Research *FY17 used a different coding structure resulting in the larger increases

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Minnesota Department of Education (MDE)

State-approved online learning providers offer students an alternative to traditional public schools that provide flexibility in time, place, path and pace of learning. The [approved online programs](#) provide students with opportunities to enroll in comprehensive or supplemental programs starting in Kindergarten all the way through the 12th grade. Approved providers participate in a three-year standards based review process for renewal of approval of their programs.

Only state-approved online programs are required to report annual online program data. Data presented in the MDE table is self-reported from state-approved providers. State law does not require Minnesota K-12 online learning enrollment data to be collected from schools, districts, or cooperatives that provide service to their own students with digital learning on a less than full-time basis.

Minnesota Department of Education Approved Provider Online Enrollment from FY11 to FY16 Academic Years

MDE Totals Online Learning	FY11	FY12	FY13	FY14	FY15	FY16	FY17
Course Registrations	83,329	79,906	83,608	102,730	80,285	92,786	*7,189
Change from previous year	-2.98%	-4.11%	4.63%	22.87%	-21.84%	15.57%	NA
Unique Students	14,190	13,826	14,703	15,083	15,279	17,932	17,895
Change from previous year	20.22%	-2.57%	6.34%	2.58%	1.30%	30.29%	-0.21%
Course Completions	56,985	55,772	55,791	76,716	59,394	67,111	*6,852
Change from previous year	2.95%	-2.22%	0.03%	37.51%	-22.58%	13%	NA

Data source: Online Learning Annual Program Data Report FY 17

*Prior to FY17, courses were counted in the same way not accounting for their duration. Beginning in FY17, courses are counted as equivalent credits to recognize the differences in quarter, semester, trimester and year-long courses.

Identifying Opportunities for Future Work

For 2017-18, the Minnesota Learning Commons and its partners will continue to focus on networking and knowledge sharing about research, trends, best practices, and strategic initiatives in online, hybrid, and digital learning. The major areas of joint interest include:

- **Professional development**
 - Minnesota eLearning Summit
 - “Best of Summit” monthly webinar series
- **Cross-Institutional and professional sharing through MnLC Special Interest Groups**
 - Quality practices
 - Innovation
 - Digital literacy
 - Open Educational Resources
- **Continue support and utilization of statewide licensing to promote efficiencies and cost savings**
 - Quality Matters
 - WCET / State Authorization Network (SAN) addressing higher ed state and federal regulations

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Minnesota Learning Commons Organizational Structure

Chair and Executive Committee: The Chair position rotates among the three partners (Minnesota State, MN Department of Education and the University of Minnesota). Minnesota State chaired the MnLC in 2016-17 and MDE will take responsibility for 2017-18. The Executive Committee is comprised of two representatives from each of the partners: UMN, Minnesota State, and MDE. The Executive Committee (supported by CCAPS) is responsible for recruiting, maintaining, and nurturing membership to the Committee and its Special Interest Groups; provide direction for MnLC website, producing the MnLC goals, budget, a business and work plan, and an annual report.

Management: The three Minnesota Learning Commons partners have contracted with the University of Minnesota College of Continuing and Professional Studies (CCAPS) to manage the MnLC. CCAPS is responsible for managing the Minnesota eLearning Summit, arranging the monthly “Best of Summit” webinars, providing support for coordinating and executive committee meetings and Special Interest Groups, publish meeting notes, hosting and maintaining the MnLC website.

Executive Committee

- *Jeff Lindgren*, Assistant Director, Center for Educational Innovation, University of Minnesota
- *Kim Lynch*, System Director for Academic Technology, Minnesota State
- *Jeff Plaman*, Online and Digital Learning Specialist, Minnesota Department of Education
- *Bob Rubinyi*, Senior Analyst for Online Learning, Center for Educational Innovation, University of Minnesota
- *Scott Wojtanowski*, System Director for Innovative Teaching and Learning, MnState

Advisory Committee

- *Troy Anderson*, ISD 728
- *Lesley Blicher*, Minnesota State
- *Sue Borowick*, Executive Director, College of Continuing Education, University of Minnesota
- *Heather Dorr*, Associate Program Director, College of Continuing Education, University of Minnesota
- *Dave Glick*, Cyber Village Academy
- *Tanya Grosz*, Dean of Graduate, Online & Adult Learning, University of Northwestern - St. Paul
- *Carla Johanson*, Online Supervisor, Distance Minnesota
- *Angie Johnson*, Supervisor, Office of Career and College Success, Minnesota Department of Education
- *Marc Johnson*, Director, ECMECC
- *Kimberly Johnson*, Director for Faculty and Instructional Development, Minnesota State
- *Emily Kissane*, Minnesota Department of Education
- *Karen LaPlant*, Information Technology, Hennepin Technical College
- *Charles LaRue*, Instructor, Anoka-Hennepin School District 11
- *Matt Lee*, Assistant Librarian, MINITEX, University of Minnesota
- *Jeff Lindgren*, Assistant Director, Center for Educational Innovation, University of Minnesota
- *Kim Lynch*, Senior Director for Educational Innovations, Minnesota State
- *Scott Marshall*, Associate Director, Disability Resource Center, University of Minnesota
- *Beth McMahan*, MOQI and Faculty, Northland Community and Technical College
- *Mary Mehsikomer*, Technology Integration Development & Outreach, TIES
- *Emily Kissane*, Minnesota Department of Education
- *Jeff Plaman*, Online Learning Specialist, Minnesota Department of Education

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- *Elissa Raffa*, Minnesota Online High School
- *Bob Rubinyi*, Senior Analyst for Online Learning, Center for Educational Innovation, University of Minnesota
- *Darcy Turner*, University of St. Thomas
- *Jon Voss*, Director of Teaching & Learning, Intermediate District 287
- *Susan Wetenkamp-Brandt*, Educational Technology Manager, Minnesota Literacy Council
- *Kim Wee*, Webmaster and Accessibility Coordinator, Minnesota IT Services

Special Interest Group (SIG) Members

We also want to recognize the over 30 individuals participating in MnLC special interest groups which include the Minnesota eLearning Summit, Open Education Resources, Accessibility, Digital Literacy, Communications, Quality Initiative, and State/Federal Distance Education Regulations :

Special Interest Group (SIG) Members	Special Interest Group (SIG) Members	Special Interest Group (SIG) Members
Debbie Allen	Kimberly Johnson	Tracy Quarnstrom
Troy Anderson	Kevin Jost	Elissa Raffa
Catherine Artac	Emily Kissane	Rita Resendiz-Abfalter
Theo Beckman	Karen LaPlant	Bob Rubinyi*
Bodong Chen	Charles LaRue*	Peg Sherven
Colin Delong	Matt Lee	Dorinda Sorvig
David Ernst	Amy LimBybliw	J.C. Turner
Maria Filace	Jeff Lindgren	Darcy Turner
Dave Glick	Kim Lynch	Debbie Vanoverbeke
Sarah Grachek	Scott Marshall*	Robb Virgin
Rebecca Graetz	Elizabeth McMahon*	Jon Voss
Tanya Grosz*	Mary Mehsikomer	Julie Walker
Mark Hillard	Jane Melander	Angie Johnson
Kristi Jensen	Anna Milone	Kim Wee
Carla Johanson	Shane Nackerud	Susan Wetenkamp-Brandt
Marc Johnson	Jeff Plaman*	

*designates SIG lead