



The Future of EDUCAUSE: Expanded Partnerships and Collaboration

Can we find our future in the past? The March/April 2017 issue of *EDUCAUSE Review* occupies the intersection between the past and the future. Don Tapscott and Alex Tapscott, the authors of *Blockchain Revolution*, consider the much discussed but less understood topic of blockchain technology, particularly its potential to deliver real value for higher education as it gives us the opportunity to build on the past and look to the future. Likewise Brewster Kahle, the founder of the Internet Archive, grounds his discussion in broad historical understanding as he proposes a plan to transform physical libraries into digital libraries and unlock analog collections, making them available to millions around the world. Finally, I offer a meditation that blurs seemingly simple terms like *past*, *present*, and *future*, concentrating on current insights to be gleaned from past imaginings of our edtech future.

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EDUCAUSE itself sets off into the future focused on our three strategic priorities: (1) personalized member experience; (2) reimagined professional learning; and (3) expanded partnerships and collaboration. In this Homepage column, I'd like to suggest some ideas behind the third priority—expanded partnerships and collaboration—noting that internal EDUCAUSE working groups are doing the same and preparing to report to the EDUCAUSE Board in March.

Over the five-year period covered in our strategic plan, EDUCAUSE will work to promote stronger, more collaborative relationships between IT leaders and other senior campus leaders. As technology solutions extend across campus and IT risks intensify, it's crucial to make connections and elevate the strategic role of information technology and also of IT leaders. With this in mind, EDUCAUSE will work at two levels. On the ground, we will expand access to resources that help our members connect the dots on campus and tell the IT story effectively. Beginning in July, we will be able to do that even better when our new membership model opens up ELI and ECAR resources to all members. We also will begin to offer even more practical, action-oriented resources like the toolkits that have proved so effective for our information security and iPASS (Integrated Planning and Advising for Student Success) initiatives, where success depends on reaching beyond IT circles.¹ I also imagine more concrete tools like EDUCAUSE infographics to help explain complex technologies and technology concepts to leaders with other areas of expertise. We'll know that we have succeeded when senior campus leaders, not just CIOs, have better frameworks for evaluating IT opportunities, understand how their institutions can improve efficiency and effectiveness through technology, and see the IT organization as a strategic partner, not a utility. Conversely, success here also means that IT leaders will have a better understanding of other stakeholders and the realities of their strategic domains.

Hand-in-hand with the important ground-level efforts on campus, we will also reenergize our efforts to make and expand connections with academic leaders, business officers, and others at the association level. Without a doubt, there are many current best practices on which we can build. For example, for the past three years we've brought IT leaders and chief finance and business officers together at our Enterprise IT Summit, cosponsored by EDUCAUSE and NACUBO, the

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national association for business officers. And for over ten years, EDUCAUSE has partnered with the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) and the University of Central Florida to deliver a summer leadership program that has helped hundreds of campus leaders innovate for student success. In the same vein, we've worked with the American Council on Education (ACE) for many years, closely collaborating on various policy matters. We will continue to develop, expand, and replicate these efforts.

We have already begun to meet with other national and international associations and organizations to share our plans and get ideas for future partnerships. For my part, I will be actively seeking opportunities to tell the story of information technology to non-IT audiences. In the next two months, for example, I'll be speaking (twice) to presidents and trustees at the annual conference of the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges, the League for Innovation in the Community College's national conference, and several other national and international conferences that bring together IT professionals and other campus leaders.

At a broader level, we will seek these opportunities because we know that our future depends on staying fresh and open to new ideas that reflect the rich diversity of our community.

On yet a third level, partnerships and collaborations can also arise from within our community, such as with our corporate members. In 2016 we created the Corporate Membership Advisory Committee to explore creative approaches to collaboration, convinced that traditional activities like corporate sponsorships are not the only way of working together for the benefit of our community. At the EDUCAUSE annual conference in October 2016, we enjoyed the first fruits of this effort at the Pitch IT! Challenge, where campus leaders pitched corporate partners with ideas for products they would like to see, in marked contrast to the traditional approach in which vendors build products that they hope higher education leaders will buy.

Certainly EDUCAUSE will explore partnerships and collaborations that advance the specific work we do, and at a broader level we will seek opportunities such as those I've mentioned because we know that our future depends on staying fresh and open to new ideas that reflect the rich diversity of our community. Embedded within our three strategic priorities is a strong commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), with considerable work planned for 2017. With the help of a grant from the Hewlett Foundation and our own funding, we are investing in our ability to promote DEI, engaging the association in a self-study of its own culture of DEI and helping the larger community do the same. One high-priority example is gender diversity, with the recent study from Accenture and Girls Who Code predicting that representation of women in computing will *decline* from 24 percent today (already unacceptable) to 22 percent by 2025.² When it comes to diversity of all kinds, equity, and inclusiveness, we will work hard in 2017 and beyond to make a positive difference.

EDUCAUSE is on the move. I'd love to hear your ideas, reactions, concerns, stories, and insights as we work to expand partnerships and collaboration within and beyond our community.

Notes

1. The Higher Education Information Security Council (HEISC) produces the *Information Security Guide: Effective Practices and Solutions for Higher Education*, a community-created resource of toolkits and other practical resources to assist campuses in implementing effective information security programs. The EDUCAUSE iPASS hub aggregates practical resources for those getting started with this highly effective approach to promoting student success.
2. Accenture and Girls Who Code, "Cracking the Gender Code" (website), accessed January 27, 2017.

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