A Portfolio for Strengthening IT Leadership Skills

Higher education IT leaders need a plan to strengthen their leadership skills. Established IT leaders must keep up with evolving technologies, new leadership methodologies, and the future of higher education in general. Prospective and new IT leaders must continually increase their competence and build their confidence in their ability to lead. EDUCAUSE has long provided a portfolio of opportunities not only for existing CIOs but also for those who aspire to CIO and other senior IT leadership positions.

The EDUCAUSE Institute (http://www.educause.edu/careers/educause-institute) offers several programs for current and aspiring IT leaders.

- **The Leadership Program.** This extremely popular program, offered each summer, is an excellent professional-development experience for those new to or aspiring to the CIO role in higher education. In the program, based on a cohort model, attendees participate in a week-long residential program of intense learning, sharing, and group discussions on topics that every CIO must understand. The program also includes the soft skills that are increasingly important for successful CIOs. Faculty members are experienced CIOs and other C-level professionals who have excellent advice and information to share. After the participants return to their institutions, the cohort listserv remains active, as participants reflect on program discussions and share new issues and topics. Attendees rank the program highly and retain relationships with their cohort and faculty throughout their careers.

- **The Learning Technology Leadership Program.** Another week-long residential program, this one is for professionals whose campus role involves the promotion of technologies to support teaching, learning, and student success. Through active-learning design of individual and team-based activities, participants build those leadership skills that will serve them in current and future campus roles. Attendees include those who have implemented and supported the use of technology in teaching and learning and have significant experience in instructional design, instructional technology, learning support, e-learning, and e-scholarship and who aspire to a higher level of leadership in higher education. Post-program communications continue through individual cohorts and an aggregated community of program graduates who share successes and seek advice for common challenges faced across the academy.

- **The Leading Change Institute.** Higher education requires leaders who can inspire, advocate for, collaborate on, and advance needed change. The Leading Change Institute, successor to the Frye Leadership Institute, accomplishes this by engaging national and international IT and library leaders who are seeking to gain a greater awareness of issues and to advance their skills for the benefit of higher education. The institute explores challenges across the higher education landscape, empowering leaders to initiate conversations and take action on issues that are critical not just to their individual institutions but to higher education overall. Through a dialogical, seminar approach, the cohort deconstructs issues, crafts arguments to reconceptualize those issues, and catalyzes action through collaborative projects—all designed to develop thinking that fosters collective action. The missions of the program sponsors—the Council on Library and Information Resources (CLIR) and EDUCAUSE—reinforce the importance of the partnership, learning, and collaboration that are reflected across the Leading Change Institute experience.

- **The Breakthrough Models Academy.** Accelerating the adoption of new models that will make higher education more valuable, affordable, and effective requires innovative programs, the use of technology, and leaders who understand campus institutional culture and decision-making. A collaboration of EDUCAUSE, the League for Innovation in the Community College, and Next Generation Learning Challenges (NGLC), the Breakthrough Models Academy is designed for this next generation of leaders. The academy consists of three parts: a week-long residential program in early summer; online cohort- and team-based sessions during the summer; and a capstone team competition held at the EDUCAUSE Annual Conference. Through a competitive selection process, the academy brings together leaders from diverse campus departments to build awareness of transformative models and catalyze change to serve higher education.

- **The Breakthrough Models Incubator.** The newest addition to the EDUCAUSE Institute portfolio is the NGLC Breakthrough Models Incubator. The program focuses on innovative change leadership that radically improves both operational productivity and student outcomes to target college access, affordability, and completion, particularly for underserved populations. Institutional teams—comprising the president, provost, CFO, CIO, and faculty senate chair—are competitively selected to participate in an intensive two-day workshop supported by expert coaching and virtual meetings focused on game-changing strategies involving competency-based progression, learning analytics, and online student-support programs. At the end of the education, design, and planning period, each institution
submits a business plan for fundamental change that incorporates technology-enabled innovations, and all institutions compete for funds to assist with launching their plan.

In addition to the EDUCAUSE Institute offerings, EDUCAUSE provides a variety of forums where CIOs can meet to discuss current issues, network, build relationships, and stay in touch throughout the year. The EDUCAUSE CIO Constituent Group (http://www.educause.edu/discuss/constituent-groups-about-information-technology-management-and-leadership/cio-constituent-group) is an active, public, online forum for CIOs to ask colleagues how they are handling specific issues, addressing new technologies, or thinking about the future of information technology and higher education. When inquiries are posted in the forum, responses are aggregated and results are shared with the group. This results in just-in-time snapshots representing the community pulse on a given topic.

Roundtables are another way for CIOs to network and to discuss issues of importance to their institutions. Hosted at EDUCAUSE Regional Conferences, the EDUCAUSE Learning Initiative (ELI) Annual Meeting, and the Enterprise IT Leadership Conference, these interactive discussions are facilitated by experienced CIOs with a strong understanding of the issues facing the profession. Evaluations consistently reflect an excellent experience that continues through virtual discussions via Google documents and “hot topic” discussions at the EDUCAUSE Annual Conference.

The CIO Experience at the EDUCAUSE Annual Conference offers a range of opportunities for CIOs to connect with each other and with important content. Members of the CIO Constituent Group meet face-to-face to discuss hot topics crowdsourced from the community or extended from popular listserv discussions. This meeting is always “standing room only.” The CIO Lounge offers informal space for individual reflection and collegial conversation, in addition to video streamed from the conference general and featured sessions and plenty of coffee and food to fuel an active conference schedule. In addition to dozens of track sessions of interest to CIO-level attendees, members can sign up for a CIO Open Space session to facilitate just-in-time discussions on specific topics of interest.

The Hawkins Leadership Roundtable (http://www.educause.edu/careers/advanced-programs/hawkins-leadership-roundtable), created in honor of Brian L. Hawkins, former EDUCAUSE president, is intended for new or aspiring CIOs and other IT leaders who want to refine their executive leadership skills. This roundtable is offered exclusively at the EDUCAUSE Annual Conference. Participants focus on high-level questions involving important leadership issues, and they are given ample time to engage in intensive networking with colleagues and exclusive mentoring sessions with experienced IT leaders.

The Enterprise IT Leadership Conference (http://www.educause.edu/events/enterprise-it-leadership-conference) is a small, focused event where CIOs, CTOs, and senior leaders have an opportunity to share and learn about enterprise-specific issues. These issues range from enterprise IT leadership to the future of information systems, infrastructure, support, and security. This conference is purposefully kept small to give the attendees an opportunity to network more effectively with their peers.

EDUCAUSE encourages established, new, and prospective IT leaders to consider these opportunities as additions to their portfolios for strengthening IT leadership skills.

Note

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