As I retire from EDUCAUSE and look back on my time here, I would like to share seven reflections that illustrate beliefs and experiences shared by many of us in higher education information technology. Intertwined with my reflections are the stories of so many of you and how you shared a laugh or an aspiration, lent a hand, or provided encouragement. I hope you find these reflections relevant to your own experience and that you see EDUCAUSE values reflected here. Finally, I hope you see a future even richer than today.

1. Education matters. I believe in education—passionately. Education is transformative for individuals as well as for society. Yet no matter how good education is, it can be better. There are millions more people whose lives can be transformed by education. We need more education, more effective education, more access to education, and more affordable education. Learning doesn't happen only at colleges and universities; it happens throughout life. I believe that both education and information technology can be game changers. Information technology can change learning experiences, catalyze new forms of scholarship, reveal pathways, and interconnect a world that is highly interdependent. (See Game Changers, the EDUCAUSE book I compiled and edited in 2012, for many examples.) The EDUCAUSE community is united in the belief that we can improve higher education through the use of information technology. Higher education is more important than ever before—and information technology has more to contribute than ever before. As we've said over the years at EDUCAUSE: “It's not just about information. Or technology. It's what you do with IT that counts.” Education counts.

2. Listen and learn. When you listen, you learn things. I learned a lot from students during my faculty and advising days. I learned how life can trip up students. They juggle many responsibilities. They have doubts. They lose their way. I learned that a clear, predictable path to graduation eludes many. Listening to their stories, though, you can't help but be moved by their grit. Hearing their joys and struggles helped me resolve to do what I could to support student success. We are increasingly using technology to help students find clear pathways to college completion and the support they need to be successful.

I also learned that things aren't always the way you assume. When information technology first started to be used for online learning, I assumed students would love online courses because students were adept with technology. I was so confident of this idea that I put a student on a national program to talk about online learning. He said he hated it. The result was embarrassing but also instructive.

Students have been great catalysts for information technology. The student perspective can change higher education's perception of information technology. It certainly changed mine. At EDUCAUSE, when we asked students what they thought about technology, we'd often get a blank stare back. What we called “technology”—mobile phones, websites, and so on—was simply how students did things. Researching and editing EDUCAUSE's first e-book, Educating the Net Generation (2005), was an eye-opener for me.

Watching students also demonstrated that anyplace can be a learning space. Wireless and mobile devices set learning free. Learning flows through the day, the campus, and the community as students go about their lives. I compiled the second EDUCAUSE e-book, Learning Spaces (2006), to help colleges and universities design spaces and technologies that bring people together and deepen
their engagement. Coffee bars, lounges, movable furniture, and play-spaces began to appear in libraries, for example, with silent and solitary study giving way to more interactive and social spaces.

3. Resist pigeonholes. When I was an undergraduate science major in a male-dominated field, a well-meaning professor took me aside and told me that “girls don’t do science.” I am sure he meant well. The full list of things women “couldn’t do” was presented to me in graduate school, again when I was a faculty member, later on in the business world, and beyond. Other women said I couldn’t be successful as a working mother. At times I was told that I was too young for certain jobs. There were other times that I definitely felt too old. I took a chance leaving a tenured professorship and restarting my career with IBM so that I could move into information technology. Sometimes other people put you in a pigeonhole; and sometimes you do it to yourself. I never imagined that I would lead EDUCAUSE or have many of the wonderful opportunities I’ve enjoyed in higher education and in the corporate world, in the United States and abroad, in my personal and professional life. I am grateful that I didn’t stay in a pigeonhole.

4. Business and higher education can learn from each other. At IBM, I coordinated a center—the Institute for Academic Technology—designed to help those in higher education explore how to capitalize on PCs. This experience allowed me to have one foot in the academic world and the other in business. There is so much I learned about business that helped me in my roles at EDUCAUSE—marketing, management, and more. The experience helped me write a 1998 book *What Business Wants from Higher Education*, which highlighted changes in the workplace, challenges in higher education, and the lifelong skills that students would find important. These types of interactions between business and higher education are increasingly common as we refine our notions of 21st-century skills, education, and lifelong learning. Technology, learning science, and consumer demand are creating new educational options that can benefit all.

5. Take a chance. One of my greatest opportunities began by picking up the phone. What started with “Would you be interested in talking about an idea?” turned into a transformative program called Next Generation Learning Challenges (http://nextgenlearning.org/), which has mobilized over $65 million in grant funds allowing schools, colleges, universities, and other organizations to use technology to improve student success. We had to develop everything about the program from scratch—and we had to do it fast. The experience was crazy—and probably one of the best things I’ve ever been a part of. The work, funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and others (http://nextgenlearning.org/partners), has launched programs in learning analytics, digital courseware, competency-based education, new models, and more. It is changing higher education and K–12. It is creating a new generation of educational leaders and breakthrough models through professional development and change-management programs such as the Breakthrough Models Academy and the Breakthrough Models Incubator. NGLC has been a leading edge of innovation, really hard work, and a joy.

6. Everything is connected. I am curious. I like learning things. I like finding the connections between different pieces of knowledge, seeing themes emerge from discussions, and realizing patterns as they reveal themselves. Visiting campuses, hearing about emerging technologies, and watching the higher education landscape change has been fascinating. In the 1990s, we talked about the future compatible campus. Distance education morphed into distributed learning and then into hybrid learning with the spread of the Internet. At that time, our focus was on the connections at the level of infrastructure and the network. But times change. When I joined EDUCAUSE as a vice president in 2004, I was responsible for the National Learning Infrastructure Initiative program. NLII, created by colleagues, was groundbreaking in that it was the first large-scale program to focus on how to use technology in teaching and learning. In 2005, we shifted the emphasis of the program from infrastructure to learning and created the EDUCAUSE Learning Initiative (http://www.educause...
Connected is a term associated with being online. However, too often we assume that face-to-face and online are mutually exclusive. This isn't a case of either/or. The physical and the virtual are connected and interconnected. The human and the digital are combinatorial and exponential. Virtually everyone and everything is connected.1 We have so much in common, nationally and internationally—a fact that is obvious every time I travel to a campus or a conference anywhere in the world. During my time at EDUCAUSE, the association has actively engaged with colleagues in other countries through joint projects (e.g., the Jisc leadership project), helping them establish their own EDUCAUSE-like organizations (e.g., Japan's AXIES program), convening IT organizations from around the world for conversation and collaboration (e.g., the Coalition of Higher Education IT Associations), and welcoming nearly fifty countries each year to the EDUCAUSE Annual Conference. It is a small world indeed.

7. We should advance the common good. At EDUCAUSE, we often use the phrase “uncommon thinking for the common good.” It is important to emphasize both “the common good” and “uncommon thinking.” I’m proud that one of EDUCAUSE’s primary contributions is building the profession across an incredibly broad range of institutions. EDUCAUSE contributes to the higher education IT profession from the inside-out, with members helping members through management and leadership institutes, for example. At EDUCAUSE, I’ve also been fortunate to spend a good deal of time helping to build the profession from the outside-in. For example, in 2005 we created the 7 Things You Should Know About briefs to make information technology understandable to any educator.2 I’ve worked on many books, articles, and presentations as a way to spread the understanding—and standing—of information technology across higher education.3 Building our profession contributes to higher education.

Information technology can enable alternative models, many of which have disrupted industries—and may disrupt our own. Information technology allows us to think differently—to do uncommon thinking—and to do different things. In the end, this idea returns to where I started these reflections: Education matters.

Today is a fabulous time to be in higher education and information technology. But, the future will hold even more for all of us.

To all of my colleagues, co-workers, and family—thank you for offering your support and for making my journey a joy. I have been exceptionally fortunate to have had so many great opportunities, to have met so many wonderful people, and to have experienced such significant changes in higher education.

I wish the best to all of you and to EDUCAUSE. As you may have heard me say, EDUCAUSE is a community—your community. I’m proud to be part of it.

**Notes**

2. A listing of the nearly 150 briefs can be found here: http://www.educause.edu/research-and-publications/7-things-you-should-know-about/.

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