Sketching Our Future

There’s so much to love about campus life and campus rhythms, and among the most energizing is the flurry of end-of-semester recognitions, awards, and celebrations. It’s inspiring to see the look on students’ faces when they are named Student of the Year or to observe the sense of accomplishment felt by faculty and staff when they are honored for their achievements. For EDUCAUSE, this is our time to celebrate our community.At our annual conference, we welcome thousands of attendees to learn, share, and engage in celebrating our past successes and solving our current challenges. We also energize ourselves by recognizing the winners of the EDUCAUSE Leadership, Community Leadership, and Rising Star Awards (highlighted in this issue of EDUCAUSE Review as well). The work we do to create connections, build the profession, and enhance decisions happens all year. However, our annual conference is our most profound expression of community. For those reading this Homepage column at the conference in Anaheim, welcome!

This is also the perfect time to share with the EDUCAUSE community my deep appreciation for the remarkable board members who represent your interests and help sketch the future of our association. The board plays a crucial role every year, but this year its leadership has been uniquely important as we are delivering our new five-year strategic plan. I’m proud to be part of this exceptional team, which has been actively involved for the last twelve months in forging the best path forward for our association. The three strategic priorities announced at the annual conference—personalized member experience, reimagined professional learning, and expanded partnerships and collaboration—represent bold and even transformational changes for EDUCAUSE over the next five years.

Our board members come from a wide variety of institutions. For example, our current board includes representatives from state systems, small liberal arts colleges, research-intensive universities, community colleges, and large state institutions with a strong undergraduate focus. However, the way the board represents EDUCAUSE members runs far deeper than institutional affiliation. For example, Joy Hatch began her board service while at a community college system, after her work at a community college for many years—and at a liberal arts college before that. While serving on the board, she became the CIO at a master’s-granting institution. Joy will be the first to underscore that she and her board colleagues represent the breadth and depth of EDUCAUSE members; they provide insight and vision for everyone, not for any particular constituency. For the board, the “common good” part of our commitment to “Uncommon Thinking for the Common Good” is not a rhetorical flourish but, rather, a day-to-day priority.

This commitment is important because our election process means that we don’t control the balance of institutional affiliations from year to year. Occasionally a group perceived as over-represented one year may be considered to be under-represented another year. To address any imbalances and bring in important perspectives, EDUCAUSE uses at-large appointments. For example, as we set out on a year of planning in 2016, the board appointed experts from other associations: Reggie Henry, CIO of the American Society of Association Executives (ASAE), and Edward Leach, executive director of the National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development (NISOD). Leach also previously served as a vice president at the League for Innovation in the Community College and held a number of community college leadership positions. For 2017, the board has appointed Joseph Moreau, a representative from the community college sector, to an at-large board seat, ensuring representation from two-year colleges.

As is evident from the strategic plan, the EDUCAUSE board has a strong commitment to diversity of all kinds, not just institutional type but also gender, racial/ethnic background, and other demographics. Board members join me in urging the EDUCAUSE community to develop and recruit board candidates who represent the broad range of voices that need to be heard. Although the board is currently as diverse (race/ethnicity) or more diverse (gender) than the community we serve, broad representation on the board has been and will continue to be a priority. The EDUCAUSE board represents a community of tremendous richness and variation, and we embrace the
conviction that diversity and inclusion allow us to better serve our higher education community. EDUCAUSE will grow in influence and service as we embody ever more varied perspectives, work experiences, lifestyles, and cultures.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to extend my thanks to those completing service on the EDUCAUSE board after the October 2016 board meeting. Joy Hatch, vice president for technology at Fort Hays State University, is a highly valued leader, one who does not speak frequently but, when she does, everyone stops to listen. Justin Sipher, vice president for libraries and information technology at St. Lawrence University, was an EDUCAUSE board officer for three years, and we all have been the lucky recipients of his thoughtful, intelligent counsel and good cheer. Bruce Maas, vice provost for information technology and CIO at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, is completing not only his service on the board but two years as board chair. Bruce is acknowledged by his board colleagues as an exemplary leader with a long and strong devotion to the EDUCAUSE community. I am personally grateful for the time and care he has spent ensuring a smooth transition for me over the last year. Bruce’s service on the board is a wonderful capstone to an inspiring career, and we all wish him well as he retires from UW in the spring of 2017.

As these three remarkable leaders complete their service on the board, a new EDUCAUSE board will be forming, including a new chair. Please join me in helping all of our board members feel welcome, and please honor their service by sharing with them your ideas, concerns, hopes, and dreams for this community that means so much to all of us. This is how we will continue to sketch and shape our future.