



Now the Challenging Part ...

I believe in the value of strategic planning. Since serving as the deputy CIO responsible for strategic planning across a large public higher education system, I have led several planning processes and have been involved in many more. I've seen plans that are inspirational expressions of hope in the future, and I've seen some that define operational goals and read more like a to-do list than aspirations for the future. I know firsthand how hard it can be to get that balance right, and I'm also well aware that the completion of the plan is more a commencement than a conclusion. More than once, I've looked over a completed plan with a tremendous sense of accomplishment, only to feel that mood give way to a dawning realization: now the real work begins.

I'm genuinely proud of the EDUCAUSE strategic priorities that were unanimously approved by the board of directors in October 2016. I'm proud of the care that went into building a comprehensive understanding of the EDUCAUSE landscape, the strong participation of the EDUCAUSE board, and the boldness of the vision we present for the next five years. We bring together three focused strategic priorities: personalized member experience; reimagined professional learning; and expanded partnerships and collaboration. These priorities are not intended to capture all the vital activities of the association; instead, these priorities concentrate on levers that promise to transform the member experience in ways that matter most to you.

We believe that in five years EDUCAUSE will offer a membership experience that will provide you with exactly the information you need, exactly when you need it.

We believe that in five years EDUCAUSE will offer a membership experience that will provide you with exactly the information you need, exactly when you need it. No one has brought together a more comprehensive array of high-quality content for the higher education IT community than EDUCAUSE. Our website is overflowing with research, reports, toolkits, presentations, videos, and much, much more. Over the next five years we want not only to expand the resources we make available to our members but also to build out a significant new capacity to personalize the distribution of that content. As we implement this new vision, you will have the opportunity to update your EDUCAUSE profile to reflect the topics that matter most to you, and this information will incrementally change your experience as a member. Knowing your interests and worries, we can send you targeted content. We can recommend

specific events instead of attempting to share news of all of them the same way, and when you sign up to attend an EDUCAUSE event we can, because we will know you better, suggest the sessions we think will be most relevant. For those who want to opt out or who want to simply browse and search as we do now, that will be an option as well. This is just the tip of the personalization iceberg, and the value swings both ways. Personalization involves targeting information to you, but it will also help us shape our focus as an association. Imagine how much more responsively we could shape future resources, research, and events if we knew, with the click of a mouse, what topics our EDUCAUSE profile holders identify as their top concerns or interests.

Personalizing the EDUCAUSE experience requires an important, sweeping change in our membership model. If your top personal concern today is information security, the right information for you might be the new research report we just released, but that won't help you if the report is immediately available only to members who pay to subscribe to the EDUCAUSE Center for Analysis and Research (ECAR). We want to share the important ECAR and EDUCAUSE Learning

(continued on page 6)

(continued from page 4)

Initiative (ELI) content with all members, and we see this as an enabling step toward personalization. To make this happen, beginning in July 2017, we will make ECAR and ELI resources available to all EDUCAUSE members. This change will require a recalibration of our dues structure to spread out the cost of these core services to all members. This change is necessary to advance personalization, but it must also be recognized that a recalibration of our member dues structure was overdue. Our board asked that our new dues structure be financially viable and equitable—that it replace ECAR and ELI revenue but not raise additional revenue. The board also asked us to simplify and modernize and to include a budget differentiator. For example, the current dues structure creates circumstances in which two colleges or universities of similar size but with vastly different budgets pay the same dues; this will change under the new structure.

Our second strategic priority promises a “reimagining” of professional learning. From our regular assessments, we know that members are very satisfied with our current portfolio of professional development offerings, but we also heard that you are hungry for more. Following the retirement of Julie Little, we are searching for a new vice president to lead this reimagining in a way that builds on the strong offerings currently in place. We’ll be exploring many possibilities, including leadership development programs that serve emerging roles like chief digital officers and that use team-based approaches to professional development. In line with personalization, we will also be considering a concierge approach to help you figure out what professional learning path is best for you personally. It’s not hard to imagine that your EDUCAUSE profile could identify your

professional development interests as well as help us connect you with appropriate opportunities in our professional development portfolio.

Our third strategic priority, expanded partnerships and collaborations, emerges from the growing conviction that individuals, organizations, and institutions can (and must) do more together than we can do alone. We believe that the future of higher education information technology is not IT professionals working in isolation; rather, successful IT leaders will increasingly be working collaboratively with presidents and chancellors, as well as others across the c-suite. We will continue to stress the value of having the senior IT leader report to the campus president or chancellor, but we will also acknowledge that what matters most is the degree to which information technology is strategically influential. We will work to advocate for this change by providing tools for IT professionals to tell their story to presidents and c-suite officers and by making

substantive connections with other campus organizations and higher education associations.

I’m pleased to bring to you a plan that is bold and focused—with grounded, practical expectations as well as ambitious aspirations. I am confident our plan reflects the strong themes we heard throughout the planning process. I want to thank all of you—far too many to name—who were involved over the last year in developing a plan and a vision for the future of EDUCAUSE. Now the even harder work begins.

Note: A longer version of this article, with more details about the EDUCAUSE strategic plan, can be found online.

Successful IT leaders will increasingly be working collaboratively with presidents and chancellors, as well as others across the c-suite.

John O’Brien (jobrien@educause.edu) is President and CEO of EDUCAUSE.

© 2017 John O’Brien. The text of this article is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License.