Essential Stops on Your Leadership Journey

Autumn brings a new semester—and the end of summer. Many of us travel in the summer to see sites and sights we've always hoped to visit. Michelin's Green Guides have helped tourists identify important cultural and scenic destinations. The Green Guides took me to many places I might otherwise have missed over the years, including Évora in Portugal, Jumièges Abbey in France, and the Marmolada mountain range in Italy. Their original rating system was beautifully concrete, suggesting destinations that are "worth the trip," "worth a detour," and "interesting."

Most of us in higher education information technology are on our own journey—to leadership. That journey can last for a lifetime or just for a project. Part of the EDUCAUSE mission is to help higher education IT professionals navigate this leadership journey. If we were to design our own Green Guide for EDUCAUSE, it would include a number of leadership destinations and stops that are always worth the trip.

Destination: EDUCAUSE Annual Conference

Some leadership opportunities at the EDUCAUSE Annual Conference require planning ahead; others can be serendipitous.

Reservations Required
Not at all coincidentally, two of the signature leadership experiences at the annual conference are named after EDUCAUSE past presidents. Each aspires to honor a particular leadership legacy. Diana Oblinger was a visionary EDUCAUSE leader who could see far into the future to identify emerging trends. The Diana G. Oblinger Innovation Forum has, in its first two years, explored the challenge of leading innovation within an institution while highlighting the technology trends that hold the greatest strategic implications for higher education. It gathers teams of both IT and non-IT leaders to learn about a particular innovation opportunity, such as student success, and how to advance that opportunity within their institutions. It takes place on Tuesday afternoon of the conference week.

The Hawkins Leadership Roundtable is named for EDUCAUSE's first president, Brian Hawkins, who left a legacy of strong commitment to leadership development, mentoring in the profession, and lifelong learning. This roundtable is a small-cohort mentoring program for new CIOs and individuals actively seeking their first CIO role. Each participant is provided with a personal mentor. Participants have the opportunity to gather with current CIOs several times during the annual conference week and participate in mentoring conversations that explore leadership topics such as strengthening personal leadership, influencing across the organization, and developing strategy. Relationships established during the Hawkins Leadership Roundtable can endure for years afterward.

CIO job seekers have a second mentoring opportunity at the annual conference. Next Generation Executive Search, which leads searches for many CIO jobs in higher education, provides pro bono résumé reviews and CIO interview coaching. More than a few EDUCAUSE CIOs have credited their first CIO job to this coaching, which is just one part of the CIO Experience at the annual conference.

CIOs aren't the only IT leaders in higher education, of course. CIOs depend on senior IT directors and deputy CIOs to oversee complex portfolios and key staff. The Senior Directors Seminar provides over eight hours of training, peer networking, and mentoring for these IT leaders.

Cultural Activities and Scenic Drives
Not everyone plans ahead. If you arrive at the annual conference without reservations, other leadership opportunities are well worth the trip. For example, a unique and highly valuable gathering of CIOs in higher education takes place on Tuesday of the conference week. The CIO Constituent Group meets at 3 p.m., drawing 100 or more CIOs from all kinds of institutions. It's a great opportunity to meet old friends, make new ones, and listen or contribute to conversations about the issues that are energizing CIOs.

The good news is that the CIO constituent group is only one of over 80 constituent groups that meet at the annual conference, allowing for numerous cultural activities. The conference app provides a guide to the times and locations of meetings for constituent groups such as women in IT, IT accessibility, young IT professionals, data governance and chief data officers, LBGTQIA in IT, research computing, privacy, health sciences, and many more. Constituent group meetings can help you meet smart colleagues from all over the world (more than 45 countries are represented at the conference), provide a venue to ask your questions and express your feelings, and give you essential insights to help you do your job that much better when you return to campus.

As any traveler knows, sometimes the most memorable encounters are those that aren't planned. More than one CIO is known to come to the conference every year and spend almost the entire time networking, taking a "scenic drive"

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through the hallways, EDUCAUSE Central, the CIO lounge, the exhibit hall, nearby restaurants, and other locations. Sitting in a heavily trafficked location can be a great way to run into colleagues and contacts, who will then introduce you to their colleagues. Before you know it, you've made several new connections with whom you can follow up after the conference.

Destination: EDUCAUSE Institute Programs

The EDUCAUSE Annual Conference has a little something for everyone at every stage of the leadership journey. But for concentrated leadership development, the ideal destination is the EDUCAUSE Institute, consisting of six programs for managers, CIOs/CISOs, and leaders interested in academic and learning technologies. These are held in the summer and spring.

Many EDUCAUSE members began their leadership journey attending EDUCAUSE management institutes and programs. The New IT Managers Program, for aspiring managers, and the Management Boot Camp, for current managers, are two-day workshops that focus on leadership at the manager level. The Management Institute is a more immersive, five-day program.

New and aspiring CIOs and CISOs can attend the EDUCAUSE Leadership Institute, a five-day program taught by experienced CIOs. This institute focuses on such essential leadership topics as creating a culture of innovation and nurturing emotional intelligence.

The Learning Technology Leadership Institute is another five-day program. It concentrates on developing aspiring leaders whose campus role involves the support and promotion of teaching and learning with technology.

Finally, the Leading Change Institute has been called "transformational" by many of its alumni, who join a network and form bonds that last for years afterward. The institute—a collaboration with the Council on Library and Information Resources (CLIR)—is five and one-half

days and draws existing and aspiring IT and library leaders.

Are the EDUCAUSE Institute programs worth the trip? As one recent Leadership Institute attendee wrote:

> I absolutely loved this institute! It's easy to remain in my bubble at my university and skip these types of functions due to the insurmountable tasks on my plate; however, this program has afforded me a brief moment to pause, reflect, learn, and has put new wind in my sails. I really appreciate the interaction and insight from amazing faculty and peers.

Destination: Home

Often the greatest enjoyment from a trip comes afterward. That's when you have the opportunity to remember what you saw and think about its lasting impact. In sharing stories with friends, family, and fellow travelers, experienced travelers can help first-timers avoid costly mistakes and find the best times and places to visit. Likewise, experienced leaders discover that sharing their wisdom allows them to consolidate their knowledge and gain new insights. Serving as EDUCAUSE Institute faculty, presenting at and participating in EDUCAUSE meetings and working groups, and writing for *EDUCAUSE Review* are just a few ways to contribute to the higher education IT field.

EDUCAUSE offers destinations and stops for all leadership journeys and for both new and experienced "travelers" with varied interests. Consider where you are in your personal leadership journey and what kinds of leadership development would suit you best at this time. EDUCAUSE will meet you where you are, will help you navigate, and will continue to guide you throughout your travels. ∎

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