
Minutes of the Regular Session of the EDUCAUSE Board

Monday, November 16, 2020 | Virtual

Note: All times listed are Eastern time (ET)

Attendance

Board members: Michael Berman, Elias Eldayrie, Keith McIntosh (Treasurer), Tony Moore, Joseph Moreau (Secretary), Michele Norin (Chair), Helen Norris, John O'Brien (President and CEO; ex officio), Amelia Parnell, Mark Roman, Celeste Schwartz, Carol Smith, Jennifer Sparrow, Sue Workman (Vice Chair)

Unable to attend: Sharon Pitt

Staff: Eden Dahlstrom, Susan Grajek, Nicole McWhirter, Mairéad Martin, Karen Mateer, Stacy Ruwe, Catherine Yang

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Call to Order

Board Chair Michele Norin called the meeting to order at 12:05 p.m. and welcomed the three new board members.

Committee Updates

Audit Committee chair Elias Eldayrie reported that the committee continued their focus on risk mitigation during this challenging time. He commended EDUCAUSE staff on their efforts to transition to a fully distributed workforce. He reminded the board that EDUCAUSE received a clean audit report this past year and shared that the committee recommends working with the current accounting firm, CLA (CliftonLarsonAllen), for a third year.

Governance Committee chair Sue Workman reported that the committee met twice since the last board meeting. The committee reviewed the process for conducting at-large appointments, as well as the role of board secretary, and had no recommended changes. Workman noted that board officer elections will be held at the November 30 meeting. The Governance Committee also reviewed the candidates put forth for this year's at-large appointment and selected three finalists that will be discussed at the November 30 meeting.

Helen Norris reported on recent activities of the Corporate Membership Advisory Committee (CMAC), which she co-chairs. The committee has as one of its goals to increase its engagement

on a strategic level and the committee recently updated its charter to reflect this new focus. Norris shared that Renee Patton, Global Director of Education for Cisco Systems, serves as the other co-chair.

Keith McIntosh, board liaison, and Catherine Yang, staff liaison, to the DEI Advisory Committee, provided an update. Yang shared that the committee is in the process of shifting from an applied role to a strategic one and is working to develop a strategic plan for DEI over the next two years. Both McIntosh and Yang took part in the DEI Experience Summit on November 5 and noted that presenter Karen Catlin highlighted actionable steps that the DEI Advisory Committee will incorporate into their future planning.

Norin asked for input on the current committee structure. Board members commented that the addition of the Governance Committee has provided much-needed clarification of board roles and processes. Eldayrie commented that having each board member on a subcommittee has made board service more participative, and Amelia Parnell added that the communication about priorities and what committees are doing is very clear. Workman commended Nicole McWhirter for shepherding the Governance Committee through its work. When asked about the process for assessing committees, McWhirter shared that formal assessments of committees should occur approximately every three years.

McWhirter noted that 2021 committee assignments will be made following the November 30 meeting.

Debrief on EDUCAUSE 2020 Annual Conference

Vice President of Professional Development Eden Dahlstrom provided an overview and recap of the recent EDUCAUSE 2020 Annual Conference, which was held virtually in October. She updated the board on several key data points, including registration, sessions offered, types of sessions, exhibitor offerings, and networking interactions. Overall, staff felt highly positive about the outcome of the event. Dahlstrom provided information on learning labs and the community day event, offering kudos to board members Michael Berman and Mark Roman, who were panelists for the extremely popular “Shark Tank” session. In addition, Dahlstrom highlighted the Experience Summits, held on November 5, that focused on four subject tracks: Teaching and Learning, Cybersecurity, Enterprise, and DEI. Board members praised the work of the staff to produce such a successful event and complimented the technology platform selected for the conference. There were positive comments about the simulative format, which allowed for meaningful interaction in the chat space and, because the content was recorded, the format allowed presenters to hone and perfect their session content; the 20-minute session length, which allowed people to attend more sessions than they typically would at a face-to-face event; and the virtual format in general, which allowed for the incorporation of student

voices as part of sessions, and allowed participants to track multiple sessions at the same time. There were mixed reactions to the exhibit hall.

Trimester Financial Review

Ruwe provided an update on the association's finances, noting that while in June she reported an anticipated a \$9M loss, the projected amount is now just under \$1M owing to better-than-expected revenues, cost-savings, and strong investment performance. Member dues are showing a decrease of 9% for US institutions, with higher non-renewal rates among associates, masters, and baccalaureates institutions. Ruwe reported that things were on track to meet the projected revenue for the annual conference and highlighted receiving notification that the previously received Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loan has been forgiven.

Roman inquired about the anticipated length of recovery for the organization. Ruwe noted that we expect a multi-year recovery and will still not be back to pre-COVID budget or staffing levels by the end of this current 3-year budget cycle. Eldayrie asked for clarification around the fiscal year. Ruwe reminded the board that EDUCAUSE's fiscal year follows the calendar year. On the other hand, about 80% of EDUCAUSE's members follow a July–June fiscal year, Ruwe added, which makes for some confusion. Parnell asked for additional details about membership renewals, specifically if any significant drops occurred in a particular sector or size of institution. Ruwe shared that while a full analysis has not yet been completed, anecdotally, feedback suggests that discontinued memberships are due to budget constraints and not because they don't use or value EDUCAUSE's services. A full report will be shared on membership renewals at the March board meeting.

Board Treasurer McIntosh provided the Finance/Investment Committee report. McIntosh shared that the committee spent time discussing membership renewals, concluding that there should be, as much as possible, a focus on member retention based on the idea that once you lose a member it will be harder to get them back. To support this, the committee recommends setting aside \$1M to create a "bridge fund" that can be used to support members who may be in financial need and would not otherwise be able to maintain their membership with EDUCAUSE.

The committee tabled the discussion about changes to the Carnegie Classification used to calculate dues citing the resulting dues increase it would cause to a handful of members at a time when dues increases are not supported by the committee or the board. The committee will continue to discuss the timing of the update to the Carnegie Classification and bring it back to the board for consideration.

Based on a practice started last year that resulted in EDUCAUSE retaining several members, Ruwe asked the board to review a list of non-renewing members and reach out and engage with contacts about their membership status.

Keith McIntosh moved that the EDUCAUSE Board approve designating \$1M over the next two years to assist with member dues transitions and to aid member retention. Berman seconded. The motion was approved.

Budget Preview

Ruwe provided a preview of the 2021 budget, focusing on the budget assumptions which include event registration revenue increase over 2020, no membership dues rate increase in 2021, a decrease in member retention over 2020, merit increase freeze, and reduced staff professional development and travel budgets. Ruwe noted that the Finance and Investment Committee will meet to review the budget in detail between now and the December budget meeting when the board will be asked to approve the 2021 budget.

Questions about Items in Written Materials

O'Brien set the stage for the discussion by noting that while in-person board meetings typically included time for EDUCAUSE staff to present updates on their respective units, we now only include this information in the board book and set aside time for any questions or discussion.

Michael Berman asked how the EDUCAUSE staff is doing with all the changes that have occurred this year. O'Brien, recognizing that 2020 has been challenging for everyone for many reasons, noted that the positive responses about the annual conference provided a lift to everyone's spirits. Susan Grajek added that her staff are still adjusting to the downsizing, but everyone is deeply committed to the work of the association, making it easier to accommodate the many changes this year.

Parnell raised the question about the positive earned media response and coverage helping conference attendance in 2021. O'Brien commented that despite the conference having fewer media representatives in attendance, we had a great response. Yang noted that in addition to the usual coverage in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, the conference received coverage in the *New York Times* and *Forbes*.

Executive Session

The executive session was called to order at 2:57 p.m. and included a discussion of the EDUCAUSE president/CEO performance for 2020. The executive session adjourned 4:00 p.m.