
Minutes of the Regular Session of the EDUCAUSE Board

Tuesday and Wednesday, March 2–3, 2021, Virtual

Note: All times listed are Eastern time (ET).

Attendance

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

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

Invited Guests: Jarret Cummings, EDUCAUSE (Wednesday); Jon Fansmith, American Council on Education (Wednesday)

Tuesday, March 2, 2021

Call to Order

Board chair Sue Workman called the meeting to order at 1:02 p.m. and began with a brief review of the day's agenda and a reminder for board members to complete the two policy-related surveys that were shared earlier by Nicole McWhirter.

Consent Agenda

Workman reviewed three items on the consent agenda: (1) an update in the board of director selection process document to add language about how to address tie votes; (2) an update in the Audit Committee charter to remove the board secretary as an ex officio member of the committee; and (3) approval of the minutes from the board meetings held on November 16, November 30, and December 17, 2020.

Jennifer Sparrow moved to approve the consent agenda. Mark Roman seconded. The motion was approved.

Committee Updates

Audit Committee chair Amelia Parnell reported that the committee is engaged in completing a review of its fiduciary oversight duties. The committee approved its updated charter as amended by the Governance Committee to remove the secretary as an ex officio member of the Audit Committee. They also reviewed the enterprise risk register to become informed of progress on risks that have been mitigated since the last report.

Governance Committee chair and board vice chair Keith McIntosh gave a review of the committee activities, including recommending language changes in the Audit Committee charter and board selection process document, both of which were in today's consent agenda. The committee also discussed the board demographics dashboard and the possible addition of a capabilities/composition matrix to use going forward.

Helen Norris, who serves as board liaison to the Corporate Membership Advisory Committee (CMAC), reported that the committee is providing input for the Showcase concept and topics and is also supporting a technical and certification concept that could connect institutional members with corporate members who offer training opportunities. Jim Burnett, EDUCAUSE Senior Director of Membership, is looking into possible new recruits for the CMAC.

McIntosh, board liaison to the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Advisory Committee, provided an update on the committee's outreach to Community Group leaders to collaborate on the annual conference program and on mentoring circles, which are available (along with 1:1 mentoring) as part of the new EDUCAUSE mentoring platform. The committee is also reaching out to the groups organizing the AriA (Anti-Racism in Academia) program. The board engaged in a discussion focused on the desire for actionable items to advance DEI efforts, as well as the continuing need for foundational work in this area. Board members described programs and initiatives under way on their own campuses, and Vice President of Digital Communication and Content Catherine Yang, who serves as staff liaison to the DEI Advisory Committee, added that the committee envisions several stand-alone activities to elevate DEI programs. Cheryl Washington, who was inaugural chair of the DEI Advisory Committee, commented that one of the first tasks of that committee was to develop a roadmap to help prepare people for their DEI journeys. Given the energy and interest around this topic and interest in a focus on action, Yang was asked to bring more detailed information to the June board meeting.

Finance/Investment Committee chair and board treasurer Elias Eldayrie reported that the committee reviewed the EDUCAUSE investment portfolio and Investment Policy Statement, with no recommended changes. Eldayrie noted that the 2020 year-end portfolio is performing favorably against established benchmarks and within target ranges and that the association's reserves are healthy. In support of members facing difficult finances for 2021, the Finance/Investment committee supports EDUCAUSE leadership's recommendation to forego

membership dues increase for 2021, keeping dues at 2019 rates. The committee also supports the idea of shifting the EDUCAUSE fiscal year from a calendar year cycle to a July 1–June 30 cycle so that it matches the one used by 80% of EDUCAUSE members. This shift makes dues reconciliation easier to manage and provides some relief for staff needing to do budget planning near the same time as the annual conference.

Trimester Financial Review

Vice President of Business Services and CFO Stacy Ruwe provided an overview of the preliminary year-end financial results for 2020 and an update on the overall financial health of the association. She noted that the capital budget was underspent by \$.6M and that a \$3M drawdown of reserves was done mid-year, but because of cost savings matched against budget losses and the improved market investments, our overall operating loss will be much better than expected, \$.5M instead of the \$1.2M loss budgeted. While several scenarios forecast early in 2020 suggested that we might fall below our board-required 6-month reserve level, Ruwe noted that through significant effort, our reserves have remained at the top of the 6–12-month range and we are starting 2021 on sound footing. We expect our reserves to remain stable through our financial recovery in 2023.

Membership Update

Ruwe provided an overview of membership. As of the end of 2020, overall dues revenue was down by 9% for the year, and the total membership count showed a decline of 12%, with the hardest hit categories being associate's ("two-year") institutions. O'Brien reminded the board that the 2020 budget anticipated a 20% decline in member revenue, so the end result, though unfortunate, 9% is better than expected. He added that the decrease in associate's institutions is disappointing because our member model was restructured in part to put EDUCAUSE membership within reach for this group and we saw considerable increase in membership for this institution type over the past few years. We will continue to track institutions that did not renew and hope that post-pandemic, as institutional budgets recover, we will be able to re-engage these members. For the coming year, we are budgeting for the possibility of an additional 5% decline in membership. For 2021–2022 membership year, no adjustments are planned to either dues rates or to the Carnegie classification schema that we use, which is one of the criteria used to determine dues for individual institutions. Ruwe reported that dues rates are usually announced in May, but a consensus agreed that it would be better to get this information out to members sooner, especially since institutions are now working on budgets. Carnegie classification changes will be announced in July to prepare institutions for financial ramifications of implementation the following year.

Mark Roman moved to approve the 2021–2022 membership dues rates [no change] as proposed. Sharon Pitt seconded. The motion was approved.

Ruwe provided an update on the membership engagement dashboard, which is a follow-up to the initial demonstration of this tool for the board in February 2020. McWhirter provided an example of how information from the dashboard has been useful in identifying prospective committee members for the Nominations and Leadership Development Committee and other advisory committees. We will continue to develop the engagement dashboards and methods of gathering data on the interest and consumption patterns of our members to provide input for future programs and services. Projects are in the works to allow members to effectively rate EDUCAUSE offerings as an input into content creation, program delivery, and member value expansion. Ruwe added that we are also exploring potential use of the dashboard to provide predictive analytics for the association.

Showcase Update

Vice President of Partnerships, Communities, and Research Susan Grajek gave an overview of the Showcase series, which is an innovative new initiative at EDUCAUSE. The purpose is to bring together both products and services to address important and timely issues for our members and to present the information in a fresh and compelling way. The series also allows us to reinforce the relevance of the EDUCAUSE Top IT Issues and helps members easily connect with our corporate members and find solutions. Grajek presented a list of the eight Showcase titles planned for 2021 and provided more detail on the first real Showcase, which focused on the theme of privacy. Each Showcase features a major thematic component. DEI elements are intended to be infused into each one. Each Showcase also includes a short video wrap-up that connects to a top 10 IT issue. Grajek provided early data about the success of the first Showcase, which resulted in 6,000 page views, 50% of which were return viewers in the first week. Plans include adapting and expanding the Showcase concept based on member feedback and increasing engagement with the corporate community by adding new interactive opportunities. We also plan to broaden our reach through new partnerships. The annual conference will serve as a culminating event, with a review of the Showcases from the previous months and member input helping determine Showcase events for the following year. O'Brien congratulated the executive team in shaping this effort and feels that our members will benefit from these events.

Questions about Items in Written Materials

During the discussion of written materials for the meeting, several board members commented on the depth and clarity of the information provided. Jennifer Sparrow commented favorably on the work done to advance DEI as noted in the staff satisfaction survey. Parnell added that

despite being one year into the pandemic, it is remarkable that staff feel they have a good sense of direction for the association. Ruwe cited O'Brien's weekly updates for staff and McWhirter's consistent goal tracking as examples of efforts that have made staff feel more connected and confident about the future. Other comments offered included praise for the level of detail in the cybersecurity report, the exponential progress in IT maturity under CIO Martin's leadership, as well as compliments for risk management. Martin commented that some of our vendor responses have already incorporated HECVAT and added that we have a vendor manager on staff who has improved our vendor risk management. Roman praised the security component noted in the board materials but felt more focus could be placed on privacy along with security. O'Brien noted that we did a major expansion of GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) and our privacy policy has been significantly expanded as a result. Ruwe added that we have several privacy-related items addressed in our risk register.

Parking Lot

Vice chair McIntosh noted that the only parking lot item was discussion about DEI and actions that can be taken. O'Brien proposed deferring this until the June board meeting. Roman suggested adding a placeholder to consider indigenous issues as part of the DEI conversation, since it is an important DEI (or EDI) issue in Canada. McIntosh agreed and suggested disability and age as other placeholder topics. The remaining discussion included ideas and observations, such as developing best practices that could be shared with the community; the need to address the varying levels of progress across a spectrum when it comes to DEI; being able to meet individuals and institutions where they are while also recognizing that this is a cyclic, ongoing effort; the need for organizational and institutional awareness and assessment as a starting point in a DEI journey, with a reference to the CUPA-HR Maturity Model; and the need for collaborators and partners (e.g., HR staff; chief diversity officers, other associations) in advancing DEI. O'Brien suggested using the "restore, evolve, transform" model when the board does its deeper dive in June. Yang asked board members to send ideas for how our effort can be tailored to be directed for an IT shop—that is, what is unique about our profession (v. all higher education) and how can we move forward with our efforts?

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 4:02 p.m.

Wednesday, March 3, 2021

Review Agenda

Board chair Sue Workman convened the meeting at 10:32 a.m. and reviewed the agenda for the day.

Staff Satisfaction Survey

President and CEO John O'Brien reported on the results of the 2021 staff satisfaction survey, which showed an increased response rate (72% to 78%) and an overall increase in satisfaction of 5% in 2020, which was made challenging by the reductions in force and difficult year all around. Specifically, the response to prompts related to EDUCAUSE DEI efforts and culture were significantly improved when comparing responses to the same prompts in 2017 and 2021. Many areas showed double-digit increases, such as an increase from 17% to 62% in staff who agree or strongly agree that "the organization is diverse, equitable, and inclusive." An increase of 43 percentage points occurred in those agreeing or strongly agreeing that EDUCAUSE employees have a "shared understanding of how DEI advances the work." This was reassuring and affirms that DEI has broadly been embedded in efforts throughout the association.

New Administration Impact on Higher Ed / Policy Update

Senior Advisor for Policy and Government Relations Jarret Cummings introduced Jon Fansmith, Director of Government Relations for the American Council on Education (ACE). Fansmith provided an overview of current legislative activity in Washington, DC, especially regarding the relief bill under consideration. The current bill, the American Rescue Plan Act, along with the legislation passed by the previous administration, provides substantial relief for higher education. Fansmith highlighted information about the Biden Administration's stance on issues related to higher education and key personnel appointments at the Department of Education. The Biden Administration, which is generally viewed as friendly toward higher education, has big goals and much it wants to accomplish; however, several of the bigger issues will require congressional action that may be difficult in the current divisive environment.

Professional Development Updates

2021 Events Overview

Eden Dahlstrom provided an overview of the range of professional development events being offered in 2021. Online events are the focus right now, with the annual conference as our first face-to-face event scheduled for 2021. She highlighted the new and popular format of Member

QuickTalks, which are agile, easy to set up, and interactive. QuickTalks and webinars, some of which are sponsored, make up the largest number of our offerings by category. Dahlstrom shared that our learning management system has helped us ramp up our Institute program offerings, many of which are now offered online. She also noted that the Hawkins Leadership Roundtable will return in 2021 as a hybrid event. Tony Moore asked whether any regional conferences are being planned, since these might be a more attractive and affordable option due to travel restrictions. Dahlstrom responded that the only regional event is NERCOMP, which is being planned as a virtual event for 2021; other than that, no regional events are planned right now. The resulting discussion focused on the strategies we have used to figure out the programs and formats that best serve our members; the considerations for pricing events and the need to be price sensitive; and ways that board members can help advance and promote professional development offerings.

2021 Annual Conference Update and Discussion

O'Brien provided context for the discussion to emphasize that several unknowns exist regarding the annual conference, given the dynamic situation with the pandemic and other factors, but we expect to have clarity by the next board meeting. Dahlstrom then provided an overview of the 2021 annual conference, which is planned as an onsite experience, a virtual experience, and a shared experience, meaning that those attending virtually will have access to some of the face-to-face options and vice versa. She then shared the main assumptions and concepts that EDUCAUSE is working with, emphasizing that we are confident that we have the resources, knowledge, and creativity to provide a rich and rewarding conference. She also provided information on various scenarios under review, including drivers (some internal, some external) and risk factors that will help guide our decision-making over the coming months. We are ready to pivot to an online-only conference if needed, and we are also being sensitive to the fact that our members face uncertain budgets, especially for professional development. Board members offered their perspectives on the potential benefits of a hybrid conference and expressed confidence in Dahlstrom and her team in dealing with the uncertainties and complexities of the circumstances out of our control.

Parking Lot

Given that the policy presentation was very US-focused, O'Brien proposed, and the board readily agreed, that we complement the US policy update at this board meeting with an international update at the next board meeting, recognizing that EDUCAUSE is an international organization with 10% of members residing outside the US.

Round Robin

The meeting ended with a round robin, with each participant sharing a key takeaway from the meeting. Positive comments were offered about the informative policy presentation, with some concern expressed about the difficult political climate. There was great interest about continuing DEI as priority for EDUCAUSE and appreciation for the work involved in planning the many iterations—in-person, online, and hybrid—of the annual conference. In addition, board members shared enthusiasm for the increasingly sophisticated way we are using data to plan and make decisions; they also look forward to being able to resume in-person meetings and events. There was a general sense of mutual respect and gratitude for the quality of the discussion and the camaraderie of the group throughout the meeting.

Adjourn

Chair Workman concluded the meeting with a note of appreciation for the EDUCAUSE staff. The meeting adjourned at 2:08 p.m.

No executive session transpired at this meeting.