
Minutes of the Regular Session of the EDUCAUSE Board

Monday, October 25, 2021, in Philadelphia, PA, and Virtual

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

Attendance

Board members: Allan Chen, 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), Sherri Yerk-Zwickl

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

Invited guests: Alex Alavi, Interim Director of Finance, EDUCAUSE; Jim Burnett, Senior Director, Membership, EDUCAUSE

Call to Order/Review Agenda

Board chair Sue Workman called the meeting to order at 8:06 a.m. and briefly reviewed the logistics for the hybrid meeting. She welcomed the board's two newest members, Allan Chen and Sherri Yerk-Zwickl, and acknowledged Elias Eldayrie and Amelia Parnell, who joined the meeting virtually. Workman drew everyone's attention to Parnell's recently published book, [*You Are a Data Person*](#), a copy of which was given to each participant of today's meeting.

Consent Agenda

Workman reviewed the three items on the consent agenda: 1) bylaws changes to remove prescriptive policy language from Article IX pertaining to the conflict-of-interest form, and to incorporate gender-neutral language throughout; 2) clarification of the timing for officer selection and committee transitions; and 3) clarification of the rules for selecting alternate candidates for board election when the need arises.

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

Committee Structure and Selection Review and Board Officer Selection Process Review

Chief Planning Officer Nicole McWhirter reported that following this meeting, she will send out a survey that includes a ranked choice option for board members to indicate their preferences

for board subcommittee service. Board members will be notified of committee assignments, and the formal approval will occur at the December 20th virtual board meeting so that any transitions can be planned for committee leadership. As current board chair, Workman will coordinate the board officer selection process and will offer a call for nominations. McWhirter reminded the group that (a) board members can nominate themselves or others (b) the chair and vice chair positions require one year of service, and (c) there is no automatic progression from vice-chair to chair. McWhirter also provided information about board members who serve on other advisory committees within EDUCAUSE, such as the DEI Advisory Committee and the Corporate Member Advisory Committee.

Board Committee Updates

Audit Committee chair Parnell reported that the committee has been briefed on progress and updates to our risk register, including a recategorization of IT risks to include a category for cybersecurity. In addition, the committee conducted an annual review with the accounting firm of CLA (CliftonAllenLarson) and we will continue to use their services for the 2021 audit, the 6-month transition period audit, and tax returns.

Finance/Investment Committee chair Elias Eldayrie reported that the committee's met with Merrill Lynch advisors to review the association's investment portfolio and discuss investment strategies and suggestions. The strong performance of our investments means that our operating reserves are healthy. The committee also has received an update on CARES Act funding and discussed membership renewals and Carnegie Classification updates, which is on the agenda later for today's meeting. O'Brien noted that for our investments, the total swing from low to high was \$4.5M, which shows how quickly and dramatically that number can change in a matter of months—positive, this time. Cheryl Washington asked if the committee feels encouraged by the Merrill Lynch report for the near future. Eldayrie responded that things look reasonably good, but there is uncertainty—especially the possibility of inflation—but Merrill Lynch anticipates a reasonably good outlook for the coming year. O'Brien noted that Alex Alavi will be joining the meeting later and can speak to this.

Keith McIntosh, board liaison to the DEI Advisory Committee, reported that the committee has been very active this year and made a concerted commitment to action, including development of a hiring roadmap, accessibility work, and development of a roadmap to encourage action steps for the CIO Commitment statement. The committee has held a partnership meeting with leaders of the [Next Leaders Fellowship](#) program and [ARiA](#), two initiatives that stand to have real impact in our community.

McIntosh, as board vice chair, also reported on the work of the Governance Committee. McIntosh touched briefly on the bylaw's changes and process changes for board officer selection, board committee assignments, and identification of alternate candidates for the

board election—all items covered under the consent agenda. The committee has also reviewed the role of the office of board secretary, which will be left unchanged because it is a requirement of the District of Columbia, where EDUCAUSE is incorporated as an organization. Eldayrie commended the work of the Governance Committee, which has brought about a new sense of cohesion and direction to the work of the board and the organization.

Board Assessment

Representing the Governance Committee, McIntosh presented the results of the recent board assessment, commenting that we achieved 100% participation and that all scores were within the “Good” to “Excellent” categories and exceeded benchmarks in all role and responsibility categories. Compared to the board’s most recent survey in 2018, there was a 17% increase in responses at or near an “Excellent” rating. The written responses on the survey and the resulting discussion centered on EDUCAUSE’s continued commitment to DEI, financial sustainability, adaptability to changes occurring generally in higher education, considerations for events given the uncertainty of the pandemic; and the kinds of data we collect from members to help determine future initiatives. Parnell commented that EDUCAUSE has an opportunity to lead in this space and O’Brien noted that the board will be involved in our next strategic planning process, which begins in 2022.

Trimester Financial Review

O’Brien introduced Alex Alavi, Interim Director of Finance, who joined the meeting to give the financial report. Alavi did a brief review of the period going back to March 2020, when the pandemic caused the financial uncertainty that went along with our need to cancel several face-to-face events. Regarding the 2021 budget, Alavi shared that we expect our revenue to exceed the budget due to forgiveness of first and second loans received as part of the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP), as well as our strong investment performance. On the expense side, he added, we anticipate expenses will come in under budget due to decreases in total salaries, vendor services, facilities costs, and travel. Alavi commented that our investment portfolio has performed well, and we have made additional investments in the private sector. In response to a question from O’Brien about the short-term outlook, Alavi indicated he is optimistic, but also cautious. Our investment managers want to stay the course with our investments, but they have latitude to operate within a specified range.

Staff suggested that we are confident about membership and corporate sales in the future, though the long-term implications of the pandemic and the business model are far from certain. The board discussed possible approaches to long term revenue stability with Eldayrie suggesting that building back revenue from membership (vs. corporate engagement) was ideal. O’Brien reminded everyone that the three-year budget discussion will be a good opportunity to

continue this discussion. The board endorsed doing what is possible around compensation to try to retain staff in the face of an exceptionally competitive job market. O'Brien noted that a project was underway to evaluate each position for market competitiveness and adjust as possible within our budget.

Membership Dues and Carnegie Classification Update

O'Brien introduced the topic of membership dues and introduced Jim Burnet, Senior Director, Membership, who gave a brief overview of the evolution of how we have structured our membership in relation to the Carnegie Classifications, which are now updated on a three-year cycle. Jim shared that EDUCAUSE currently uses the 2010 Carnegie Classification and had planned in 2020 to implement the 2018 Carnegie update; however, because of the pandemic the board agreed to pause any update. Instead, dues levels remained at the 2019–2020 levels. In 2021 we are again recommending no change to dues for one more year and pausing the update the Carnegie levels until we can carefully study the data sources used in creating our dues structure.

Keith McIntosh moved to approve the freeze of membership dues rates at the 2021–2022 level for the 2022–2023 membership year, which will end June 30, 2023. Allan Chen seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

E21 Preview

Vice President of Professional Development Eden Dahlstrom provided an up-to-date overview of the conference, including the practices and protocols in place to make it an exceptional and engaging event. Our planning involved working with new vendors on risk assessment and health information verification who have experience in best practices for holding a conference during a pandemic. The exhibit hall will be downsized from previous years, but the vendors participating are eager to be in Philadelphia and see EDUCAUSE as a value. For future planning, we will continue to incorporate online components and use feedback on this event to capitalize on what works best for each audience. Board members were extremely enthusiastic and impressed with the level of effort taken this year to make the conference exceptional.

Top 10 IT Issues

Vice President of Partnerships, Communities, and Research Susan Grajek gave an overview of the process to determine this year's Top 10 IT Issues. This year's committee greatly expanded input from the international community, with eight individuals representing six countries. Several of our international partner organizations such as Jisc, CAUDIT, and EUNIS were represented through the participation of these individuals. This year the emphasis was on the

impact of technologies and several of this year's issues explicitly referenced digital transformation and the use of technology to improve the institution's business model, which includes the identification and management of risks.

Community Platform: EDUCAUSE Connect

Vice President and CIO Mairéad Martin reported on our new community platform, EDUCAUSE Connect, which was rolled out in late September. The platform is currently home to 68 open community groups, 38 closed committees or committee-type groups, one solution-provider space, and a corporate partner hub/landing page. Martin shared that during the initial phase of adoption, the platform has experienced a few accessibility issues, and her team has been working with the IT Accessibility Community Group (CG) to remediate these issues as much as possible. Higher Logic has also formed an accessibility group to help develop the product platform in terms of its functionality. Workman suggested some further marketing around how to make the most out of the platform. Currently the main avenue for promotion has been through the CG Leaders group.

Questions about any Items in the Written Materials

Helen Norris inquired about the internal DEI work, and O'Brien responded that to supplement the work being done by the DEI Advisory Committee, EDUCAUSE created an internal staff DEI working group to examine our own practices and become a more equity-centered organization. Catherine Yang is taking a leadership role in this effort. Yang commented that the first undertaking has been an inclusive language guide created by our editorial team, which McWhirter used to update the bylaws. Several board members expressed interest in seeing this document, and McWhirter will share it via the board portal.

Closing Remarks

The meeting concluded with a round robin, with each participant commenting on something they learned or want to explore further following the days' meetings. There was uniform praise for the planning done to prepare for the annual conference and enthusiasm for our first in-person event since the pandemic started. Others noted appreciation for EDUCAUSE staff in general; continued enthusiasm and support for the progress and action around DEI initiatives; and praise for the superb development of the board committee structure and processes.

Finally, there was warm acknowledgement of board members who are rotating off the board, Sue Workman and Keith McIntosh, who said a few words about their board service.

Adjourn Regular Meeting

Workman thanked the participants for an engaging and informative meeting. The regular meeting was adjourned at 2:30 p.m.

Executive Session

The board entered executive session at 2:35 p.m. and adjourned at 3:20 p.m.