

Summer Camp— Then & Now

Many of us have fond memories of spending a week or two at summer camp during the long, hot, lazy months of June, July, or August. When we were kids, camp was a time to get away from home, to make new friends, to learn new skills, to broaden our horizons, and of course, to have fun. This summer, more than 150 IT professionals will also be attending “summer camp”—at the EDUCAUSE Institute Management Program, the EDUCAUSE Institute Leadership Program, or the Frye Leadership Institute. At these one- or two- week events, attendees will get away from their offices, meet new people, expand their professional networks, learn new management skills, and develop their leadership abilities. And if the past experiences can be relied on, they’ll have some fun too.

It may be more important than ever that these kinds of opportunities are and continue to be available. One of the key findings of the ECAR study “Information Technology Leadership in Higher Education: The Condition of the Community,” which was published in February 2004, is that continuity of IT leadership in higher education may be in jeopardy. According to the study, which included survey data from nearly 2,000 IT professionals, as older IT leaders leave their positions for retirement or other opportunities over the next five to ten years, there may not be enough aspiring leaders ready to take on their responsibilities. Identifying and preparing the next generation of IT leadership is therefore an important responsibility of today’s executives. Their success at doing so is critical to ensuring smooth transitions for higher education institu-

tions, which are experiencing rapid technological change and are continuously increasing dependence on all aspects of information technology while being challenged by shrinking budgets and endowments, increasing public scrutiny, and growing private-sector competition.

Over the last five years, the EDUCAUSE Professional Development Committee has emphasized management and leadership preparation through the EDUCAUSE Institutes. These programs are led by practicing IT professionals, as well as by CFOs, presidents, and other higher education representatives, who bring significant experience and a wealth of knowledge and understanding of IT issues and the academy. During the week, the attendees spend time in one-on-one discussions, small-group projects, and larger-group sessions. Attendees and faculty share meals and mingle both formally and informally throughout the week. Web sites and online discussion groups continue the conversations and maintain the new connections long after the face-to-face portion of the institute has ended. And of course, time is allowed for relaxation.

The Management Program, targeted at those who are relatively new to management, focuses on developing participants’ management and organizational skills. The curriculum emphasizes helping IT managers understand the role they play within the institution and the changing nature of information technology, and it focuses on the practical skills needed to succeed, including time management, effective team-building, project management, performance management, communications skills, and career planning.

In the Leadership Program, individuals

who occupy or aspire to senior positions in campus IT organizations examine the realities of IT leadership. Working closely with the faculty, the participants learn strategies to promote and lead change, nurture organizational development, and encourage innovation. Real-life situations form the basis for the discussions and case studies, and participants examine the many aspects of IT leadership within the context of the overall institutional culture. Issues of policy, strategic planning, broad institutional decision-making, and career issues are also incorporated into the curriculum.

The Frye Institute, held for the last four years at Emory University and operated in partnership with Emory and the Council on Library and Information Resources (CLIR), offers yet another leadership-development opportunity for those who aspire to the most senior roles in the academy. Attendees come not just from IT but from the faculty, the library community, and other areas of higher education. Interested individuals are nominated and submit applications for this two-week residential program, which also includes a follow-up, one-year practicum.

This year, as these “summer-campers” get together in Boulder, Colorado, and Atlanta, Georgia, they will be taking some of the necessary steps to prepare themselves to fill the gaps projected for the years to come. Today’s institutional IT leaders need to look for these and other types of opportunities to foster leadership development and to prepare their institutions for the future.

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