

Foreword

The EDUCAUSE Center for Applied Research (ECAR) was launched on January 1, 2002, to create a body of research and analysis on important issues at the intersection of higher education and information technology. ECAR is fulfilling its mission through a program of symposia and through the publication of

- ◆ biweekly research bulletins oriented to senior campus functional executives;
- ◆ detailed studies designed to identify trends, directions, and practices in an analytically robust fashion; and
- ◆ case studies designed to showcase campus activities and highlight effective practices, lessons learned, and other insights from the practical experience of campus leaders.

Since ECAR's inception, four symposia have been held and more than 75 research publications have been issued.

ECAR remains a new and evolving venture. Its success as a research center and business enterprise depends in large measure on our reception with EDUCAUSE members and sponsors. Our members, as always, have shown great confidence in us and have shown their support by subscribing to ECAR despite a difficult economic climate for higher education in 2002 and 2003. These members understand that particularly in tough times, investments in good research

and analysis can save money in the long run. ECAR has been especially fortunate to enjoy the support of an unparalleled group of sponsors. While Cap Gemini Ernst & Young, Datatel, HP, Microsoft, PeopleSoft, SCT, and WebCT provide significant financial support to ECAR, they are more than financial sponsors. These companies believe that impartial applied research on critical issues in higher education generates a more informed marketplace of both buyers and sellers. These firms are committed to understanding their customers and helping them make the most effective decisions related to their technologies and products. Most impressively, these sponsors understand deeply and respect the importance of intellectual independence in the marketplace of fast-moving ideas.

The IT Community in Higher Education

The traditional roles of the computer center and the library—and the professionals who have led these organizations—are no longer adequate to support a changed and changing higher education environment. A new kind of leadership with new skills and orientations is needed, and, throughout our institutions, various managers of digital resources and information technologies

will have to assume new roles. This is true whether these leaders are chief information officers (CIOs), chief technology officers (CTOs), IT directors, librarians, or other high-level administrators responsible for managing an institution's digital resources and information technology.

Colleges and universities thus face not only a shortage of and competition for the specific technical skill sets needed to advance institutional IT strategies but also the need to ensure effective IT leadership at the highest levels.

Many people with functional responsibilities in higher education institutions see themselves solely as advocates for their areas of responsibility. Leaders, on the other hand, see themselves not in terms of the functional units they head but as part of the institution as a whole. Leaders of information resources and technology units on campus increasingly need to participate actively in the academic enterprise's central administration, both to be personally effective and to make the institution effective. This new leadership approach requires these people to be partners in reconceptualizing the institutional mission, articulating a vision, and forging the political alliances necessary to achieve the kind of change required.

These new roles have little to do with the skills and mindsets such leaders might have found critical in earlier stages of their careers. Leaders today must know how to move beyond the comfortable realm of technical expertise to tackle the hard questions, especially "What must the college or university become to remain successful?"

Information resources and technology leaders today need to understand that their role is no longer that of specialist but rather that of generalist, acting and participating as critical partners in the institution's central administration. To do this, these people need at least rudimentary knowledge of such things as grants and contract administration, en-

dowment spending policies, intercollegiate athletics, financial aid and tuition discounting, and myriad other facets of the institution as a whole. Since all of these issues present problems and challenges, the senior administrative team in the institution must be able to look at all of the needs, weigh the trade-offs, and make informed decisions. This militates against the notion of advocating solely for the needs of the "stovepipe" organization that a given person may officially represent. The objective must be to find the optimal solution for the institution, not to maximize the advantage for a given unit or set of units. The latter approach creates a suboptimal solution, and the management literature is full of examples where such solutions have damaged overall organizational health.

This is a fine line to walk, because leaders are expected to advocate for the functional area they represent. Finding the balance between advocating for special needs and looking out for the larger interests of the institution ultimately determines the credibility and the respect accorded any senior administrator responsible for leading information resources and technology. Are these individuals seen as being at the top level of the IT or library organization or at the bottom level of the central administration? Truly effective leadership requires that leaders apply equal skill, time, and attention to both of these roles.

This ECAR study goes a long way toward documenting the state of a professional community and its leadership cadre. Its use of validated instruments to study issues of leadership style and innovation climate in higher education settings is nearly without precedent. The results of this study are simultaneously heartening and disquieting: heartening because many of our leaders today are indeed in the big game and are being entrusted with responsibilities that demand an institutional view and skill set, and disquieting because so many of our

communities' top leaders and professionals are nearing retirement and plan to exit higher education in growing numbers in the near future. It is also worrisome to see significantly fewer of the highly qualified women (as compared with men) in our community express interest in attaining these top positions that will open in the next few years.

Important Contributions

Information Technology Leadership in Higher Education: The Condition of the Community is the first ECAR research study of 2004. It is the result of eight months of collaborative research and was conducted under the direction of Richard Katz and ECAR fellows Robert Kvavik, Mark Nelson, Jim Penrod, Judy Pirani, and Gail Salaway. This study also benefited from the efforts of ECAR fellows Phil Goldstein and Dewitt Latimer. ECAR fellow Toby Sitko's thoughtful editorial and coordinative leadership added measurably to the study's quality. Thanks also go to Madhavi Gujja, a doctoral student at the University of Memphis, for bibliographic research.

This is perhaps the most comprehensive study of our community to date. Thanks to EDUCAUSE members' dedication, the research is based on input from nearly 2,000 college and university IT practitioners who participated in a major survey in March 2003. More than 100 people participated in focus sessions, telephone interviews, and campus visits. We recognize these contributors in the study and cannot thank them enough. In addition to this project's advisors, a group of particularly gifted educational leaders gave significant time to reflect on higher education's collective experience in IT leadership and on the future of our community in higher education. This group included Ron Bleed of Maricopa Community College; Polley McClure of Cornell University; Jack McCredie of the University of California, Berkeley; Martin Ringle of Reed College; Mike Roberts of The

Darwin Group; and Dave Smallen of Hamilton College.

This study looks at senior-most leaders and their staff in central IT organizations; IT leaders and their staff in functional campus organizations; and IT leaders and staff in local campus units such as schools, colleges, and academic departments. The study compares the behaviors, attitudes, and preferences of leaders, aspirants, and others in our community and then compares these vectors by institutional mission, Carnegie classification, budget, and other variables. In addition, the study examines the behaviors, preferences, styles, and other qualities of that subset of IT leaders described in Synnott and Gruber's original research¹ in which the term CIO was coined.

Three case studies produced by ECAR on the topic of IT leadership in higher education supplement this study. Higher education is fortunate enough to enjoy a professional IT community possessed of a great generosity of spirit and commitment to the common good. In the course of its existence, ECAR has visited numerous campuses and benefited enormously from this generosity.

Finally, as the primary contributors toiled in this field, other ECAR fellows provided regular and ongoing counsel on our findings and steered other elements of the ECAR program. Robert Albrecht, Robert Bender, and Judy Caruso are remarkable colleagues, and our community is lucky to have them in our midst. This study also benefits from the advice of a wonderful group of colleagues, chosen for their own facility and leadership. We mention here Ron Bleed, Don Harris of Emory University, Polley McClure, Susan Perry of the Council on Library and Information Resources, and Robyn Render of the University of North Carolina Office of the President. And finally, ECAR stands on the shoulders of the great EDUCAUSE staff, which never fails to amaze. EDUCAUSE comprises individuals who truly take pride in excellence and strive

for greatness in performance. It is an honor to work with them.

—Brian L. Hawkins, Boulder, Colorado

Acknowledgement

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A Campus Agenda for Educating and Managing Workers in the Digital Age, Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2002.

Endnote

1. W. R. Synnott and W. H. Gruber, *Information Resources Management: Opportunities and Strategies for the 1980s*, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1981, pp. 66–68.