



2003 Summary Report

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APPENDIX A:

Historical Context

Finding useful and relevant comparative data for information technology units in higher education has long been a challenge, and a number of data collection activities have arisen through the years to meet this need. Prior to its consolidation with Educom in the summer of 1998,¹ CAUSE had been capturing data from its members for nearly 20 years. Early surveys collected data primarily on administrative systems, as the CAUSE mission had not yet broadened to encompass academic computing. Academic computing data were captured in a survey done annually by Charles Warlick of The University of Texas at Austin. Between these two surveys, the IT community had access to some fundamental data about academic and administrative hardware and software. Warlick's data were published regularly in a print compendium, while summary CAUSE data were published periodically in monograph format.

In addition, the CAUSE data were used to form the basis of an Institution Database (ID) service through which members could request custom reports drawn from the data in six major areas: staffing, budgets, organization, software, computer hardware, and communications. This service was quite popular with members, peaking at 442 custom reports requested in fiscal year 1994–1995 and declining in 1996 after CAUSE stopped collecting data.

The CAUSE ID survey instrument changed over the years as the association's mission changed, especially after Warlick ceased to do his survey about a decade ago. Several years

earlier, Kenneth C. Green had begun to disseminate and report the findings of a comprehensive academic computing survey (called The Campus Computing Project) that focused on the microcomputer environment on campuses throughout the country, a survey that has continued to the present (see <<http://www.campuscomputing.net/>>). In addition, several years ago David Smallen and Karen Leach (chief information officer and chief financial officer, respectively, at Hamilton College) partnered to begin a new data collection activity, called the COSTS Project, focused on identifying and capturing the cost of networking on campus (see <<http://www.costsproject.org/>>). This activity for the most part has attracted the participation of small, liberal arts institutions, but institutions in other Carnegie classes also increasingly participate.

Following the merger of CAUSE and Educom, EDUCAUSE developed a number of strategies for delivering a research program to capture and share the data and information our members need to plan for and manage IT on their campuses. First, an EDUCAUSE Current Issues Survey was launched in 2000 and has been conducted annually since then (see <<http://www.educause.edu/issues/>>). Then, in 2001, the EDUCAUSE Center for Applied Research (ECAR) was created to respond to members' increasing requests for applied research and analysis to help campus leaders inform and reinforce their IT-related decisions (see <<http://www.educause.edu/ecar/>>).

EDUCAUSE Research Task Force Members

EDUCAUSE appreciates the efforts of the following individuals, who provided advice throughout the planning and developmental stages in the creation of the Core Data Service and who continue their work in a policy advisory role.

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Finally, a task force was convened in the fall of 2001 to consider establishing an ongoing core data collection activity similar to the earlier CAUSE ID survey and service. Members of this task force (see the sidebar), who were representative of the diversity of the EDUCAUSE membership, were chosen for their interest and/or expertise in benchmarking, assessment, and data collection and analysis. The group recommended that the association develop a Core Data Service (CDS) that would disseminate a survey to collect data about information technology environments and practices on member campuses. The goal was to develop a new, Web-based, interactive database service available to all who complete the survey through which they can access data contributed by their peers to help benchmark, plan, and make decisions about IT on their campus; and an annual summary report about campus IT environments based on data contributed through the survey.

This initiative went forward with the idea that it would not duplicate but rather cooperate with existing IT-related data collection efforts and explore opportunities to partner with other associations in such efforts. Task force members worked with EDUCAUSE staff members to develop the direction and policies guiding the Core Data Service, which was launched in December 2002, and they continue to provide advice and counsel in this regard.

Note

1. CAUSE, the Association for the Management of Information Technology in Higher Education, was founded in 1971 as a nonprofit association for colleges and universities, with an initial focus on administrative computing. Educom was a nonprofit consortium of higher education institutions whose mission was to facilitate the introduction, use, accessibility, and management of information resources in teaching, learning, scholarship, and research. The two organizations merged in 1998 to form EDUCAUSE, whose mission is to advance higher education by promoting the intelligent use of information technology.