The Educause 2013 conference was a great example of leaders in higher education uniting to share and explore the issues and opportunities present to us all. This is not a review of the conference but rather an attempt to capture some of the salient thoughts and ideas shared in the Community College Constituency Group meeting this year.

In keeping with the tradition started last year . . . (I realize that two data points don’t define a tradition, but would hope that we continue this going forward) . . . we had participants in the meeting share one of their recent successes. Many of our daily successes don’t rise to the level of a conference presentation but none the less it is important for us to recognize them and share them publicly. The challenges we face can at times seem daunting. Through this activity I hope we recognize that we make many contributions throughout our days. So let’s celebrate a little more often.

Here are some of the things your peers mentioned as recent successes:

* Recently built out pervasive wireless infrastructure.
* Completed a comprehensive print optimization design and selection.
* Delivered Data Warehouse and Blackboard analytics.
* Implemented counseling and course mapping.
* Implemented self-service payment plans.
* Implemented Bus pass enrollment and sales.

We used the Educause top ten issues as a starter for our discussion. The following should give you some insight as to the nature of our discussions.

* Leveraging the wireless and device explosion on campus.

One participant suggested that “leveraging” was the wrong term and recommended that the more appropriate term would probably be “surviving.” Others appeared to echo that sentiment with discussion ranging from the challenges of securing public networks and catering to the breadth of Bring Your Own Devices (BYOD). While some institutions required credentials to access the wireless network others offered parallel networks: public and secured. Several institutions felt CALEA created a standard that required authentication for all users while other institutions passed the responsibility for CALEA compliance to the Internet Service Provider (ISP.)

* Bring Your Own Device (BYOD)

The proliferation of devices in use by the public and employees are creating challenges for most institutions. Discussion on Mobile Device Management (MDM) revolved around whether institutions were actively pursuing solutions.

* Funding Issues

Funding of IT continues to be a hot button topic. Unfunded mandates continue to claw away at already distressed budgets according to some participants. Others shared their frustration with hardware and software maintenance escalation. When maintenance escalation outpaces budget growth, maintenance consumes an even larger portion of the budget thus squeezing out other priorities. Most participants acknowledged that this is their current situation. Inherited contracts leave little room for stabilizing maintenance costs.

It appeared that there were many more topics that the participants would have engaged in if time had allowed. We will petition for a longer session at our future conferences.

If you weren’t able to join us this year, we missed you and hope you will be able to join us next September 29 through October 2 in Orlando, Florida where we’ll continue our discussions. Our Constituent Group Listserv has been relatively quiet recently. If you have some thoughts or questions on these or other issues please pass them along through the listserv. Our goal is to have a vibrant group which supports and strengthens us all.

Chuck Currier

Vice President Information Technology

College of DuPage