EDUCAUSE on Campus

What is EDUCAUSE on Campus? Using EDUCAUSE resources—video, readings, and discussion guides—you can create programs and completely design local professional development events. Combined with the EDUCAUSE Event Planning Kit, containing resources to plan your meeting and facilitate discussions, you can bring innovative ideas and thought leadership from across higher ed IT to your faculty and staff in an easy, cost-effective fashion. This document will take you through the basic steps to prepare and customize the content for your program.

Step One: Decide Purpose and Length of Event

The first question to ask yourself or your event team is, What is the purpose of this program? Is it to get a diverse group together to build a team while learning more about a specific topic? Do you plan to develop a more intense, assignment-driven experience on a highly focused topic for your attendees? Or do you want a fun, full-of-activity escape from daily work where you can learn more about a broad topic? Knowing the demographic of the people you are working with will be crucial here. That will influence your determination of what you intend to accomplish with your program. Once you have that question answered, you can move on to the next step.

Step Two: Develop Your Curriculum on Your Program’s Topic or Theme

The next step is to consider your theme and curriculum. What is the main thrust of this experience? What is the primary goal you want all your participants to meet? How would you define success, in terms of what your people walk away with? Once you figure out the main theme and these learning objectives, you can use the content on the following pages to create a highly customized curriculum for your program.

As you assemble your program using the suggested content on the following pages, be sure to search for more current content on the EDUCAUSE website as resources, articles, podcasts, webcasts, and other valuable content is added every day.

Step Three: Plan the Logistics and Host Your Program

Using the two-part EDUCAUSE Event Planning Kit, plan the logistical details for your site and prepare to facilitate the group learning experience on the day of your program. The kit provides easy-to-use promotional tools to help you create awareness and encourage participation. You will also find tips and strategies to continue the conversation about the event’s topic or theme.

So, take a look at the content and activities we have assembled on the following pages. With a little bit of planning you will be able to leverage the best thinking in higher ed IT to put together a great professional development activity right on your campus.
The Future of Computing Labs

Program Overview

Students are increasingly arriving on campus with their own devices, from laptop computers (80% of students reported they have in the most recent ECAR Survey of Undergraduate Students) to Internet-capable smartphones. Yet, in many cases, campus computing labs remain unchanged, despite their significant cost to operate and support. As our IT services and students become increasingly wireless, is there still a place for a wired lab on campus?

Using this program, participants will be challenged to further explore this question, pondering what the future might hold for computing labs on campus. From virtual computer labs to enhanced teaching spaces, participants will be introduced to a wide variety of solutions to the issue and be challenged to consider the ramifications for their own institutions.

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1. Pre-Event Activities

1.1. Pre-Event Homework

To provide attendees with background in the topic, consider suggesting the following resources as pre-event homework:

- **Alan Cattier**, “Navigating Toward the Next-Generation Computer Lab” From *Learning Spaces*, an EDUCAUSE e-book
  An intimate look at the process involved with transforming the Cox Computing Lab at Emory University to accommodate today’s students’ needs. The article details the design team’s process and its guiding principles as it worked to reenvision the computing lab on campus.

- **Brian Hawkins and Diana Oblinger**, “The Myth About the Need for Public Computer Labs” *EDUCAUSE Review* (September/October 2007)
  In this column from *EDUCAUSE Review*, the authors lay out key strategic questions that administrators should ask when thinking about the need for public computing labs and highlight the key purposes of computing labs on campus.

- **Shannon D. Smith, Gail Salaway, and Judith B. Caruso**, *The ECAR Study of Undergraduate Students and Information Technology, 2009*
  This annual survey produced by the EDUCAUSE Center for Applied Research seeks to shed light on how information technology affects the college experience. The survey asks students about the technology they own and how they use it in and out of their academic world. The 2009 study also includes a special focus on student ownership and use of Internet-capable handheld devices. You might consider asking participants to review the study and note its implications for campus computer labs.

- **Clare van den Blink**, “Uses of Labs and Learning Spaces” *EDUCAUSE Quarterly*, November 2009
  Cornell University shares the results of campus research to determine how campus computer labs were being used and their needs for the future. Key questions included: What will the labs look like? What will people use them for? The focus group methodology was designed to generate many ideas for the lab of the future and engage invested individuals from a broad cross-section of the campus community. You can also listen to a [podcast](#) of a session from EDUCAUSE 2010 on the topic.

1.2. Pre-Event Conversation Starters

To help participants begin connecting around key ideas before the session begins, consider posing the following questions for discussion. Discussion might occur on a discussion board, through e-mail, or in a face-to-face meeting during the program. After the program concludes, consider revisiting these questions to see how attendees’ perspectives have changed.

1.2.1. For a Focus on Virtual Computer Labs

- What needs would be the most compelling drivers for virtual computer labs at your institution?
  - Reclaiming space
  - Providing anytime, anywhere student access to software
  - Freeing up support staff (ease of maintenance of multiple images, no physical lab staff)
  - Reducing cost in computer refreshes and software licensing
  - Other: ______________________________________________________
• What factors would be most prohibitive?
  ▪ Hardware startup costs
  ▪ Culture
  ▪ Software vendor licensing restrictions
  ▪ Other: _________________________________________________

1.2.2. For a Focus on Learning Space Design
• What types of activities do your campus computing labs currently enable?
• How have today’s students and today’s classrooms changed the types of activities you would like to offer in computing labs?
• What is the value of having public computing labs on campus? What role should they play in the student experience?

2. Opening and Additional Sessions
While creating your campus program, consider using the following recordings as sessions. Perhaps you want to set one of these sessions up as the “keynote” or opening session to set the overall theme for your event, with following sessions positioned as supporting sessions. As participants watch, include time for discussion after the presentation concludes, soliciting additional questions or discussing the implications of each idea for your campus.

• Joan Lippincott, “What to Do While Your Building or Renovation Project Is On Hold”  
  EDUCAUSE Live!, June 2009
  Many campuses will be postponing or curtailing new building projects and renovations due to the current economic climate, but the pressing need for newly configured, technology-enabled spaces has not gone away. This session describes a number of low or no-cost strategies for moving institutions toward their overall goals for new learning spaces, particularly in libraries and computing centers, while waiting for the actual construction or renovation. In the process, these strategies may help campuses clarify what they hope the new spaces will accomplish, assist units in being able to implement new, user-driven services as soon as the new spaces are occupied, and forge new campus partnerships.

• Beth Schaefer, “What Happened to the Computer Lab?”  
  EDUCAUSE Live!, February 2010
  Although computer labs might still be necessary, one can’t help but feel that traditional labs are anachronistic in a world of wireless connectivity, iPods, and smartphones. Labs are expensive to equip, staff, and maintain, and often the layout maximizes the amount of equipment that can be put into a given space rather than the creation of a comfortable or stimulating learning environment. Rather than predicting an entirely new model, this presentation focuses on low-cost changes that can be made to the design, layout, and operation of existing computer labs to meet both the changing needs of students and the necessities of the economic recession.

• Henry Schaffer and Sarah Stein, “Cloud Computing for the Academic Institution”  
  EDUCAUSE Live!, July 2009
  The Virtual Computing Lab (VCL) is a cloud computing solution that is designed to address the unique needs of academic institutions. Computational resources for teaching faculty, students, and researchers require flexibility in order to be effective in diverse environments. The VCL enables this in an unprecedentedly affordable manner. This talk presents an overview of the VCL and discuss the computing resource problems that initiated it, the advantages and limitations of its use, and its pedagogical impact, as well as the economic implications of cloud computing.
3. Synthesize for Action/Session Activities

After participating in the sessions, enhance the discussion with additional information and activities that will prepare attendees to take action. Keep in mind the learning objectives and goals that were set while defining your program.

3.1. Landscape Review: Virtual Computing Labs

As participants consider the future of computing labs on campus, consider organizing a landscape review, challenging attendees to explore the options provided by other campuses and note their potential and their concerns. The following is a list of campuses with virtual computing labs currently in use. Facilitators are encouraged to search for additional examples:

- California State Fullerton
- Colorado State University
- North Carolina State University
- Northern Arizona University
- Old Dominion University
- Oregon State University
- SUNY Geneseo
- University of West Florida

As attendees review the websites, consider having them answer the following questions on a worksheet for each example:

- What are the basic services provided by the virtual computing lab?
- What resources are missing? In other words, what services would be provided by traditional computing labs?
- What are the perceived benefits of the virtual computing lab?
- What are your concerns?
- Based on this example, what ideas can you bring to your institution?

3.2. Landscape Review: Innovative Learning Spaces

Virtual services are not the only option for reenvisioned computing labs on campus. Consider taking participants on a “tour” of innovative physical spaces and then asking each participant to highlight key features of each environment. The following is a list of campuses with innovative computing labs currently in use. Facilitators are encouraged to search for additional examples:

- The Carnegie Mellon West Wing Collaborative Cluster
- The Computing Center at Cox Hall
- Denison University MIX Lab
- North Carolina State University Learning Commons
- Temple University’s TECH Center
In addition, facilitators might consider reviewing the case studies provided as part of the EDUCAUSE e-book *Learning Spaces* or materials provided as part of the EDUCAUSE Midwest Regional Conference session, "Are Computer Labs Becoming Passé?," which provides a snapshot of research on computer labs at different institutions.

As participants explore the examples, ask them to note the key features of each model that they like and some key concerns they have about each model. You might use time afterward to discuss potential takeaways for your campus.

4. Customizing Your Event with Additional Content and Activities

In addition to using content provided by EDUCAUSE, we encourage each institution to consider ways to bring local voices into the conversation, allowing for networking among participants and interaction with the community.

Consider:

- **Gathering Student Input:** When we engage in discussions about the future of spaces on campus, we sometimes overlook the importance of gathering student input as part of the process. Using the ELI Discovery Tool on Learning Spaces, you and your participants can conduct a brief survey of student attitudes. Once you have completed the survey, discuss the implications for your campus and computing labs, in general.

- **Problem-Solving Workshops:** Create scenarios for individual discussion teams related to campus computing labs. Individual scenarios might focus on a specific type of service or a problem that participants have faced on campus. (You could solicit potential topics from participants in advance.) Organize the group around each scenario and challenge them to read the problem, discuss, and prepare a brief presentation based on their collective ideas for a response. Present each group’s findings in a report out at the end of the session.

- **Discussion Sessions:** At the start of the session or before, ask participants to share their concerns related to computing labs on campus, perhaps posing the question in a poll before the event or on a whiteboard or flipchart throughout the program. Leave time in your day for participants to break into smaller groups around the big issues for informal discussion. To aid the process, consider assigning discussion facilitators who are trained to get the conversation moving and to capture key ideas. Plan time for a report out from all the groups involved.

- **Ethnographic Research:** In 2007, Nancy Fried Foster and Susan Gibbons embarked on a landmark study (*Studying Students: The Undergraduate Research Project at the University of Rochester*) to apply ethnographic research principles to the study of undergraduate students and their use of technology on campus. Facilitators might encourage participants to review the study and consider implications for their own campus. For instance, could participants spend a day observing students in campus computing labs or the libraries and report their findings to the team? How would such a study change the way we envision computing resources on campus?

- **A Brainstorming Carousel:** Carousels are a high-energy activity designed to generate content and build collective ideas. Consider these three questions or create your own:

  1. What are the potential benefits to utilizing virtual computing labs on campus?
  2. What are the potential risks?
  3. What are some smaller changes we can implement to make campus computing labs more useful for students and the university’s mission?

Create three distinct areas in the room, one for each question, and ask participants to migrate to an area. For five minutes, ask them to react to the questions on a flipchart. When time is up, ask the group to migrate to the next station and to spend five minutes building on the previous group’s responses. After
another rotation, each group should have responded to each question. At the end, ask each group to share big ideas from their last station, incorporating their comments with those of the group before.

5. After the Event

This event should just be the start of conversations with your faculty and staff about the role of computer labs on your campus. Consider using your local event as a jump start to continued professional development. Post-session events might include:

- **Problem-Solving Lunches**: Build on the community formed during your event during a series of solution-seeking brown-bag lunches. Ask faculty and staff to bring their frustrations and concerns to the group during a series of “problem-solving lunches” where they seek feedback from colleagues. Or, pose a challenge to the group each week and ask them to collaborate on potential solutions or ideas moving forward.

- **New Ideas Lightning Round**: Consider using a lightning round to highlight new initiatives or projects started after the event ends. A lightning round is delivery of a series of short (~five minute) presentations on related topics in a single session. After the session, leave time for informal interaction between attendees and speakers.

- **Virtual Community**: Use the event—and the interest generated in the topic—to build a virtual community of practice around enterprise services. Learning management systems, social networking tools like Ning, and community wikis can provide the tools necessary for colleagues to share resources, plan events, and continue conversations.

6. Additional Resources

- **The Apache VCL Wiki**
  A good resource that includes downloads for the open-source “stack” used by North Carolina State University and a virtual computing labs listserv.

- **“The First Annual Summit on Cloud-Delivered Software: Proceedings”**
  Presentations from the first annual meeting that brought together software companies and universities to consider new models for software licensing for virtual labs.

- **Learning Spaces**
  This EDUCAUSE e-book discusses current and evolving theory related to learning space design and includes case studies from other universities.