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# C-LAB 2011

## *Report of the 2011 meeting of the NMC Campus Leaders Advisory Board*

*How will colleges, universities, and museums stay current and competitive in a world as fast-changing and dynamic as the one in which we live? In a world where communication is instant, and governments can be toppled via the action of social networks, what is the role of the educational technologist? How can we continue to innovate and become the next generation consortium? In this world, what is the next chapter for the NMC and its many member campuses?*

These were some of the underlying questions that the 32 members of the Campus Leaders Advisory Board (C-LAB) who met in Austin, Texas on March 3-4, 2011, grappled with at this annual gathering. The ensuing journey led to a reexamination of the organization's core values, its purposes and directions, and its ultimate vision. By the end of the day, an action agenda was crafted that will ensure the NMC continues to collectively advance a global agenda around the adoption of new technologies, while actively encouraging connections between members and facilitating real and positive change in educational practice on member campuses.

As campus leaders broke into groups to discuss future initiatives for the NMC, each group considered a series of questions: How can the NMC Community be improved? How can we work better together? With outside partners? How can our research be better shared on campuses even as it attracts the attention of policy makers and political leaders? How can we be sure that every idea and voice within the NMC has a chance to be heard? How can the volumes of information we generate be better presented? How can they be better disseminated? How can we take better advantage of new media?

What became increasingly apparent as the processes of the day unfolded was that the emerging ideas fell into three clear themes. In essence, the groups had independently formulated variations of many of the same ideas, and, in some cases, they even proposed identical initiatives. A natural consensus had already emerged even before the official voting took place. When all the votes were finally cast, and the group collectively considered what emerged, they saw seven clear and positive action steps with these three themes, each an important way to keep the work of the NMC relevant to members and member campuses in this increasingly fast-paced world in which we all operate.

### **Frictionless Communication**

- **An NMC Communications Hub.** There was clear consensus around a single communications hub that would aggregate information and conversations that are now happening across multiple channels into one convenient place. There are many ways the NMC communicates, but there is not one place to get a sense of the NMC Community

conversation. This idea is strongly supported by campus leaders and staff alike, and the NMC's new Communications Group is actively working on ways to coordinate all our communication channels. Short-term plans include a weekly video report and a monthly digital newsletter will be developed and launched to enhance communication.

- **A Clear NMC Voice.** The C-LAB highlighted the need for a singular strong and clear NMC voice — one that articulates the value of the NMC within its community and to the global academy as a whole. The need to have clearly articulated “stories” about our vision and key contributions, like the *Horizon Report*, the Horizon Project Navigator, and other NMC projects and initiatives, was seen as a critical step for NMCers to be able to keep the value of the NMC clear within their institutions. (The NMC Board of Directors and the staff agree, and strongly. For the past two years, they have been working on a plan to do just that. The first and most important step in that process was to hire the new communications group.)
- **Online Meet-Ups.** Campus leaders see benefit in real-time online gatherings around hot topics. This was widely regarded as an easily implemented and very good idea that can provide some of the same immediacy as the face-to-face C-LAB meeting. In the short-term, the NMC is looking at testing a number of software and web-based communications platforms that will give the NMC Community more efficient, flexible, and valuable ways to communicate.

## New Tools

- **Implementation Toolkits.** There was a clearly identified need for a set of implementation tools for new and existing NMC institutions, designed to guide NMCers through all the available assets the NMC offers. This was seen as useful for existing NMC C-LAB members to ensure they have a practical means of involving others within their organizations with the NMC Community. Several models exist, including the Campus Guides to the *Horizon Report* we published for a number of years, and the campus implementation toolkit that CoSN has developed for K12 users of the *Horizon Report*.
- **A Navigator for the NMC Community.** The ability to find peers, people with similar perspectives, or leaders with specific expertise within the NMC Community was agreed upon as a crucial value of belonging in the NMC. The NMC Community already specifies numerous tags within their bios on nmc.org, including job title, and this information is easily searchable. Enhancing the visibility of peer-groups within NMC, especially via social media channels, is an easily achievable goal.

## New Collaborations and Initiatives

- **The NMC as Incubator.** The NMC has given birth to many successful projects that go on to have a life of their own, including Pachyderm, the NMC Campus Project, MIDEA, and others of smaller scale. The C-LAB embraced the idea of NMC as incubator for ideas that are supported until they can sustain themselves, and then move into smaller communities of practice that are part of the larger NMC community.

- **Strong Alliances.** This strategy has actually been in place within the NMC for some time. We partner with many organizations around research and projects, such as our new NSF-funded project with the National Geographic Society launched in January. We have longstanding relationships with ELI, CoSN, and now this year, with ISTE around the Horizon Project and our respective annual meetings. This form of collaboration was especially encouraged by participants, and staff have been thinking about this for some time as well — this year, in fact, for the first time, the NMC and Games for Learning are collocating our conferences at the same place and time, and the two organizations have agreed to allow registration for one event to provide entry to both this year in Madison. The 2011 NMC Summer Conference will be hosted by the University of Wisconsin, Madison on June 14-18, the same dates as the GLS 7.0 Conference.

The discussions and subsequent consensus that emerged at the C-LAB gathering highlighted powerfully what people working on campuses and by extension, what institutions and organizations need across the range of their work to be successful and remain ahead of the curve — new and more frictionless ways to communicate, new tools, and an increasing need for collaboration over competition.

The Horizon Project Navigator was highlighted over and over as an example of how to marshal useful collective knowledge for the common good of the membership. Navigator 1.0 is emerging soon from several months in beta. Every C-LAB member will receive a full access subscription to the new toolset, one of a series of strategies aimed at providing NMCers easy access to tools they can put to use immediately. In this case, Navigator provides a central location for finding new ideas, real world projects, and the latest technology-focused news and research — all curated to be immediately useful to educational technologists and strategists.

## Next Steps

The connective thread that ties together all the initiatives set forth in the action agenda above is the belief that education is in need of disruption, and that to make that happen, we need people with the passion to persevere and push new ideas to the forefront.

At its core, the NMC is a community based on a shared passion — that much was clear in Austin. Our related values of optimism, creativity, imagination, and transformation came through with equal clarity. The NMC is the most dynamic, capable, and influential organization of its kind, and is increasingly invited to be at the table for discussions of national and international education policy. With the growing influence of the NMC as background, the strategies identified in Austin will ensure that the individuals and institutions that comprise the NMC remain at the center of our initiatives and projects, even as their work is increasingly noticed by a larger and larger global audience.

