



INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP ABSTRACTS

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My NCIA Journey, and Why it Matters



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Have you ever had that moment in life where you know it is time to move on from something, yet it is so hard to officially break away?

I am having that moment right now as a member of the NCIA board. This Instructional Leadership Abstract will be different from others, but in keeping with the mission of NCIA, contains information to support you as a community college instructional administrator.

NCIA has been a part of my professional life for the last 20 years. I first became familiar with NCIA when I was an administrative assistant working for a VP of Academic Affairs. He had recently been added to the board of NCIA and our college had volunteered to host their summer board retreat. I oversaw the logistics as far as event planning, meals, hotel accommodations, etc. for all the board members that were going to be in attendance as well as the Executive Director of NCIA.

In a moment of panic, my boss called me and said that the Executive Director had misplaced his computer power cord and asked if I could look around for it. He needed to find it before their meeting was over because he had to catch his flight. I was able to find the power cord and rushed it across campus. The Executive Director was so appreciative and so thankful, and in that moment my friendship with Dr. Brent Cejda, the Executive Director of NCIA, began.

Dr. Cejda, who at that time was employed at a community college in Texas, and I kept in touch regularly as my boss continued on the NCIA board and eventually became the board president. Through that time, I worked with Dr. Cejda to set-up meetings, retreats, etc. in support of my boss's role on the board. I was able to see first-hand the work the council did to advocate for community colleges and provide professional development opportunities for those in Chief Academic Officer and other instructional administrator roles. I remember how excited I was when I found out that both NCIA and Dr. Cejda were relocating to the University of Nebraska - Lincoln, just a quick 45 minutes away from me.

A change in leadership led my boss to a presidency in New York, but I remained close with NCIA through Dr. Cejda and a new board member also from the state of Nebraska. When I landed my first VP job at a school in western Nebraska, one of the first phone calls to congratulate me as

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well as offer an invitation to join the NCIA Board was Dr. Cejda. It was a true full-circle moment and I was completely honored. My president at the time was unfortunately not aware of the value of membership and I had to turn down the offer.

Three years later, with another change in presidency, I made a phone call to Dr. Cejda and let him know that I was now able to serve on the NCIA board and would be ready and available. But again, unfortunately, there was not an opening on the board at that time. Dr. Cejda assured me he would definitely keep me in mind.

When the CAO representing the Nebraska region moved into the role as board president, that coveted spot on the board opened up and both Dr. Cejda and Dr. Headrick, prior VP of Southeast Community College, called to ask if I would consider filling the spot. Of course I jumped at the chance and in 2015 officially joined the NCIA board. It was such a humbling and proud moment to now serve on the board of an organization that I once planned events for.

Through my time on the NCIA board, I experienced much more than simply serving on a board. I was able to see the organization go through good times and bad, as other completely volunteer boards experience, and ulti-

mately re-brand itself to become the amazing organization it is today. I have grown professionally by learning from some of the brightest academic minds in this country, and most importantly, I have made friends that will last a lifetime. I was also able to reconnect with my former boss who continues to support NCIA through his institution to this day. In fact, his CAO, Maryrose Eannace (now retired), was also a long-time board member.

Today, NCIA continues its work to advocate for community colleges at a national level. The National Council of Instructional Administrators provides support to institutions and individuals through their network, provides meaningful professional development opportunities, recognizes the great work of academic leaders through national competitions, provides NCIA Instructional Leadership Abstracts and #NCIAchats with prominent academic leaders such as Russell Lowery Hart and DeRionne Pollard. And more!

Through my time on the board I have seen at least five of our representatives move on to presidencies at Community Colleges and many of our Dean level members move into VP positions. We have found comfort and comradery with each other as we all navigated the COVID pandemic across many different states. It was personally and

professionally enriching to not only be there for each other and know that we were not alone, but also to share our experiences and grow from lessons learned in this unprecedented time of disruption.

My time on this board has now come to an end as I have served my term and will be moving on to chair our local hospital board. I will forever be grateful to this organization for the people I have met and for the connections I have made but also the ability NCIA provided to engage with and learn from many different community college instructional administrators throughout the United States. As my last official duty, I encourage you to either join NCIA as a member or consider serving on the boardit will change your life.

Take advantage of all that NCIA has to offer and reach out to Dr. Kathy Wesley (katherine.wesley@unl.edu), Executive Director of NCIA. You can also go directly to the NCIA website to apply for membership: <https://cehs.unl.edu/ncia/ncia-membership-application-form/>

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