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Learn, Apply, Collaborate: ACUA's Educational Model

Howdy, Friends!

In case you didn't know, the world around us is changing fast. The speed of innovation is mindboggling. As audit practitioners we know this from the speed at which risk is coming at us. As soon as we think we have a handle in one dimension, another area seems to crop up.

The same is true for ACUA. The Association must continually be rethinking and innovating to stay on par or ahead of the changes in our marketplace. The effects of this strategic thinking are the recently announced updates to *Audit Interactive: A Higher Education Collaborative Experience* (formerly Midyear) and the forthcoming changes to *AuditCon: A Higher Education Summit* (formerly Annual). The ACUA Board of Directors has been very deliberate in our efforts to ensure the learning activities we deploy meet the needs of our membership and also incorporate changes to learning strategies noted in the marketplace.

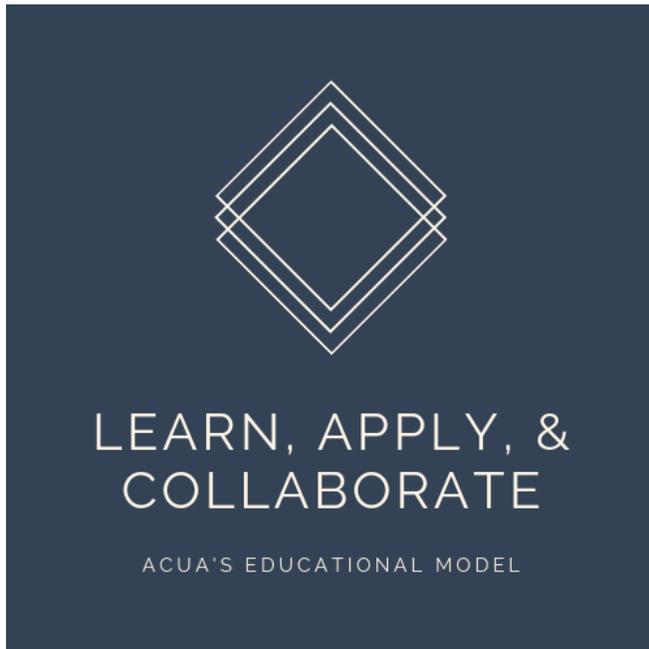
What I have learned is the conference development and deployment processes are not immune to the rapid innovation and change we see in the broader marketplace. The "millennial effect," or whatever term you'd like to apply, and their entrance into the marketplace is real. The effect of four distinct generations with very specific learning desires is also daunting. It is our job as an Association to work to creatively address these differing challenges to ensure we meet ACUA's educational strategic priorities.

To address these issues, the Board of Directors, Professional Education Committee, and Executive Office Staff have developed a new curated educational content model. The goal of a curated content model is to make a call for content rather than a call for proposals. While that may seem only semantic, it really is shift away from the model of "tell us what you want to talk about and we will try to decide if we want to hear it" toward "this is what we want to learn about – do you have something to offer?"

So what does that mean, practically speaking? Well, some details are still being worked out, but I imagine when the 2019 AuditCon call goes out it will say something like "We are looking for presenters on enterprise risk management" or "We are looking for content proposals for practical application of data analytics". By taking this approach, we hope to generate depth of topics in certain areas with less duplication across the conference schedule.

So why move to this model? We consistently poll our audiences on the format and content they find most compelling, which has provided a lot of data points for our consideration. Additionally, we have seats at the tables in other organizations and national committees, which allows us to stay current on next generation educational programming. By taking all of this information in making a call for content, it is our hope we are working harder to meet the needs of the broader ACUA community.

Next, we consistently hear member's desires to be able to walk away from presentations with practical takeaways. The difficulty in this is the Association has little control over speaker content. To assist our speakers and to try and change the landscape of this issues, last month I introduced Learn, Apply, Collaborate.



Learn, Apply, Collaborate is an effort to push our speakers toward accountability between the audience and the Association on learning outcomes. In short, Learn, Apply, Collaborate is an attempt to direct speakers toward a more interactive model that produces practical takeaways for attendees.

Learn: The presenter should provide an understanding of the topic or area. It should have the appropriate depth for the level of the advertised audience. For instance, if a session is marked as beginner then the definition of terms or standards might be appropriate. Conversely, if the session is marked as advanced it should not start out with a foundational definitions rather should seek to gain depth of understanding or the complexities that surround a subject.

Apply: Once we have learned a topic, let's work on how we can apply it in real life. We'd expect speakers to talk directly to action items, audit programs, potential stakeholders, or other practical items that could help the learner take the topic and begin their work back in their own audit shops.

Collaborate: Lastly, we want each session to have a collaborative element to ensure we understand and can apply the topic. The elements could be as diverse as a case study, group discussion, roundtables, or other interactive portions that can keep the learner engaged but also further the learning outcomes.

You might be thinking, "Man, he sure is going on and on about this" and you'd be right. My goal is to introduce this concept so our speakers can begin the process to *think differently* about their presentations. A great number of our members respond to our call for presentations each year and I want to be sure you are not caught off guard by the upcoming change when the call for content goes out early next year. I also hope to build excitement among our membership for the exciting new educational offerings we are developing.

Closing Thoughts

The new year will bring about a lot of innovation for the Association. We will be introducing a new look for Audit Interactive, making initial adjustments to AuditCon, and rolling out a new website. I hope you are as excited as we are to be continuing the ongoing evolution of the Association.

Finally, I wish each of you the happiest of holidays. May your days be merry and bright! Be sure you check out this month's **Volunteer Spotlight** on the next page! If you have questions or feedback, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Happy Auditing!

Justin T. Noble
ACUA President
Assistant Chief Audit Executive
Texas Tech University System

Volunteer Spotlight: **Kara Kearney-Saylor**

Kara Kearney-Saylor is the Director of Internal Audit at University at Buffalo and has been a member of ACUA since 2006. She currently serves as the Committee Chair for Standards and Best Practices, which develops great resources for our members such as the ACUA Kickstarters. She was also awarded the Rising Star Award at the Annual Conference in New Orleans. Check out the article in the fall 2018 edition of the *College & University Auditor* Journal.



ACUA: Why did you become an ACUA volunteer?

Kara: I became a volunteer because Leigh Goller asked me to quite a while ago.... However, I continue to volunteer, because I think ACUA is an amazing organization. There are so many great members, and I appreciate being connected to such a large network of auditors!

ACUA: What is your favorite ACUA memory?

Kara: I really enjoyed being part of the ACUA Leads program. It was a great way to connect with some of my fellow ACUA members, and I'm pleased to say that I'm still close with a number of my fellow cohorts! It was also a yearlong opportunity to focus on my leadership skills. That being said, I had a great time on Frenchman Street with a number of ACUA members at our recent New Orleans conference.

ACUA: What have you learned as an ACUA volunteer/member?

Kara: By presenting at a number of ACUA conferences over the years, I have gained a lot of confidence.

ACUA: What is the best piece of advice you have ever received?

Kara: I think the best advice for everyone is to lean in. It is easy to give in to self-doubt. But challenging myself, while colleagues & mentors cheered me on, is a great experience.

ACUA: What are your hobbies/interests outside of audit?

Kara: Reading, travelling.

Please contact Terri Tarbett-Wallace (Frances.Tarbett@usm.edu) if you would like to nominate a current volunteer for the next ACUA Volunteer Spotlight.