

Campus Success Program Participant Retrospective Report

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Executive Summary

On August 28, 2018, Internet2 TIER Program conducted a retrospective with the participants leads of the Campus Success Program. Begun to help jump-start the adoption of the software platform, the Program was designed to encourage collaboration among campus staff and provide subject matter experts and training to help participants implement and deploy.

Overall themes that the participants identified were

- **Program Start Up and Support.** Internet2's support of the Program was well staffed and helpful. Campuses, however, need more training earlier in the program and more direction on how they should participate until they understand how a cohort works.
- **Collaboration Modes & Tools.** Overall, the different methodologies employed to support the participants were very helpful, but several minor suggestions came up for how to make it more successful. As usual, face to face meetings were very helpful in building trust among the cohort. Blogging on campus progress was understood as primarily benefiting those schools looking to adopt the software platform, but sometimes it was difficult to find the time to do it.
- **Overall Program Design.** The basic design of the program was determined to be sound: requiring campus plans, meeting regularly to drive local progress, providing training, and collaborating with peers and subject matter experts. Participants requested more training earlier in the program as well as a documentation framework. They also asked for more structure around how the campuses work together and with the subject matter experts as opposed to leaving it up to them to reach out. This is especially helpful early on before the face to face meeting and initial groundwork for personal trust has been built.
- **Campus Resourcing.** The participants reflected that the campus plans designed at the outset were sometimes too ambitious for the amount of time in the program. Several had issues with keeping on track due to competing priorities and observed that having adequate local resources to devote for the full year would have been very helpful. There was clear interest in helping to mentor the next round of CSP schools.

The last question of the participants was whether this experience was valuable enough to offer again and whether or not they would participate again, knowing what the program provides. The participants responded positively, unanimously.

Background

The purpose of the 2017-18 Campus Success Program (CSP) was to:

- accelerate local adoption of TIER components to provide the community with guidance more quickly
- assist campuses in the successful deployment of TIER-packaged components to address one or more campus need(s),
- provide lessons learned about the local challenges and solutions
- develop deployment guidance and advice for later adopters in the form of presentations, project reports, and locally produced TIER-related artifacts
- inform the TIER program about issues encountered in production implementation
- provide data for next steps regarding adoption support, technology development and the feature set.

Program planning began in July 2017, which included a call for proposals. After thorough review, ten campuses were accepted into the first cohort of the CSP. The cohort officially kicked off in October 2017 and will conclude in October 2018.

A retrospective was completed on August 28, 2018. A retrospective is team-driven and can be thought of as a "lessons learned" meeting. The team reflects on how everything went and then discusses ideal enhancements in future programs. An atmosphere of honesty and trust is critical in order for every member to feel comfortable sharing their thoughts.

This exercise involved a virtual discussion to learn how the campus leads perceived the success of the program. Special focus was placed on how the program was executed and focused on how it can be improved in the future. To ensure candid participation and feedback, Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) and program support staff were not invited, and all feedback remains anonymous. There was representation from each of the 10 campuses engaged in the inaugural CSP.

This report serves as a high-level overview of the CSP retrospective.

Common Themes

Several common themes and takeaways evolved during the retrospective exercise. These themes are summarized below, highlighting things that went well, things that

could have been gone better, and new ideas. Full detailed responses and links to the exercise artifacts are included in Appendix A of this report.

Program Start Up and Support

Things that Went Well

- Campuses were added to appropriate collaboration tools very early in the program enabling quick connections.
- Program artifacts were organized in the wiki and easily discoverable.
- The program support team, comprising Internet2 staff charged with running the program and helping campuses participate, was well resourced and quick to support campus needs.

Things that Could Have Gone Better & New Ideas

- During startup, there was a little lack of clarity on what the relationship of the program support team was to the campus participants.
- Jump-start guides to enable a quicker startup would be useful to set the tone and direction faster.
- Offer pre-reads to help the cohort with an idea of where they are collectively going and how they will get there.
- During the kick off, Internet2 staff could talk to the cohort to determine the length of the program. Campuses that finish earlier may be able to focus on helping others later.
- Both a skills and interest inventory in the beginning for all CSP participants. Identifying local SMEs early on will facilitate earlier progress. The program support team did ask participants to complete such an inventory early on as an informational exercise, but did not structure the program around the results.

Collaboration Modes & Tools

Things that Went Well

- A variety of tools and repositories (e.g. Slack, Google docs, GitHub, Box) were used to promote collaboration between program support, campuses, and subject matter experts (SMEs).
- Working groups were created to focus on specific deliverables for the program outside of the campus project plans.
- Face-to-face meetings were extremely productive and helped the team to develop strong collegial relationships.

- The entire team regularly came together in 90-minute bi-weekly work sessions. The goal was to share campus progress reports and blockers, provide updates on working group deliverables, and engage in deep-dive topics (often with demonstrations). This proved to be an effective way to keep all participants in line with program milestones.

Things that Could Have Gone Better & New Ideas

- The program should consider adding a new tool that is easily searchable for threads on particular topics (e.g. StackOverflow).
- Rather than using working groups, the team felt that it would have been more advantageous to work within subject-matter cohorts instead of focusing on 'other' deliverables.
- Future iterations of the CSP could host a F2F at kick-off as opposed to several months into the program.
- Bi-weekly work sessions could be structured differently. Meetings could be limited to 60 minutes and frequency could be reconsidered during different phases of the program. A couple of suggestions were to limit campus and working group report-outs to monthly and streamline attendees for each meeting. Additionally, more demonstrations with Q&A time should be scheduled during these sessions.
- Blogging seemed like a dreaded homework assignment for the campuses, although the value was understood. Internet2 program staff could offer support in suggesting, drafting, and editing content.

Overall Program Design

Things that Went Well

- Having a timeline for work and Internet2 staff keeping us "honest" with reminders was greatly appreciated.
- Program staff was very responsive.
- Access to SMEs was immensely helpful and directly impacted progress on campus and working group deliverables.

Things that Could Have Gone Better & New Ideas

- Consider having Internet2 facilitators for each working group rather than relying on institutional individuals.
- Offer training on each of the components early in the program.
- Create a framework of guidance with tools and artifacts for standing up the components.

- Engage campus Project Managers in a separate track to share plans and collaborate to overcome obstacles.
- Use a more structured and scaled project management (e.g. each campus define THEIR requirements) at the program start. Articulate goals more clearly to one another.
- Consider scheduling dedicated time for campuses with SMEs early in the program.

Campus Resourcing

Things that Went Well

- N/A

Things that Could Have Gone Better & New Ideas

- The majority of campuses felt that they included more work in their project plans than could be accomplished during the one-year program. Future CSPs should ensure that campuses have a firm commitment of local resources prior to joining the program to ensure things can progress onsite.
- The program could help campuses re-scope proposals to more reasonable goals with associated timeframes.
- The current CSP cohort was interested in the idea of providing guidance to future CSP cohorts for scoping, scaling, and resourcing.

Should Internet2 offer this program again?

The last question of the participants was whether this experience was valuable enough to offer again and whether or not they would participate again, knowing what the program provides. The participants responded positively, unanimously.

Concluding Thoughts

The inaugural Campus Success Program experienced numerous challenges and far more successes. The size and impact of this project was new and unique for all participants - Internet2 staff, Subject Matter Experts, and campus participants. As with any new program, methodologies were launched, altered, and relaunched to best meet the needs of the participants while supporting program goals. The CSP was fortunate to have an engaged cohort willing to provide feedback on how to improve the program for future iterations. It was without reservation that all stakeholders regarded this program as a success and realized tremendous value.

Appendix A:

Retrospective Sticky Note Exercise

[Direct Feedback](#)

[Affinity Mapping](#)

Feedback	Notes
Productive & Enjoyable	
Multi-campus brainstorming and problem solving helped us overcome challenges	
Product demos early on were useful and informative	
Direct access to SMEs was very useful	
Face-to-face meetings made it easier to collaborate without technical coordination	
Great sharing of ideas, lessons learned, and collaborative problem solving	
We found the CSP to be extremely beneficial and we wouldn't be where we are today without it.	
Slack - Good stuff	
Access to other CSP participants and I2 SMEs.	
Excellent community building.	
Having a timeline for work and I2 keeping us "honest" with reminders	
F2F was great for establishing relationships	+1
Responsiveness of I2 staff. Thank you!	+1
slack channel discussions with SMEs critical to our success.	
Frustrating	

Program could start faster if we had more guidance from I2 staff at the offset	
Timeliness of midpoint resource readiness. Container unlikely to be ready until at/after the end of the program.	
Program is maybe too long. Hard to maintain focus over the course of a year.	
Felt that as a whole, we were spread too thin on projects.	
We attempted to do too much (3 TIER products) with too few resources (2). Should have narrower scope.	+4
The spin-up of the program felt a little slow, particularly with the wait for midPoint training.	
Should have had a firmer commitment of local resources.	
Bit off more than I could chew -- need more time to deploy	
attending bi-weekly sometimes challenging	
Resource constraints due to shifting priorities and small team	+4
There was a little lack of clarity in the beginning on what I2's responsibilities were vs. a campus' related to starting the work.	
Locating technical answers for products (mainly Grouper) was sometimes challenging when SMEs or peer schools were unavailable.	
Managing expectations - campuses hoped for more guidance from I2 staff & SMEs (e.g. here's what you need to do to stand up midPoint)	+1
Confusing	
not clear where all CSPs school stand from a big picture perspective - goals still aligned? changes over the course of the CSP?	
Institutions all started from different points of expertise, approach, and priorities.	
Zoppi's Avatar	+1
Need More Of	
More product or subcommittee specific meetings	+1
More training on various tools would be useful	

Facilitation of common development needs with vendors - leverage the matrix. Do a deeper dive on why this didn't work?	
Work in subject based cohorts. e.g. Grouper people get together	
Product demos or demos of in-progress work from fellow CSP members.	
F2F was a big moment for us to learn from one another.	
Dog and pony shows - progress along the way. "Here is what we've done so far." With that said an ACTUAL dog and pony show would be great :)	
Don't use the whole 90 minutes if we don't need them in the bi-weekly meetings.	
Keep the Same	
Cool retrospective exercises.	
Daily scrums (just limit the time, keep them as actual scrums, and start them from the beginning)	+4
Slack channels	
Communication channels: multiple methods to contact / interact with SMEs and TIER WGs.	+1
One year timeline is good.	+2
Do Less Of	
Bi-weekly meetings at 90 minutes were at times a bit painful. Reasons: lengthy discussions, not everybody needed to meet every meeting.	+3
Blogs - felt pressured to do them and didn't always have content. Didn't get a lot out of them.	
New Ideas	
Provide program start-up materials to help participants get moving faster	
Email and Slack discussions aren't easily searchable. Something like StackOverflow might offer better discoverability with Google searches	
Would like more focus from a project management perspective – share plans,	

overcome obstacles, but not sure how realistic this may be	
Engage more of the project managers from the CSP sites. Have a PM track.	+1
Scheduled 1-on-1 engagements with SME's. Work with them for more extended periods to tackle a specific campus problem.	
Smaller focus. Don't mix groups who only want to do grouper with groups who only want to do midpoint.	
Mid-program update to community. With Global Summit/Tech Ex, we could have done a comprehensive update. Might have kept us on track more.	
Wasn't sure where we were headed initially. It was a slow start up. Maybe some pre-reads to help us with an idea of where we were going. Package with jump start materials to set the tone and direction faster.	+1
Have the first F2F kicking off earlier in the program.	+2
Kick off the CSP at a different time of the year. Starting around the holidays was a challenge. Would have loved to see more at TechEx. Earlier the better!	
this CSP crew could give guidance to future CSP cohorts for scoping/scaling.	
Consider having I2 facilitators for each working group rather than relying on institutional individuals.	+1
Report outs from campuses on monthly. Focus on the other meeting focused on smaller meetings and education.	
Offer editorial support from I2 to seek out, interview, or taking rough ideas from CSP participants and draft the blog.	+1
Blogs do their purpose, despite their drudgery. Remember we are blogging for the community, not what's going on inside the program. Find out what the community thought of them.	
Bi-weekly meetings of 60 minutes might be better, more efficient; force a more disciplined use of time	
I2 or CSP could warn new participants if you think they aren't resourced appropriately.	

More structured approach via PM tools or components (e.g. each campus define THEIR requirements) before or at start. Articulate goals more clearly to one another.	
Describe PM strategy - include that in future proposals.	
12 staff could help campuses re-scope proposals to more reasonable timeframes.	
Ask current CSP to review the communication we have around the program to make sure it reflects their experience so that we are conveying the intent of the program accurately.	
Do a skills inventory in the beginning for all CSP participants. Who are our local SMEs? Think about a new way to do this.	
Do a retrospective earlier on so that we could course-correct (maybe instead of the quarterly assessments?). Definitely halfway would be good.	
Figure out a way to get feedback from folks outside of the CSP. It will help to get more adopters.	
During kick off, talk to the cohort to decide how long the timing should be for the program. Those who finish earlier may be able to focus on helping others later.	
F2F kickoff would be nice for relationship building	