A way out of the worst consequences of eduPersonAffiliation divergence

In the decade since the release of the first version of the eduPerson specification, divergences in usage emerged and grew. The causes were varied, but the result is that the eduPerson{Scoped}Affiliation attribute(s) and values are interpreted and used in multiple and sometimes incompatible ways across sites.

There is no practical way to bring current practices back to some ideal and well-defined state. It may, however, be possible to profile the use of eduPerson{Scoped}Affiliation for use in federated access control scenarios. This wiki page is devoted to exploring that possibility, working toward consensus across the global community of eduPerson implementations and promoting the adoption and adherence to this eduPerson profile, specifically in the federated usage scenario.

Approaches to Profiling eduPerson

- Recommend exclusive use of a well-defined and commonly understood subset of the controlled vocabulary for eduPerson{Scoped} Affiliation; Initial draft proposal:
    - "faculty",
    - "student",
    - "staff" (when distinguished from "faculty"),
    - "member" (as "all faculty, students and staff plus other persons who are considered to be full members of the institutional community as regards access to resources and services"),
    - "alum" and
    - "affiliate" (defined to be anyone affiliated with the university who is NOT a "member" or "alum"
- NOTE: This does not depend on all parties agreeing to a single strict, detailed and precise definition of these named affiliations. To the degree that eduPerson{Scoped}Affiliation has proven useful, it has done so while allowing for reasonable variation in definitions across institutions.
- Acknowledge that many sites have created their own values for ePSA to suit their need for a local set of affiliation values.
- Adopt a live and let live attitude to the above practice of extending the value space for ePSA--PROVIDED THAT in federated and more generally inter-institutional scenarios, institutional use of eduPerson{Scoped}Affiliation does not violate the community-blessed profile that emerges from this work.