Higher Education Information Security Council (HEISC) Charter

The Higher Education Information Security Council (HEISC), formerly the Computer and Network Security Task Force, was established in July 2000 to provide coordination for the higher education sector. In 2002, funded by an NSF award, EDUCAUSE hosted a series of four top-level workshops on different aspects of cybersecurity in higher education and worked closely with staff from the White House and the President’s Critical Infrastructure Protection Board to develop the report “Higher Education Contribution to the National Strategy to Secure Cyberspace.”

What Makes HEISC Different?

The collaborative nature of HEISC reflects the higher education community in general. The higher education volunteers who contribute their time and efforts to address information security and privacy issues in higher education do so for the common good. That is, by working together, the entire higher education sector benefits. These collaborative efforts have led to:

- **The annual Security Professionals Conference (established 2003):** This is the only conference that provides community dialogue and professional development activities for higher education information security and privacy professionals.

- **Information Security Guide (established 2003):** The guide is a key resource for information security and privacy issues in higher education, updated with hot topics and helpful toolkits, maintained by higher education information security and privacy volunteers.

- **International awareness efforts:** HEISC has participated in National Cybersecurity Awareness Month (NCSAM) activities since 2004 and in Data Privacy Day (DPD) activities since 2012.

- **Information-sharing opportunities:** Information security and privacy practitioners have the opportunity to engage with their peers through several Community Group lists.

- **Professional development, publication, and networking opportunities:** HEISC has offered almost two decades of professional development, publication (through EDUCAUSE Review, the Security Matters blog column, and in collaborative papers created with HEISC partners), and peer networking opportunities, including workshops, webinars and virtual events, topical working groups, and the conference program committee.

HEISC volunteers include CISOs, CIOs, CPOs, and other security or privacy professionals and practitioners in the higher education community.

Vision

HEISC will guide and inform academic institutions in their quest to reduce risk; safeguard data, information systems, and networks; protect the privacy of the higher education community; and ensure that information security is an integral part of campus activities and business processes.
Mission

The HEISC mission is to support higher education institutions as they improve information security governance, compliance, data protection, and privacy programs. HEISC accomplishes this work through volunteer groups supported by professional EDUCAUSE staff, as well as collaborations with other organizations that address information security and privacy in higher education. HEISC actively develops and promotes information security leadership, awareness, and understanding; effective practices and policies; and guidance for the protection of higher education data, IT assets, and infrastructure. HEISC focuses on four major activities: (1) revising and refining the HEISC Information Security Guide; (2) coordinating the Security Professionals Conference and other awareness events; (3) providing effective practices and guidance; and (4) fostering communication and networking within the community.

Membership

HEISC is a volunteer effort open to all higher education information security, privacy, and other IT professionals. The HEISC Advisory Committee is responsible for ensuring progress in meeting the strategic priorities of the council. To accomplish this, the committee creates and monitors community and working groups, annually reviews the strategic priorities to see if changes are needed, and annually sets objectives for the community and working groups that will produce tangible outcomes that further the goals of the council and the EDUCAUSE Cybersecurity Initiative.

The advisory committee includes the council’s co-chairs; community group co-chairs; Security Professionals Conference program chair and vice chair; and staff liaisons from EDUCAUSE, Internet2, and the REN-ISAC. Past co-chairs of the council may continue as ex officio members of the committee.

EDUCAUSE Role

EDUCAUSE engages the HEISC Advisory Committee on a regular basis to identify and obtain the resources needed to accomplish the goals of the council, including recruiting human resources; developing and implementing strategies to engage higher education institutional leadership, association executive leadership, and corporate leadership in furthering the goals of the council; ensuring effective communication and collaboration with Internet2 and REN-ISAC; and periodically assessing the functioning of the council and, when appropriate, overseeing the change process. Additional collaborations and joint activities often occur between HEISC and other EDUCAUSE groups or programs.

Not in Scope

HEISC includes information security and privacy professionals at higher education institutions, as well as collaborations with professionals from other organizations that address information security and privacy in higher education. Despite its wide range of expertise, HEISC deliberately chooses not to engage in some activities at this time. These activities include:

- Developing or brokering information security fee-based services or tools
- Formally approving, recommending, or endorsing information security products
- Creating technical training materials
- Participating in information sharing and analysis of operational issues