Ending and Beginning

Here, in the waning months of 2010, may seem an unlikely time in the year to speak of new beginnings. However, as our organization’s tradition continues, it is a time of transition in leadership in many of the elected positions within AECT. During the annual conference, many of our members begin “wearing new hats”, either as incoming division leaders, committee members, or board members. It is also a time for many of our members to transition out of leadership roles, hopefully not venturing too far away! Our new leaders will rely on the sharing of your experiences and insights as they begin new responsibilities and activities. Having just completed a year of serving in the role of President-Elect and shifting into the new role of presidential service, I appreciate this opportunity to reflect on what I have learned in the past year, lessons that exemplify why I believe AECT is an exemplary professional organization.

It Takes a Village

The first observation, and probably the most timely, relates to the planning and execution of our annual national convention. The AECT President-Elect’s primary responsibility is to manage the myriad of tasks that are required to hold a successful conference for our members. In assuming this responsibility, I can tell you that there is no way that such a conference would have been possible without the combined efforts of many people. The AECT 2010 conference planning team was comprised of the president-elects of each division and the Graduate Student Assembly, representatives from our affiliate organizations, and the staff at AECT Headquarters in Bloomington, Indiana. Additionally, the President-Elect appoints a lead conference planner, and I had the very good fortune to have Dr. Miriam Larson serving in this vital role. In total, I could not have asked for a better group of planners with which to work! The coordination of our yearly gathering is an on-going activity which lasts from the time that one is elected into the role of President-Elect Designee through the completion of the planned conference, a period of a little over a year and a half. Through multiple monthly meetings and hundreds of emails, this group maintained a sense of dedication, a positive attitude, and a great enthusiasm for assembling the best possible professional gathering for our members. Their outstanding contributions to the planning process ensured that this year’s convention was an excellent experience. I cannot thank them enough!
Greatness Comes From Within

AECT, being a large professional association, holds tremendous expertise in a wide variety of areas and issues related to the field of educational communications and technologies. During the past year I have learned that the many initiatives in which our members are engaged on behalf of AECT are successful due to the commitment of volunteers who share both their time and expert knowledge with which to carry out our association’s activities. For example, the Virtual Worlds Committee, led by Tom Atkinson, has provided a tremendous amount of time and effort in advancing AECT’s Second Life presence. Elizabeth Boling has provided leadership to move the concept of an online journal that focuses on instructional design cases to a reality. Stephanie Moore has continued to guide the production of the HistoryMakers Series, an effort to document and share the noted expertise of our field’s leaders. The professional design and functionality of AECT’s new website was informed by a team led by Dr. Ted Frick and his students at Indiana University. These are only a few of the many activities of our organization that require the commitment of time, along with the professional skills and knowledge of our individual members. We as a group rely on such contributions and recognize that our advancement as a professional collaborative is dependent upon the volunteer efforts of our membership.

Following the Leader

During the past year, I have also learned a great deal about what to expect in the coming year through my interactions with and observations of current AECT President Mike Spector. Limitations on space in this column do not allow me to list the many contributions of Mike to our organization during his term of leadership. I will, however, mention a few of his initiatives and accomplishments that I hope to carry forward into the coming year. Mike is a true believer in AECT as an organization and has worked tirelessly to communicate the strengths of our group to a larger audience. He has interacted with a wide variety of other professional associations and groups, significantly increasing the visibility of AECT both nationally and internationally. Because of his efforts, AECT has a new international affiliation with the Indonesian Professional Association of Educational Technology (IPTPI).

Mike has also initiated a critical review of our professional standards and our association with NCATE. At a time when resources are limited, but accountability is high, we do need to take a hard look at how to best ensure that our organization is making the best possible use of funds to support the needs of our member constituents.

One of the most striking lessons I learned from watching Mike operate over the past year is the importance of frequent communication with members through multiple channels. Through electronic newsletters (sometimes written in the hours of the day when most of us are sleeping), a new President’s Blog, and open invitations to communicate with him directly regarding any ideas, concerns, or needs, Mike exemplifies an open leadership style that promotes a strong sense of professional community. I marveled all year at his ability to juggle the demands of a full-time job and the tremendous amount of time that he was obviously dedicating to AECT, all while maintaining a positive attitude and great sense of humor. I have learned that these qualities will be helpful in my own service to AECT, and I am very much looking forward to maintaining this collaborative tradition with AECT members during this coming year.