

# Reexamining Women Leaders in Online/Distance Education Associations/Organizations

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The role of professional associations in shaping and promoting research, knowledge, policy, and practice is important to the members of any field. In addition to developing knowledge in their

respective domains, offering opportunities for research dissemination, professional development, mentoring, and networking, professional associations often also serve as regulatory agencies, shaping their fields with special emphasis on developing standards (Nerland & Karseth, 2013). Clearly, professional associations/organizations play important roles in the development of its members and their respective fields. Similarly, the leaders of associations/organizations cultivate and influence their constituents and the fields they represent. Yet, Milman (2015) found that the leaders of most Online/Distance Education associations/organizations were predominately male.

The field of online/distance education, which falls under the broader instruc-



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tional design and technology and science, technology, engineering, and mathematics umbrellas, has many different associations/organizations that focus on online or distance education, at least to some degree. Additionally, with the COVID-19 pandemic and shifts to emergency remote teaching and learning (Hodges, et al., 2020; Milman, 2020a, 2020b), it is very likely that most associations/organizations, even those not specifically related to instructional design and technology, have created special interest groups or other divisions to concentrate on online/distance education.

In this column, we share the gender representation of the leaders (i.e., president or chief executive officer) of major educational technology and online/distance education associations and organizations. We sought to update Milman's (2015) review of these associations/organizations to find out if there were any significant changes in the gender identity of its leaders. The review of the 21 education technology associations/organizations (see Table 1) showed 45% of the leadership is currently female in contrast to only 30% documented in 2015.

While the positive shift is encouraging, Warner et al. (2019) found that "data ... shows that despite making up a majority of the U.S. population, women lag substantially behind men when it comes to their representation in leadership positions" (para. 1). Globally, gender differences are even larger as evidenced in the sixth edition of Deloitte Global's *Women in the Boardroom: A Global Perspective* (2019). In this report, the authors provided data outlining the percentage of women who serve on boards (as a member or leader) and as chief executive officers around the world.

Although the data show that much progress is still needed, Sharon Thorne, the chair of Deloitte Global noted that organizations can take several steps to foster more gender equality such as address-

ing the "pipeline problem" (2019, p. 7), requiring term limits, and cultivating middle management. Similarly, associations/organizations can use similar tactics to increase gender representation to foster more women leaders. There is no doubt that women leaders are needed to provide representation and spearhead the development of innovative ways of increasing membership and promoting knowledge in these associations/organizations.

For some of the organizations, such as Association for Educational Communication and Technology, female leadership far exceeds the trends in American business (Doyle, 2016). This started with the roots of the organization: 4 years after its foundation in 1923, its first female president was elected; however, it took women serving in this capacity for many years before women serving as Association for Educational Communication and Technology president equaled that of men serving (Doyle, 2016). To increase gender representation in leadership, the strategies noted by Thorne would be a good start.

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**Table 1. 2015 Versus 2021 Online/Distance Education Associations Leadership by Gender**

Association/Organization	2015		2021	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
1. African Council for Distance Education <a href="https://acde-afri.org/secretariat-staff/">https://acde-afri.org/secretariat-staff/</a>	X		X	
2. American Distance Education Consortium/Apollidon Learning <a href="https://apolldon.com/about/leadership/">https://apolldon.com/about/leadership/</a>		X		X
3. Asian Association of Open Universities <a href="https://www.aaou.org/past-presidents-and-secretaries-general/">https://www.aaou.org/past-presidents-and-secretaries-general/</a>		X		X
4. Association for the Advancement of Computing in Education		X		X
5. Association for Distance Education and Independent Learning <a href="http://www.adeil.org?q=node/11">http://www.adeil.org?q=node/11</a>	X		X	
6. Association for Educational Communications and Technology <a href="http://www.aect.org/newsite/">http://www.aect.org/newsite/</a>		X	X	
7. Australasian Council on Open, Distance and E-learning <a href="http://www.acode.edu.au/mod/page/view.php?id=18">http://www.acode.edu.au/mod/page/view.php?id=18</a>	X			X
8. Consortium for School Networking <a href="http://www.cosn.org/about/staff">http://www.cosn.org/about/staff</a>		X		X
9. Educause <a href="https://www.educause.edu/about/leadership">https://www.educause.edu/about/leadership</a>		X		X
10. European Association for Distance Learning <a href="https://www.eadl.org/people/">https://www.eadl.org/people/</a>		X		X
11. European Distance and E-Learning Network <a href="http://www.eden-online.org/about-us/governance-and-management/">http://www.eden-online.org/about-us/governance-and-management/</a>		X	X	
12. International Association for K-12 Online Learning/Aurora Institute <a href="https://aurora-institute.org/about-us/our-team/">https://aurora-institute.org/about-us/our-team/</a>	X		X	
13. International Council for Open and Distance Education <a href="https://www.icde.org/the-board">https://www.icde.org/the-board</a>		X		X
14. International Society for Technology in Education <a href="https://www.iste.org/about/board-of-directors">https://www.iste.org/about/board-of-directors</a>		X		X
15. Online Learning Consortium (previously Sloan Consortium) <a href="https://onlinelearningconsortium.org/about/board-directors/">https://onlinelearningconsortium.org/about/board-directors/</a>	X		X	
16. Open and Distance Learning Association of Australia <a href="http://odlaa.org/about/executive/">http://odlaa.org/about/executive/</a>		X		X
17. Presidents' Forum <a href="https://presidentsforum.org/who-we-are/">https://presidentsforum.org/who-we-are/</a>		X		X
18. United States Distance Learning Association <a href="https://usdla.org/about/board-of-directors/">https://usdla.org/about/board-of-directors/</a>	X		X	
19. University Professional and Continuing Education Association <a href="https://upcea.edu/about/#staff">https://upcea.edu/about/#staff</a>		X	X	
20. WCET <a href="https://wcet.wiche.edu/about/leadership/">https://wcet.wiche.edu/about/leadership/</a>		X	X	
21. World Association for Online Educators <a href="http://www.waoe.org/directors.html">http://www.waoe.org/directors.html</a>		X		X

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