The eXtreme Science and Engineering Discovery Environment

2018 Campus Champions
Climate Study Report Executive Summary

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The eXtreme Science and Engineering Discovery Environment
2018 CAMPUS CHAMPIONS CLIMATE STUDY REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
Background and Context
Since its inception in 2008, the Campus Champions program has grown to a sizeable group with
over 400 members and more than 200 participating institutions. Members, known as
“Champions,” initially served as liaisons between their research institutions (i.e. universities,
non-profit organizations, government facilities, etc.) and the National Science Foundation (NSF)
funded cyberinfrastructure (CI) project, TeraGrid. A typical Champion is a research professional
or faculty member with institutional responsibilities that align with the program’s mission to
inform researchers, educators and scholars on national Cyberinfrastructure (CI) resources.
Following TeraGrid, the program demonstrated sustainability through its 2011 incorporation into
the eXtreme Science and Engineering Discovery Environment (XSEDE) NSF project. The
Champions’ size and widespread distribution throughout the United States and its territories, has
matured beyond its initial TeraGrid and XSEDE ties to support all national CI while still
maintaining its original backing and close relationship. The purpose of this report is to facilitate
continued program growth beyond XSEDE in an effort to secure a sustainable future through
deeper understanding of the Champion culture.

Key Findings

❖ Champions report high Overall Experience in the program. Newer members expressed
exceptionally high satisfaction and accounted for more than half of respondents.

❖ The Champion community’s impact extends beyond individual knowledge and skills
improvement to institutionalization of the champion role, changes in institutional research
computing policy, and inclusion of Champions in strategic talent recruitment for their
organizations.

❖ Some Champions are considering sustainability following XSEDE. They would like to see
the program continue to expand beyond advocating for NSF systems to other agencies.

❖ Respondents from non-research-intensive organizations and members of marginalized groups
including women and underrepresented racial/ethnic groups in HPC, report positive
experiences in the organization.

❖ Key program components (i.e. listserv/mailing list, peer mentoring, and champion
allocations) are seen as critical to functioning as a champion. Some suggested the addition of
a more detailed Champion directory to facilitate networking and collaborations.

❖ Champions would like to combine popular mailing list topics and solutions into a regular
newsletter, GitHub repository, and best practice guides for HPC.

❖ Domain Champions reported lower Overall Experience and Impact ratings. Comments from
this group suggest a lack of clear alignment with traditional Champions.
Champions believe the Regional program’s geographic structure should be revisited to prioritize similar institutions over state location. They also view the program as particularly useful for onboarding new champions and research computing staff.

**Recommendations**

- Increase opportunities for small group engagement through the formation of topical interest or identity groups such as operations-oriented staff or computing at teaching institutions to further encourage personal connections and belonging in the community.

- Consider exploring support for the program beyond NSF to include additional agencies. Support may vary and include access to resources similar to Champion allocations so that program participants can familiarize themselves with allocable resources to inform their system recommendations to local users.

- Create a series of best practice guides, technical reports, or short white papers on popular listserv topics that address common issues or policies coupled with repositories on GitHub, when appropriate. Consider crowdsourcing their creation among the Champions to address resource constraints. Prioritize topics by allowing voting via a Slack poll. Couple these activities with a regular newsletter or mailing list digest that summarizes current threads.

- Improve the current Champion directory utility for facilitating collaborations and networking by creating an optional space for members to include their HPC related expertise.

- Explore ways to align Domain Champions more with current Campus Champions to increase understanding of membership and responsibilities in relation to the larger program. Consider including representatives in related topical interest groups as key content experts available for advice and guidance.

- Revisit the Regional Campus Champions geographic structure to account more for institutional characteristics than location. Encourage the development of locally specific training programs, such as extended workshops or mentoring, to aide in onboarding of new Champions within the region.