

CASE - 2026 Award Story

Denise Atkinson-Shorey

President/CEO - e-Luminosity
2026 CoSN Volunteer of the Year Award

“

"Technology is just the tool. Respect, trust, and collaboration are the real infrastructure."

— Denise Atkinson-Shorey, on what leadership in ed-tech truly requires

”

ON CAREER & WHAT SHAPED HER AS A LEADER

When you reflect on your career so far, what moments or experiences most shaped you as a leader?

Working with students from low-income communities served as my primary forge. These experiences stripped away the abstraction of "technology" and replaced it with a human imperative: providing access where it is most needed. The first twenty years of my career were in classrooms and schools in Colorado, some of the most rewarding and impactful work I have done. The day Murphy the Irish Wolfhound came to the elementary school to visit students that had returned all their library books or the day the sixth graders got to visit the zoo and see a live Komodo Dragon are events that motivate students to push themselves to reach a goal.



What leadership value or belief guides your decision-making most consistently?

My leadership is anchored in a singular belief: partnerships and collaboration are the building blocks of progress. Whether navigating the complexities of broadband infrastructure or drafting strategic plans for school districts or setting goals with students, I have consistently found that diversity is strength, and active listening leads to "win win" solutions for the collective good.

ON RECOGNITION & WHAT IT MEANS

What does this recognition mean to you personally, beyond the title of the award?

Beyond the prestige of being nominated as CALET's Volunteer of the Year, the true weight of this award lies in the fact that it comes from my peers. In the often siloed world of educational technology, being acknowledged by those who are "in the trenches" validates a career spent not just managing systems, but fostering a culture where we elevate one another.

“

"A student's zip code should not determine their digital destiny. A leader's success is measured by the barriers they remove for others."
— On the human imperative behind educational technology

”

ON CHALLENGES & BREAKING DOWN SILOS

What are some of the specific challenges you have faced in your career or in your current role, and how did you overcome those challenges?

The trajectory of my career has been marked by rapid shifts in technology and the unfolding opportunities for women in the technology and broadband fields. In a sector where technology staff are often cordoned off into "silos," I have focused on opening doors and overcoming professional isolation through building trust, establishing a foundation where people feel safe to share failures and successes alike, facilitating connections by bringing together professionals across districts to spark new perspectives, and mentorship, actively helping others find their footing and sharing lessons learned to ensure growth is sustainable. By focusing on these values, we create organizations that people don't just work for, but truly want to be a part of.



How has collaboration with other district technology people through CASE influenced your growth?

Collaborating through organizations like CASE and CALET in Colorado and CoSN and SHLB at the national level turn isolated challenges into shared successes, proving that when peers share lessons learned, the entire state benefits. In a sector where technology staff are often cordoned off into "silos," I have focused on opening doors and overcoming professional isolation by bringing together professionals across more than 49 school districts to spark new perspectives.



“

"When peers share lessons learned, the entire state benefits. We create organizations that people don't just work for, but truly want to be a part of."
— Denise Atkinson-Shorey, on the power of collaboration across Colorado's districts

”