

TARGET 

Enrollment Managers' Biggest Data Concerns

What to Do When Your Data
Analytics Aren't Working For You





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Introduction

Data is here to stay; learn to use it wisely

Most of us have read or heard about the Tower of Babel, and the Babylonians' lofty intentions of building a tower to heaven. Those intentions were never realized because God created multiple, diverse languages so the workers could no longer talk to one another. Communication broke down. Chaos ensued.

Does your institution rely on higher education data technology and analytics? Does this sound oddly familiar? Data can be frustrating, but big data and analytics are not inherently bad. To be competitive and timely in our industry's ever-changing ecosystem, they are, in fact, absolutely necessary. However, they can be rendered useless when “the workers” don't talk to one another, and the data isn't used well, is used as a weapon, or is seen as a panacea for larger ills.

In this E-Book, we'll take you through the main challenges facing higher education regarding data and suggestions on how to solve them.



Did you know?

6 in 10

*Higher Education institutions
are either considering
launching a campus data
analytics program, or already
have such a program in place.*

Source: Ed Tech Magazine, 2019

The Five Biggest Data Challenges Facing Higher Education

From data babel to bad data and more

The Five Biggest Data Concerns Facing Higher Education Today

1

Data Babel

Too much data coming from too many disparate sources

2

Bad Data

Incorrect or out-dated preventing truly data-driven decision making

3

Reluctance to Embrace Data

Different departments measure data in different ways, making it hard to align

4

Data Culture is Punitive

Data is being used as a punishment, making everyone reluctant to share

5

Data Expectations Are Too High

Good data is not a cure-all, and managing expectation is key

#1: Data Babel

Nowadays, most institutions have a CRM and have access to a lot of data. The problem is making sense of an enormous amount of information that may not be integrated across campus.

Do you have critical operational challenges that involve applications, systems, platforms, and databases from across campus that do not speak with one another properly and are difficult to integrate? Are you overwhelmed with too much data noise? You might just have your own version of Data Babel.

#2: Bad Data

Bad data is worse than no data at all. In order to be useful, according to IBM, data should have four primary characteristics:

- Complete
- Accurate
- Timely
- Available.

Very few higher education institutions have all four. Without these pillars, institutions are working with a hobbled dataset that cannot possibly inform successful decision-making.

Did you know?

67%

*Of TargetX respondents
said that they could not
easily see which of their
territories were
performing well.*



#3: Reluctance to Embrace a Data Culture

A recent national surveys of presidents, provosts, CFOs, and CIOs revealed that the many (and in some surveys, the majority) do not believe that their institutions do a good job of using data to inform campus planning and decision-making. In other words, the campus culture is not organized around timely, useful data that is aligned across campus.

Different offices often measure different things in different ways, making it hard for leadership to have confidence in the data findings. If everyone is on a different page, there can be no coherent strategy or approach to applying data to goals.

#4: The Data Culture is Punitive

Just like bad data is worse than no data, sometimes a bad data culture is worse than no data culture at all. If your institution has weaponized its data as a means of “punishing” those who “didn’t pull their weight” or “failed to deliver,” your culture is counterproductive, and can often lead to data hoarding (limiting those who can see data).

Data should be used as a learning tool for improvement and course correction, or to recognize what’s working. Establishing a culture that prioritizes and understands the importance of quality, timely data is essential, and it can’t be done if everyone on campus fears it.

An abstract digital background featuring a diagonal split. The left side is dark blue and black, filled with glowing blue and white binary code (0s and 1s) and circuit-like patterns. The right side is a solid light gray, providing a clean space for the text.

Did you know?

73%

*Of surveyed Enrollment
Managers agree that
leadership does not trust the
accuracy of the data given to
them*

#5: Data Expectations Are Too High

Good data is a reflection of what is happening on the ground with your prospects, admissions team, students, staff, and administrators. Within a strong data culture, data will help you make the best decisions to increase interest, yield, and graduation rates. It can also give you a roadmap for improvement. What it cannot do is solve existing weaknesses on your campus. If you have uninspiring faculty, a lackluster campus experience, or a weak academic record, those vulnerabilities will shine through regardless, in the data and beyond.

Overcoming Babel Through Data Solutions

*Investing in data governance, positivity, and
clarity*

Solution #1

Make Sure Data Systems Speak the Same Language

Make sure all of your data systems speak the same language directly and coherently to one another. For example, TargetX allows you to connect virtually to any system or data source on campus with the CRM — from SIS to ERP to common imports and file types. We provide best-in-industry tools and open APIs to effectively manage data. We also help you maintain data integrity with dedicated tools for data validation and duplicate management.

Solution #2

Be Clear and Aligned On Data Questions

Data only works if you understand what you're asking of it. What information does your institution need most? TargetX did a survey of enrollment managers, in which 47% of those surveyed said they want their data to easily and accurately compare current performance to past performance. Important data information! To get accurate data and for the information to be truly useful, the same data needs to be pulled in the same way year after year, otherwise you're comparing apples to oranges. Invest in thoughtful data questions on the front end and commit to ensuring the integrity of that data. This investment of time will only pay off in the long run.

“Student success is about relationships, and maintaining real relationships at scale requires an appreciation for data.”

Kevin Butts

***VP, Product Management,
TargetX***



Solution #3

Invest in Data Governance

To combat bad data, establish data governance committees or data analytics teams who are committed to ensuring that all data is linked and complete, accessible to anyone who needs it, up-to-date, and fully accurate. Who owns what piece of the data process? You've already made a huge investment in your data and data systems. Making sure they work properly and getting everyone to buy into the same data practices is more than worth the additional investment. This also goes a long way in helping to create the positive data culture we mentioned.

Solution #4

Create a *Positive*, Campus-wide Data Culture

As quoted from an article by Jonathan S. Gagliardi and Philip Wilkinson in Higher Education Today, “Campuses need to begin treating their data as importantly as their financial assets.” This means investing in the support structures needed to analyze and implement data well. It means prioritizing data across all campus offices and departments. It also means showing through action that data is a powerful tool, not a means to dole out punishment. Data consistency, and more importantly, consistent context, are key to building a positive data-driven culture across campus. With TargetX Insights, everyone can be confident they are working from a single source of truth, meaning data-driven decisions are better informed and leadership can trust the reports being pulled—every time—and can react with positive change and improvement when needed.

Sources

- <https://edtechmagazine.com/higher/article/2019/06/breaking-down-data-governance-data-quality-perfcon>
- <https://www.higheredtoday.org/2017/12/13/big-data-campus/>
- TargetX Survey of Enrollment Managers, 2019



About TargetX

Student-centric Solutions For Higher Ed

Enhance the admissions process, increase enrollment, and prioritize student success with TargetX's comprehensive suite of HEDA Core Compatible CRM solutions, powered by the Salesforce platform and trusted by over 400 institutions. Our Recruitment and Retention Suites are specifically designed for higher education and built mobile-first, empowering your campus to meet today's students where they are.

About Insights

TargetX Insights empowers institutions to make more meaningful, data-driven decisions with easy-to-read dashboards that show how your enrollment activities are performing, and how you're tracking to your goals. With out of the box, best practice-driven dashboards, easily see things like point-in-time funnel reports, event attendance to enrollment metrics, progress to application and enrollment targets and academic performance dashboards.

Ready to create a postive data culture on your campus? We're here to help: [Request a Demo](#)