

# Data as a Buoy

Using Analytics Ethically in a Sea of Uncertainty



# Agenda

- About Amelia & NASPA
- What's Going On?
- 6 Considerations for Using Data Ethically
- 4 Additional Considerations
- Resources
- Questions

# About Amelia

Optimist | Researcher | Connector | Friend



# About NASPA



- 100-year-old association that provides professional development, advocacy, and research for over 14,000 members
- Focused on common functional areas within student affairs (housing, advising, conduct, assessment) as well as broader higher education themes (access, persistence, and degree completion)

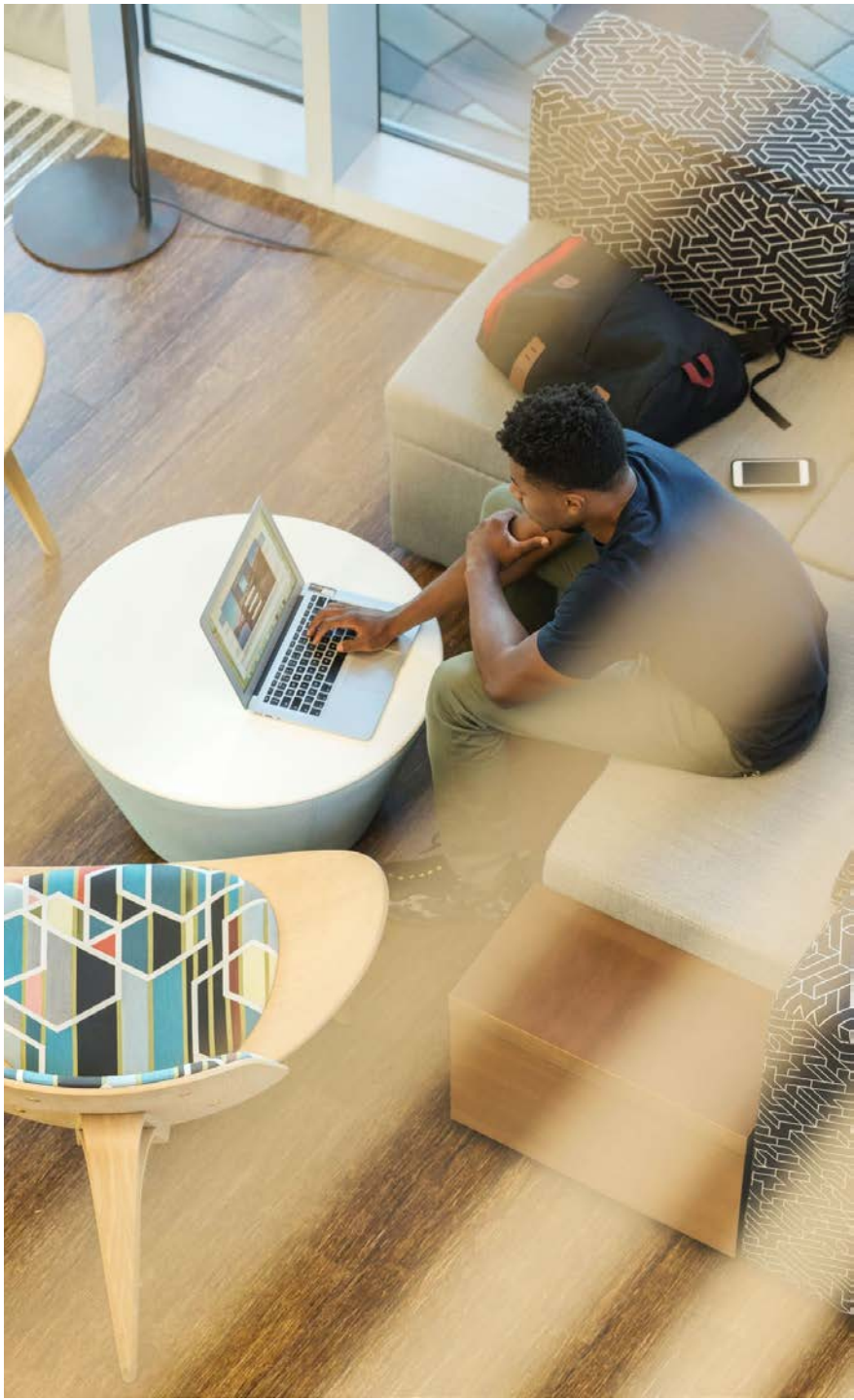
# What's Going On?

Leading Questions about the Current and Future State of Higher Education



# The Future State of Higher Education: 5 Macro Questions

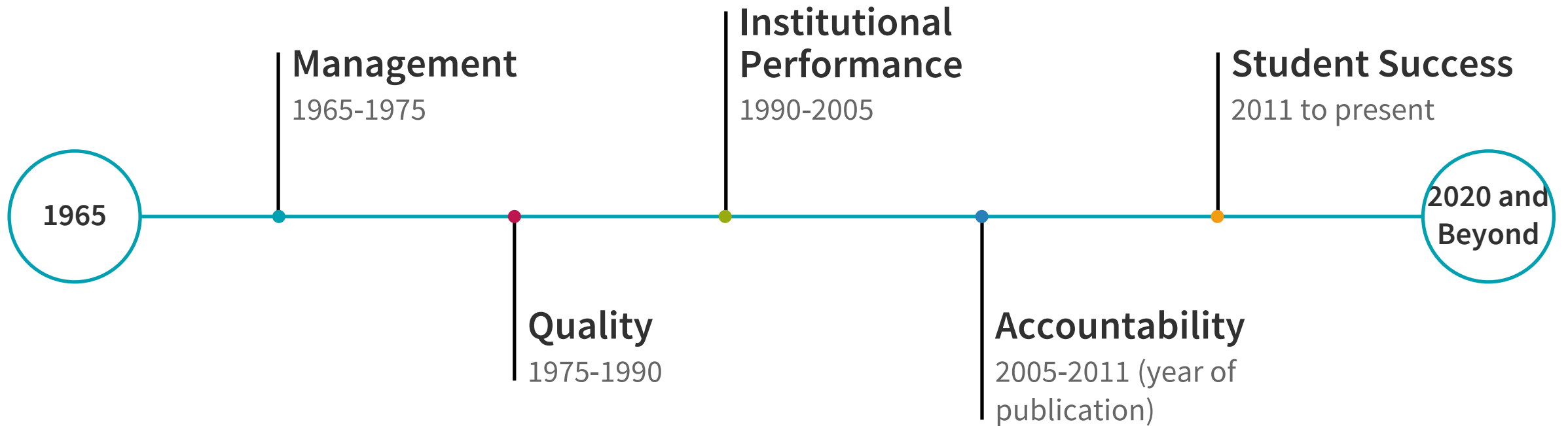
- How stable will institutions' financial position be over the next 2-3 years?
- How will institutions balance free speech and safety?
- Will COVID-19 result in permanent shifts to residential campus operations?
- How will requirements to measure and report students' performance change?
- Will we need new talking points for debates about the value of a college experience?



# The Current State of Higher Education: 5 Micro Questions

- How are institutions realigning financial and personnel resources?
- How are institutions dealing with racial inequities and injustice?
- How are professionals providing emergency support to students?
- How are professionals monitoring students' progress in virtual and/or blended learning environments?
- How are institutions managing career preparation?

# IR Focus Areas: A Brief Timeline of Themes



Source: Adaptation from 2011 publication, The Association for Institutional Research: The First 50 Years



# What is a buoy and how can data be one for higher education?

- Buoy: an anchored float serving as a navigation mark, to show reefs or other hazards



# Data As a Buoy: 6 Considerations for Using Data Ethically

# 6 Considerations for Using Data Ethically



## Clear Goals

We can use data to expand our descriptions of student success.



## Inherent Biases

We can use data to identify and interrogate assumptions, especially those related to students.



## Trend Awareness

We can regularly consume and share information about events that happen outside of the IR office.



## Data Stewardship

We can use data to not just comply with rules and regulations but to also examine our policies and procedures.



## Communication

We can use data to appropriately select and sequence our efforts based on students' input.



## Your Data Identity

We can identify and leverage our individual strengths to contribute to and make data-informed decisions.

# Consideration #1

# Clear Goals

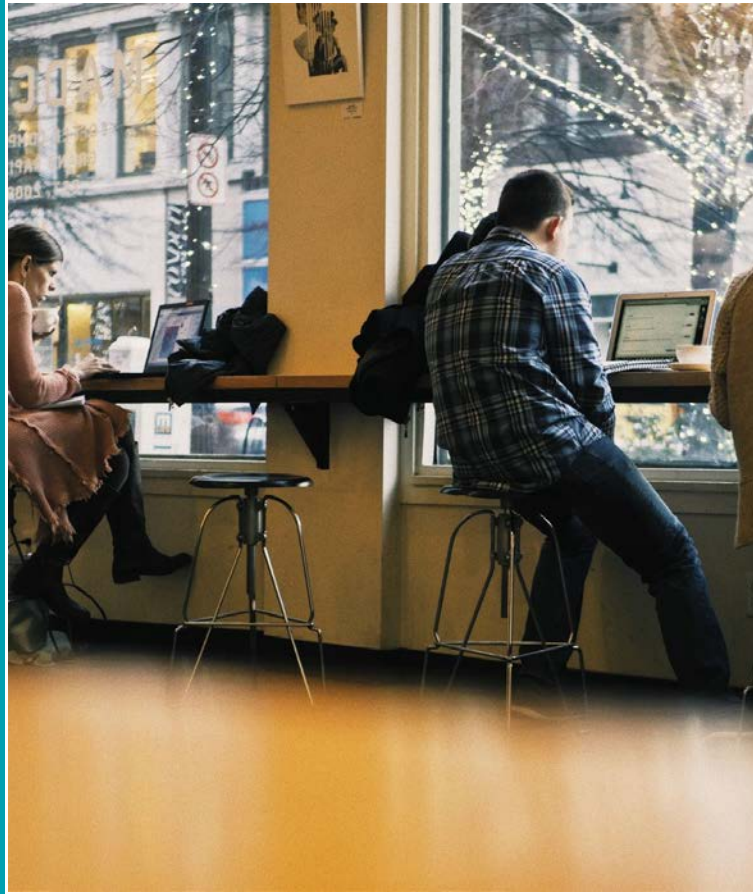
A Spotlight on Descriptions of Student Success



# How Are We Currently Describing Student Success?



Retention



Persistence



Graduation



# Let's Expand Our Descriptions of Student Success - A Successful Student:



Understands how to balance competing individual and community priorities



Knows how to manage resources for which they have and share responsibility



Realizes their unique contributions and can leverage abilities to improve their conditions

## Consideration #2

# Inherent Biases

A Spotlight on Prescriptive Analyses and the Impact of Racial Injustice





“Consider a student majoring in art and the various related career directions. With the help of a **prescriptive analytics** and demand forecasting model, an institution could crunch data on job openings, required skills, average starting salaries, geography and many more factors to yield specific recommendations for the student’s curriculum path for maximized employability.”

Jim Milton



**“By coupling real-time student engagements and interactions with behavioral data, institutions can pinpoint the motivations of individual students and personalize recommendations to ensure positive student outcomes.”**

Jim Milton

# 45%



of students reported feeling so depressed that it was difficult to function during the past 12 months

# 65%



of students reported feeling overwhelming anxiety during the past 12 months

**“Feeling safe ”at my school“ means something radically different today than it did before -- what students experience now is like no other time in history, and education leaders must lead and teach from a caring perspective.”**

Katie Lyon and Tom Matson

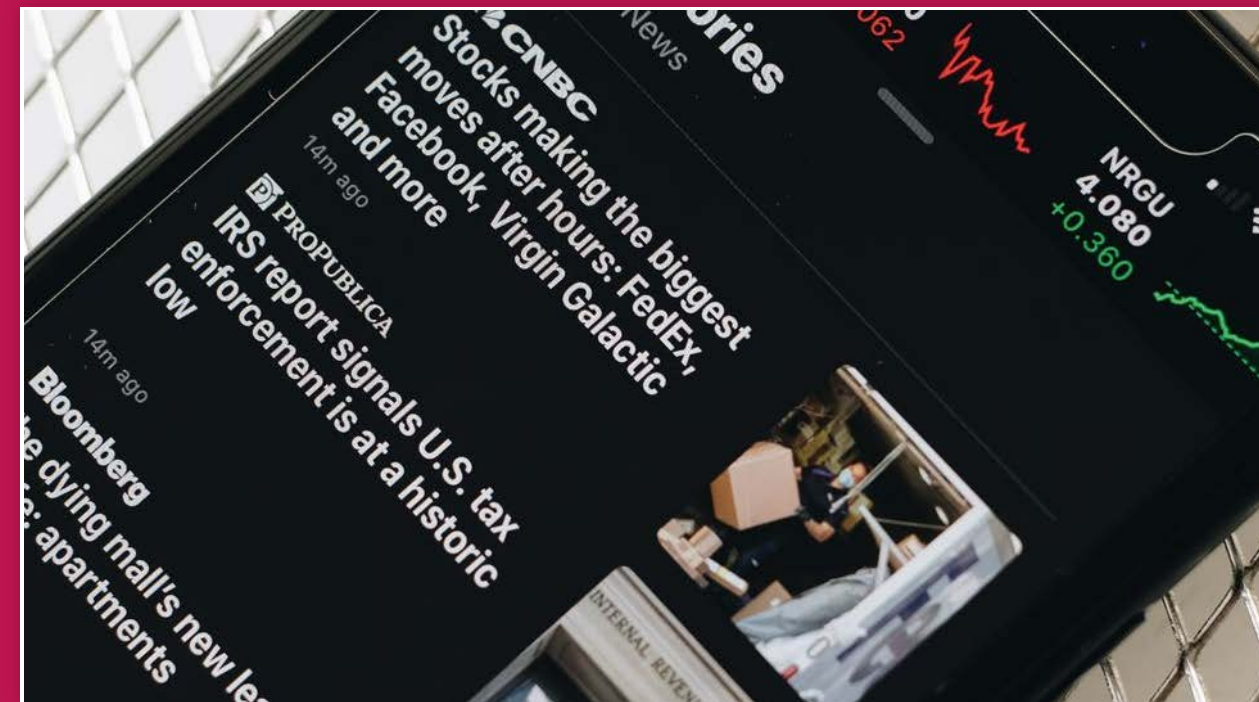
**“If social injustice contributes to poor mental health outcomes for people, even as professionals we have to figure out how we speak to that and **really validate** that. Those are things that go into being proponents of mental health on a campus -- not just dealing with the individual.”**

Sharon Mitchell, president of the Association of University and College Counseling Center Directors

# Consideration #3

# Trend Awareness

A Spotlight on Holistic Learning and Cross-Functional Collaboration



# Learning Happens Everywhere



## COMPREHENSIVE LEARNER RECORD



- Comprehensive learner records contain data from co-curricular transcripts, badges, e-Portfolios and other digital instruments
- Institutions are using data from these records to show the impact of engaging in out-of-classroom activities on students' performance
- AACRAO, NASPA, and NILOA are partnering to help 100+ institutions create comprehensive learner records



# Cross-Functional Collaboration Is Happening!

60%

Institutional researchers reported involvement in assessing the impact of interventions

59%

Student affairs professionals reported involvement in developing the institution-wide data strategy

30%

Information technology professionals reported involvement in managing the early-alert system

# Consideration #4

# Data Stewardship

A Spotlight on Regulations and Privacy

A close-up photograph of a person's hand holding a black marker, writing the word "Rules" in a cursive script on a whiteboard. The whiteboard surface is covered in light-colored, horizontal streaks, suggesting it has been previously used or is being prepared. The background is blurred, showing what appears to be an office or meeting room setting.

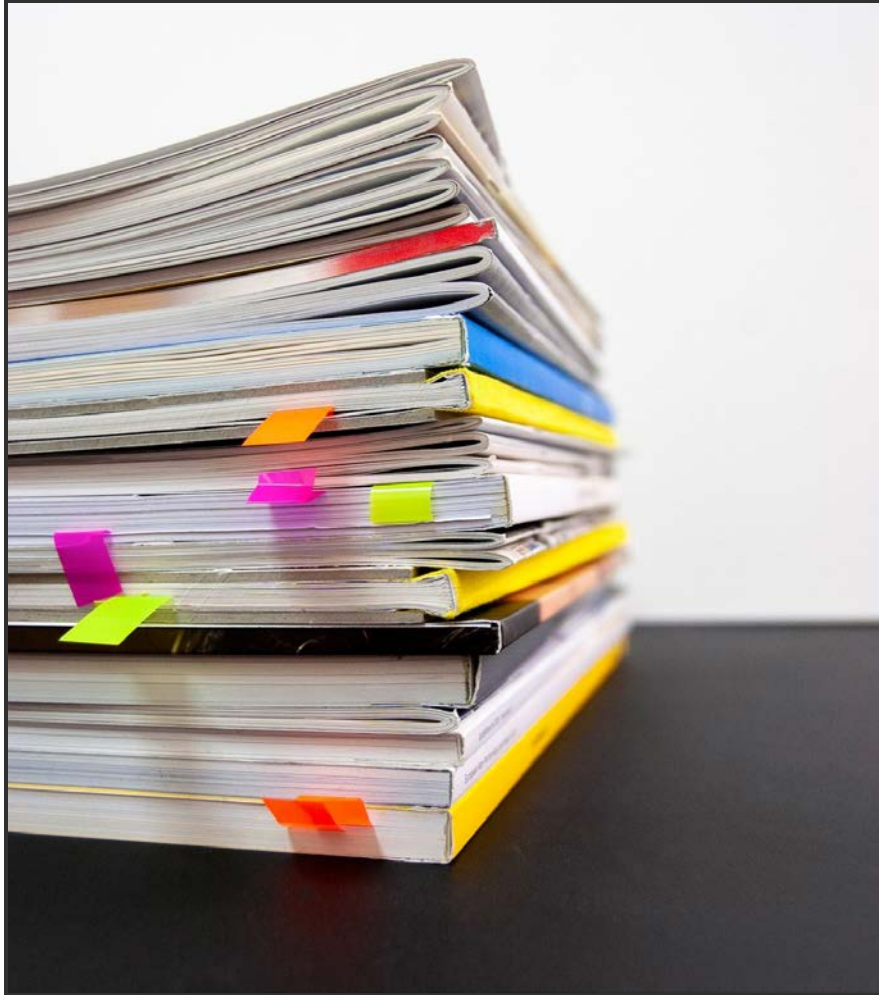
Rules

A close-up photograph of a person's hand holding a black marker, writing the word "Standards" in a cursive script on a whiteboard. The whiteboard surface is covered in light-colored, horizontal streaks, suggesting it has been previously used or is being prepared. The background is blurred, showing what appears to be an office or meeting room setting.

Standards



# Emerging Areas of Discussion



- August 2020 Title IX Regulations
- Data Privacy Related to Students' Health Records and Contact Tracing
- Campus Reporting of Federal Relief Funding

# Consideration #5

# Communication

A Spotlight on Effective Uses of Email and  
Managing Uncertainty



# 50%



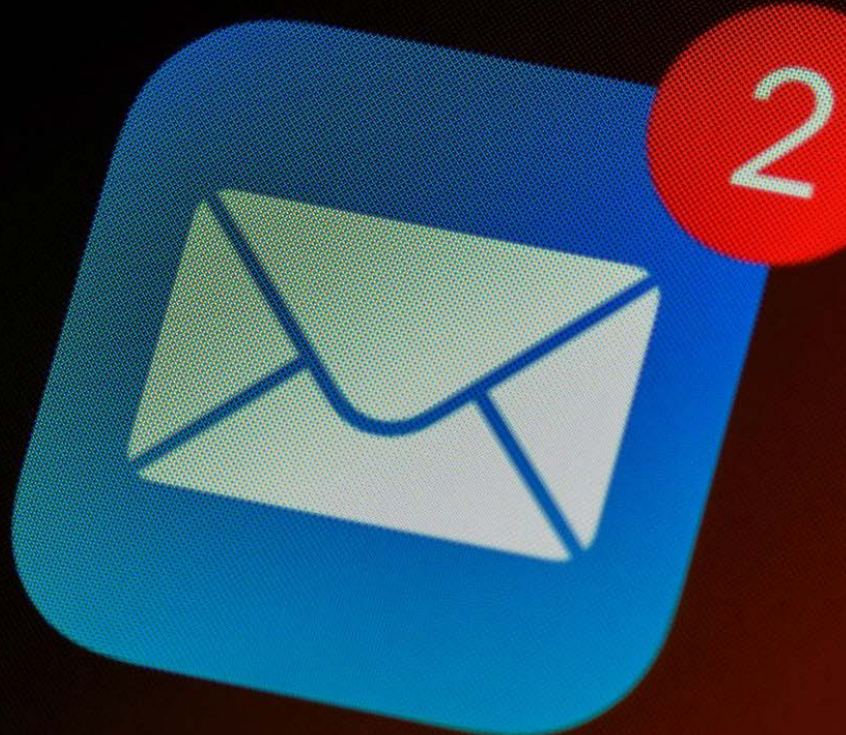
of students say they do not always read emails from their institution or academic department

# 40%



of students say they do not always read emails from their advisors

# Key Factors for Communicating with Students via Email



- Governance structures, policies, and processes
- Building awareness about email communication standards among faculty, students, and staff
- Data to assess the effectiveness of the email strategy
- Value of pairing email with other modalities
- Functionality of technology platforms

# Student Affairs Professionals' Voices - May 2020



## 75% Report that Working Remotely Is Difficult

Challenges: communication, suitable work location; workload, family responsibilities, mental health



## Many Desire Professional Development

Areas: virtual program development, virtual meeting facilitation, video production, supervision, crisis management, wellness and self-care



## Professionals Expect Several Virtual Practices to Continue

Practices: chat communication, digital document sharing and signing, telehealth and counseling, engagement via social media



## Most Are Concerned about Higher Education

Concern areas: future of higher education (72%); their institution's sustainability (53%); student affairs offerings (31%)



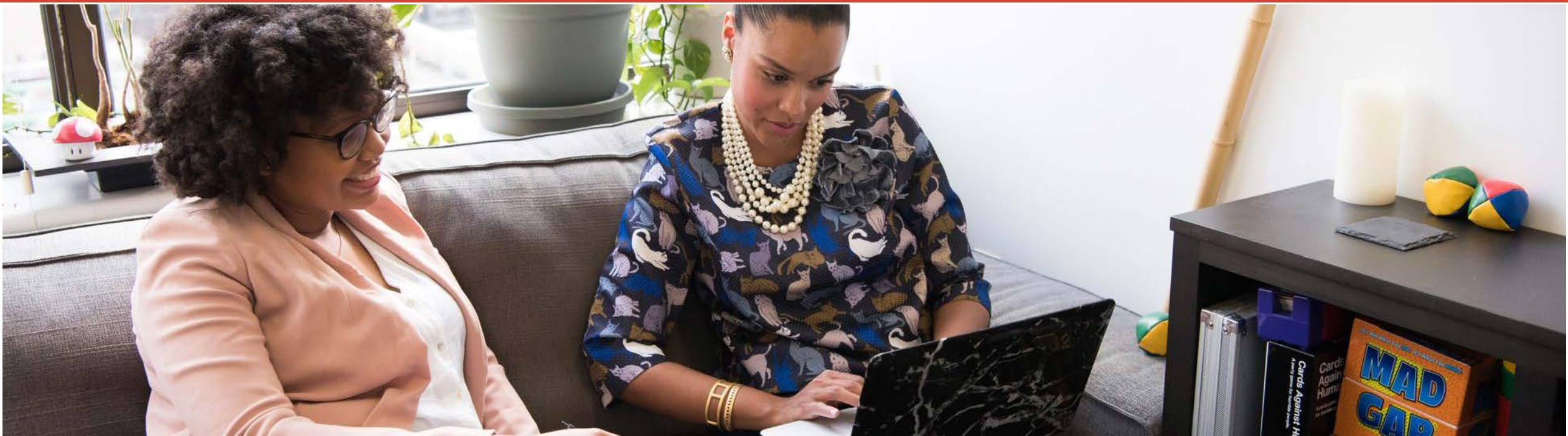
## Some Are Concerned about Quality

Areas: low utilization rates; budget cuts; designing effective and accessible hybrid virtual/in-person events for the future

# Consideration #6

# Your Data Identity

A Spotlight on the Value of Multiple Skills and Competencies



# The Data Identity Framework

A Six-Component Guide to Helping You Find Your Data-Related Strengths

# The Data Identity Framework

## Curiosity & Inquiry

Ability to Formulate and Ask Clear Questions

## Research & Analysis

Ability to Select and Use Appropriate Methodologies

## Communication & Consultation

Ability to Clearly Discuss Findings with Multiple Audiences

## Campus Context

Knowledge of Current Issues and Trends within the Institution

## Industry Context

Knowledge of Current Issues and Trends in Higher Education

## Strategy & Planning

Ability to Select and Execute a Course of Action



# Understanding the Framework: 4 Principles



- Each component is a valuable part of one's data identity. Therefore, the components are not provided in a sequential or ranking order.
- Within each component, some professionals will have much more experience and knowledge while others have less.
- All 6 components are valuable to engaging in collaborative work on a campus.
- The level and frequency at which professionals engage in activities related to each component will vary.

# Data Identity Framework Sub-Components



## Curiosity and Inquiry

Issue Clarity

Question Formation

Historical Context

Stakeholder Impact



## Research and Analysis

Methodology

Technical Expertise

Data Integration

Computation



## Communication and Consultation

Delivery Type

Audience

Interpretation

Follow-Up

# Data Identity Framework Sub-Components



## Campus Context

Student Information  
Programs and Initiatives  
Strategic Plan  
Campus Mission



## Industry Context

News and Events  
Sector Knowledge  
Functional Knowledge  
Student Trends



## Strategy and Planning

Role Alignment  
Project Management  
Resource Allocation  
Progress Monitoring

# Example Personas (3 of 15)



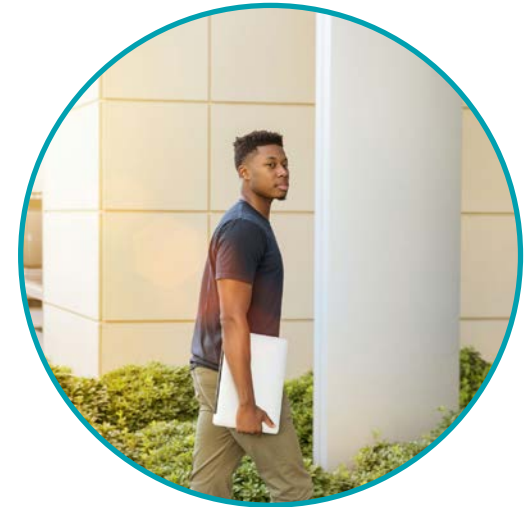
## The Curator

Research and Analysis +  
Communication and  
Consultation



## The Connector

Curiosity and Inquiry + Campus  
Context



## The Mission Monitor

Strategy and Planning +  
Campus Context

# 4 Additional Considerations

# Additional Considerations



Change  
Management



Politics and  
Competition



Crisis  
Management



Resource  
Constraints



# Resources



- **Achieving the Dream Toolkit: Holistic Student Supports Redesign (Chapter 8 - Data Distribution Strategy Worksheet)**
- **AIR Statement of Aspirational Practice for Institutional Research**
- **Parnell Book: You Are a Data Person - Strategies for Managing Analytics on Campus (Summer 2021)**








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