

## Identifying Key Performance Indicators: The Foundation of an Institutional Dashboard

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### What is a Dashboard in Higher Education?

- A brief document that graphically displays critical institutional information in a succinct, easily understood, visually appealing format
- A tool to communicate the current health of the organization and its progress toward its strategic objectives

## Purposes of Dashboards



- To communicate current information about major indices of organizational performance to primary stakeholders
- To provide information to assist in evaluation of organizational performance
- To provide a comprehensive analysis of how the organization's achievement of its strategic objectives leads to effectively carrying out its mission and vision
- To provide information about organizational performance compared to appropriate benchmarks

## Why Do We Need Dashboards in Higher Ed.?



- Institutional leadership has a responsibility to be accountable to both internal and external stakeholders
- Stakeholders want/need accurate, concise, easy-to-understand, up-to-date data & information about organizational performance
- Traditional communication sources in higher ed. (e.g., annual reports) are usually obsolete by the time they reach stakeholders and typically fail to provide necessary/sufficient detail about organizational performance

## Components of Dashboards



- A limited set of measures—usually referred to as **“Key Performance Indicators” (or KPIs)**
- An integrated data structure for that set of measures
- A source of comparative benchmarks for the measures
- Graphics for displaying the measures

## Characteristics of an Effective Dashboard



- Operationally focused—tied to the institution’s mission and strategic plan
- Timely
- Accurate
- Easy to understand
- Represents the current state of the organization
- Provides a straightforward summary of organizational performance

## KPIs — What Are They?



Data elements that :

- Measure core inputs, outputs, and outcomes
- Reflect the institution’s strategic plan and core business
- Measure high priority operations of the institution
- Measure institutional characteristics that are important and meaningful to stakeholders
- Measure institutional performance in areas in which it must be successful to survive and be competitive

## Examples of KPIs



- Enrollment
  - Fall headcount enrollment
  - Percent of area high school grads enrolling subsequent fall
- Student progress
  - Fall-to-fall persistence
  - Term-to-term persistence
- Student success
  - Graduation rate
  - Transfer rate
  - Workforce placement rate

## Sources of KPIs



- Institution mission statement and strategic plan
- For community colleges—“Core Indicators of Effectiveness for Community Colleges” (Alfred, Shults, & Seybert), published by AACC
  - Identifies and describes 16 core indicators in six major categories:
    - Student progress
    - General education
    - Outreach
    - Workforce development
    - Contribution to the public good
    - Transfer preparation

## Identification of KPIs—Who’s involved



- Effort usually led by a Dashboard Development Team
  - Representative of senior leadership
  - Representative of IR
  - Representatives of key constituencies
    - Faculty
    - Student affairs
    - Others
- Team solicits input from affected work groups and administrators
- Senior leadership (president’s cabinet?) makes final determination of which measures reflect key functions and are included in the dashboard

- **President & Members of President's Cabinet**
  - Vice President of Instruction
  - Vice President of Student Services
  - Vice President of Institutional Advancement
  - Dean – Bowie Campus
  - Senior Director of Campus Operations
- **Instructional Leadership Team**
  - Dean of Health Sciences
  - Dean of Arts & Sciences
  - Dean of Advanced & Applied Technology
  - Dean of Lifelong Learning
  - Department Chair – College Preparatory Studies

- **Other Administrators**
  - Dean – Corinth Campus
  - Associate Dean of Student Services (Corinth Campus)
  - Director of Admissions/Registrar
  - Chief Information Officer
  - Director of Institutional Research & Effectiveness
  - Director of Academic & Student Support Services
  - Coordinator – Student Success Center

- Selecting a facilitator
  - Critical decision
    - Internal or external
    - Experience & expertise
- Team solicits input
- Pre-workshop “homework”
  - Mission/vision/values statements
  - Strategic plan
  - AACC “Core Indicators of Effectiveness for community colleges”

- The “work”
  - Introductory presentation by facilitator (45-60 minutes)
  - Divide into small groups
  - Round 1
    - Goal is to identify the college’s “core business”/most important institutional functions/key mission components (60-75 minutes)
    - Reconvene: groups report progress (30-45 minutes)
    - Entire group comes to consensus on core functions (60 minutes)
  - Lunch

## How KPIs are Identified



- They are an outgrowth of strategic planning
  - Important and meaningful to stakeholders
  - Viewed as important to the organization
  - Linked to strategic plan and organizational priorities
  - Help determine the extent to which the organization is progressing toward its stated goals
- Team can begin with a large number of potential KPIs and then whittle down to the vital few—no more than 15-20

## Context for KPIs: Benchmarks & Target Values



- Process also requires establishing benchmarks and target values
  - Benchmarks
    - What are reasonable values for measures
      - Upper and lower limits
      - What is “good” and “bad” for a given measure
  - Targets
    - How do we know where we want to be?
    - Based on both benchmarks and past performance
    - Must be reasonable and achievable
      - Can (should?) be “stretch objectives”
  - Possible Sources: NCCBP
    - Achieving the Dream Database
    - IPEDS Peer Analysis System



## A Valuable Source for Community College Benchmarks: The NCCBP



- A national community college data collection/reporting consortium
- Collects and reports on over 120 benchmarks covering all areas of interest to community colleges:
  - Institutional characteristics
  - Student characteristics
  - Student learning outcomes
  - Community outreach
  - Faculty and staff data
- 210 colleges participated in 2009
- [www.nccbp.org](http://www.nccbp.org)

## A KPI in Detail



### Performance Indicator (PI 22): Transfer Rate

**Definition:** The percent of Fall, transfer-intent, first-time SCC enrolled students who also enter a degree program at a four-year institution within three years (9 terms).

**How the PI is measured:** To be eligible for the cohort, students had to have the following characteristics:

1. Were enrolled at SCC for the first time in a Fall cohort term.
2. Were 18-22 years old.
3. Were enrolled full time in a Fall cohort term (i.e., taking 12 or more hours).
4. Cumulated at least 12 SCC credit hours three years after their first Fall cohort term at SCC.
5. Specified a transfer intent on their SCC application.

**Source:**

- National Student Loan Clearing House data
- STACS

**PI Standard:**

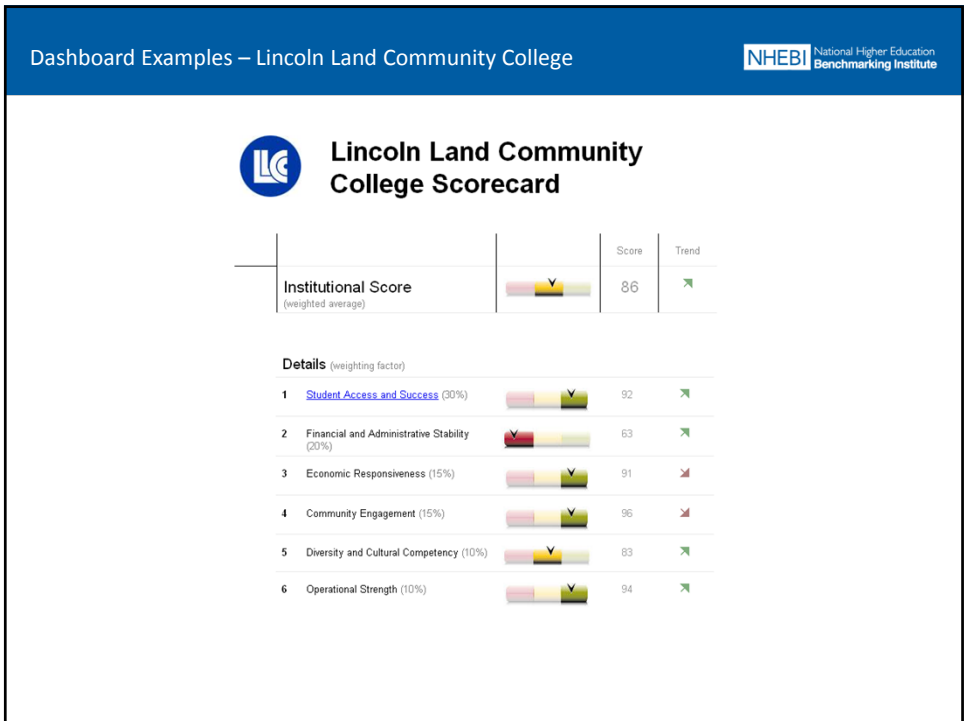
- Exceeding Expectation: > 60%
- Meeting Expectation: 50% - 60%
- Needs Improvement: 40% to 49.9%
- Alarm Bells: <40%

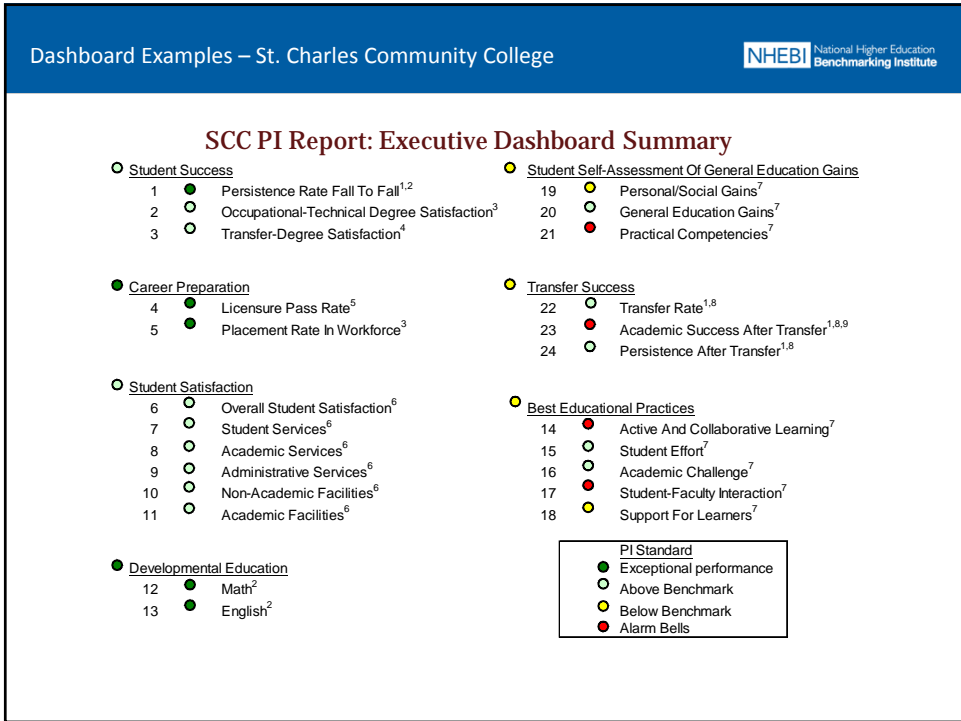
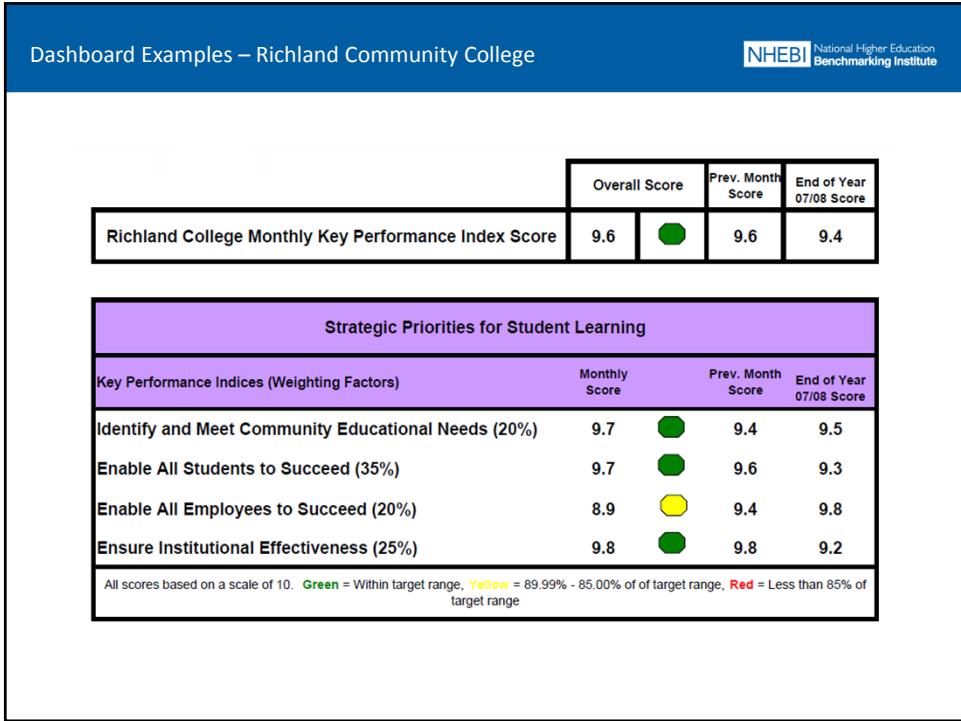
**Sample NCCBP Benchmark** **NHEBI** National Higher Education Benchmarking Institute

Percentile ranks are the percents of benchmark values that fall below the institution's values.  
Johnson County Community College

	Institution			NCCBP Percentiles				
	Reported Value	% Rank	N	10th	25th	Mdn	75th	90th
<b>FORM 2: Proportions of Students That</b>								
<b>% Completed in Three Years (Col 3)</b>								
Full-time, First-time in Fall, 2005	19.12%	55%	210	8.34%	12.28%	18.18%	25.65%	34.50%
Part-time, First-time in Fall, 2005	20.75%	91%	172	2.18%	3.25%	6.57%	11.49%	20.41%
<b>% Transferred in Three Years (Col 5)</b>								
Full-time, First-time in Fall, 2005	29.43%	89%	192	8.60%	13.15%	18.12%	22.43%	29.90%
Part-time, First-time in Fall, 2005	13.97%	77%	139	2.96%	4.90%	9.17%	13.64%	23.33%
<b>% Compl. or Transf. in Three Years (Col 6)</b>								
Full-time, First-time in Fall, 2005	48.55%	84%	192	22.99%	27.85%	37.73%	44.42%	53.03%
Part-time, First-time in Fall, 2005	34.72%	89%	139	7.83%	11.11%	16.03%	25.00%	37.03%
<b>FORM 3: Student Performance at Transfer Institutions (Most Recent AY)</b>								
Cumulative First-year GPA (Col 2)	--	--	67	2.62	2.79	2.89	2.98	3.07
Average First-year Credit Hours (Col 4)	--	--	55	15.36	18.09	20.66	23.50	25.32
Percent Enrolled Next Year (Col 5)	--	--	55	63.90%	71.50%	76.77%	82.61%	86.91%
<b>FORM 4: Fall 2007 Credit Students Who Enrolled Next Term and Next Fall</b>								
Next-term Persistence Rate (Col 4)	63.45%	24%	206	57.93%	63.47%	68.61%	71.70%	74.62%

**NCCBP** National Community College Benchmark Project





## Dashboards – Strengths



- Relatively straightforward way to monitor current institutional performance
- Provide metrics on KPIs that represent core institutional goals, issues, and operations
- Easy to understand
- Engaging presentation format to communicate important information
- Can be used at all levels of the institution (institution as a whole, division, department)

## Dashboards – Challenges



- Design and implementation require a comprehensive understanding of complex data definitions, sources, appropriate analyses, and sources of appropriate benchmarks
  - Requires appropriate expertise (internal or external)
- Don't provide an in-depth understanding of underlying data that drive the KPIs
  - Limited in scope and somewhat simplistic
  - Lack of detail makes it difficult to understand the "whys" of institutional performance
- Provide no information regarding what should be done—no guidance for institutional action
- To be optimally effective need to be supported by formal underlying data structure with drill-down capabilities—a balanced scorecard

## Exercise I



1. Discuss and identify the sources of your institution's core business/most important functions
2. Select three elements of core business for which you will identify KPIs
3. Identify one first-level KPI for each aspect of your institution's core business
3. Report results of your deliberations

## Contact



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NCCBP

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