

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
 - Round 2
 - Teams begin discussion of first-level KPIs (60-75 minutes)
 - Reconvene: groups report progress (30-45 minutes)
 - Entire group comes to consensus on first-level KPIs (60 minutes)

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

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%

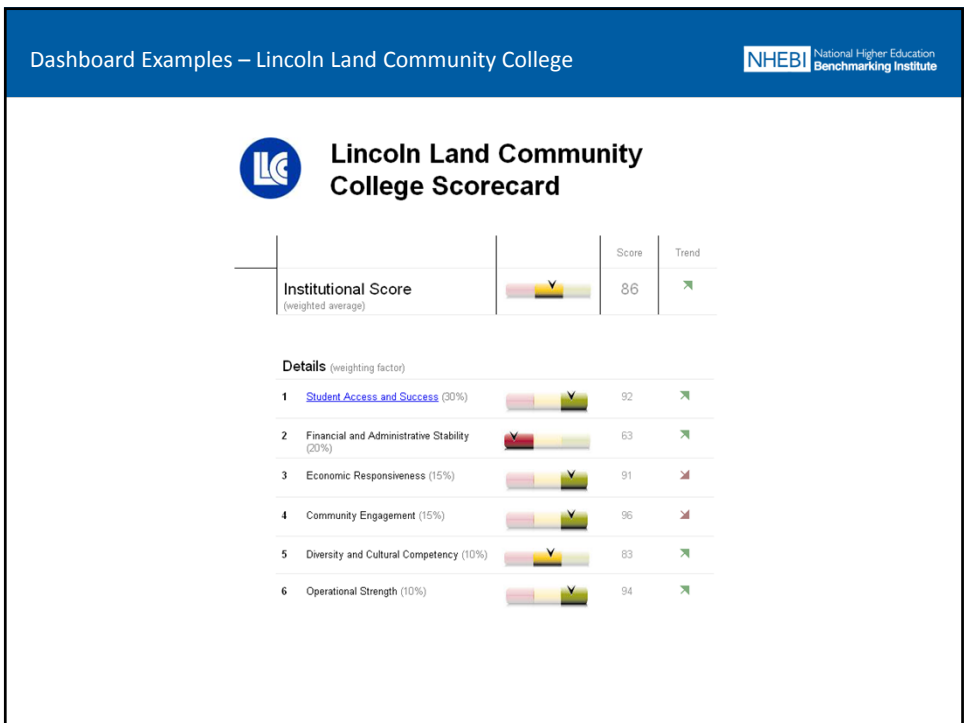
Sample NCCBP Benchmark

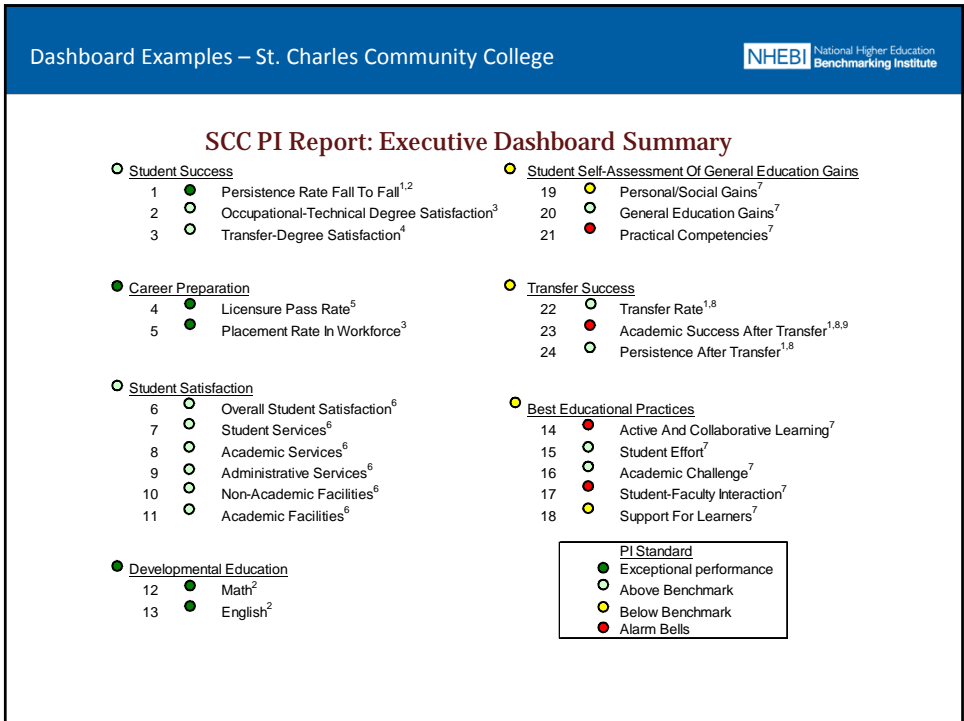
NHEBI National Higher Education Benchmarking Institute

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
FORM 2: Proportions of Students That								
% Completed in Three Years (Col 3)								
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%
% Transferred in Three Years (Col 5)								
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%
% Compl. or Transf. in Three Years (Col 6)								
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%
FORM 3: Student Performance at Transfer Institutions (Most Recent AY)								
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%
FORM 4: Fall 2007 Credit Students Who Enrolled Next Term and Next Fall								
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 NHEBI National Higher Education Benchmarking Institute
- 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)

- 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

1. Identify three elements of your institution's mission/"core business."
2. Identify first-level KPIs for each of the elements of your institution's core business
3. Report results of your deliberations

Contact



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NCCBP

www.nccbp.org