Data Fellows Project Leaders:
  Dhushy Sathianathan  
  *Interim Associate Vice President for Academic Planning*

  Cynthia Grutzik  
  *Associate Dean, College of Education*

  Krzysztof Slowinski  
  *Associate Dean, College of Natural Sciences & Mathematics*

  Vanessa Red  
  *Special Assistant to AVP for Academic Planning*

Data Fellows Advisory Group, Year One:  
  David Dowell, Provost  
  Nele Hempel-Lamer, Interim AVP for Undergraduate Studies  
  Tom Enders, AVP of Enrollment Services  
  Mahmoud Albawaneh, Director, Institutional Research and Assessment  
  Jeff Gold, Senior Director, Academic Technology, Chancellor’s Office

**Project Overview**

In July 2015 Provost Dowell and Interim Associate Vice President Dhushy Sathianathan proposed a novel and collaborative approach to improving graduation rates and reducing achievement gaps by forming teams of “Data Fellows” who would explore various data sources and develop projects using those data. Teams were to consist of one faculty member, one staff member, and one Associate Dean from each college, as well as teams from Student Affairs and Undergraduate Studies, for a total of nine teams (see Roster, Appendix I). The overall goal of integrating Student Affairs and Academic Affairs in this way was to empower these Data Fellows to become experts on several data sources, to cultivate broader understanding and application of available data, and most importantly, to place a university-wide and collective focus on students and their success.

The Data Fellows project builds on a strong tradition of data-driven leadership by engaging faculty, staff and administrators in a systematic collaborative project. Over the last five years, CSULB has raised its 6-year graduation rates from 53% to the current high of 67%, and 4-year transfer graduation rates
have improved from 69% to the current 80%. The achievement gap for freshmen has been reduced to
6% for underrepresented students and 4% for Pell eligible students, and the achievement gap for
transfer students has been close to 1% for the past three years. This unprecedented improvement in
degree completion can be attributed to several institution-changing strategies involving planning,
communication, curriculum redesign, budget decisions, proactive academic advising, enrollment
management, tenure-track hiring, K-12 partnerships and other strategies with an overarching theme of
data-driven approaches to student success. The Data Fellows project creates a unique opportunity to
analyze these changes in the context of unit-level, campus-wide, and CSU system-wide retention and
degree completion data. Perhaps the most important feature of the project is that it brings together,
for the first time, faculty and staff who typically do not have access to these data and who rarely have
opportunities to work on these kinds of outcomes as a team.

The Data Fellows project was presented in a panel session at the 2016 AASCU Academic Affairs Winter
Meeting in Austin, TX in February 2016, and it generated a lot of interest from participants.

Guiding Questions
At the first meeting in October 2015, Provost Dowell provided an overview of the goals for the Data
Fellows project, and asked the group to focus on three guiding questions as they explored various data
sources, framing these as key problems that the campus currently faces.

1. What can we do to understand and increase CSULB’s 4-year FTF and 2–year Transfer
   graduation rates?
2. What accounts for our persistent opportunity gaps and how can we eliminate these gaps?
3. How can we better understand attrition on the degree progress pathway, especially in the first
   and second year? Who leaves? When and why?

The Data Fellows returned to these questions repeatedly in discussions and in their team
presentations. Provost Dowell also challenged the group to use “systems thinking” by envisioning the
student pathway through the whole institution, and working on multiple aspects of this pathway at
once.

Another priority for Data Fellows is to learn how to interact with data. By listening to presentations
from experts, the Data Fellows learned how to describe, analyze, and challenge the data, as well as use
it to marshal and argument or give evidence of a concern. Thus as the year progressed, the teams’
questions became increasingly sophisticated and complex, and discussions more rich.

And finally, Data Fellows were invited early on to provide feedback to the university Institutional
Research (IR) office about the data that were not available, that would be helpful to have in addressing
the guiding questions. Members of the IR team were present at every Data Fellows session to interact
and receive this feedback.

From the planning stages forward, the Chancellor’s Office expressed support and interest in not only
the guiding questions and priorities but in the collaborative, team-based process for addressing them.
The Senior Director for Institutional Technology, the Director of Dashboard Student Success Research
Initiatives, and other IT staff participated in several of the sessions to hear what the Data Fellows were working on, and to check their own thinking about needs and possibilities for the CSU in these areas.

CSULB Data Fellows 2016

Activities in Year One, 2015-16

Funding, Staffing, and Setting
The Data Fellows project was funded in Year One through a combination of a Chancellor’s Office grant and Academic Affairs funding. The total amount budgeted for the year was $50K, and this covered per-session stipends for the faculty and staff participants, professional development funds for the co-leaders, and group meals. No additional equipment, software, or materials were purchased for this project in Year One.

Staffing for the Data Fellows was an important part of keeping the project moving and making sure all communications flowing through one person. Therefore, one staff member from Academic Affairs had part of her time reassigned to support the Data Fellows project. She kept the BeachBoard site up to date, sent out each session’s Agenda, communicated with the presenters, and took notes during planning meetings that were posted to the BeachBoard site.

The setting for the Data Fellows meetings was an Active Learning Classroom (ALC). Five tables each had their own screen for close or shared viewing, and the instructor’s computer could project to one large screen or all screens. Table surfaces were whiteboards, which promoted active participation through strategies like Gallery Walks and team brainstorming.
The classroom setting also gave a collegial feel to the meetings, as faculty, staff, and administrators sat together in groups of 8-10 people. As participants gathered for each session, the room filled with voices and energy, evidence of the relevance of this team-based approach. Senior campus administrators, college advisors, faculty, and researchers all had opportunities to connect and form new working relationships that enhanced the Data Fellows project itself.

**Planning and Syllabus**

The project was designed as a two-year plan (see Appendix II 2015-16 Syllabus). In Year One, Data Fellows would get an overview of key data sources and create team reports about their units using these data. In Year Two, they would design and carry out a team project using these data. They would also work with their college or unit leadership on ways to introduce and use these data sources with faculty and staff, creating the kind of culture shift that the Data Fellows project embodies.

Following this plan, five data sources were first introduced, explored, then integrated into team presentations:
- Chancellor’s Office Dashboard
- Institutional Research (IR) website
- EAB
- Local Data
- CSLink

The data sources were presented in order of level of detail, from very broad system-wide data to very specific department-level and student-level data. Some of these data sources were well known to several of the Data Fellows already, so their expertise was tapped in making presentations with real-life examples (IR, CSLink). Other data sources were new to most participants, and required more time to process (CO Dashboard, EAB). The local data sources varied widely across colleges and units, but were important to include as significant aspects of the whole (Excel spreadsheets, survey data, college dashboards).

Each session began with a check-in, presentation or discussion, time for exploration, then synthesis from the co-leaders. As with teaching a course, planning for each session led to adjustments and revisions in response to participant feedback and other changes. An important part of each session was the team’s reflections afterwards. They entered these in BeachBoard and other teams and the co-leaders were able to read and respond.

Sessions were held on Fridays from 9:00 – 11:00 a.m., and participation was high throughout the year.

**Team Formation**

In August 2015, each College and the Student Affairs division were asked to form a Data Fellows Team: one faculty member, one staff member, and one Associate Dean. Typically, the staff members were lead advisors who already had some knowledge of several data sources as part of their daily work. Faculty members were those who expressed interest in either data or assessment, and who could commit the time. Both Student Affairs and Undergraduate Studies identified staff for their respective teams. The nine teams had consistent membership all year, with only one substitution mid-year.
Session Topics and Presenters

Fall 2015: Five Sessions
1. Overview:
   a. K. Slowinski, C. Grutzik, D. Sathianathan, and D. Dowell shared the plan for the project, and introduced the three guiding questions. Participants introduced themselves.
   b. J. Gold discussed data use in the CSU and at the Chancellor’s Office.
   c. T. Enders gave an overview of data use at CSULB.
2. Chancellor’s Office Dashboard:
   a. Prior to this session, Data Fellows were provided with a link to the Dashboard and some navigation questions, to give them a preview.
   b. R. Stripling presented the CO Dashboard and guided teams through an interactive exercise.
3. Institutional Research (IR):
   a. Prior to this session, Data Fellows were given some questions to track down in the IR data.
   b. R. Weitzman and E. DeSantis provided a detailed and guided tour through the IR website.
   c. R. Weitzman gave a brief Excel tutorial to assist in better using the IR data.
4. Five Team Reports
   a. Each team used the following Presentation Guidelines to give a 10 minute presentation including Q&A: Introduce your unit by the numbers, using IR and other data; address one of the three guiding questions or another pressing issue for your unit; integrate the CO Dashboard and IR in your presentation. C. Grutzik facilitated the sessions. At the end of each session, D. Sathianathan and K. Slowinski offered summary comments.
   b. All presentations were posted to the BeachBoard site.
5. Four Team Reports, following the same process listed above.

Spring 2016: Eight Sessions
6. Goals and Provost’s Retrospective:
   a. Co-leaders reviewed the revised Syllabus, and the goals for Spring 2016.
   b. D. Dowell provided a Retrospective in the form of an Institutional Policy Timeline. This generated rich discussion and insight about previously observed data trends. (See Slides 7 and 8 of Data Driven: Student Success Initiatives from a College Level Perspective, Hempel-Lamer, Maples, Ostergren, and Slowinski, AASCU Austin, February 2016).
7. EAB Session 1:
   c. Sara Kuzmik introduced EAB and its components, and given time to explore these as teams.
8. EAB Session 2:
   d. Experienced academic advisors from four colleges – K. Spralja (COE), J. Deutschman (COE), L. Rojas (CBA), A. Garnica (CED), T. Kalliomaa (CNSM) – shared ways they use EAB on a daily basis: finding qualified tutors, identifying students at risk of failure, finding high-achieving students, designing proactive advising campaigns, or tracking a cohort.
9. Local Data and Team Presentation Planning:
   e. Teams briefly shared their units’ strategies for collecting and storing “local” data,
      pertaining to their unit only: What data are you collecting? How often are you collecting
      it? Who uses the data and for what purpose?
   f. Teams brainstormed on whiteboards to summarize their thinking about final
      presentations, topics or issues of interest, and their current thinking about the guiding
      questions, then conducted a “Gallery Walk” to read and discuss each others’ work (see
      Appendix III Example from College of Health & Human Services).
10. Presentation: Aligning Team and University Goals — D. Sathianathan
    a. Using the photos of the Gallery Walk team brainstorms, D. Sathianathan presented
       ideas for aligning the team ideas, university goals, guiding questions, and the “four
       pillars” of student success in planning the upcoming presentations.
    b. K. Slowinski shared thoughts on themes and team connections as evident in the Gallery
       Walk photos.
11. Outline of Goals for Year 2, and Team Planning Time
    a. Teams were given work time to prepare their presentations.
12. Five Team Reports: Teams were each given 10 minutes plus Q&A to present the following:
    a. Use what you’ve learned and discussed as a team this year to outline an issue or project
       relevant to your college or unit;
    b. Align your presentation with the guiding questions, the university’s Strategic Plan, or
       other teams’ projects and ideas;
    c. Finish with a Team Reflection: What have you learned this year about using data? What
       have you learned by working as a team?
13. Four Team Reports, following the same process outlined above;
    a. R. Stripling (CO) gave a brief presentation about updates to the CO Dashboard and
       invited Data Fellows to explore their units through these data.
    b. Group Lunch and Photo!

**Goals for Year 2 2016-17**

**Sustainability and Institutional Buy-in**
The main goals for Year 2 are to move from data analysis to data engagement, and to start embedding
new ways of using data across the university. Each college or unit has a distinctive student success
profile, its own history of enacted interventions, and faculty and staff with varying appreciation for
quantitative data. Therefore, a critical factor in the success of this project is that Fellows tailor the
dissemination and implementation phase to their respective college or unit constituents.

In Fall 2016, each team will be required to plan and carry out a meeting within their unit, in
collaboration with unit leadership and colleagues, to introduce some of the data and insights from the
Data Fellows project. Data Fellows co-leaders will meet with each team prior to their presentation,
attend their presentation, and debrief with them afterwards.

In addition, each team will work with their unit leadership to use student success data to address the
relevant issues or challenges identified in Year 1. These projects may be department specific, unit or
college specific, or university-wide. For example, Fellows could consult with individual departments to
facilitate understanding of the data and to recommend proven interventions that each department may implement to address its unique student success profile. Fellows could also work with their unit or college leaders to identify data trends that point to opportunities for improving services to students such as Supplemental Instruction, tutoring, or graduation advising.

Several units have already identified emerging projects to be pursued in Year 2.
1) CNSM will focus on development of data management plan for the college.
2) COE will develop academic characteristics of a successful COE pre-major.
3) CED will investigate the problem of ITEP/BA switching.
4) COTA will take a closer look at the causes of delayed graduation in visual arts majors
5) SA will focus on NSSE & FSSE surveys
6) UCUA will identify retention risks for undeclared students
7) CHHS will investigate major switching patterns.
8) CLA will create a data toolbox for CLA Department Chairs, and examine the needs of students enrolled in the Developmental English course.
9) The Student Affairs and Undergraduate Studies will take a close look at the CSULB Institutional Learning Outcomes and WASC Core Competencies, and at several large data banks of survey data (CIRP, DLE, NSSE, FSSE) in order to merge data with goals, and to see connections and relationships, not just descriptive data. Housing is a program that will be brought into focus through this effort.

Collectively, the Fellows also will work with CSULB’s Institutional Research (IR) to identify the data that are critical to student success efforts, and to ensure that data are as clear and accessible as possible for the intended audience. As in Year 1, the group will make recommendations about the content, functionality, and design of the IR portal through which these data are made available to CSULB faculty and staff.

**Structure and Format**
The leadership and membership of the Data Fellows project will continue as in Year One, although two key members of the Advisory Group will be new: Provost Brian Jersky, and the AVP for Enrollment Services.

Meetings will again take place twice a month, in an Active Learning Classroom, in order to maintain the momentum gained in Year 1 even as teams become more focused on their programs.

The co-leaders will explore using a different platform for exchanging and storing Data Fellows information in a more publicly accessible format, such as Office 365.

The Advisory Group will seek funding in order to continue the stipends for staff and faculty that made it possible for them to participate in the project.

**Sample of Year 1 Reflections from Data Fellows**

“The entire campus is a learning system. The campus community works collaboratively to produce educated and self-aware learners, skilled workers, democratic citizens, and life skills managers.”

- Student Affairs
“Implementing a growth mindset is key to all our initiatives.”
- College of Natural Science and Mathematics

“The goals are to improve four-year graduation rates and decrease time to degree... but there is no one-size-fits-all for CHHS! We must determine the best “fit” for each department.”
- College of Health and Human Services

“We would like to partner with other colleges to look at what factor time plays in the acquisition, demonstration and mastery of skills (technical and conceptual).”
- College of the Arts

“How can we change our campus culture in regard to the “undeclared” status, especially for those students who need to be advised out of a major [and are simply in transition]?”
- Undergraduate Advising

“Data is created and used differently by various faculty and staff depending on their needs and purposes.”
- College of Engineering

“It is our hope that greater data-driven decision making will eliminate bottle neck courses and improve the quality of student success programs, thereby improving graduation rates.”
- College of Liberal Arts

“Now that we have a better understanding of data available about undergrads, how do we get the same for post-bac credential and MA students?”
- College of Education

“Lessons learned: Importance of using data to drive decision making; depth as well as limitations of data; value of engaging other stakeholders and getting their input. Lessons learned by working as a Team: Value of Data Fellows with different backgrounds and roles; different insights and perspectives.”
- College of Business Administration
### Appendix I
#### 2015-16 Data Fellows Roster

*Advisory Group

**Project Leaders

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CSULB Faculty and Staff Data Fellows for Student Success
2015-16 Syllabus

Day and Time: Fridays, 9:00 – 11:00 a.m.
Dates: Jan. 29, Feb. 12, Feb. 26, Mar. 11, Mar. 25, Apr. 8, Apr 22, May 6
Location: EED-40 Active Learning Classroom

Coordinators: Kris Slowinski, Krzysztof.Slowinski@csulb.edu
Cindy Grutzik, Cynthia.Grutzik@csulb.edu
Vanessa Red, Vanessa.Red@csulb.edu

Notes for Participants:

- Bring a laptop each time.
- Sign in each time.
- Please attend each session. If you can’t attend, please send someone in your place.

Goals for the Data Fellows Project:

- Foster a culture at the university and college level of ownership for data and for solutions that drive change.
- Empower Data Fellows to become experts on data, and to cultivate broader understanding and application of available data in their colleges.
- Positively impact student success across the university.
- Pose increasingly sophisticated questions related to student success in your college and the university, and to find data that address these questions. These include three key questions:
  - What can we do to understand and increase our 4-year graduation rate?
  - What accounts for our persistent achievement gaps
  - Where is there attrition on the degree progress pathway? Who leaves? When? Why?

Fall 2015:

- Access, analyze, and use a broad range of system, university and college data. Describe the relationships between the data sets.
- Examine the data specific to your college, and describe trends and insights. Identify strengths, threats, and areas that offer greatest opportunity for improvement at the college level, department level, or program level. Identify data that are missing, too.
- As individuals and college teams, share what you are learning.
Spring 2016:

- Continue to learn about university data sources (EAB and CS Link) and share findings.
- Continue to examine relationships between data sets (System wide, IR, CS Link, EAB and local). Integrate the existing college- or program-specific datasets into the broader data frameworks.
- Continue to provide feedback to the university about availability and applicability of data.
- Begin to work with your Data Fellows team (staff, faculty, associate dean) to design a college-specific improvement project for 2016-17, based on data, related to the university’s Strategic Goals and your college’s vision and mission.
- Work with your Data Fellows team and your dean to identify ways to disseminate what you have learned, and to embed data use and analysis in your college’s routine practices.

Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Homework Due</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10/2</td>
<td>Overview</td>
<td>Overview</td>
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<td>Introduction, Team Check-in</td>
<td>Overview</td>
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<td>Fall 2015 Syllabus</td>
<td>Overview</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Introductions, Team Check-in</td>
<td>Overview</td>
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<td>Data Source Presentation and Exploration</td>
<td>Study Websites in depth:</td>
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<td>Desdemona Cardoza</td>
<td>- Ed Trust</td>
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<td>- EdTrust</td>
<td>Team Reflection</td>
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<tr>
<td>10/16</td>
<td>Data Source Presentation:</td>
<td>Study website in depth:</td>
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<td>Institutional Research (IR) and Institutional Context: Ryan Weitzman, Erin DeSantis</td>
<td>- IR Website</td>
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<td>- Examples of ways to use IR data (Dhushy, Cindy, Kris)</td>
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<td>Tools: Excel</td>
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<td>11/13</td>
<td>Data Fellows Team Reports by college</td>
<td>Presentation:</td>
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<td></td>
<td>College teams share what they have learned about their colleges; group discussion.</td>
<td>- Explore the IR data sources in depth.</td>
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<td>- In College Teams, prepare 5-7 min</td>
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presentation:
  - Strengths, threats, applicability;
  - What do you learn about your college from these data sources?
  - What do these data add to what you already know?
  - How do you integrate these data into your college?
  - What’s missing?

12/4  Data Fellows Team Reports by college - Continued  
College teams share what they have learned about their colleges; group discussion.

Presentation:
- Explore the IR data sources in depth.
- In College Teams, prepare 5-7 min presentation:
  - Strengths, threats, applicability;
  - What do you learn about your college from these data sources?
  - What do these data add to what you already know?
  - How do you integrate these data into your college?
  - What’s missing?

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Homework Due</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 29</td>
<td>Data Fellows Goals Reviewed – Dhushy</td>
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<td>Policy Timelines:</td>
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<td>• Timeline of policy changes presentation – Nele, Tom, Dave</td>
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<td>• Teamwork: unit or college timelines, data correlation</td>
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<td>Lunch provided at the Chartroom</td>
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<td>February 12</td>
<td>Data Source Presentation:</td>
<td>Team Reflection, Assignments by presenters</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• EAB and Institutional Context</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Examples of how to use EAB data</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Event Description</td>
<td>Notes</td>
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<td>February 26</td>
<td><strong>Data Source Presentation:</strong></td>
<td>• Team Reflection</td>
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<td>• Advisor presentations</td>
<td>• Assignments by presenters</td>
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<td>• Continue with EAB</td>
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<td>• How is your team using EAB data? EAB Workbooks?</td>
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<td>March 11</td>
<td><strong>Local Data Discussion</strong></td>
<td>• Team Reflection</td>
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<td>• What data are you collecting?</td>
<td>• Assignments by presenters</td>
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<td>• How often are you collecting it?</td>
<td>• <strong>Due:</strong> Create two slides showing your unit’s local data. Plan a 5 minute presentation.</td>
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<td>March 25</td>
<td><strong>Data Sources Presentations:</strong></td>
<td>• Team Reflection</td>
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<td>• CSLink and Institutional Context:</td>
<td>• Assignments by presenters</td>
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<td>Vanessa Red et al.</td>
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<td>• Examples of ways to use CSLink reports</td>
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<td>April 8</td>
<td><strong>Final Wrap Up and pointing ahead to the next year</strong></td>
<td>• Team Reflection</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 22</td>
<td><strong>Data Fellows Team Reports Continued</strong></td>
<td>• Team Presentations</td>
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<td>Teams share what they have learned about their units; group discussion.</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 6</td>
<td><strong>Data Fellows Team Reports</strong></td>
<td>• Team Presentations</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Teams share what they have learned about their units; group discussion.</td>
<td>• Lunch</td>
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Appendix III Example from Gallery Walk – College of Health & Human Services

1. Would local data collection be beneficial/practical for CHHS?

2. Goal: We want to get faculty chairs more aware/informed of data (e.g., Grad rates/time 2 degree)

3. How to best utilize EAB campus & allowing access to faculty/chairs.

4. Communicating more w/depts to better understand their needs.

4a. Use above comm. to inform our future work w/this data.