**Data Analytics Buyers Guide (DRAFT DOCUMENT)**

Purchasing a data analytics solution to support student success efforts can be a daunting task. There are a multitude of analytics tools and a changing array of vendors offering a frequently changing array of options. Moreover, successful implementation of such platforms involves a broad cross-section of institution al staff. This guide is intended to help academic leaders navigate the purchasing process. It is not intended to tell institutions what they need, rather to pose the questions they should consider when considering such an investment.

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| **Topical Area** | **Questions to Ask** | **Options to Consider** |
| **Institutional Capacities** | Does the institution have access needed for the vendor to provide the services requested/offered?  Does the institution’s IR and/or IT offices have the capability to pull the data and share it in the format required by the vendor?  What resource will be needed to put the data file together? |  |
| **RFP Creation and Evaluation** | A fully implemented analytics solution cuts across multiple units and staff groups. Have you considered including representative of groups involved in both infrastructure and usage, such as:   * Institutional Research * Institutional Technology * Academic Affairs (Faculty & Administration) * Student Affairs * Data Analytics (someone who can assess the data techniques to be used) * Information Security |  |
| **Data Preparation, Sharing, Integration** | In what format does the data need to be structured in order to share it with the vendor?  What is expected of the institution and the vendor in terms of preparing the data?  How much time will it take institutional staff to pull together the data files?  How will the data be shared with the vendor?  Will data be shared once or will there be an open pipeline between the institution and the vendor? |  |
| **Troubleshooting** | What supports does the vendor provide if problems arrive?  Will support be handled at a distance or, if needed, on-site?  What resources are available from the vendor for troubleshooting?  What priority will your institution receive in terms of troubleshooting? |  |
| **Data Analysis** | What type of data manipulation/techniques will the vendor be using to conduct the analysis?  Does the analysis align with the question being asked/services being offered?  Is there someone at the institution who understand the data techniques?  It is it clear the representatives of the vendor understand the data techniques? (If not, request to speak with the vendor’s data scientist(s)). |  |
| **Data Access and Ownership** | Who owns the data the institution shares with the vendor?   * Does the data become the property of the vendor?   Does data sharing require permission of someone else?   * Do you have data from other entities such as wage data from the state’s department of labor that have their own data sharing protocols? * What institutional or governmental policies pertain to sharing of student data?   Who owns the data created by the vendor?  What happens to the data after the relationship/contract ends? |  |
| **Data Security** | How will the vendor secure the data?  What are the vendor’s policies/practices/procedures if there is a data breach? |  |
| **Alignment** | Has the institution undergone a needs analysis to determine what it needs in terms of a data analytics solution?  Do the solutions offered align with the needs of the campus?  Do the solutions replicate or complement existing efforts? |  |
| **Impact** | Will the service/analysis provide impact student success?  Will the institution be willing to act on recommendations stemming from the analysis?  Does the institution have the resources/capacity to provide the needed interventions?  Could the same result be achieved through other means? (e.g., internal analysis) |  |
| **Navigability of User Interface** | Does the interface provide information about students in an easy to understand format?  Is the information provided actionable?  Is the information presented in way that allows students, staff, or faculty to use it to guide their own decision making? |  |